

Kōrero

Mātauranga

Me kōrero tātou

Online Survey

The voices of young people

We asked New Zealanders to tell us, via an online survey, what was important to them in building a more robust education system. These are the thoughts of almost 2000 young people aged between 5-12 and 13-18.

We asked four questions to get people thinking about the future of education:

1 If you were the boss of education in New Zealand, what would you do first?

2 What does a successful student of the future look like to you?

3 What will they need to know and be able to do?

4 What things need to be in place to make sure every learner is successful?

Survey themes:

Out of the responses we received, we grouped the report into the following four themes:

Learning – environments: incorporates feedback around cultural, teaching and learning elements, as well as physical environments and wellbeing.

Learning – opportunities: covers resourcing, equity, access to education, educational pathways and learning support.

Learning – connections: encompasses parents, family, whānau, employers, communities and the concept of shared ownership.

Learning – relevance: includes feedback about skills, innovation, discovery, creativity, competencies, knowledge, values and the concept of lifelong learning.

Where we have used verbatim quotes, we have left them unedited, except where we have made minor grammatical changes or shortened them to highlight key parts. We felt that leaving them as they were originally written was a more authentic reflection of the person who responded to the survey.

Have your say about the future of education

What you told us

Almost 2000 of 16,466 people responding to the survey said they were aged between 5-12 and 13-18. We commissioned Global Research to analyse these responses for us and this is our summary of their findings.

The full report is available here:

<https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/education-conversation/what-you-told-us/>

The online surveys are just one part of the **Kōrero Mātauranga | Education Conversation**. During 2018, more than 43,000 New Zealanders, including educators, parents, children and young people, Māori, Pacific communities, people with disabilities and those needing learning support, told us what they wanted in their future education system.

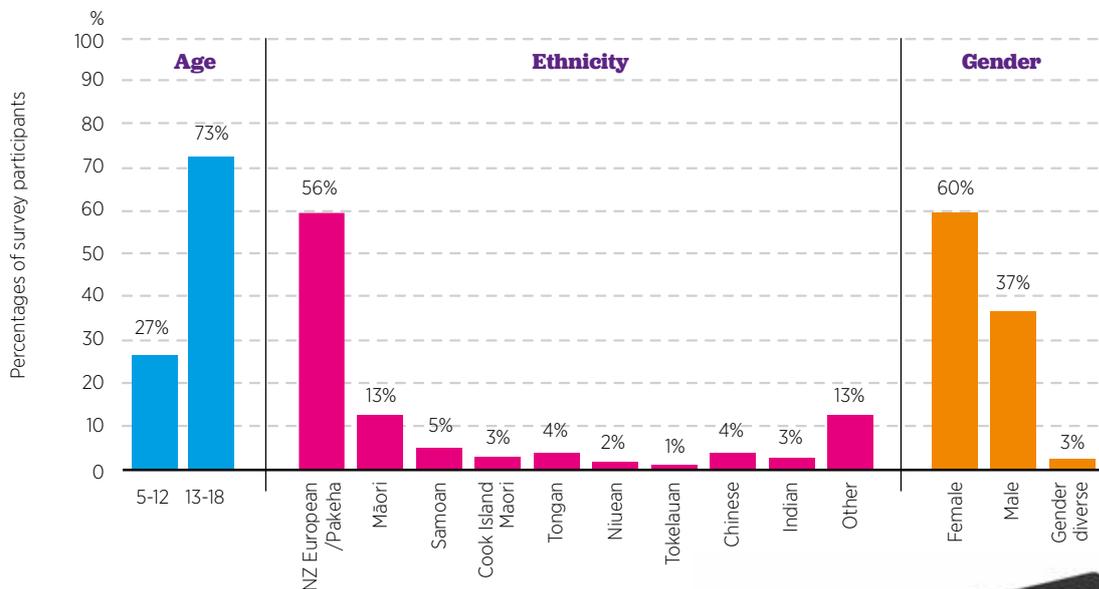
New Zealanders want all our learners to be successful, confident, life-long learners, and to have the skills to fully participate in their

families, their whānau and their communities. They also want all our learners to make a positive contribution to society and the economy.

New Zealanders also told us that, in any new education system, the cultural identity and wellbeing of every learner should be central to their educational progress and success. And that parents, whānau and communities want to be more active participants in the education of our children and young people.

The chart below shows the age, ethnicity and gender of youthful respondents:

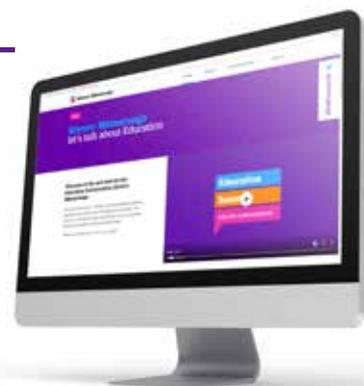
Figure 1. Percentages of survey participants: age, ethnicity, gender



The report is based on responses from 1935 young people:

- » 5-12 year age group comprised 27% (525) of participants
- » 13-18 year age group comprised 73% (1410).

Join the conversation



Learning – environments

Learning

- » Individualised learning and teaching that understands different styles, interests, strengths and weaknesses.
- » They said that children who do not learn in the same way as the teachers want to teach should not be disadvantaged.
- » Learning that's fun, practical, hands-on, play-based, driven by passion and relevant.
- » Allow young people to determine their own idea of success and set individualised timetables and goals.

Teaching

- » Students consider that the relationship between them and their teacher is pivotal to their educational success.
- » Teachers who are fair and understand diversity, particularly in ethnicity and socio-economic circumstances.
- » A need for teachers to understand Māori and Pacific culture specifically, as well as students from international backgrounds.
- » Ensuring teachers don't treat minority groups differently or unfairly.
- » High quality teachers are those who understand and support students' emotional challenges.
- » Qualified, enthusiastic teachers who are helpful, caring, supportive and nice, who motivate with encouragement and who are able to explain concepts well.
- » Smaller class sizes to increase one-on-one help, more than one teacher per classroom or a teacher aide or assistant to offer one-on-one help.

'The system'

- » Students said the education system was a "one size fits all" outdated approach, and suggested fixing it in consultation with them.
- » Young people said good principals and leadership were necessary for success of the system.

Homework

- » Less or no homework was requested because of mental health or stress implications, or more available time for extra-curricular and family/whānau commitments. Almost unanimous agreement that homework should be lessened or banned, as they feel that it is not always relevant to their learning objectives.

"Make education more affordable for parents with low-paying jobs."

Aged 13-18

What you told us

"...As humans we accept that we are all different, however our current education system assumes that we all learn the same way."

Age 13-18

"High teacher to student ratio to form mentoring bonds and to help deal with each student as a unique person with their own needs and qualities."

Age 13-18

"Stop placing all emphasis on academic success and take a more holistic approach to learning and education."

Age 13-18

Learning environments

- » Young peoples' comments reflected the idea that if schools were more enjoyable, interesting, and welcoming and students felt a sense of belonging, then student engagement would increase and outcomes would improve.
- » Learning environments should harness the full potential of technology-based learning.
- » Dissatisfaction with modern learning environments, saying that large open plan classrooms are distracting.
- » Students want: quiet spaces in classrooms, quiet breakout spaces, and adequate heating and good quality playgrounds.
- » Young people wanted schools that embrace ways of learning that ensure the learning experience is enjoyable and engaging for students; for some, this meant implementing more practical, or play- or outdoor-based spaces.
- » Young people say that if schools feel warm and inviting, rather than feeling like an obligation, outcomes will improve.

Streaming

- » Three quarters of students were in favour of streaming, albeit with reservations about it being used across the board, i.e. they did not think that because you were good at maths you should also be put in the top class for other subjects. They preferred instead that students be streamed based on the individual subject and felt that it resulted in students with similar abilities being able to progress at appropriate rates.
- » Those not in favour of streaming considered it detrimental to a student's self-esteem and mental health to be judged by an average across all subjects.

“Throughout high school, we should be encouraged and rewarded for new ways of thinking and being able to prove our intelligence in ways outside of an outdated exam.”

Age 5-12

“Whakatika te papa takaro – fix up the playground.”

Age 5-12

“No homework because after school is the children's time to take a brake of school.”

Age 5-12

What you told us

“I want school to be a really safe place for everyone... even bullies because some bullies might not feel safe and that's the reason why they bully other children.”

Aged 5-12

“Support students if they're getting bullied or having a hard time with school or at home. Because I got bullied and the teachers never helped me. They just said “well don't go near them or play near them.” They said that over and over again. When that happened I felt like no one in the school cared and no one wanted to help me they just wanted to watch me get bullied.”

Early childhood parent

Mental health/wellness

- » Mental health is under-prioritised in schools – it should be seen as an integral aspect of student success. Supporting students' wellbeing, including their mental and/or physical health, was prioritised by young people. This appears to reflect that education forms such a large part of young peoples' lives that it has a substantial impact on how they feel, act, and learn about themselves.
- » Young people want schools to be places where all students feel safe on multiple levels. More needs to be done about bullying.
- » A very large number of young people feel stressed at school, with too much emphasis on examinations/assessment, as well as a high workload, being commonly identifiable causes.

Mental/physical health

- » Knowledge and awareness of mental and/or physical health was important for students to have prior to leaving school.
- » Students asked for more support and services for those who suffer mental health issues and more education on mental health, disorders and/or disabilities.
- » Successful students were seen as ones who are involved in sport, know about nutrition and how to cook healthy food and are physically fit and healthy.
- » Knowledge of the dangers of recreational drug use and excessive alcohol consumption was deemed important, as well as knowing when to access medical advice.

Assessment

- » Results in exams and assessments is deemed important to identity and worth, and underperformance was linked to timing and high workloads.
- » Students said that heavy workloads and pressure from the NCEA system can have crippling effects on their mental health and wellbeing.

“It is the teacher that determines whether I pass or fail a subject and I know that it is the same with many others, it is because of the relationship they have with the students, whether they care or not, the way they engage with you, how clear they are in instructions and delivering information and whether they care about engaging students in the subject or just getting them to pass the standards.”

Age 13-18

What you told us

“Use older students together with teachers to tutor students to complement classroom learning (creates a sense of community).”

Age 13-18

“I would make sure that students are still having fun. Mental illness and stress is causing our students to drop out and not attend school and believe that education is nothing.”

Age 13-18

“Teachers really need to be strict on values in my school our values are excellence, resilience, whānau/family and respect.”

Age 13-18

Learning – relevance

Life skills

- » Young people seek a broad education that produces well-rounded New Zealanders who have academic knowledge, as well as life and personal skills to enable life-long success.
- » Knowledge learnt in the social and physical sciences is important for understanding the world, for life after school, and expanding future opportunities and career options.
- » Young people say they need to be taught in a way that has more relevance to the 'real world'. This means being taught how the curriculum will be useful to them as an adult – they say that understanding the relevance of what is being learnt will lead to increased student engagement.
- » Practical teaching of financial, literacy and spoken language skills with relevance to work-life.
- » More information provided to students early in their schooling on what types of skills or areas of employment were needed most in New Zealand.
- » Young people defined 'success' as politically-aware students who vote, are caring and accepting of all people, have a wide outlook, contribute socially and financially to society, and improve the lives of others as well as their own.
- » Other desired skills include: cooking and nutrition, driving and vehicle maintenance, gardening, knowledge on sustainability and climate change, having good management of time and education, work and life balance, conflict resolution, fixing and building skills, looking after children, washing and cleaning and buying, renovating and maintaining a household.

Subjects

- » Young people want a base knowledge of core subjects and skills, in particular numeracy, literacy and technological skills. They also want a solid base of general knowledge, common sense and knowledge of core academic subjects, as well as an understanding of how the world works. Also, knowledge of politics, laws, research and critical evaluation skills is considered desirable.
- » Schools should extensively teach students about how to use technology and computers to prepare them for their future working life.
- » Students wanted te reo and New Zealand Sign Language taught in addition to English.
- » Students felt they needed knowledge about the natural world, how to be environmentally-aware and an understanding of climate change.

What you told us

“I would make all schools teach Te Reo Maori because we are Tangata Whenua we are the people of this land and so all schools should learn the history about New Zealand and how it was in the past.”

Age 5-12

“Someone who feels they left school with a lot of knowledge to set them up for the real world.”

Age 13-18

“Teach children to play more sports because these days in school they people usually are on the computers doing work.”

Age 5-12

Extra-curricular

- » Young people requested improved access to extra-curricular activities because of their importance for teaching new skills and developing new interests.

Culture

- » Young people said that being proud of their ethnicity and understanding New Zealand and Māori history, language, culture and current events was valuable.
- » They say having more knowledge of Māori language, culture, and history to promote respect and understanding of Māori and multiculturalism in New Zealand will lead to a more accepting and knowledgeable society.

Attributes

- » A commonly-mentioned element of self-esteem was students' confidence to be themselves and not be troubled by their mistakes or others' opinions of them.
- » The following attributes were admired: organisational, problem-solving, logic, rationale and innovation skills, confidence, curiosity, creativity and 'thinking outside the box'.
- » Taking risks and having new experiences was seen as essential for personal growth.
- » Having a strong set of morals and values and having the confidence to stay true to these was admired, along with a sense of identity and knowing one's culture and background.
- » There were some differences in values between age groups - those of primary school age were more inclined to value those with good manners who are polite, while secondary-aged students spoke of respect for others.
- » Secondary-aged students commonly discussed independence, while primary-aged students were more likely to comment on self-esteem, independence and culture.

“Someone who is passionate about something and can use that passion in the real world to make a positive impact on society.”

Age 13-18

What you told us

“Push for more Māori and Pasifika teachers in schools and pursue other means to connect more with Māori and Pasifika students so that they succeed at the same level as Pakeha students.”

Age 13-18

“...My friends said every year they were dressed up to sing a song at some festival but never taught the language or what the words of the songs meant so they feel like it's only for Māori people and they wondered why I tried to take it...”

Age 13-18

Engagement with learning

- » Young people said if they are able to have a say in what they learn, how they are educated, or the way their school operates, they're likely to be more engaged in their learning and enjoy it more.
- » Young people valued education that encourages learning because they are engaged, rather than memorising information just to pass assessments.
- » Resilience and adaptability were frequently discussed in the context of young people needing to be able to respond and cope with a rapidly-changing world.

“ They will need to be able to read, write and do maths.”

Aged 5-12

“ Calling people achieved, merit, excellence student etc can be detrimental. Whilst they are studying they won't study as far as their mind can go and often they'll say what's the point if I am an achieved student in math, I can't go to merit or excellence or whatever. Comments such as 'Why not go higher! It's possible!' should be more encouraged...”

Age 13-18

“ Spend more time listening to kids who want to better the education system and actually put actions towards their words.”

Age 13-18

What you told us

“ One who is passionate about their role in society and doesn't believe themselves to be better than anyone else.”

Age 13-18

“ Get a good performing arts programme in all primary schools, this would make everyone a lot less shy and more social.”

Aged 5-12

“ Particularly Math's, and the Science's need more CONTEXT... Context will fuel a student's willingness to learn.”

Age 13-18

Learning – opportunities

Resourcing

- » Young people called for more funding, more resources in class and more resourcing for teachers.
- » Young people wanted cheaper or free education, with food provided in schools.
- » Removing financial barriers to things like technology resources that enable access to education was deemed essential.
- » Well-maintained buildings and facilities and adequate resources, particularly classroom resources and technology.
- » An increase in salary would make teaching more appealing, and attract others.
- » If teachers had their workloads reduced, they could dedicate more time to students.
- » More disability and learning support, funding and resources to prevent people from falling behind in class.
- » Schools have a role in providing technological devices, especially if families do not have financial resources.
- » Schools needed to provide more support for students' personal needs and their wellbeing to ensure educational success.

“Completely free education for ALL students, for example, free uniform, NO PTA donations, free sport team etc.”

Aged 5-12

“Learning support so that students can get the help they need the time they need it so in the future those small problems don't affect their job and their life.”

Aged 13-18

“Change the education system that we have been using since the industrial revolution.”

Aged 13-18

What you told us

“To me a successful future for New Zealand looks like a place where all kids can get some form of education so that they can get a good job and earn enough money to support themselves.”

Aged 13-18

“I would make sure every student is able to go to school comfortably whether that be arriving with lunch, shoes or being able to connect in schools. There are many issues in our nation at present child poverty is one of them. Our nation needs to target our solutions towards the next generation of New Zealanders.”

Aged 13-18

Equity

- » Young people want an education system that welcomes every child into education. Young people want to have equitable access to high quality learning irrespective of ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability.
- » Overall, young people were very aware of the financial burdens of education on families/whānau, the impact of socio-economic disparity on accessing education and academic success, and the challenges of finding a job and being able to financially care for themselves after they finish school.
- » Well-rounded education achievement was sometimes considered a key to unlock financial and life success.
- » Young people also want a system where success isn't defined by or limited to those who fit into the mainstream.

Life skills

- » Young people want their education to adequately prepare them for working life.
- » Young people saw a successful future as one they enjoyed and in which they were able to financially support themselves.
- » Measures of success by young people included graduation from university with a degree and continuing on to a successful career and job.

“Give all the kids kai so they not hungry.”

Aged 5-12

“Make sure that all teachers were required to recognise the potential of all children, and not hold back those who have abilities more advanced than others in their class. Each child should be catered for according to their own needs...”

Aged 13-18

What you told us

“Also for a learner to be successful they need to have security in other parts of there life like money to eat and rent etc.”

Aged 13-18

“There is an extreme university-glorifying culture at my high-achieving public school, and while I realise that university is an academic progression, other options should not be treated as being only for those who aren't 'good enough' for uni.”

Aged 13-18

“Equal focus on every student.”

Aged 13-18

Learning – connections

Connections/family involvement

- » Families/whānau and communities should support schools, students and education in general and students felt that strengthening those connections would result in a well-rounded student who had a better chance to succeed after education.
- » Maintaining and nourishing ties with family/whānau, community and society was a valuable attribute for students, as was their commitment to being an active and participating member of those groups.
- » Strong relationships between students, family and teachers were encouraged to ensure a student receives the support they need.
- » Young people also expressed the importance of being able to make and maintain friendships. This was noted as an important contributor of social health.
- » Better engagement by families/whānau in education.
- » Involvement would improve if there was “space for whānau to participate”.
- » Some ranked relational skills over knowledge and academic success, stating that it was better to be a good person who tries their best and knows how to learn.
- » Forming genuine connections and having positive interactions with peers and teachers was said to improve students’ ability to learn.

Transitioning

- » More support for transitions into further education or into a career and life skills classes to prepare them for life after school.

Participation in society

- » Young people said a student was considered successful if they valued relationships, commonly thought of others and aimed to do good for humanity.

Belonging

- » Having a sense of belonging to one’s community was important because that’s linked to successful educational outcomes.
- » More personal expression through things like mufti clothing.

“ A successful student is also empathetic and has the ability to put themselves in someone else’s shoes.”

Age 13-18

“ Students should have a strong support system – both within and in their community and they must know this.”

Age 13-18

What you told us

“ They should also not be self-centred and rather have a community-based approach with aims to make them happy by making the world around them a better place.”

Age 13-18

“ Understands the importance of whānau.”

Age 5-12

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Mātauranga

Me kōrero tātou

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Join the conversation at conversation.education.govt.nz



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