Kōrero Mātauranga

Education Conversation

The voices of young people

Table of Contents

Introduction

Background

This report was prepared by Global Research for the Ministry of Education and analyses comments from young people who responded to the Education Conversation | Kōrero Mātauranga Online Survey (the Survey).

The purpose of this report is to reflect what young people discussed on a variety of pertinent education topics. To focus the analysis and reporting, the Ministry prepared 15 broad questions under seven themes that are answered within the report; they are listed in the contents of this report and as sub-headings throughout. These questions were used to probe the comments received, although they were not asked directly to respondents. These were the actual questions that respondents answered:

» If you were the boss of education in New Zealand, what would you do first?
» What does a successful student of the future look like to you?
» What will they need to know and be able to do?
» What things need to be in place to make sure every learner is successful?

The Survey ran from March to October 2018. Respondents' comments included within this report were from young people aged 5–12 and 13–18 years of age. 1935 young people contributed to this report. The chart below presents participants' ages, ethnicities and gender.
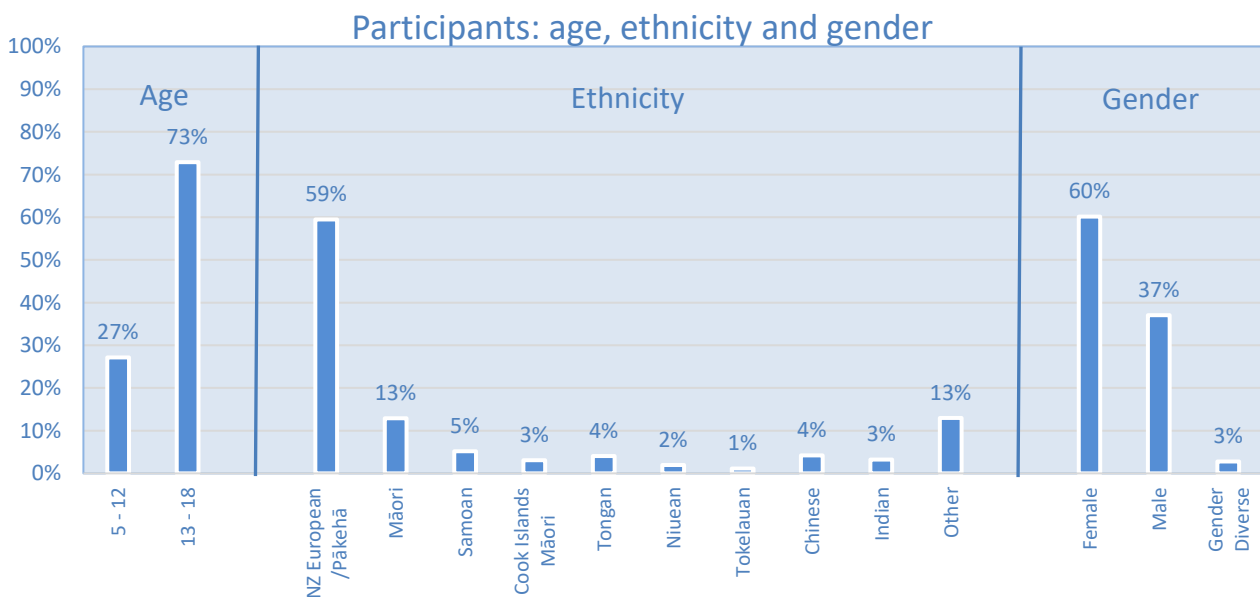
Figure 1: Percentages of survey participants: age, ethnicity, gender

» 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).

» Participants broadly reflected the ethnic composition of New Zealand's population. (participants could identify with more than one ethnicity):

    – New Zealand European/Pākehā 59%
    – Māori comprised 13%
    – Samoan 3%
    – Cook Island Māori 3%
    – Tongan 4%

    – Niuean 2%
    – Tokelauan 1%
    – Chinese 4%
    – Indian 3%
    – Other 13%

» A high proportion of respondents were female:

  – Females 60%
  – Males 37%
  – Gender diverse 3%

The Survey is one aspect of the broader Education Conversation | Kōrero Mātauranga. Other aspects of the conversation include the Education Summit events (the Summit) and more specific engagement by parts of the education work programme with a wide range of stakeholders. This is a link to more information on the education work programme https://conversation.education.govt.nz/ .

The emerging vision and themes from the Survey and the Summit will inform the development of shared principles across the education work programme as we work to build the world's best education system. Specific feedback from the Survey will also be used to inform the various aspects of the Government's Education Work Programme. The work programme is made up of:

» big reviews of parts of the system;
» medium-term strategies to map out priorities and actions over the next three or more years; and,
» some key initiatives for things to get underway now.

Report Structure

The findings of the report are discussed under seven main themes and 15 questions.

The 15 questions are listed in the contents of this report and are as sub-headings throughout.

This report commences with the *Key findings* that arose from the data across all responses from young people. The five main themes identified as *Key findings* were clearly evident across multiple topics.

Following this section, topics are presented under the six question areas as prepared by the MoE. These are:

1. Teaching and learning environment
2. Knowledge, competencies and skills
3. Wellbeing and support
4. Systems and structures
5. Parents, whānau and communities
6. Success
7. Culture

To provide some of the flavour of the comments, direct quotes are included from respondents; these are presented as blue boxed text on the right-hand side of each page. Note that quotes are cited verbatim, and in many cases contain spelling and grammatical errors – they have not been altered to ensure that the feeling and personality within comments remains, and to ensure that the points made by respondents are not altered.

Within the discussions, to give a consistent indication of the amount of comments on each topic, the following key has been used to describe the number of comments on each topic:

» Very large amount/number of comments = 150+
» Large amount = 100–149
» Sizeable = 75–99
» Substantial amount = 50–74
» Considerable amount = 25–49

» Moderate amount = 15–24
» Several comments = 8–14
» Small number = 4–7
» Few = 3
» Couple = 2

These proportions were also used when appropriate:

» One quarter of comments on this topic
» One third of comments on this topic
» Half of comments on this topic
» Two thirds of comments on this topic
» Three quarters of comments on this topic
» All of the comments on this topic

Key Findings

The following key findings emerged from young people's comments to the Education Conversation | Kōrero Mātauranga online survey.

Young people want a broad full-spectrum education

Young people sought a broad, full-spectrum education – one that produces well-rounded New Zealanders who have academic knowledge as well as life and personal skills – to enable life-long success.

Relational skills, favourable personal attributes, social skills and emotional intelligence, were highly regarded by an overwhelming number of young people. Being able to effectively and respectfully communicate and interact with others, as well as being resilient in a changing environment, were deemed vital skills to students' success in life. Students who leave school with these skills were viewed as having had a high-quality education.

Young people expressed the opinion that students need to be taught in a way that has more relevance to the "real world", such as learning in an applied manner and knowing how the curriculum will be useful to them as an adult. Young people stated that understanding the relevance of what is being learnt will lead to increased student engagement. More integration of technology into the education system was sought. Students had the view that they need to become computer literate and confident in a technology-dominated world and at the same time, benefit from technology-assisted learning.

Young people frequently requested more education, advice, and support for transitioning into new areas of education or life, particularly regarding what future education and career pathways are available to them. More emphasis on life skills was sought, with many saying that students need to be better prepared for adult life, rather than learning basic facts. Life skills frequently discussed were how to get a job (especially in an area that they enjoy); how to look after themselves physically and mentally; how to manage finances; and, to understand societal roles and responsibilities. Similarly, young people sought more education in the Māori language, culture, and history to promote respect and understanding of Māori and multiculturalism in New Zealand. This would lead to a more accepting and knowledgeable society.

While life skills and a relevant curriculum were encouraged, young people still favoured a comprehensive education in a range of key subjects. Maths, English and science were all considered critical to a basic education. Students were expected to be skilled in numeracy and literacy, which were deemed necessary for later life. Other subjects, such as, history, geography, arts and languages were also favoured for the contributions they make to a more well-rounded knowledge base.

Overall, a broad education that prepares students for life after school and narrows the gap between school and employment or continued education was supported by young people.

Young people seek an individualised and holistic learning experience

Young people reported wanting an education system in which students' whole selves are acknowledged, and success isn't defined by or limited to those who fit into the mainstream. Ideally for students, schools would view students as a person and not a statistic throughout the education system.

Although academic subjects are considered essential, additional emphasis is sought on non-academic aspects of schooling so that students' personal selves, cultural identities, backgrounds and preferences can be recognised and acknowledged.

Teachers were viewed as having an integral role in providing an individualised and student-focused education. Students expressed a desire for teachers to know students and understand and respond to different ways of learning. Teacher traits and attitudes were given more attention than teaching skills, with passion for teaching and care for students frequently cited as traits that effectively engage students.

Students reported wanting all aspects of the learning environment to reflect the array of individual ways of learning, and to effectively accommodate these so that everyone can succeed (or at least not feel like a failure, which students associated with leading to poor mental health and low self-esteem). To this end, young people stated that those with learning needs outside the mainstream ought to receive the support and resourcing they need (this included both high and low achievers); more funding for disability and learning support was commonly requested. Students were in favour of greater support for teachers in the form of higher remuneration and more teacher aides. They equated greater resourcing in these areas with better student outcomes.

Young people supported education that meets the needs of different learning styles. Physical aspects included: spaces for both group (conversational) and individual (quiet) learning; flexible timetabling to accommodate later starts, shorter days or longer breaks. They also wanted changes to assessment, which was deemed stress-inducing and with an unrealistic emphasis on fact-recall over the more important process of learning and developing greater understanding. Streaming was a contentious issue; it was favoured for high academic achievers, but for others it was labelled a stigmatising practice that discourages learning.

Prioritisation sought for students' wellbeing, mental/physical health and looking after oneself

Supporting students' wellbeing, including their mental and physical health, was prioritised by young people. The emphasis on wellbeing and mental health appears to reflect that education forms a large part of young peoples' lives, and has a substantial impact on how young people feel, act, and discover themselves.

Young people sought more support and awareness of student wellbeing from the education system, their teachers, and their family/whānau and community. Students with reliable and easily accessible support networks and services were considered more likely to succeed. Improved access to counsellors and social workers was also sought. Many wanted improvements to pastoral care services, as well as acceptance, tolerance, and understanding from teachers, and increased involvement of families/whānau and communities in schools. Feeling supported, comfortable, safe, and having a sense of belonging at school were all considered vital for student wellbeing, enjoyment of school, and learning engagement.

Many made the point that workload and pressure to succeed academically is too great for some students, and can have significant negative impacts on mental health and wellbeing. Mental health issues reported included; excessive stress, anxiety, and reduced self-esteem and confidence in their academic abilities and in themselves as a person. More stress-relieving initiatives and mental health support were sought in schools.

Teaching students how to care for and maintain their wellbeing and health was considered a vital role of the education system. Encouraging and educating students how to be physically and mentally fit, and how to monitor and maintain this fitness throughout their lives, was deemed essential to students' success. For some, this meant being aware of their mental health and knowing how to manage it, understanding and accepting who they are and their background, and striving to maintain a good life balance. Others expressed the importance of knowing how to physically care for themselves, such as knowing when to seek healthcare, what to eat and how to cook, and the importance of staying active.

Poverty, equity, and financial success in life: a wide-ranging topic

A large number of young people expressed the need to reduce the cost of education and the financial burden it places on families/whānau. Many requested that education be truly free, while others sought more funding for schools to provide resources and services to all students to ensure that everyone has equal opportunities to learn and succeed. One commonly suggested initiative was the provision of food in schools, which was expected to improve students' ability to learn and to ensure that no student is disadvantaged due to their socio-economic status. Some young people also highlighted that uniforms are a significant cost for families/whānau.

Ensuring that all students can access a high-quality education, despite their socio-economic status was important to young people. Students sought a reduction in disparity between schools of different deciles; ideas put forward included increased resourcing, increased funding, improved quality of education, and support for students from families/whānau who are struggling financially. Breaking intergenerational poverty was

mentioned in comments, with young people expressing the importance of equal access to education and a chance at academic and life success, regardless of financial circumstance.

Those who gained a good education and were able to secure a job after school were commonly described as successful by young people. Many added that a well-paying job, being able to financially care for themselves and their family/whānau, or being able to afford a house, car, or other items were signs of success. Young people, particularly secondary-aged students, however, were concerned about being adequately prepared for and informed about career paths, available options and opportunities, and job-finding processes after school. Many sought more support from schools in this area.

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.

Enjoyment and interest key to student engagement

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.

Many students made the point that emphasis on meeting academic standards or achieving grades was detrimental, and that a better approach would be to employ student-centred practices with a focus on fostering interests and passions. Allowing students greater agency and involvement in what and how they learn was suggested to achieve this. This idea extended to students' appraisals of their future lives, where students expected to work in jobs they enjoyed, in areas of interest to them, as opposed to "any old job".

Again, teachers feature as a large part of the education experience for students. Students desired enthusiasm and vitality in teachers, qualities they associated with younger teachers, and which were viewed as a key inspiration for learners.

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 pedagogies. Young people reported that if schools feel warm and inviting, rather than an obligation, outcomes will improve.

Cultural representation and diversity in the education system

A greater awareness, understanding, appreciation and acceptance of different cultures was widely supported by young people. Cultural competency was considered a key attribute of a successful student. Students were expected to not only be comfortable with their own cultures, but also to appreciate and celebrate other cultures. Learning about other cultures and languages was also supported for its contribution to students obtaining a broader knowledge base and worldly points of view.

Overall, young people suggested that more could be done in schools to improve cultural competency and ensure that students' cultural identities are supported. It was noted that the current education system is not always inclusive of all ethnicities and that young people favoured teachers who can respond to the needs of students from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds.

A stronger representation of Māori culture in education was supported. Young people recognised the importance of students learning about Māori culture and language to ensure due respect and acknowledgement was paid to Aotearoa's tangata whenua. This was expected to be achieved through education in Te Reo Māori and New Zealand history, including European colonisation and the Te Tiriti o Waitangi, as well as learning about Māori kaupapa and tikanga.

(1) Teaching and learning environment

(1a) What teaching approaches or practices helped students to learn? Or that they think would work better? ~ 855 comments

Summary

» The most frequent comment from young people about teaching practices was a request for individualised learning. Students expressed this view in multiple ways and described various approaches, but all concluded that the most beneficial approach to learning was one that understands individual learning styles, personality traits, interests, and strengths and weaknesses.

» Alternative learning approaches that were suggested by students included: fun approaches; play-based learning; practical and hands-on learning; passion-driven learning; and context-driven, relevant education.

» Students revealed that they would prefer smaller teacher/student ratios. They wanted to know that they and their fellow students could get help when they needed it and that the teacher had time to spend one-on-one time with them.

» Around two-thirds of comments relating to discipline agreed that schools needed to have and enforce rules about student behaviour. Many students want rules as they feel that learning is being disrupted by undisciplined students. Students also think that more needs to be done to combat bullying in schools.

» Comments were nearly unanimous in agreement that homework should be reduced or removed completely. Many stated that homework is not always relevant to their learning objectives and that they find it stressful and time-consuming.

Individualised learning ~ 300 comments

A large number of students want to see a change in the way students are taught, with more flexibility in teaching methods incorporated into learning. They said that the current system is failing to cater for individual learning styles and that some children are disadvantaged as a result. Students recognise that there is more than one way to teach a child and that the system should reflect this. For example, students describe visual, auditory and tactile learning in various ways. They reported that some students prefer individual tasks while others prefer discussion-based activities. They also emphasis that not excelling in one subject, e.g. maths, did not mean that the child is not intelligent. Students commented that a student should not be told that they have failed at something, when actually the teaching method may not have supported their individual learning style instead.

> "The teaching of a subject matter needs to be available in many different formats so that it suits every learner's needs and allows them to learn in the most effective way. For example, offering pictures and diagrams as well as words and audio. Tactile learning should also be incorporated."
>
> *age 13-18*

The traditional teaching methodology of having the teacher stand at the front of the classroom and "lecturing" students was identified by a moderate number of students as inadequate, as it is believed to not be catering to individual needs.

Student-driven learning, where young people could determine their own idea of success and set individualised timetables and goals were suggested by a considerable number of young people. They surmise that students would be more engaged in learning and achieve better results, if they are given autonomy over what they study.

> "The right systems in place in order to ensure that every methodology and type of learning is catered for. From more hands-on approaches to learning to a more structured

institutionalized 'traditional' learning. 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

Homework ~ 110 comments

Almost all comments regarding homework advocated for a reduction in homework, or the abolishment of it altogether. Few students thought homework beneficial to a student's education. A moderate number of students talked about the perceived negative mental health impacts of homework, citing that it "stresses them out" or takes time away from physical activity, friends, and family.

"I would lower the amount of homework we get as school is taking our family and home time away from us. Yes if students have assessments they need to finish at home then that's okay but I would take away the unnecessary homework."

age 13-18

Primary-aged students were more likely to suggest completely banning homework. Whilst secondary-aged students agreed that workload pressure should reduce, they could understand the reason for some study and revision outside of school hours.

"no homework because after school is the children's time to take a brake of school."

age 5-12

Discipline ~ 85 comments

A substantial number of students mentioned student discipline at school with the majority in favour of consequences for "bad" behaviour. They also advocated for strict rules and guidelines, that the students understood and agreed to. A moderate number of students described themselves as well-behaved and thought that their learning was negatively impacted by the misbehaviour of other students. The perception of good versus bad was more commonly noted by secondary school students. In many cases students supported rules and discipline, but stipulated that draconian discipline was unnecessary. Opinions about this were often subjective, and not explained in detail.

"teachers really need to be strict on values in my school our values are excellence, resilience, whanau/family and respect."

age 13-18

"I would get teachers to have more power over unruly and rude students. These kids are always messing up the learning session. They can even affect all the other students in their class, making the bad behavior become a virus."

age 13-18

A few students drew a correlation between bad behaviour and comprehension, i.e., the student misbehaved because they did not understand the question or were not interested in the subject. They wanted teachers to try and understand the reason behind the behaviour before disciplining the student.

Bullying was mentioned by several young people. A few acknowledged the bullying of teachers by students and wanted children to be taught how to respect others, as a way of reducing the problem. Others mentioned bullying in general with broad support for eradicating it.

Several young people wanted fewer school rules and regulations, especially with regards to uniform and phone use. They thought that teachers should focus more on behavioural issues instead.

"privileges and lenient teachers/ tutors but as well as all of the students having fun in their learning environment they need to be properly disciplined instead of the students being able to walk all over the teachers."

age 13-18

Class ratios ~ 60 comments

A considerable number of young people commented on student-teacher ratios and class sizes and all were in favour of reducing the number of students per teacher. The key reason offered for this was that students wanted to have more one-on-one time and assistance from their teacher. They stated that it was important for a teacher to understand and know each student in their class, so that they could easily recognise when the student needed extra support. Smaller classroom sizes were considered conducive to increasing one-on-one time with the teacher.

> "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*

Student-teacher relationship ~ 60 comments

A substantial number of students suggested that the relationship between the student and their teacher was pivotal to their educational success. Kind, caring, supportive and understanding were the descriptors used most often when young people talked about what made a good teacher. They stated that when the teacher was interested in them as a person, they were more likely to respond in kind. They also talked about teachers' enthusiasm for a subject and the increased likelihood of engagement with the lesson, if the teacher was positive and enjoyed teaching them.

> "Also I would like for someone to find a better way for the teachers to teach. I have noticed that unless the teacher bonds well with the students they can end up becoming upset, at my last school a teacher as brought to tears when the students were being rude and mean to her. It would be good if they can find a way to fix this."
>
> *age 13-18*

Education approaches ~ 50 comments

Students discussed various alternative learning approaches. These included: play-based learning, passion-driven learning, relevant and context-driven education, practical and hands-on approach, and fun learning.

The most popular approach was fun. Many students simply stated their desire for school and the education system as a whole to be more fun. This suggests that they would feel more engaged if learning was enjoyable.

> "Kids also need to be taught in a funner way rather they be taught in a boring way so they can understand and relate better."
>
> *age 5-12*

A moderate number of young people wanted more practical or hands-on learning. Interactive activities, outdoor-learning, hands-on experiences and active learning were commonly cited. Students suggested that learning practical skills was important for their future, and interactive activities were more interesting and enjoyable.

> "Things need to be done visually in schools I believe. As a student myself, I know that when the lesson consists of more hands on activities I gain more interest in the subject at hand."
>
> *age 13-18*

Other specific approaches discussed were passion-driven learning (i.e. students had the freedom to learn things relevant to their passions and life goals), context-driven learning (i.e. learning focussed on relevant local, domestic, and global issues), and incentive-driven learning (i.e. measuring students' progress against their own development/learning and that of their peers, so as to motivate students).

School system ~ 50 comments

Comments included in this topic discussed streaming, charter schools, private schooling, and alternative schooling.

A considerable number of students made reference to the practice of streaming in schools. 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. A few students were not in favour of streaming. They considered it detrimental to a student's self-esteem and mental health to be judged by an average across all subjects.

> "Students need to guided towards finding their learning style and be able to apply that towards their work. In a classroom environment this would involve having the teacher teach with different styles. I believe grouping students in accordance to academic level would help as the teacher then can focus on everyone instead of a few students who are really struggling, which could neglect students who aren't really struggling but still need help."
>
> *age 13-18*

Several students commented that charter schools should be allowed to carry on as the reports they had from fellow students who attended them were all positive. They thought that charter schools could not be replaced by special character schools and that they were most effective for students who were perceived to have failed in the mainstream education system.

> "charter schools need to be available for students who are not finding it easy to learn in the mainstream education system."
>
> *age 13-18*

A small number of students mentioned private schools, with most in favour of abolishing them. Those who opposed private schools did so because they thought the money would be better spent on community or charter schools. The couple of students in favour of private schools thought so because of the perceived operational freedom they had.

Alternative school systems were mentioned by a moderate number of students and were considered as a complement to the existing education system. Te Aho o Te Kura was mentioned as an alternative education system for students that did not fit the main stream model.

Teacher aides/Tutors ~ 50 comments

Extra support in the classroom in the form of teacher aides was requested by a considerable number of young people. In many cases comments simply stated "more teacher aides". There was support for extra people in the classroom as this was seen as enabling the teacher to spend more time with an individual student. Aides were also viewed as being able to help individuals, allowing the teacher to concentrate on the rest of the class.

> "Get a teacher aid to support the one's in need."
>
> *age 13-18*

Tutors were also considered beneficial by a moderate number of students, especially by those who identified that they struggled with a subject. The availability of tutoring, or tutorials for students who needed it was also supported.

> "Use older students together with teachers to tutor students to complement classroom learning (creates a sense of community)"
>
> *age 13-18*

General comments on the education system ~ 89 comments

A considerable number of comments made by students wanted the education system changed but did not suggest how or why this should happen. Those that did expand on why they thought the system needed to change mentioned individualised learning that did not stigmatise the student, and allowed them to learn about things they were interested in and at a pace that suited them. Several students wanted to spend more time in the environment during school time as they thought it beneficial to absorbing information and gaining

understanding of the connection between their school work and the wider world. A small number of students referred to the concept of innovation, but did not elaborate on what they thought innovation looked like.

> "Particularly Math's, and the Science's need more CONTEXT... Context will fuel a student's willingness to learn"
>
> *age 13-18*

> "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 13-18*

(1b) What skills or capability did students identify as important for teachers? ~ 425 comments

Summary

» The personal qualities of teachers were commented on substantially more often than their subject knowledge and pedagogical approach to teaching.
» Students wanted teachers who were enthusiastic about teaching. Students noticed when teachers were not passionate about their role and said that this affected how well they learnt a subject and their own motivation for doing so.
» Qualities such as being helpful, caring, supportive and kind were frequently mentioned as desirable traits in a teacher.
» Students wanted teachers to understand individual ways of learning and have the time to help every student on an individual level.
» Understanding of diverse backgrounds was sought by many students, particularly from those who identified ethnically as being Māori. They also wanted teachers to be aware and supportive of students who felt they were disadvantaged by their family's socio-economic circumstance.

Attributes and skills ~ 250 comments

Comments from young people about the required skills and attributes for teachers were most often simple in nature. Students reported wanting teachers that were: good, better, great, (high) quality, and effective. "Good teachers", with no elaboration, was the most common response from a large number of students.

> "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*

Knowledge was considered a key skill for teachers by a considerable number of students. Qualifications were raised in this context as a way to ensure teachers were equipped with the skills to teach. Adaptability with regards to new technology was also considered important. A considerable number of comments addressed specific attributes that were desirable in teachers. These were diverse in nature, but all alluded to their role in prioritising student wellbeing and achievement. For example, effective teachers were described as those who were: stable, who knew their job, who actively taught students, who put in effort, who concentrated on the act of teaching over results, and who were focused.

> "when a teacher isn't excited about the subject they are supposed to be professional in, I will lack enthusiasm or a will to learn the subject being taught. I want to learn when I go to school. But I cannot learn from a teacher that is reading words from a book because they're supposed to."
>
> *age 13-18.*

A moderate number of students stated that a teaching degree should be more than just knowledge of a subject and emphasised the importance of aptitude and of relationship skills.

Personable qualities ~ 125 comments

A large number of students wanted teachers to be kind, empathetic and supportive people. These comments emphasised that the teacher-student relationship was considered vital for learning. Students reported valuing teachers who were happy, fun or good to be around, equating this with better student outcomes. There was strong support for teachers who had personal skills, and who could relate to children.

> "teachers with better degrees teachers how know how to handle themselves and gain their students respect without being mean"
>
> *age 13-18*

A substantial number of students wanted their teacher to be relatable, empathetic, and supportive generally. These soft skills were very important to students, as evidenced by the comments which were often descriptive and emphatic.

> *"teachers who FIRST & FOREMOST are emotionally stable, creative & able to deal with PEOPLE & the children they will be working with in a more than normal mature manner. needs to be priority."*
>
> age 13-18

A moderate number of students wanted a teacher who treated everyone equally, did not show favouritism and made time for everyone. A small number of students referred to "bad" or "mean" teachers that were strongly disliked, inferring that this impacted negatively on their ability to learn.

Several students commented on the preferred age of the teacher with older teachers considered "stuck in their ways" or "only hanging in until they were able to retire". Others wanted teachers from a wide range of cultures in their schools. A few commented that they would be more engaged in learning if the teacher was "like them"

Individualised teaching ~ 50 comments

A substantial number of young people wanted their teacher to see them as an individual and treat them as such. Several stated that their success depended on how well they were taught and wanted teachers that recognised their individual styles of learning and adapted accordingly.

> *"Along with that, teachers need to be taught to respect that some students have different needs to others. Some need a quiet space to work, some need to be drawing as they listen to the teacher and others need headphones in and something to fidget with. And, everyone learns differently, teachers need to teach in more than one way."*
>
> *age 13-18*

Acknowledgement of a student's cultural identity and socio-economic status was mentioned by a moderate number of students. Being able to pronounce a student's name correctly, for example, was mentioned by several students as a sign of respect by a teacher. Those who commented on multi-culturalism also wanted teachers to treat students from other cultures the same as others, implying racism was a reason why some students were failing. Recognising that a student from a low-income family may need extra support at school was also considered an important skill for teachers to have.

> *"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*

(1c) What's the impact of the learning environment on students' learning? ~ 615 comments

Summary

Comments about the learning environment covered multiple interpretations of "environment". Young people discussed the physical learning environment including schools, classrooms, and resources, as well as a more socio-cultural perspective, including feelings of support and safety.

» General ideas of supportive, safe and good learning environments were expressed by a large number of young people. Young people identified emotional and physical safety in places of learning as a key aspect of student success.
» Students want learning environments that harnessed the full potential of technology-based learning. Many connected technologies in education to enabling individual ways of learning.
» Students were, on balance, not in favour of Modern Learning Environments. However, negativity was generally centred around the size of the class rooms and teacher/student ratios rather than pedagogy.
» Timetabling and concerns around scheduling of education were discussed, with students commonly suggesting shorter school days and longer/ more breaks.

Timetabling ~ 180 comments

A very large number of young people raised the topic of timetabling as an aspect of the learning environment that affected their ability to learn.

Comments regarding timetabling were centred around two key themes: starting the school day later, and shorter weeks. The majority (a substantial number) wanted less hours per week spent at school because they wanted time to do other things. Three-day weekends were frequently requested by secondary students, whilst primary-aged students requested shorter periods and longer lunch hours instead. A small number of students commented that it is harder to focus during one-hour periods and wanted shorter classes with longer breaks.

> "School needs to start most probably at 10.00am for the sake of children and their sleep, less students would have less attitude and gives teachers to prepare themselves properly."
>
> *age 13-18*

A considerable number of secondary students wanted the school day to start later with the most frequent reason being that there was scientific proof that teenagers needed more sleep. A moderate number of students wanted the timetable to be flexible with students choosing when they would study and for how long. There would be a minimum number of hours per week that they had to attend school, but students could choose when these times were. Several wanted schools to be open at night and at the weekend so they could learn when they felt they were in "peak study mode".

Several students wanted to spend more time at school as they wanted more time to learn about a subject. A small number of students wanted no change to the current timetable. A few students wanted less time spent on assessments and more time learning.

Student agency ~ 150 comments

A very large number of young people commented on the importance of being given a voice and a choice with regards to their learning environment.

> "Choices but not too many choices, students should be guided but not forced as we are becoming young adults. We should be made aware of the consequences and possible outcomes so that we can understand our actions and their effects"
>
> *age 13-18*

With regards to voice, they stated that it was important to be given the opportunity to comment on what was taught and to have their opinions validated. With regards to choice, they supported being given the ability to choose the subjects that they were taught and to be given individualised learning plans. Several students

commented that one-on-one support from teachers was effective and promoted feelings of being in control of their education.

Socio-cultural environment ~ 52 comments

A substantial number of students described the type of learning environment that was beneficial to them in socio-cultural terms and generalised statements. Generalised statements included: a good environment, a supportive environment, friendly people. "Better" environments than what currently existed were sought.

Other key characteristics considered important for the learning environment included: safe, positive, free, comfortable, kind, individualised, inclusive and fun. Emotional and physical safety were considered important contributors to students' ability to learn. For many, this included feeling supported and cared for in places of learning.

> "Make sure all kids of different learning abilities are learning in a comfortable environment and have all the tools and encouragement they need to achieve their personal best."
>
> *age 5-12*

Technology based environment ~ 100 comments

There were a large number of comments highlighting the use of technology as an integral aspect of the learning environment. Students argued that the future student needed to be technologically capable if they were to be successful in a modern world. Many comments were unspecific and non-descriptive. These ranged from wanting all students to be equipped with a device, to wanting teachers to use electronic whiteboards because their handwriting was bad. A considerable number of students wanted devices to be provided free, so that no child was disadvantaged because of families' socio-economic status.

> "As well as this, I would invest in computing systems for all schools to encourage computing systems and coding, which is incredibly beneficial especially concerning the future society."
>
> *age 13-18*

Physical/built environment ~ 80 comments

When young people commented on the physical school environment, it was mostly in relation to buildings. Students frequently called for "good", "better", or "new" classrooms. They stated that they wanted classrooms that were appropriately heated and cooled, according to the season; and spaces that were pleasant, and not old or dated. Learning spaces that were well-built, and that feel "safe" were also requested.

A considerable number of students wanted larger classrooms, so they did not feel cramped. They also wanted quiet spaces where they could concentrate on individual projects. Several secondary students proposed indoor areas where students could relax and socialise at break-times.

> "Change Open Plan Learning - IT DOES NOT WORK. It impacts both the quality of the teachers work and the students response to school work. How can possibly one teacher successfully teach a large number of students and how can they in return successfully learn with so many distraction.
>
> *age 13-18*

Primary school children were more likely to make requests for more/better playgrounds when they discussed the physical environment at school.

> "Whakatika te papa takaro
>
> fix up the playground"
>
> *age 5-12*

Several students advocated for more of their day to be spent learning outside and in nature. Other comments about the environment were focussed on teaching sustainability and the need for students to protect the environment for future generations.

A small number of secondary students noted bathrooms as an issue and wanted gender neutral bathrooms, or bathrooms that were clean.

Modern learning environment ~ 50 comments

A substantial number of students mentioned modern learning environments (MLE) or open-plan learning. Three quarters of students who referenced modern learning environments were not in favour. Comments on large, open plan classrooms with breakout rooms that did not allow for quiet study were numerous and negative. They also thought that the teacher/student ratio in the MLE was poor with little time given to each student's needs. However, students did show general support for the pedagogy of the MLE with its emphasis on flexible learning styles and enquiry-based learning.

(2) Knowledge, competencies and skills

(2a) What did students say about knowledge (subjects, facts, and languages)? ~ 1750 comments

Summary

» Young people sought knowledge that would prepare them for their future education, careers, and life in general. A base knowledge of core subjects and skills was deemed essential, particularly numeracy, literacy, and technological skills.

» Knowledge of arts, language, social and physical sciences, Māori language, culture, and history, were all considered important for developing a well-rounded and globally-aware person with greater future opportunities. Some stated that knowledge of these subjects encourages students to be engaged and contributing members of New Zealand's society.

» Typically, secondary-aged students went into greater detail of why knowledge in general, or in particular areas, would be beneficial for students' lives, particularly for their future career prospects.

Numeracy and literacy ~ 600 comments

A very large number of young people argued that knowledge of numeracy and literacy were key for a student's future success. Comments ranged from simple statements such as "how to read and write", to descriptive accounts of how and why this type of knowledge is necessary. The majority of comments were relatively short, and stated in simple terms; this was particularly the case for comments from primary-aged school children. Maths was deemed a core subject in two times the number of comments as English, however both were frequently noted alongside other aspects considered necessary for a successful student of the future.

> *"Reading writing and maths, Sports, basicly all things that a kid should do in school"*
>
> *age 5-12*

Skills in numeracy and literacy were described as essential and were seen as important for job prospects in future. These areas were viewed as the essential foundations upon which other knowledge and skills were dependant. Literacy was referred to using the following terms: reading, writing, literature, use of language, with "read and write" commonly used together.

> *"Secondly students should be taught lots if maths during school and should study it out of school. Algebra, measurement, etc maths is in every almost every job and need to be a priority for students to learn"*
>
> *age 13-18*

A smaller group criticised specific subject material being taught, claiming skills taught in English and maths should be more applicable to everyday life. It was also noted that the strong focus on English and maths may be contributing to students feeling disengaged from school and it was suggested that students should be credited for gaining numeracy and literacy skills through a range of other subjects.

> *"get rid of level 2 English and make other fun subjects with literacy credits availabe. This is because English is useless. If anything it should be teaching us how to write a cv. Instead it teaches us how to use adjectives and verbs."*
>
> *age 13-18*

Base knowledge ~ 460 comments

A very large number of young people made broad comments regarding basic knowledge to be gained from education systems. These comments were often general in nature and did not go into significant detail about specific knowledge areas. Young people expressed that a successful student of the future would know about "everything", or "a little bit of everything", be "skilled in many areas", have common sense, and be well-rounded. These comments expressed the sentiment that students should be competent and have a broad base

knowledge in a range of different areas. Some simply stated that a successful student of the future would be clever, or smart.

"However, every student should know the basics of core subjects and be a good communicator. They should have skills in a wide variety of areas in order to be a well-rounded student."

age 13-18

"They should know the basics of everything"

age 5-12

It was suggested by young people that having a broad and comprehensive base knowledge would be of benefit later in life as it would spark curiosity, develop common sense, help understand how the world works (and their place in it), and be applicable in a range of situations, including the workforce.

Academic knowledge was specifically discussed by a very large number of young people. It was noted that students should be "academically smart" and have a strong base knowledge in a range of academic fields. Comments typically mentioned key core subjects, or "the basics" that students should be proficient in. Subjects commonly included English, science and maths. Other subjects less frequently mentioned included technology, arts, social studies, social sciences and sport or P.E. The overall argument was that students should be academically "well-rounded".

Māori language, culture, and history ~ 250 comments

An appreciation of Māori language, culture and history was favoured by a very large number of young people. A large number of these comments specifically discussed education in Te Reo Māori. Young people were supportive of students having at least a basic knowledge of Te Reo. Some stated students should understand simple concepts and phrases; others suggested students should be fluent in both Te Reo and English. Many noted Te Reo should be included as a compulsory subject in all schools. Reasons for support included the preservation of Te Reo as one of New Zealand's national languages, respect for Māori and Te Reo as the first people and language of New Zealand, and supporting New Zealand as a multicultural nation.

"They need to know their pepeha, to mihi, to say karakia and to do kapa haka."

age 5-12

"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

Education around Māori culture was favoured by a large number of young people for similar reasons; students supported the general population having a greater familiarity with tikanga Māori. Comments expressed sentiments that students should have a greater awareness and appreciation for New Zealand's indigenous culture. It was noted that this could be achieved through learning about whakapapa, hapu and iwi; participating in kapa haka, mau rākau and karakia; and learning Māori sports, cooking Māori food and "how to live Māori". Many stated Māori culture should be taught alongside Te Reo in schools. A moderate number of young people that spoke of culture did not specify Māori culture and instead stated that students should be aware and appreciative of all cultures.

The teaching of New Zealand history was supported by a substantial number of young people. Comments noted the importance of understanding New Zealand's background and heritage and how this has influenced where we are today. This included New Zealand's cultural history, specifically European settlement, the Treaty of Waitangi and the Māori Land Wars. This was thought to promote better understanding between different cultural groups.

> "Make Maori history, current Maori affairs and the story of European settlement a compulsory subject, so that our younger generations can move forward with a better and more empathetic understanding of their classmates and country"
>
> *age 13-18*

Technology ~ 210 comments

Proficiency with technology was important for a very large number of young people. Almost all comments indicated that technology has a high degree of relevance to post-education life, and that students should be confident using technology. Comments ranged from suggesting that students should have a basic knowledge and ability with computers, to endorsing a more complex understanding in areas such as coding, robotics and artificial intelligence.

> "I think they would probably have to have a sound knowledge of computing sciences and operations as, even now, technology is a key part of our workplaces and lives."
>
> *age 13-18*

In many cases, this was stated in simple terms such as "skills in technology". Those that elaborated saw these skills as necessary in preparing for the future. As economic landscapes evolve and technology becomes increasingly prevalent in the workplace and daily life, it was seen as important that students are able to adapt to changing technology. Several comments, however, noted that while technological proficiency is important, students should not entirely rely on it and should still be able to learn and function without it.

> "I think a successful student of the future would be able to understand technology. We are coming into the age of technology and I think it would be essential to know a lot about technology because then they would be able understand basically all you need to know"
>
> *age 13-18*

Social and physical sciences ~ 120 comments

A very large number of young people noted the importance of either social or physical sciences. Science was cited as a knowledge area of import, in most cases simply using the word "science". In cases where this was expanded on, physical science was the most commonly mentioned. Although not discussed to the same extent as maths and English, science was commonly described as a core academic subject of equal importance to literacy and numeracy, and was often noted alongside these subjects.

> "Ensure that all students are learning and acquiring the knowledge and skills for their future careers. English, Mathematics and a Science (Physics, Chemistry, Biology) should be compulsory for all students across all year groups"
>
> *age 13-18*

Knowledge in physical science was viewed as critical in helping to understand the world, as well as highly applicable in a range of career pathways that would positively contribute to society. Young people sought hands-on and applicable science lessons, which were considered more engaging and as having the potential to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of science topics. STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) subjects were highlighted as important by several students.

> "Change the science curriculum so that we actually get curriculum coverage, instead of this current pick and choose that we have for some reason, which really doesn't make any sense at all."
>
> *age 13-18*

Social sciences such as politics, history, geography, social studies and current affairs were all viewed as important to contribute to a well-rounded knowledge base. Young people spoke of these subjects in relation to understanding how society operates and how historical events have influenced where we are today.

"I think that at a high school level, as I am myself, we need to be taught more about what goes on around the world. I believe that social studies is incredibly important as we are learning about relevant things and learn of what is going on by the world."

age 13-18

Arts and language ~ 110 comments

A large number of young people supported languages and the arts, indicating these knowledge areas as important components of the future success of students. The arts were noted by a considerable number of young people, often by simply stating "art" or "the arts". Others viewed the arts as singing, dancing, playing an instrument, drawing, filmmaking and performing. The general sentiment was that arts subjects would contribute to a more rounded knowledge base. Comments stated that the stigma surrounding arts subjects as being "dropout subjects" should be removed and others noted the benefits of arts subjects removing pressure from students and allow them to express themselves creatively.

"Get a good performing arts program in all primary school, this would make everyone a lot less shy and more social."

age 5-12

A sizeable number of young people cited their opinion that a successful student is one who knows more than one language. Young people encouraged students to be bilingual or multilingual, noting the benefits of being able to communicate with people from around the world and gain a greater appreciation of different cultures. Comments typically did not offer specific suggestions, simply stating "more languages" are important. Those that elaborated commonly mentioned Te Reo and New Zealand Sign Language as these are the official languages of New Zealand.

"I think that kids in the future should be able to speak at least one other language and know the basic life skills. Speaking another language is important and fun, you can use it for a lot of occasions, if you are in a place and a person is lost and can't speak English very well you can help them or you can just show to your friends what you can do"

age 13-18

(2b) What did students say about practical competencies and/or life skills? ~ 1480 comments

Summary

»   A very large number of young people expressed the need for students to have knowledge of life skills. A very high proportion of these were secondary-aged students who were mainly concerned about getting a job, managing finances, and functioning independently outside of school.
»   Young people wanted to feel prepared for life after school and to be successful in work, home, and their social lives. Many considered it the education system's responsibility to teach young people the required skills for life after school.
»   Specific aspects of life skills were each mentioned by a very large number of young people: education about future employment opportunities, work experience, and information on how to get a job; knowledge on looking after their own mental and physical health; and, financial literacy, including budgeting and paying bills and taxes.
»   Civics and societal roles, such as having knowledge on laws and politics, and the importance of voting, was another life skill area that a large number of young people supported.

General life skills ~ 650 comments

A very large number of young people made general comments highlighting the importance of life skills. It was noted that the current education system may not adequately equip students with the skills necessary to overcome life's challenges and complete important tasks outside of school. A large number of comments recommended a class be added to the curriculum that teaches skills important in everyday life.

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

age 13-18

In general, young people supported schools equipping students with the skills and experience to prepare them for life outside of the education system. Such skills were viewed as necessary to survive, function and prosper in the real world. Students were encouraged to gain a broad knowledge base and have exposure to a variety of experiences that would help prepare them for the future. Young people supported students being competent, well-rounded and practical and able to draw on existing knowledge to accomplish daily tasks.

Young people noted in simple terms that students should be competent in basic life skills. Many expanded by offering specific suggestions on what skills and experiences students should be competent in. These suggestions can broadly be categorised into work readiness, mental and physical health, financial literacy and civics and societal roles. These themes are discussed in greater detail in the following sections. Other specific life skills included cooking and nutrition; cleaning; time management; driving and vehicle maintenance; gardening and growing food; conflict resolution; building and handiwork; childcare; and household management.

"participates in extra curricular to support their future and give them a boost into society with prior knowledge to several different "wordly" subjects/areas."

age 13-18

As well as being taught these life skills, it was encouraged that students are exposed to a range of experiences that would promote learning for themselves. Extracurricular activities were viewed as a way to achieve this. A considerable amount of young people supported extracurricular activities and suggested more school trips, better funding for extracurricular activities and diverse opportunities outside of the classroom. It was noted that these activities encourage students to pursue their own interests and offer learning experiences beyond school hours and outside the school curriculum.

Accessing information was considered a vital life skill by a considerable amount of young people. Comments noted the importance of knowing where and how to access relevant information when existing knowledge in an area is limited. It was suggested that this would help develop research skills and contribute to students being more independent learners, therefore fostering independence in later life.

"There is so much information out there which is accessible in seconds that learning content is being less and less important but the ability to find and seek information is much more important."

age 13-18

Work readiness ~ 280 comments

A very large number of young people supported skills and competencies being taught at school that would prepare them for the workforce. Having a good career was considered a marker of success for many young people. It was suggested that as students finish schooling, they should be well-placed to move on to a career of their choosing. Comments stated that students should have a broad base of relevant knowledge that can be applied to a range of careers. It was also suggested that students should be supported in discovering their interests and planning an appropriate career path. This includes developing an understanding of the job market and the opportunities available when leaving school as well as learning about appropriate subjects that would be useful in reaching their desired career.

"Students should be able to learn how to get a job and learn what sorts of degrees and pathways to get to where their preferred career"

age 13-18

The New Zealand curriculum was criticised for teaching material that would ultimately not be used later in life, such as in workplaces. Young people wanted to see a greater importance placed on material that would be applicable in the workforce. They noted that the current education system should focus less on teaching

The voices of young people

students to pass NCEA exams and more on giving students the skills to excel in their chosen career. Essential skills for gaining employment were also identified as important. Such skills included writing a CV, interviewing well, and developing a strong work ethic.

> "Direct more resources to areas where unemployment is high, and set up a way for students to get connected to employers, …Also getting a first job is difficult for most people, if they haven't had experience, are young, don't have much to put on a CV or cover letter and aren't connected. Would there be anyway of bridging the gap?"
>
> *age 13-18*

Mental and physical health ~ 300 comments

Mental and physical health were discussed by a very large number of young people. These comments supported students being taught healthy practices and how to support their mental and physical wellbeing. Young people stated that students who were supported in physical fitness and who were aware of their mental health and how to maintain it would be those who were ultimately successful. Both mental and physical health were mentioned in a similar number of comments and often spoken of together, implying young people believe the two are closely linked and equally important.

Physical health was discussed by a very large number of young people. The majority of these comments simply noted that students should be "fit" or "good at sports". Young people supported schools having strong sports and P.E. programmes that encourage students to get out of the classroom and stay physically active. A small number of comments, however, noted the importance of not forcing students to play particular sports and instead encourage them to participate in physical activities they are comfortable with and interested in. A small number of comments highlighted the importance of students being taught nutritional concepts and how to cook healthy and nutritious food.

> "Teach children to play more sports because these days in schools they people usually are on the computers doing work."
>
> *age 5-12*

Mental health was also discussed by a very large number of young people. Comments encouraged a stronger awareness of mental health as well as providing the necessary support. General comments supported students being "mentally healthy". Others supported a greater awareness and support for mental health in schools. Comments implied that through awareness and support for mental health, students would be given the skills to stay mentally healthy. Some noted in this regard that while schools may have strong sport and P.E. programmes, metal wellbeing is often comparatively overlooked.

> "i would change the curriculum so that self-LOVE and self-CARE are taught to students around year 7-8 up until they are year 11 or 12. growing up i was clueless about so many things that weren't taught at school - there are a lot of kids who have nothing to learn from their parents … yes a job and money is important for your future, but what's even MORE important is your mental, emotional and physical health."
>
> *age 13-18*

Dedicated health classes were supported by a considerable amount of young people. It was suggested that these health classes should teach students the skills to stay physically and mentally healthy, including coping with mental disorders such as anxiety and depression; dealing with stress; and learning about drugs. Sex education was noted by a moderate amount of these young people. These comments stressed the importance of sexual health and suggested teaching students about safe sex; consent; diversity; gender and sexuality.

> "I'd probably make mental health and sexual education compulsory from year 1. Admittedly not the full on stuff immediately but teaching them what a healthy relationship is and how to deal with disorders from an early age."
>
> *age 13-18*

Financial literacy ~ 150 comments

A very large number of young people made comments regarding financial literacy. These comments viewed financial literacy and an understanding of economics as highly practical skills that would be relevant for life outside of school. Nearly all these comments were simple statements supporting education that would make students financially independent. Young people wanted to be taught how to manage money, budget, pay taxes, get tax returns, pay bills and save money. Others sought a greater understanding of accounting and banking.

> "I would also implement commerce programs for junior high school students. Basic economic and financial skills are extremely important and many people who leave school cannot do many things in the commerce aspect of life."
>
> *age 13-18*

> "Educate students on how to pay bills, how taxes work, what the rates are going to. All of these basic skills we are going to need for adulthood"
>
> *age 13-18*

Civics and societal roles ~ 100 comments

An appreciation of civics and the role of people in society was important for a large number of young people. These comments supported students being able to confidently take their place and become a productive member of society. Upon completion of their studies, it was suggested students should have a sense of citizenship and be able to make a positive contribution to their community.

Others noted that students should have a firm grasp of social structures and of forces driving society. It was suggested they should understand the government, politics, laws, how to vote and global affairs, all of which contribute to the advancement of the population.

(2c) What did students say about relational skills (social, emotional, learning for life, identity)? ~5040 comments

Summary

» A very large number of young people discussed relational skills that they thought successful students should have; over 5000 comments were made, with over three-quarters coming from secondary-aged students.
» Relational skills were supported by young people. A varied set of personal attributes and attitudes were noted as vital for fostering success in students. Being able to effectively engage with peers and the learning process was also considered important.
» A student who is comfortable with their own identity, positively contributes to society and has an appreciation of different cultures, including Māori and Pacific cultures was viewed favourably.
» Comments suggested being a good person who tries their best and knowing how to learn was just as important as achieving academic success.

Favourable attributes and attitudes ~ 1770 comments

Overall, students with certain attributes and attitudes were considered best placed to be successful, during their education, and throughout their lives. Young people identified a range of specific attributes they considered an important component of student success. Primary-aged students admired those with resilience and a good work ethic, while secondary-aged students commented on a wide range of attributes with no theme dominating.

> "Passion = motivation. Motivation = work. Work = success."
>
> *age 5-12*

Work ethic was valued by a very large number of young people. Comments typically noted this in simple terms, suggesting a successful student is one that studies hard, works hard and is dedicated to achieving success in education and later life.

"Keep pushing yourself to do better, never give up, it's not just about how smart you are it's about how hard you are willing to work to get to where you want to go."

age 13-18

A very large number of young people made general comments about relational skills. These comments presented a variety of basic favourable attributes of a student with no consistent common theme between them. While it would be difficult to include all these attributes, in general, a successful student was seen to be confident, smart, focussed, presentable, independent, fair, patient, motivated, passionate and respectful.

"Someone who can solve problems using a variety of strategy and able to ask questions"

age 5- 12

A very large number of young people favoured resilience in students. These comments noted students must be able to persevere in the face of challenges. Adaptability and determination were frequently raised among these comments. It was suggested that a student should be able to handle themselves in different situations, face setbacks and show determination in the face of challenges.

"Someone who gives 100% in everything they do and be happy with whatever result they get and learn from it and study from it, to improve for the next thing that come towards them."

age 5-12

Confidence was noted as a favourable attribute by a very large number of young people. It was suggested that a successful student should not only be confident in themselves and their abilities, but also confident engaging with others. Students should not be afraid to ask for help when needed or speak up about something they believe in. They should be confident in their own personal values and stick to them regardless of what others may say.

"they will need to be confident so that they can have their say and speak up about things."

age 5-12

Goal setting was raised by a large number of young people. Comments expressed the importance of setting goals. It was noted that students should set goals and be ambitious and dedicated in achieving these aspirations.

"A successful student is driven towards completing their goals, knows how to set these goals and works well to manage themselves."

age 13-18

Problem solving was important for a large number of young people. Students were expected to be capable of drawing on their own knowledge and applying it to different problems. Critical thinking, being creative, and thinking outside of the box were all encouraged in the finding of solutions to problems.

A large number of young people commented on adaptability. A successful student was seen as being able to adapt to changing situations. It was suggested students should be "open to change" and able to "handle what the world throws at them" by drawing on a broad base of existing knowledge.

"Many students of today's society are afraid of trying for the fear of failure and being judged, when feeling this students aren't going to learn or take opportunities required for them to be successful and do the things they want to do later in life."

age 13-18

A sizeable number of young people made general comments about a student's approach to learning and life. These comments were highly varied with no common themes between them. In general, however, it was agreed that students should be ambitious, interested in life, humble, focussed, enthusiastic, show initiative and have a good mindset.

Critical thinking was mentioned by a sizeable number of young people. Comments encouraged students to be critical thinkers, think for themselves, and draw on existing knowledge when solving problems. Many

comments aligned with those that discussed problem solving. Students were encouraged to be innovative and think outside the box to work through issues and come up with solutions.

Creativity was valued by a sizeable number of young people. Typical comments described a successful student as creative. Others noted students should be innovative and able to think outside of the box. Creativity was something that young people believed should be fostered at school, with more opportunities and activities that encourage students to be creative.

A sizeable number of young people valued leadership as a key attribute. These young people supported students having leadership skills, displaying leadership qualities and being able to confidently step into leadership positions. Taking charge of a situation, speaking up for themselves and others and listening and taking on advice were considered strong leadership qualities.

A substantial number of young people discussed morals and values of a successful student. Many simply stated that a student must have "good morals and values". Those that elaborated spoke of being respectful, having integrity, knowing what is right and wrong, using manners and showing respect and love.

> "We need to change our views on what we regard as morally/ethically correct and changes our perspective on old ideas that linger in our society and hold us back from moving on"
>
> *age 13-18*

> "A person who stands up when they see something wrong even when nobody is looking that's when it means the most."
>
> *age 5-12*

Open-mindedness was sought by a considerable amount of young people. Students were encouraged to "be open-minded", which included being open to new experiences, new challenges and differing opinions.

An equal number of young people mentioned optimism in comments. A positive attitude was viewed as critical in a student's success. Other comments noted the importance of students putting "maximum effort in everything they do" and not giving up in the face of adversity; thus, these comments were similar to resilience comments.

Well-roundedness was a favoured attribute by a considerable number of young people. Comments expressed the importance of students having a balanced life and being well-rounded, both academically and outside of school. It was suggested that students should be exposed to a range of experiences and opportunities that contribute to them being mentally, physically and socially happy and healthy.

Curiosity was mentioned by an equal number of young people. Comments noted successful students should be curious, ask questions and constantly seek deeper answers to questions. Some comments suggested curiosity goes together with learning and therefore a passion for education and knowledge should be fostered in students.

> "a learner needs to eager and curios to learn new things to help in their journey to learn new strategies to make equations and problems easier to solve."
>
> *age 13-18*

Finally, risk-taking was mentioned in a moderate number of comments. Young people believed successful students should have the confidence to take risks, challenge and push themselves, and not be afraid to make mistakes in doing so.

Social interactions ~ 1090 comments

A very large number of young people spoke of social attributes in a successful student. Students with good social skills and the ability to interact with a wide range of different people were admired. Overall, being able to positively interact with others, socialise and be friendly, be able to form genuine connections with peers, and relate to others were highly regarded skills for students.

"people skills is big must!!! some highly academic people are the smartest there is but lack human interaction therefore limiting their chances of getting jobs."

age 13-18

Communication was most frequently discussed by a very large number of young people. Having good communication skills was considered vital to successfully interact with others. Young people expressed the importance of being able to work and cooperate with others in education and later life. Good communication skills were deemed a critical component of this. Students were encouraged to be eloquent, well-spoken and confident public speakers. A smaller group, however, noted communication works both ways and students should also be willing to listen and cooperate.

"Someone who is able to communicate, and have discussion with their peers. I feel like in schools, students are loosing that way of communicating and they don't have that skill which is essential in life."

age 13-18

A very large number of young people made comments supporting general social skills. Comments were not typically specific and listed a broad range of skills that would make a student socially competent. Specific social skills included a student who is a good communicator, listener and collaborator; respectful, inclusive and non-judgmental; and able to network, engage with people and make new friends. Some of these skills are discussed in greater detail in other parts of this section.

"They will need to learn to respect others and themselves, valuing everyone equally, as well as basing their own opinions on what they believe is right."

age 13-18

Empathy and kindness were valued attributes by a very large number of young people and were said to be important for social interactions. Comments implied that for students to successfully interact and engage with others, they need to be kind, caring, respectful and empathetic. It was suggested that students should look out for and help others when needed. While comments rarely elaborated, it can be inferred that by treating others with kindness and empathy, a student will be respected and likely to receive the same treatment in return.

"A successful student is also empathetic and has the ability to put themselves in someone else's shoes"

age 13-18

"someone that's being kind and caring to everyone, especially people on the bus (giving up seats)."

age 5-12

Collaboration was noted by a large number of young people. Capability to work in a team was considered a critical aspect of being a functional member of society. Comments described various aspects of teamwork, which included contributing to groups but also listening, cooperating and working collaboratively to solve problems.

Elements of social etiquette were mentioned by a large number of young people. Comments reflected those previously discussed regarding empathy and kindness and suggested a successful student should be respectful, polite and always use good manners. Closely linked with these comments were a considerable number of comments made regarding acceptance. These comments encouraged students to be non-judgmental, to appreciate diversity, and to be accepting of everyone.

A large number of young people focused on building relationships with others. 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.

It was suggested by a considerable number of young people that students should have positive role models that demonstrate the previously mentioned favourable characteristics. These role models were expected to be mentors for students to look up to and teach them how to conduct themselves.

"A successful student is someone who is able to lead by example and make independent decisions"

age 13-18

Engagement with learning ~ 1070 comments

A very large number of young people made general comments supporting students' engagement with learning. These comments implied the success of a student is dependent on their willingness and determination to learn. Consequently, comments often made suggestions on how to support student engagement with the learning process. An engaged student was described as one who is excited about learning and the opportunity to go to school – and in doing so, works hard to achieve good results. While good grades and academic success were valued outcomes, the majority of young people talked more about the learning process itself. These comments noted that school should allow students to find their passion in a chosen field: teach students study techniques that work best for them; motivate students to work to the best of their potential; and spark a passion for learning that continues into the future.

A range of suggestions were made by young people to promote a sense of engagement with learning. Comments noted that an engaged learner is one who enjoys learning. To promote student enjoyment, young people stated that classrooms and the learning experience should be more fun and not solely reliant on traditional teaching methods. It was noted that students should participate in a varied curriculum and be exposed to a range of learning experiences to help identify their personal strengths and passions. Students were also expected to begin developing a strong work ethic at school. It should be acknowledged that hard work leads to good results and students should understand the value of setting goals and persevering to achieve them. Overall, a successful student was described as someone who is happy, excited and passionate about learning and knows how to learn and work hard to achieve their desired results.

"A happy, healthy school environment that kids look forward to spending time at and do not dread while getting ready in the morning."

age 5-12

"Someone who is engaged in their learning. They are enthusiastic and love to gain new knowledge, so enjoy their time at school and/or university and look forward to learning new things while staying motivated."

age 13-18

Student agency was favoured by a very large number of young people. These comments supported students having a voice in the education system and having some control over their learning experiences. Comments suggested students should not be restricted by compulsory subjects and have the freedom to choose what they want to learn. Others believed students should be self-motivated and independent learners that can think for themselves and come up with their own ideas. Young people also stated that students should have a greater say in how the education system operates as it is students who will be most significantly impacted by changes.

"I think a big one though is freedom of expression as cliche as it sounds, young people are finding themlselves at school and if we are restricted it makes it difficult and a good communication from a peer level between student and staff and not this hierarchy"

age 13-18

A large number of young people commented on the types of behaviour they expected to see from students. These comments largely reflected those that described the behaviour of an engaged student. Comments stated that a student who is respectful, responsible, engaged, hard-working, focussed, knows how to learn

and study, follows the rules, is well presented and can form relationships with peers and teachers is likely to be a success.

A sizeable number of young people spoke of the importance of attending school. Comments stated that students should be motivated and enjoy going to school and measures should be taken to ensure attendance remains high. Some stated that schools should be happy and healthy environments, so students want to go to class. By fostering a sense of enjoyment in the learning process and getting students excited to learn, it was expected that a passion for learning will continue into later life, a concept that was supported by a sizeable number of young people.

Identity and citizenship ~ 610 comments

A very large number of young people made comments relating to identity citizenship and culture. In general, these comments discussed the importance of a student knowing and accepting themselves and recognising their place in the wider community.

Independence and self-management were considered important by a very large number of young people. These comments supported young people being capable of learning and moving through life without relying on help from others. Students were expected to learn and study independently in a way best suited to them; solve problems without help from others; and form their own opinions, think for themselves and come up with their own ideas. Schools were encouraged to provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills to become truly independent.

> "Someone who knows what their strengths are and plays to them but also know what their weaknesses are and acknowledge them and try to improve them."
>
> *age 13-18*

Elements of self-identity were discussed by a large number of young people. These comments highlighted the importance of a student understanding themselves knowing who they are in order to be successful. This included identifying work and study methods that are well suited to them; and understanding strengths, weaknesses and passions in education and life in general. It was implied that in doing so, students would be able to use skills to their advantage and determine appropriate career paths for the future.

> "They will need to know their own body, mind and soul. They will need to be able to recognise what they need and take every opportunity they can to better themselves."
>
> *age 13-18*

Self-esteem was important for a substantial number of young people. Comments rarely went into significant detail and generally admired students who are confident; believe in themselves; are proud of their achievements and strengths; and are accepting of who they are. All of these young people expressed sentiments of embracing individuality and being comfortable in their own skin.

> "To me, a successful student of the future looks like a student who is proud of themselves for what they've learned and participated in."
>
> *age 13-18*

> "So you can know yourself, and be proud of yourself, no matter what you look like, sound like or what other people think."
>
> *age 5-12*

Responsibility was noted by a considerable number of young people. All comments stated students should be responsible and "take responsibility for their actions".

Citizenship was discussed by a large number of young people. These comments generally related to students understanding their place as part of a wider community. Young people encouraged students to be good New Zealand and global citizens and supported students being put in positions to make positive changes to the world. It was noted that students should work hard to become functioning members of society and be motivated to make positive contributions to their communities.

Emotions ~ 300 comments

A very large number of young people spoke about the emotions of students. Two thirds of comments equated student success with their being motivated and passionate about education and the world around them. It was suggested students should be encouraged to engage in education and strive to make a positive contribution to the world.

"Somebody who can manage stress and has the skills to manage their own emotions"

age 13-18

A substantial number of young people stated that it is important to be happy, which was linked to having fun, trying their best and reducing stress.

"A successful student in the future to me looks happy"

age 13-18

Emotional intelligence was mentioned by a moderate number of young people. These comments supported students having a high EQ; understanding and being able to regulate emotions; expressing their feelings; and being empathetic and relating to others.

Diversity and culture ~ 200 comments

Cultural identity and appreciation were noted by a substantial amount of young people. These comments supported students not only being proud of their own cultures but also appreciating and celebrating other cultures. Being a proud New Zealander and also having knowledge of other cultures, learning other languages and appreciating cultural diversity were all favoured by young people.

Māori and Pacific cultures were specifically mentioned in a considerable number of comments. Young people who spoke of culture often referred to Māori culture, highlighting the importance of celebrating New Zealand's indigenous people. It was suggested this could be achieved through a greater knowledge of Te Reo, Tikanga Māori and other Māori cultural practices. A smaller proportion of young people sought greater representation of Pacific culture in education.

"Affirmed in their culture identity and able to bring what's important to them into their learning."

age 13-18

Acceptance, inclusion and support for the disabled and those in the LGBTQIA+ community were also favoured by a moderate number of young people.

(2d) How should progress be assessed? ~ 800 comments

Summary

»   Young people expressed that education needs to be learning focussed rather than assessment focussed, to encourage young people to learn rather than memorise information solely to pass assessments.
»   The pressure on students to perform in assessments causes significant stress. Many students feel that value and ability should not be defined by grades.
»   Grading schedules were considered too standardised and too focused on making comparisons between students rather than their personal progress.
»   A number of NCEA issues were highlighted, including its focus on gaining credits as opposed to learning and development. Students also felt the NCEA system does not work for all styles of learning.

General assessment and measurement ~ 330 comments

There was broad agreement that holding students to set standards, and testing and measuring them against these did not bring out the best in students. A very large number of young people conveyed that test scores are not an adequate measure of intelligence or worth and that the future success of students should not depend on systematic testing.

"I personally think that the test according to how fast you answer questions, put on a lot of pressure because you need to figure it out fast and correctly."

age 5-12

The number of assessments was deemed by a considerable number of students as too high. Assessments were viewed as stressful, however there were arguments both for and against formal assessment requirements such as exams, tests, and internal essays or reports.

A prominent theme in this section was that education is too oriented around memorising ideas and concepts for an assessment. Some called for an emphasis on teaching the topic, rather than teachers prioritising material that will be tested in an effort to maximise test scores. Students stated a strong desire for increased focus on the process of learning, describing the ideal education being one in which knowledge is absorbed and becomes applicable in post-education life.

"Instead of teaching to the exams and specific questions. Just teach the topic"

age 13-18

"Make the high school system more learning oriented and less result/test oriented, explain why skills are useful in everyday life"

age 13-18

A range of comments on NCEA assessments were specifically discussed. Topics included: frequency of assessment, suggesting over-assessment is an issue; more flexible assessments that allow for interpretation and for students with unique ways of learning to achieve; and, a mix of opinions regarding the ratio of internal to external assessment. Students generally felt that NCEA assessment measures are not an accurate record of their progress. Most who expressed an opinion on how easy NCEA is stated that it needs to be easier; a small number though felt that standards should be as they are, or higher.

Scrap NCEA or radically change it ~ 240 comments

A very large number of young people called for NCEA to be scrapped or significantly changed.

"Scrap the NCEA system. It's completely biased and unfair towards students who put in so much effort and lose their expected grade"

age 13-18

A substantial number stated the system should be abandoned altogether, while many more suggested an overhaul or changes to the system so it is fairer, more reflective of effort, or better in undefined ways. Some students felt NCEA was too easy, not challenging for high-achieving learners, while others felt it didn't support individual ways of learning outside the mainstream. Overall, for whatever reason, a number of young people felt that NCEA is not a system that works well for their education.

"First of all, getting rid of NCEA would encourage students to stay at school (I know as I have had friends leave as they doubted themselves to do level 2 and 3)-age"

age 13-18

A considerable number of students raised NCEA in the context that obtaining NCEA qualifications is an indicator of success. These students simply noted that "having NCEA" was a maker of success, frequently adding that gaining employment was the next step.

A moderate number of students stated that level 1 was unnecessary, and caused undue stress, while a similar number advocated for NCEA style assessment from year 9 (to better prepare students). A moderate number of students felt that NCEA was burdensome and created significant stress. This was due to multiple assessments, and the examination process generally.

Another moderate number of students suggested NCEA's level of relevance to the real world, and career development is minimal.

Grading ~ 120 comments

Grading was mentioned by a large number of young people. Comments on grading were varied but often expressed the sentiment that the current grading system is inadequate, inconsistent, unfair or not reflective of the amount of effort that goes into an assessment. The education system was criticised for placing such significant emphasis on final grades. Comments suggested a student's worth and ability should not be determined by a grade and that the grading system places undue competition and pressure on students. It was noted that grading often does not consider the individual circumstances of a student and success should be measured based on personal outcomes, rather than the results of others. Grading based on a bell curve was similarly criticised. It was noted that all students should have a fair and equal chance to achieve high grades.

Young people made comments both in support and opposition to standardised assessment and marking schedules. Some supported more consistent assessment and marking criteria across New Zealand, believing it was easier to achieve better results at certain schools due to differences in the way assessments are graded. Others were against strict marking schedules and stated that they encourage students to simply learn and work towards the schedule rather than promoting creativity in work.

The Achieved, Merit, Excellence grading system in NCEA was criticised for several reasons. Classifying students as above and below average was viewed unfavourably as it places undue stress and feelings of inadequacy among students. Young people were also concerned that students were being categorised by these grades, therefore lowering expectations and reducing motivation for students to improve. Others suggested these three grades lacked sufficient scope as there is no way to distinguish between someone who comfortably gained an endorsement and someone who just scraped through. These comments supported grading students with a more traditional letter grade system.

> *"Teachers need to be careful how they treat other students. Calling people achieved, not achieved, merit, excellece 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. Schools definitely do group students into categories in terms of grades and I think that's not a good thing."*
>
> *age 13-18*

Exams and tests ~ 100 comments

A substantial number of young people made comments both for and against examinations and tests. The majority of these comments were against exams, stating that they place too much pressure on students and can significantly contribute to increases in stress and anxiety. It was also noted that exams are not reflective of what students will experience in the real world and therefore assessment material should be more project-based.

Those that supported exams suggested that they are a good method of ensuring students stay on track in their education and are progressing with required learning outcomes. Some even stated that there should be no internals, more exams, or that exams should be more difficult.

Several comments were neither for nor against exams, but stated they should be spaced more throughout the year to reduce stress in certain periods and ensure each exam has adequate time for preparation.

NCEA Credits ~ 50 comments

The NCEA credit system was criticised by a moderate number of young people, most notably that it encourages a style of learning only focussed on gaining credits. It was suggested that at present, students are encouraged to work solely towards being awarded credits and do not value the learning process itself.

"Change the way ncea works. Ncea is about getting credits not learning, I build up all this information in my brain and the second I hand in my internal or finish my exam I throw all that learning out my brain because I can think "I got the credits now it doesn't matter".

age 13-18

"How to find answers ourselves and to speak Māori. 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 Maori people and they wondered why I tried to take it. I had to change classes because NCEA Level 1 assumes you've had two years and Mom wanted to make sure I didn't get a NA on my record so there's no way I can learn it now."

age 13-18

Others questioned the value of credits, claiming it is more difficult to gain credits in certain subjects and therefore those taking more difficult subjects are less likely to achieve higher grades. Some students also claimed that credit awards often do not reflect the amount of time and effort that goes into an assessment.

Other comments ~ 50 comments

A range of other topics were discussed to a lesser extent.

Several young people favoured NCEA being replaced with a more internationally recognised qualification such as Cambridge.

Some students commented on national standards. There were arguments both for and against overhauling national standards in education, including NCEA and NZQA qualifications. Some also commented on removing standardised assessment methods.

The frequency of assessment and testing of progress was commented on by some young people. Most comments suggested that there should be less assessments, tests and exams. Most participants did not expand on this idea; however, some suggestions included: extra-curricular activities and heavy workload causes stress; project-based learning is preferred; and more practical or alternative learning methods are desirable.

(3) Wellbeing and support

(3a) What did students say about what influenced or detracted from: wellbeing; belonging; feeling safe at school (incl. bullying); and, mental health, including stress and anxiety? ~ 722 comments

Summary

» Young people valued good mental health as a significant factor underpinning success. Mental health was viewed as being under-prioritised in schools.
» Poor mental health was frequently related to exam stress and young people felt under pressure to perform well.
» Young people felt that schools have a responsibility to support their wellbeing.
» A number of mechanisms were viewed as supporting wellbeing, including supportive and trusting relationships in schools, physical activity/health, support services, support networks (peers), education around mental health, emotional resilience and self-care.
» Factors that detracted from wellbeing included: stress from academic pressures and/or social factors, lack of institutional support, lack of emotional support in schools, and pressures of home life.
» There was a strong sense that young people want schools to be places where all students feel safe on multiple levels, including safe from: poor classroom behaviour from other students, bullying, overt or casual racism or discrimination, and from any form of harm.

Wellbeing ~ 242 comments

A very large number of students inferred that a supported student is a student who will do well. This support could come from friends, teachers, families and specialised support services. Students commented that a student who knew that they could ask for help and felt confident that they would be supported was a student with good wellbeing. A substantial number noted that the student should not be afraid to ask for help, but that sometimes, teachers need to ask them if they are okay first.

"Teachers that care about you"

age 5-12

A large number of young people commented on how the attitude of the teacher heavily influences how a student feels about their time at school and their interest in learning. Teachers who love teaching, are passionate about the subject they teach and show genuine interest in a student's education are positive influences on a student's wellbeing. Teachers who criticise, ignore or seem to have no time for a student's concerns are detrimental influencers on their wellbeing.

Acknowledgement and support of a student's cultural identity are considered an important influencer on wellbeing by a moderate number of young people.

"Bring Māori culture/all culture back into our schools, girls at my school thrive when they're surrounded by their culture and don't feel like an outcast in our traditional English high schooling"

age 13-18

Students also thought that learning how and when to ask for help, as well as how to deal with stress are important strategies that young people need to be taught.

Physical wellbeing was considered important to the success of the future student by a considerable number of young people. This was mostly expressed in general terms such as "be healthy" or "they should be fit", but several commented on the link between eating well, exercise and overall wellbeing.

"I think there should be a focus on health and well-being. The health and well-being of our children and teenagers is so important. A focus of school could be to support them in finding

> *what they love to do, and what makes them happy. I think our education system could focus more on supporting children and teenagers well being physically, mentally, emotionally, socially and spiritually"*
>
> *age 13-18*

Mental wellbeing is discussed under its own heading later in this report.

Belonging ~ 120 comments

A large number of young people talked about wanting to feel like they are welcome at school and that they belong. Descriptors used to define belonging included: feeling accepted, comfortable, supported, that they mattered. They want to know that their views are listened to and acted upon. They want to feel part of the school community and for everyone to feel accepted.

> *"Support, effort, and time from teachers, and also more genuine student input into their learning processes…. If a student does not feel welcomed, or feels uncomfortable in their school environment, then the school needs to provide the care and support for that student, and should actively consider and review where they might have gone wrong"*
>
> *age 13-18*

A sizeable number of young people commented that if a student feels that they belong then they will be more likely to be successful in their academic studies.

Feeling safe at school ~ 140 comments

A substantial number of young people stated that they wanted children to feel safe at school without qualifying what "safe" looked like. They either wanted a safe environment for students to learn in or for people to feel safe.

When safety was linked to diversity, however, young people talked about the need for systems in schools that enable students to feel accepted and safe; whether because of ethnicity, gender identity, socio-economic status, or disability.

Bullying was identified as an issue requiring urgent attention from school authorities. Students stated that, currently, not enough was being done to deter bullying and this sentiment was expressed across all ages. Several students commented that they did not want to go to school because of the bullying they received at school. Other students stated that they thought some teachers were also bullies and wanted a system that would allow them to report a teacher anonymously.

> *"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"*
>
> *age 5-12*

A sizeable number of young people reported wanting student behaviour to be better managed. In many cases, clear rules around behaviour are asked for and also that transgressions be dealt with consistently. Many of the comments evoked the idea that emotional safety is maintained when a level of consistent discipline is present in learning environments. Rules and discipline were primarily a concern for secondary-aged students who spoke broadly about how poor discipline detracts from a pleasant classroom environment.

> *"A student who isn't traumatized by emotionally abusive primary school teachers that tell them they're a burden to everyone around them and allow death threats from other students is a successful student. According to that logic, I am not a successful student"*
>
> *age 13-18*

Mental health ~ 220 comments

Stress was identified as being detrimental to young people's mental health by a large number of students. Stress caused by sitting NCEA exams and internal assessments throughout the year, was mentioned by a substantial number of students. They feel that there is too much emphasis placed on achieving good grades, which when combined with high workloads is proving too much for some students. They also talked about the timing of assessments and thought that the system needs to change to allow for an even workload throughout the year. Several students commented on increasing pressure to maintain social relationships, good grades and extra-curricular activities within a limited time frame. They said that they have no time to relax and are increasingly stressed as a result.

> "Every day at my school, students joke about lying down in the road, or shooting themselves. While these are said in a humorous way, it makes me worry about the stress these students are under, at such a crucial stage of development in their lives. What kind of system makes students more open to self harm due to academic stress than asking for help? With things going on in their personal lives, their academic lives, and their extracurriculars, things quickly add up and I think the system could be less strict and firm on enforcing deadlines when the teachers know that the students have a lot going on."
>
> *age 13-18*

A considerable number of students talked about stress levels without a specific cause, citing that they just wanted less stress at school.

Young people frequently raised good mental health (or the absence of depression/anxiety) in response to questions about what a successful student looked like. When commenting on how the future student would handle stress, a considerable number of students said that they will be taught how to reduce their stress levels and cope with pressure. They also said that the school environment will be different than from today and will be a less stressful place for a young person to be.

> "Run a 3-day course for all year 10-13 students which teaches all students how to manage their time and activities easily as well as teaches all students how to study with ease."
>
> *age 13-18*

A moderate number of students want better mental health resources at school and for teachers to receive training in how to recognise when a student may be struggling and how to support them. They thought it was up to schools to lead the way and that there should be courses in self-care available in the curriculum.

The majority of comments on mental health were from secondary school students.

(3b) What supports or initiatives were identified to support students' learning, attendance, or success: pastoral care (including support for transitions); meeting basic needs (i.e. addressing poverty); disability and learning support; and, mental health support? ~ 830 comments

Summary

» A very large number of young people discussed support or initiatives that they considered important contributors to their learning, attendance, and success in school. Overall, young people wanted support for students' wellbeing (mental and physical), as well as academic support. They pointed out that schools should be a place that supported students holistically, rather than solely focused on grades and academic achievement.

» Pastoral care was discussed in a broad sense, with young people wanting schools to provide more support for students' personal wellbeing and adequately prepare them for life after school.

» Young people noted that the provision of certain basic needs was essential for optimal student outcomes, i.e. food, clothing, warm homes. Financial barriers were considered to be the primary cause of students not having access to and making the most of educational opportunities.

» Disability and learning support were discussed in a general sense, with young people wanting more support for any student who needs additional help to learn/cope at school. Young people considered early intervention as a precursor for success in life. Students thought that schools, teachers, and peers needed to be more understanding and tolerant of those with disabilities, or requiring learning support.

» Initiatives to improve mental health were focussed on the greater provision of support services in schools. Young people wanted to see an emphasis in schools on the importance of maintaining good mental health, and ways to do this. Exams were considered a primary stressor in a secondary student's life and changes to NCEA were requested.

» Secondary school students were more likely to comment on their personal experience and then relate it to a request for pastoral care. Meanwhile, primary-aged students made short, to the point comments, which were generalised, e.g. help the poor people.

Pastoral care ~ 185 comments

Pastoral care is defined as providing emotional and spiritual support to young people during their time in the education system. A sizeable number of students discussed pastoral care when talking about what made a successful student, and the support that they would like to receive at school now.

When discussing the student of the future, they wanted them to be fully supported in all aspects of their life. They also thought that the future student will be comfortable about asking for help. When they talked about their own school, they spoke about wanting access to social workers, career guidance counsellors, psychologists and peer-to-peer support. They also want to feel that teachers support them academically and emotionally at school. They want schools to spend time supporting and nurturing students, preparing them for their future holistically.

Students saw a link between school attendance and a child who felt supported and happy at school. A willingness to learn was important but they also recognise that a young person who feels a valued member of the school community is more likely to attend school than someone who isn't.

Several students think that technology can be used to help students find support. For example, there could be a website or an app where students can rate their teachers and report anonymously those who they felt are bullying them or are not supportive. Others recommended the PowerUP initiative and thought there should be more of them.

Support for students' transitions into different levels of education or into a career was sought by a large number of young people. For many, exposure to a variety of options and pathways to follow post school, and preparation for continuing education and/or finding a job are highly regarded. They want work experience and interaction with future employers, professionals and academic advisors. Several students thought that there should be more support and encouragement for pathways other than university, because they think that tertiary education is not suitable for everyone.

> "Days where professors come in to schools and talks about a specific subject so the students get more knowledge about what they wanna do"
>
> *age 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
>
> *age" 13-18*

Similarly, a large number of young people stated that life skills should be taught in school. Life skills include things like; learning to change a tyre, cooking, budgeting, home plumbing, contracts, voting and tax. Several students thought that life skills should be a compulsory subject.

Meeting basic needs ~ 311 comments

A very large number of young people thought that it should be free for students to attend school and that it is currently too expensive for many students to attend. They do not think students should have to pay for uniforms, school trips, stationery, lunches, music lessons and sports. They thought that some students are missing out on a full education because they cannot afford to join clubs, choirs or other extra-curricular activities that schools provide. Students also commented on the socio-economic divide in schools between those whose parents could afford new uniforms, devices, music lessons, etc. and those who could not. They thought that it was unfair that children are marginalised and/or bullied because of their parents' financial circumstances and that children are failing school because of this inequity.

> "Make education more affordable for parents with low-paying jobs"
>
> *age 13-18*

> "completely free education for ALL students, for example, free uniform, NO PTA donations, free sport team etc."
>
> *age 13-18*

Providing free lunches and transport to and from school were suggested by a sizeable number of young people. They see first-hand the effect that not having these basic needs met is having on fellow students' ability to learn and think that the Government should provide when parents cannot afford to.

> "Give all the kids kai so they not hungry"
>
> *age 5-12*

A substantial number of young people talked about the need to ensure that children are living in warm homes, have warm clothing and adequate footwear in order to function well at school. They also commented on the need for sleep, with many teenagers requesting that school start later. They quoted scientific research, which states that their sleep patterns are at odds with current school hours, as the reason for this request.

> "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"
>
> *age 13-18*

A sizeable number of young people commented on uniforms with opinion equally divided on whether they should be part of school life or not. Those that want to wear, or talked about uniforms want them to be more affordable and practical for day-to-day wear. Those who want them removed also talked about the cost of uniforms and cited this as a main reason for wanting to wear their own clothes. They thought that students are more likely to be bullied for having an incorrect/untidy/second hand uniform. Several students thought that uniforms are an infringement on the child's right to express their individuality/creative expression.

> "no uniform because it's expensive and so we don't get them dirty and get teased for having a dirty uniform"

The voices of young people

A very large number of students see being supported as a basic need, consistently reporting that a student who feels supported is a child who does well at school. This support was described in emotional and tangible terms, and ranged from simply wanting "to feel supported by the teacher", to help with learning difficulties or tutoring in a subject that is difficult, e.g. maths. They thought that support should be made available to all students regardless of their social economic status.

A few students requested gender neutral bathrooms and same-gender safe sex education.

Disability and learning support ~ 215 comments

A very large number of young people discussed disability and learning support, with all wanting easy access/more support for those who needed it. A successful student is one who has received all the help that they need during their education. They thought that no one should fall behind because of a disability or learning difficulty. It is up to the schools and Government to ensure that everyone has equal access to an education that will result in a successful life.

> "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."
>
> *age 13-18*

A sizeable number of young people talked about the need for extra support for "gifted students". They thought that their needs are not currently being met by the curriculum, support services and teachers. They want the curriculum to allow for extension classes at any age and exemptions from compulsory subjects if the child's talent is in another area so they can focus on what they excel at. They want their talents to be identified early on and support put in place in the form of extra tutelage or in-class support from primary school age onwards. They did not think the support should be cost prohibitive to any parent. They want teachers to be supportive of their talents and encourage/challenge them as appropriate. A few students recommended the MindPlus programme for gifted students.

> "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…"
>
> *age 13-18*

Several students wanted more support at school for their dyslexia. Most spoke of personal experience in not receiving the help that they need and subsequently feeling let down by teachers and the education system. This feeling of not enough support is echoed by those with other learning difficulties such as ADHD and autism.

> "I am nearly 9 years old and I used to go to mainstream school and the reason I'm with Te Kura now is because security reasons and I am dyslexic and school didn't have any good things for dyslexic children. I went to school from 5 to 6 years old."
>
> *aged 5-12*

A considerable number of young people seek equity and understanding for those who have disabilities or require learning support. They said that they should have an equal opportunity to attend mainstream schooling in order to improve their ability to learn, their experience of school and their likelihood of success.

> "i would make teachers more understanding and helpful with kids that have disabilities and Asperger's also anxiety"
>
> *age 5-12*

Mental health support ~ 115 comments

A large number of young people thought that there needed to be more support for mental health initiatives in the education system. There was a consensus that students are under a lot of stress at school and face

pressure from outside sources that were not evident in previous generations. A substantial number thought that NCEA and internal exams placed undue stress on students, and many are struggling as a result. Opinion was divided as to whether there needs to be a review of NCEA or whether it should be scrapped, and another system implemented. Several students suggested that the MOE look to overseas experiences such as Finland.

> *"I can't go through one week without experiencing either someone around me crying or myself crying from immense stress. I love school but the past couple of weeks have been so tough that it has (at points) put me off furthering my education."*
>
> *age 13-18*

Students want the causes of mental health issues to be addressed and for students to be taught how to reduce stress levels and ask for help before they collapse. They thought that schools could take a greater role in educating people about mental health and that how to have a healthy mind should be just as much a priority as having a healthy body.

> *"We need to teach younger kids that is isn't bad to reach out for help if you feel bad mentally and/or physically. Also speaking about that TEACH KIDS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH! It is a very important subject and thing to know, we should learn about how to deal with it and how to help someone with any type of mental health"*
>
> *age 13-18*

Some of the ways that students think that stress can be reduced include: change the way assessments are undertaken; reduce the amount of time spent at school; reduce or eliminate homework; reduce incidences of bullying; improve peer-to-peer support services; increase the number of teachers who are passionate about their work and enjoy working with children; individualise learning and provide learning areas that are pleasant to work in.

> *"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*

Support services for young people at school were generally described in terms of "support students". A considerable number went into further detail, however, and suggested: counselling services; access to doctors or psychological services; provision for "mental health days"; training for teachers in how to support students who are struggling, and stress-relieving activities such as kittens in schools.

> *"Decent counselling- my generation is a bit more sensitive than previous generations, and there are pros and cons to that. Because of this we require more and better counselling"*
>
> *age 13-18*

(4) Systems and structures

(4a) Within school or outside of school what is needed to improve: resourcing; equity; access to education; and, governance of schools? ~ 2000 comments

Summary

» Education is viewed by young people as under-resourced; more education funding generally, more in-class resources and more resourcing to support teachers was all called for.
» Young people reported wanting an education system where success isn't defined by or limited to those who fit into the mainstream.
» Equity and access were frequently addressed together; the main issue was that financial and structural issues were perceived as preventing equal access to education by all students. It was noted that all students should have equal access to education.
» Governance was addressed at the highest levels, with "the system" criticised as outdated; within schools, young people called for good leadership. Several wanted more rules, and their enforcement, to improve the school learning environment and student outcomes.

Resourcing ~ 750 comments

A very large number of young people commented on the support received by teachers, and the changes they felt were necessary. Nearly all of the comments supported an increase in salary for teachers. Students also wanted to see an increase in the number of teacher aides and learning/behavioural support staff. Young people said that an increase in wages would improve the quality of teachers, and attract better people to the profession. Several students commented that teachers were worth more. They also said that increased salaries would make the profession more appealing to others, which would then reduce teacher shortages. A substantial number of students commented that reducing teacher workloads would result in less stressed and happier teachers. They also commented that reducing teacher workloads through extra support, would give them more time to spend with them one on one.

> "Give teachers more money - they do so much for us and deserve so much more than they get"
>
> *age 13-18*

> "I would increase the teaching wage to attract people to become teachers, instead of other jobs"
>
> *age 13-18*

A very large number of students commented on school infrastructure and these were split into four distinct areas: classroom resources, technology, equipment, and buildings. A large number of comments that mentioned school infrastructure were generic and these were commonly stated as "better resources". Young people consistently wanted better resourcing across all areas.

> "Better schools and way more school funding's"
>
> *age 13-18*

A large number of students wanted better classroom resources. These included books, text books, stationery and a generic "learning equipment". Technology was discussed by a sizeable number of young people, who called for better resourcing in relation to computers, laptops, tablets/iPads and internet access. Several students felt that schools should supply devices to take financial pressure off families who may not be able to afford them, with several young people criticising the current BYOD requirements in many schools. The need for more/better sports equipment and playgrounds was discussed by a substantial number of young people. Comments on this topic called for safer playgrounds, with a small number suggesting that playgrounds should be a feature in secondary schools as well as primary. A small number of respondents also called for more

swimming pools in schools. A substantial number of comments related to school buildings. Several young people called for more classrooms to be built in schools to reduce class sizes. Others also discussed a need for more gender-neutral bathrooms, warmer rooms and bigger learning spaces.

A large number of students commented on funding and finance. All thought that schools are not adequately funded. Young people consistently called for increased funding for the education sector equal distribution of funds between schools. Additionally, a considerable number of young people expressed a desire for cheaper or free education, with the inference that the government should facilitate this.

> "If there is any parent with not enough money to send their child to school and don't want them to miss out on going to school, there should be a way. Maybe giving the kids a chance to go to a cheep school close to home but if there isn't and there is only costly schools the parents can pay the money over time and get support with the costs. This idea will help with the poverty levels in nz, if more kids get a good education and get a good job they will afford to have a safe home to live in."
>
> *age 13-18*

Equity ~ 350 comments

Equity was viewed as a key factor contributing to success amongst young people. The majority of comments were about equitable access to high quality learning. Comments frequently contained the sentiment that "all" or "every" child should be welcomed into education and have an equal chance to succeed. Most often this was stated in simple terms, and as an ideal outcome rather than with a proposed set of steps to achieve this.

> "make sure that all children would be able to easily secure a place in some school"
>
> *age 13-18*

Teaching was the focus of a moderate number of comments about equity. Young people stated a desire for more diversity among teaching staff, and more culturally responsive pedagogies and practices. Several young people specifically mentioned equality for Māori and Pasifika groups.

A substantial number of young people discussed equity in relation to ethnicity, gender, sexuality and (dis)ability. Comments consistently expressed the sentiment that every student should be treated with the same respect, and offered the same chance to succeed in education as others, regardless of where they sit in relation to the above groups.

There were also several comments from young people calling for more uniformity in terms of testing and examinations across New Zealand, with some expressing the sentiment that currently, rules around NCEA are not being enforced in the same way in all schools.

Access to education ~ 600 comments

A very large number of students thought that education should be cheaper or free. Young people felt that education is not affordable or attainable for all New Zealanders, and that changes need to be made to ensure that everyone has access. Young people commented on the need for an increase in attention to basic needs in school, such as free food initiatives, cheaper uniforms, and lower school fees.

> "I would make education more affordable because a lot of families may not have enough money to send their kids to good schools"
>
> *age 13-18*

Young people made several suggestions of ways that fairer access to education could be achieved. Ideas were mostly centred around relieving the financial burden for families/whānau. These ideas include increasing the number of scholarships available to students, reducing the price of school uniforms, and more equitable distribution of government funding across schools. Several students commented that schools should not be funded based on decile, but rather on the number of students attending the schools, to ensure that some schools are not favoured/disadvantaged over others. Students not having their basic needs met was viewed as restricting access to places of learning, (i.e. as some children stay home rather than go to school), as well

as limiting access to quality education once at school (i.e. children's capacity to learn is hindered if they are not properly fed or suffer a lack of sleep, etc.).

> *"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."*
>
> *age 13-18*

> *"A successful student of the future is one who is able to access education despite their home and financial background."*
>
> *age 13-18*

Access to education was also mentioned in regard to the subjects offered in schools. Young people argued that offering a variety of subjects resulted in higher student engagement and therefore better access for those who may not have otherwise stayed in school.

Governance of schools ~ 400

The education system was criticised by a very large number of young people, though frequently with no suggestions for improvement other than that change is needed. A sizeable number of young people called for a 'revamp' or rebuild of the current outdated, "one size fits all" system, while others argued a complete redo "from scratch" was necessary. A small number of young people did offer suggestions for changes that could be made, with several supporting greater focus being placed on "alternative schooling". This included charter schools, which a small number of young people argued were producing positive outcomes for their students. Others stated that having schools governed by local communities rather than the centralised government, or the Ministry of Education would produce better results for students. A considerable number of young people called for increased consultation with students and whānau, to give them a voice in decision-making about education.

> *"change the education system that we have been using since the industrial revolution"*
>
> *age 13-18*

Several respondents also discussed a desire for better, more regular reviews of the education system. One young person suggested that ERO reviews should be conducted spontaneously to ensure that authentic educational practices are being seen. Other comments around reviews expressed a desire for more efficient and innovative practices to be identified, and subsequently adopted in other schools. A small number of young people stated that no change was needed, expressing satisfaction with the current system.

> *"Spend more time listening to kids who want to better the education system and actually put actions towards their words"*
>
> *age 13-18*

A sizeable number of young people commented about leadership in schools. Comments around leadership in schools generally suggested that "good" principals and staff were needed, though what constituted a "good" leader was not defined. Several young people called for greater diversity on school boards and in leadership positions. Several young people also favoured stricter rules to encourage better behaviour. One respondent suggested that having fewer rules, but enforcing them more strongly, would lead to positive behavioural and engagement outcomes.

> *"Higher standards of teachers and management roles"*
>
> *age 13-18*

(5) Parents, whānau and communities

(5a) What did students have to say about: family/whānau, community and society involvement; and, how they want their families/communities to be involved? ~ 210 comments

Summary

» Student success was defined in terms of their ability to maintain strong family/whānau and community connections by a large number of young people.
» Young people stated that families/whānau and communities should support schools, students and education in general.
» It was felt that strengthening these connections would result in a more well-rounded student who is better able to succeed in a post-education setting.

Family/whānau, community, and society involvement ~ 150 comments

A large number of young people discussed family/whānau, community and society involvement, with a general consensus that maintaining and nourishing these relationships was an important factor in achieving positive outcomes in education. Respondents also discussed the importance of young people understanding the value of their whānau, communities and society, and being contributing members of these groups.

> "A student who can help in the community and can help evolve humanity as we know it is a key person for the future of the human race.."
>
> *age 13-18*

A considerable number of young people discussed the concept of citizenship. These comments were primarily around the need for students to contribute positively to society. For some young people, this meant students being politically aware, or being involved in helping others who are less fortunate. Others noted the importance of learning skills that can be taken to jobs which will add a positive contribution to their communities and wider society. There were also comments around the importance of working to improve the lives of others as well as their own, and being accepting of diversity. The general theme of comments around this topic were that students should aim to make the world they live in a better place for all.

> "They also should 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*

> "be an active participant in making my community better. For example street clean ups."
>
> *age 5-12*

The considerable number of young people who discussed being a good whānau and/or community member made similar, but more local or family-focused comments. These comments tended to be around knowing what was going on within their families/whānau and communities, and spending time with them.

> "someone that has been working hard not only at school but at home as well. someone that is proud of their family, their school, and themselves"
>
> *age 13-18*

How do students want their family/whānau and communities to be involved? ~ 60 comments

The general consensus amongst young people regarding family/whānau and community involvement, was that a successful student would have support from these groups.

Several comments from young people suggested that parents knowing more about what their children are doing in school would be a positive outcome. Several comments also suggested that students should have

the freedom to place the same emphasis on family/whānau and social lives as they feel they do on education, as these are also very important aspects in their lives. The most common sentiment among young people, however, was simply that young people ought to feel supported by their families and whānau.

"The learner themselves has to be responsible for their own learning. They must put in the effort. Maybe making sue the parents are involved in the learning, might make the students contribute to their learning at school"

age 13-18

Young people spoke about community involvement by stressing that students must be able to contribute to their communities both while they are at school, and after they have left school, i.e. that a successful student is defined by their ability to contribute to society or their community in some way. Others suggested that it is important for students to understand what is happening in their communities, and that it should be part of a school's role to ensure there is a relationship between students and the wider community. As well as supporting schools getting more involved within their communities, young people also acknowledged the importance of communities supporting students, suggesting that a reciprocal relationship would be the ideal outcome.

"Students should have a strong support system- both within and in their community and they must know this"

age 13-18

Few young people gave specific ways in which they wanted families/whānau and communities to be more involved in their education, with most simply stating that they felt these groups should be heavily involved. Of the few who did offer specific suggestions, the ideas varied. Some young people suggested that students get actively involved in helping out in their communities with things such as "street clean ups". One student suggested that involving whānau in homework would be a good way of engaging families in students' education. Another few comments suggested that making more "space for whānau to participate" would encourage family engagement, and subsequently foster positive educational outcomes for students. Comments such as these point to a desire for schools to be more open to working with whānau and communities in general.

"have fun homework that gets the family involved like do a sports for homework with your parents watching or playing then sign it of"

age 5-12

"Get advice from parents or teachers, to see how they feel"

age 13-18

"…a focus on the importance of family and family time, playing and fun, perusing interests - sport, art, music, helping out in the community, spending time in nature, learning about nutrition and how to make healthy food, movement"

age 13-18

(6) Success

(6a) How is academic success described? ~ 520 comments

Summary

» Academic success was able to be measured in quantifiable terms such as grades and qualifications. Young people perceived successful students to be those who consistently achieved good grades.
» Gaining entrance to university, or being able to succeed at university were both defined as academic success by a sizeable number of students.
» A "well-rounded" student was described by some students as a hallmark of academic success. Students defined a well-rounded student as someone who possessed the combination of good grades and commitment to extra-curricular activities. They also possessed attributes such as leadership skills and good time management.

Subjects ~ 190 comments

A very large number of students commented that young people should leave school knowing how to read, write and understand the basics of maths and science. They also said that knowing how to use technology and being "techno-dextrous" were important skills to have learnt at school.

> "Your average student (by the time they reach 13), in my opinion, should be able to read quickly and efficiently - i.e be able to read this entire sentence in under 10 seconds. They should be able to write interesting pieces. They should know their entire timetables up to 12 and be able to problem solve in Maths."
>
> *age 13-18*

Having left school with life skills that would enable a young person to "fit into the real world" were also considered important indicators of academic success by a very large number of students. Life skills ranged from knowing how to change a tyre and cook a meal to understanding the political system and tax system. Being financially literate by the time they left school was mentioned by a large number of students.

Being able to speak a second language was considered a marker of academic success by a substantial number of students. Te Reo Māori was the second language of choice by students. Understanding other cultures as well as your own was mentioned by a moderate number of students.

Quantifiable outcomes ~ 120 comments

A large number of students defined academic success as having achieved passes in NCEA at the very least, with most simply stating "good grades". A considerable number of students referred to passing levels 1, 2 & 3. Gaining merits and excellences are considered optimal measurements of success by a moderate number of students.

> "getting A or A PLUS"
>
> *age 5-12*

> "a student that has got enough grades and points through NCEA to get a scholarship (i want to go an American university on a scholarship to play football)"
>
> *age 13-18*

Further education ~ 79 comments

A sizeable number of students commented that academic success looked like going to university and completing a degree at either under graduate or post graduate level depending on the subject. Several mentioned specific degrees such as Medicine and Law, but mostly simply stated achieving a degree.

"have a house to live and a successful life not being poor and finish there university"

age 5-12

Most students who talked about gaining a degree considered it the height of success, but a moderate number saw a university degree as a stepping stone to a well-paid job and/or an influential career.

"Gone to university and gotten a degree in a subject they like and am working in a good job in that field getting a good amount of money"

age 13-18

Obtaining knowledge ~ 50 comments

A substantial number of comments discussed the acquisition of knowledge without mentioning grades or degrees. A successful student according to them has lots of knowledge; is smart or intelligent; has the ability to apply one's knowledge; or has developed an ongoing desire for knowledge.

"academically reasonably good"

age 13-18

"A successful student to me looks like a smart educated person."

age 13-18

Good jobs ~ 42 comments

A considerable number of students described academic success as gaining a good job once they left school. Several commented that this was the main purpose of an education and that students should choose subjects based on the type of work that they wanted to as an adult.

"Well-rounded" ~ 40 comments

A considerable number of young people described a successful student as being good at everything. They had achieved good grades, but had also participated in extra-curricular activities like sport and the arts. They possessed positive attributes such as leadership, resilience and showed effective time management. They may not have passed exams with excellences, but their overall academic education was described as well-rounded. It was suggested that as a result of being well-rounded, they would make a good contribution to society when they left school.

(6b) How is success more broadly described? ~ 1115 comments

Summary:

» A very large number of young people commented on success in broad terms.
» Young people commonly considered a wide range of relational skills as a marker of success. These skills were considered demonstrative of a well-rounded good person, who was likely to succeed in education, work, and social settings.
» A large number of students expressed the importance of finding a job or further study in an area that they enjoyed and that paid them enough to support themselves and their family/whānau.
» Young people stated that those who understood the value of nourishing relationships with family/whānau and friends, who knew the importance of being involved in their community, and who were aware of their societal roles were successful.

Social and relational skills ~ 615 comments

Being able to interact and relate to other people were considered important skills for students to learn at school by a very large amount of young people. A successful student looked like a person who could communicate clearly and understand any task that was put in front of them.

"They need to really helpful and they have to be confident speakers so that they can share their ideas."

age 5-12

A large number of young people considered that showing empathy and kindness were important skills for the student of the future to have learnt at school. Other personal attributes that were considered desirable in a successful student were: respectfulness, motivation, curiosity, resilience, passion and confidence.

"Someone with important core values like honesty, kindness, forgiveness and pride"

age 5-12

A very large number of young people defined successful students by their positive relationships with their families/whānau and wider communities. Comments were generalised and suggested that a successful student was one who is a contributing member of society; who works to improve the lives of others, including family/whānau, friends and strangers; is politically engaged; actively cares for the environment; and, uses their skills to benefit humanity in general.

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

age 13-18

The ability to form, foster, and maintain relationships with others (commonly family and friends) and being able to interact well with others were considered signs of success by a substantial number of young people. For many, this meant making time for socialising and being there for family/whānau and friends, having a kind, helpful, and polite manner, and a positive and caring attitude towards others. Several said that a future student had a lot of friends, a partner, or a family/whānau. Several young people stressed the importance of socialising and nurturing relationships with family/whānau and friends rather than solely focusing on studying and developing a career.

"Be able to make big impacts in the society and streets of New Zealand"

age 13-18

Successful employment and financial stability ~ 450 comments

A very large number of young people discussed employment as a mark of student success, particularly if the work was something enjoyable, stimulating and well paid. A moderate number of students commented that the future student should follow a career path that is genuinely interested them, allowed them to feel fulfilled, and not work solely for the money.

"A person who achieves their own dream in life of what they genuinely want to persue in a career. Not based on how much money they earn but what thier interests and where thier heart is."

age 13-18

"After leaving school, having a job that pays well and makes them happy and lets them follow their passions and dreams."

age 5-12

Being able to support yourself and your family/whānau financially was considered an outcome of a successful education by a large number of students. Similarly, students viewed lack of debt, not being homeless and not having financial struggles as markers of success.

"Someone who has the knowledge and qualifications to get the job they want and support their family"

age 13-18

"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."

age 13-18

"One who is not on the dole"

Primary-aged students were more likely to identify the type of career they thought a successful student should have, e.g. rugby player, vet, doctor, scientist and engineer.

opportunities ~ 50 comments

A substantial number of young people commented that the future student should know by the end of school what they wanted to do next and a general idea of what they wanted to with their life. While success at school opened future opportunities for students, those students who sought or created opportunities for themselves were more likely to be successful.

> "A successful student would also be involved in programs, during their last years of high school that would educate them and help guide them towards there chosen careers."

age 13-18

In line with these comments, several young people argued that schools should do more to promote a wider range of career paths or study options to their students. Offering a bigger variety of subjects and extracurricular activities were among suggestions for how schools could help with this.

(7) Culture

(7a) What is the perceived level of cultural competence in your school? ~ 230 comments

Summary:

» Young people typically did not comment on the level of cultural competence in their school but noted more could be done to promote stronger cultural representation in schools in general.
» Increased understanding of New Zealand history and specifically Māori culture was favoured. Young people stated that elements of Māori culture, including Te Reo Māori, should be integrated as part of the compulsory curriculum.
» Some young people highlighted inequality in schools and suggested that certain cultural elements and languages are not respected. Comments implied more could be done to support a culturally equal environment in schools.

Culture in schools

Comments from young people about culture suggested more should be done in schools to include culture. Though few students commented specifically on how culturally competent their schools were, comments around culture generally spoke in terms of what they wanted to see, that wasn't happening already. A considerable number of young people linked success as a student with cultural awareness. For many, this meant students being aware of their own culture, whatever it may be, as well as having a deep understanding of New Zealand history and Māori culture. For a substantial number of young people, speaking more than one language was also important; many expressed the sentiment that more focus should be placed on teaching Te Reo Māori in schools. Several comments noted that Te Reo Māori should be much more present in our education system, given it is an official New Zealand language, and the language of the tangata whenua. A small number of students suggested that including compulsory Te Reo in teacher training would help with this.

> "Be proficient in two or more languages, with the hope that one is their ancestral lannguage. If not, then learn the language from this part of the world."
>
> *age 13-18*

Several young people commented on the lack of equality in schools in terms of support and validation. One young person who felt marginalised because of their culture specifically criticised the current cultural inequality in their school. They stated "please, please help the schools have a more equal environment". Comments conveyed a sense that cultural elements, such as kapa haka, languages, (in particular Te Reo Māori) were not respected or considered as important as other subjects or extracurricular activities. Young people felt it would be a positive outcome if schools promoted the use of Te Reo Māori, and incorporated more Māori elements such as kapa haka, learning their mihi and saying karakia every morning and afternoon.

> "It's a plea, a desperation for help. Please, please help the schools have a more equal environment. It is just not right. Indian Language Week is coming up, and instead of being happy and proud to celebrate my cultures week like the other cultures, many of us are already scared and embarrassed of the reaction other students are going to give when this week is going to be celebrated at assembly. Students will laugh, students will mock, students will criticise, I hope the schools environment will be more inclusive."
>
> *age 13-18*

Overall, comments around culture suggested that young people felt schools are not currently incorporating this aspect of people's lives enough. More emphasis on Māori culture, as well as other cultures, was viewed as beneficial for students as it would help all feel more accepted and valued by their schools.

> "He akonga ka mohio ana, ka ngakaunui ana ki nga ahurei maha

The voices of young people

He akonga mohio ana ki tona ake whakapapa, ahakoa no hea, ko wai

TRANSLATION: A student who knows and is passionate about different cultures

A student who knows their own whakapapa, irrespective of where they come from and who they are"

age 13-18

(7b) Does your school encourage (your) cultural identity? ~ 350 comments

Summary:

» Young people generally suggested more could be done to encourage cultural identity in schools. The current education system was considered to not be supportive of all ethnicities.
» Culturally responsive teachers were supported who are inclusive of all cultural identities and recognise that the teaching needs of different cultures may be different.
» Inclusion of more Te Reo Māori and also Māori and Pacific cultural practices in schools was deemed important in encouraging cultural identity.

Cultural Identity ~ 350 comments

The majority of comments centred around cultural identity implied that their cultural identities were not being fostered at school. The consensus among comments on this topic was that currently, not enough is done in schools to encourage students to feel proud and successful, while allowing them to retain their own cultural identities. A small number of comments referred to the way students of other cultures are currently expected or encouraged to assimilate to "the white majority". These comments stated that this needs to change, and more should be done to encourage students to feel proud of their culture and heritage.

"Bring Maori culture/all culture back into our schools, girls at my school thrive when they're surrounded by their culture and don't feel like an outcast in our traditional English high schooling"

age 13-18

A considerable number of young people discussed this topic in relation to teaching in schools. Several respondents discussed the need for teachers to be more culturally responsive in their practice. One young person stated that they would "change the way how different students/teachers are treated by the colour of their skin or what their culture/ethnicity is or what language they speak". Several young people spoke of teachers being unable to pronounce their names correctly, which they felt did not support their cultural identity. One young person mentioned that they felt some teachers supported their cultural identity, acknowledging a need for more teachers with similar attitudes. In line with this were several comments calling for greater diversity in teaching staff, specifically to ensure that there are teachers who can relate to Māori and Pasifika students as well as Pākehā.

"In schools like mine, a high decile special character (read: majority pakeha), staff need to learn to treat maori students the same as everybody else, and see them as equal to their peers. They also should learn why it is important to be able to recognise and differentiate between students of asian descent. (the amount of times elizabeth has actually been called joyce)"

age 13-18

Young people also felt that by including more Te Reo and Tikanga Māori in schools, students would feel more supported in their cultural identities. Similar sentiment was expressed regarding New Zealand history, with respondents stating that teaching Māori and Pacific history should be as important as European history in schools, since it is the history of our country. Several young people criticised the current education system and New Zealand Curriculum, arguing that it is not responsive enough to diversity, or the wants/needs of the students. Giving students agency to pursue subjects they are interested in is one way that students can feel more accepted and encouraged.

"Implement more te reo Māori into schools. It doesn't have to be full on everyday, to reach fluency, but I feel like more needs to be done to teach people proper pronunciation and thus give Māori people and place names and culture the respect it deserves in proper pronunciation"

age 13-18

Overall, young people did not generally feel that their schools encouraged their cultural identities. The general feeling among comments in this topic was that more needs to be done to ensure that students feel supported and able to succeed, regardless of their culture.

Appendix

Methodology

The Survey ran from March to October 2018. Respondents' comments included within this report were from young people aged 5–12 and 13–18 years of age. 1935 young people contributed to this report.

The Ministry prepared 15 broad questions under seven themes (listed below) that are answered within the report. These questions were used to probe the comments received, although they were not asked directly to respondents. These were the actual questions that respondents answered:

» If you were the boss of education in New Zealand, what would you do first?
» What does a successful student of the future look like to you?
» What will they need to know and be able to do?
» What things need to be in place to make sure every learner is successful?

The answers to each question were prepared by combining multiple relevant topics from a variety of places across the initial coding schedule. Analysts then combined and synthesised relevant comments into subtopics and created the discussions contained in the body of the report.

The questions (above) that were asked of participants encouraged forward thinking about how to ensure education works for everyone. How these questions influenced responses was considered throughout the analysis.

Questions were asked of the data using each of the above theme headings, and (as per below), under seven additional sub headings. The discussions are presented under subtopics. Each subtopic is presented in order of those with the most comments to those with the least. The number of comments received on each topic is presented following the topic name.

Teaching and learning environment

(1a) What teaching approaches or practices helped students to learn? Or that they think would work better?

(1b) What skills or capability did students identify as important for teachers?

(1c) What's the impact of the learning environment on students' learning?

Knowledge, competencies and skills

(2a) What did students say about knowledge (subjects, facts, and languages)?

(2b) What did students say about practical competencies and/or life skills?

(2c) What did students say about relational skills (social, emotional, learning for life, identity)?

(2d) How should progress be assessed?

Wellbeing and support

(3a) What did students say about what influenced or detracted from: wellbeing; belonging; feeling safe at school (incl. bullying); and, mental health, including stress and anxiety?

(3b) What supports or initiatives were identified to support students' learning, attendance, or success: pastoral care (including support for transitions); meeting basic needs (i.e. addressing poverty); disability and learning support; and, mental health support?

Systems and structures

(4a) Within school or outside of school what is needed to improve: resourcing; equity; access to education; and, governance of schools?

Parents, whānau and communities

(5a) What did students have to say about: family/whānau, community and society involvement; and, how they want their families/communities to be involved?

Success

(6a) How is academic success described?

(6b) How is success more broadly described?

Culture

(7a) What is the perceived level of cultural competence in your school?

(7b) Does your school encourage (your) cultural identity?

Within the discussions, to give a consistent indication of the amount of comments on each topic, the following key has been used to describe the number of comments on each topic:

- » Very large amount/number of comments = 150+
- » Large amount = 100–149
- » Sizeable = 75–99
- » Substantial amount = 50–74
- » Considerable amount = 25–49

- » Moderate amount = 15–24
- » Several comments = 8–14
- » Small number = 4–7
- » Few = 3
- » Couple = 2

These proportions were also used when appropriate:

- » One quarter of comments on this topic
- » One third of comments on this topic
- » Half of comments on this topic
- » Two thirds of comments on this topic
- » Three quarters of comments on this topic
- » All of the comments on this topic