

Kōrero

Mātauranga

Me kōrero tātou

Online Survey

The voices of people with disabilities or in need of learning support

We asked New Zealanders to tell us, via an online survey, what was important to them in building a more robust education system. These are the thoughts of almost 1200 people who have a disability or a learning support need.

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

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

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

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

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

Survey themes:

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

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

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

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

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

Have your say about the future of education

What you told us

About 1200 of 16,466 people responding to the survey identified as having a disability or a learning support need. We commissioned Global Research to analyse these responses for us and this is our summary of their findings.

The full report is available here:

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

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

New Zealanders want all our children and young people to be successful, confident, life-long learners, and to have the skills to fully participate in their families, their whānau and their communities. They also want all our learners to make a positive contribution to society and the economy.

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

The listening we have done so far has already brought changes to learning support. You can find out more here: <https://www.education.govt.nz/quick-links/special-education/>

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



Join the conversation



Learning – environments

- » Individualised and competent teaching was seen as a major contributor towards ensuring all students are successful in their learning and life.
- » There was a strong emphasis on meeting the needs of individual learners.
- » Teachers who can adapt to individual learning needs in a proactive and empathetic manner are held in high regard. They are seen as giving each student every chance of success and the ability to reach their full potential – especially for students who require learning support or identify as having a disability.
- » People sought a holistic approach to providing well-rounded support for wellbeing.
- » Bullying was identified as an area of concern, particularly in the case of ensuring educational institutions are safe for people with disabilities, or for those who need extra support.
- » There were regular calls for teachers to receive better training so that many more have the ability to identify and teach to cater for particular learning needs.
- » There was a common expectation for teachers to be trained in, and given professional development opportunities, to learn behavioural and learning approaches for students with special learning needs such as autism and dyslexia.
- » Gifted students were identified as needing more support so that they can nurture their gifts and study at an appropriate level. Some felt let down by the current education system.
- » More acceptance for the deaf community was sought through teaching of sign language.
- » When physical disabilities were mentioned, respondents expressed the importance of infrastructure that promotes inclusion and student involvement.

“Teachers misinterpret what it means to be successful. They mark success with a grade. A successful [person] is not exactly someone who is the smartest person, but someone that puts in the hard work.”

Secondary student

“Do not force open planning class rooms [where] students can get lost onto all schools in Auckland. I was dyslexic and was lost in an open planned school situation – teacher took the easy path.”

Parent, primary student

What you told us

“Someone who believes in themselves and is ready to go into the real world. They feel successful even if they didn’t do the best at the core subjects.”

Secondary student

“They should know and understand the importance of mental [health] and how to maintain good mental health this should be taught in the same way the physical health is taught.”

Parent, secondary student

“Learn about the child’s learning needs and apply a teaching techniques that apply to each child, grew and rejoice in there different talents.”

Parent, early childhood

Learning – relevance

- » Key skills and attributes sought by students at all learning stages included: life skills, basic literacy and numeracy, technological competency; and social skills such as collaboration and communication.
- » Independent learning and collaboration, empathy for others, global citizenship, and a healthy self-identity were considered important traits to be learnt at school, by all voices that responded to the survey.
- » Students should also be equipped with a broad range of knowledge and be confident to apply that knowledge in real-world situations.
- » Calls were made for personalised, rather than comparative assessment.
- » Employment or tertiary education was the ideal outcome from obtaining these skills and attributes.
- » These skills and attributes were also considered contributors to a happy life.

“Why aren’t we taught about basic financial literacy like how to work a budget or how to bank? We need to be taught subjects for life!”

Parent, early childhood

“Make the lessons interesting and they will come. Make them informative and they will learn. Make them insightful and they will grow.”

Parent, tertiary student

“A student who can work in a team. Excessive studying won't get you a spot in your precious future career because you need to be able to communicate with the people around you as well.”

Pacific parent, primary student

What you told us

“Review or funding to help all special needs children. The criteria is too hard and does not include adhd dyslexic ASD. All these kids are failing school at alarming rates or are being home schooled.”

Primary student

“With learn disabilities having the right tech and reader writers to support them. Too much teacher time is wasted on unimportant things that are the parent’s job.”

Parent, primary student

“Provide extra funds for children with special needs as this is a huge problem in NZ school.”

Parent, primary student

Learning – opportunities

- » Making sure all students have equitable access to education, future opportunities and successful outcomes in school and life, regardless of their background or situation.
- » Measures towards achieving equity included: ensuring that all students receive the support they need; celebration of diversity and learning environments that support students' wellbeing so that they feel safe, confident and empowered.
- » Early identification of a disability or learning support need was considered significant for a student's success in school and life. This needed to be followed up with adequate resources and services so students don't lose confidence in their abilities.
- » Equitable access was sought. In particular, an increase in funding across all services was broadly agreed for those with a disability or requiring learning support. A general increase in funding for educational services, such as teachers' wages and infrastructure, was also requested.
- » Diversity was discussed in terms of providing resources and support focused on ensuring that people of all abilities have the opportunity to achieve. Comments were made that the education system needs to provide for people of all abilities and be nuanced enough to meet everyone's needs, especially those with disability and require learning support.
- » Equity was highly regarded by those who identify with a disability or require learning support. Ensuring all students have equitable access to education, future opportunities, and successful outcomes in school and life, regardless of their background or personal circumstances, was very important for these respondents.
- » More professional development opportunities in teaching those with disabilities and learning support requirements should be available for teachers so they have the right skills.
- » More support services for those who identify with a disability or requiring learning support. In particular, allocating funding and supporting those students who have dyslexia, autistic spectrum disorders, ADHD, or other barriers to learning.
- » Parents expressed frustration at a lack of services and lack of easy access to services, with either waiting lists being too long, or costs being prohibitive. There are calls for more support services alongside more funding for learning support services.
- » There are calls for the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) to not be capped.
- » Accessible funding, resources and support services for those who identify with a disability or require learning support was deemed essential. Others wanted more support staff in schools, including support or special educational needs coordinators, pastoral care staff and mental and physical health professionals.

What you told us

“Expand learning options so that we can make learning accessible and relevant to all types of students in ways that the current education system does not.”

Parent, early childhood

“If I was the boss of Education, I would make sure that all of the kids got the same amount of learning. Sometimes I have waited patiently for help, day after day, and still I have not been helped by the teacher. It makes me feel dumb and stupid, and then I don't want to go to school.”

Primary student

“Currently our next generations brightest children get NOTHING. They are supposed to be catered for as 'special needs' but are overlooked constantly because special needs to the majority of educators means disability – dyslexia, dysgraphia etc.”

Pacific parent, primary student

Learning – connections

- » People discussed the importance of family involvement in learning, the significance of a healthy home environment, to feel loved and supported in learning, and to have family members support students through their education.
- » Students benefit from being part of a wider community and by being supported by their whānau.
- » There were comments about the connections between students and the wider community and the value of a community-aware student.
- » It was also identified that students should give back to their community.

“I would like to see schools literally be part of the community, preschools and kindergartens on site, parent education onsite, parental and sibling learning together. I would like to see businesses and community agencies be more involved in secondary school learning.”

Parent, tertiary student

“They must be able to think as a citizen of the world, collectively and empathetically understanding that theirs and others actions/decisions impact on each other and the island of earth that we live on.”

Parent, secondary student

“Also get the elderly community to support teachers and students in classrooms because they have a wealth of experience which is invaluable and irreplaceable.”

Parent, secondary student

“A strong support network of whānau.”

Secondary student

What you told us

“I go to Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu and I learn online. I feel lonely, because I have nobody around me except Mum all day. We should have every day advisory, so we can spend part of each day with other students.”

Primary student

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Have your say about the future of education.

Join the conversation at conversation.education.govt.nz



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