

School library spaces, resources, and services in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Executive summary

This report presents the findings of a research project carried out by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) for the School Library Association of New Zealand Aotearoa Te Puna Whare Mātauranga a Kura (SLANZA) and the National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa (the National Library) in 2024.

School libraries are not mandatory in Aotearoa New Zealand schools. Consequently, investment in library spaces, collections, and staffing is discretionary and variable between schools. Research about school library provision in Aotearoa New Zealand including library spaces, resources, staffing, and services is limited. There is also limited understanding about what constitutes an effective school library, and its role and value. The aim of this study is to address some of these gaps in research knowledge and understanding.

Our research questions and design

The research focused on the provision of library spaces, resources, and services across English-medium schools.¹

The research questions were:

- What library spaces, resources, and services are provided by schools?
- How equitable is the provision of library spaces, resources, and services?
- How do leaders support the provision of library spaces, resources, and services?
- What are the benefits, challenges, and enablers for schools in providing library spaces, resources, and services?

We used a mixed methods approach involving a national survey and case studies of schools. The survey was designed to provide a snapshot of the current number, distribution, and types of school libraries and school library services across the motu, and to indicate whether there are any correlations between the findings and variables such as school size, location, and socioeconomic barriers to achievement.

The case studies sought to identify successful approaches that schools used to ensure access to the core elements of an effective school library. These include access to quality resources; staff with the ability to connect the resources to learners; practices that engage learners; strong relationships within the school; and commitment to the library by school leaders.

The survey

The survey was aimed at the person with the greatest responsibility for the library at a range of primary, intermediate, secondary, and composite schools. We contacted 1,853 staff from individual schools representing around 76% of English-medium schools. We received a total of 659 responses, giving a response rate of 35% of English-medium schools.

¹ The Steering Group is considering separately how they might approach Kura Kaupapa Māori and Kura-a-iwi about their views on library services.

The use of a convenience sampling approach for the survey is likely to have resulted in a higher overall response rate but also some bias. The results may be skewed towards schools that have library spaces and paid library staff. Schools that were slightly underrepresented in the final sample included: schools with more socioeconomic barriers (those schools in the top two of the seven Ministry Equity Index [EQI] categories); smaller schools (schools with rolls equal to or less than 300); and rural schools (Rural Other and Rural Settlement). Readers should, therefore, be cautious about generalising the findings to all schools.

The case studies

We selected six case study schools from a list provided by SLANZA and the National Library of schools known for their effectiveness in meeting the needs of their students, staff, and communities. The selected schools ranged in type, size, location, and Schooling Equity Index (EQI) groups. At each school, we ran Zoom interviews with school leaders, staff with library hours, teachers, and students. In total, we interviewed six school leaders, eight library staff, 14 teachers, and 25 students (from Year 4 to Year 13).

Findings from the survey

There were commonalities across responding schools

Most responding schools (89% of respondents) had a permanent, onsite library space and their own library collection that supported reading for pleasure and curriculum learning.

Nearly all respondents considered their collection supported te reo Māori and the diversity of their students and whānau, either “well” or “very well”. However, only around one-third considered their collection supported Pacific languages “well” or “very well”. A very small proportion considered their collection supported students with disabilities “well” or “very well”, highlighting equity concerns for these students.

Most responding schools had staff with at least some paid hours for library work and offered a range of library services to students and staff.

For responding schools that provided library services, these usually included the following:

- services for students—support with choosing or finding books, issuing and returning books, accessing resources for curriculum learning, recreational reading, and wellbeing
- services for staff—informing teachers about new resources, providing resources to support curriculum learning, helping to develop a school culture of reading, and assisting teachers to run class sessions on reading for pleasure.

However, of the responding schools that provided library services, less than half said these included the following:

- services for students—sessions to help develop inquiry, research, or information literacy skills; managing technology or devices for student use; help with homework or study skills
- services for staff—assisting teachers with class sessions on inquiry, research, or information literacy skills or helping teachers develop their own such skills; engaging teachers with their own reading for pleasure; supporting teacher professional learning and development (PLD)
- services for whānau—providing access to library spaces and resources; learning sessions for whānau; access to technology.

There was also variation across responding schools

Survey responses reveal a range of concerning equity issues, especially for small schools, rural schools, and schools with more socioeconomic barriers.

These schools were less likely to:

- have a collection that provided “very well” for reading for pleasure and for curriculum learning
- have staff dedicated to providing library services
- have paid staff hours dedicated to library work
- have staff with library qualifications
- provide library services for students other than issuing and returning books
- provide library services to teachers other than informing teachers about new books or resources in the library.

School leaders’ aspirations were not always matched by actions

Overall, survey respondents at schools with a library considered that school leaders had high aspirations for use of their library spaces, resources, and services. Nearly all agreed or strongly agreed that school leaders were committed to having a library space all year round, and understood the value of having effective library spaces, staff, and services. Most agreed or strongly agreed that their school’s collection management processes ensured that the collection met staff and student needs; and that ongoing funding was provided for an up-to-date collection.

However, fewer agreed or strongly agreed that their school leaders set clear expectations about valuing and using the library or provided ongoing funding for library staffing and PLD opportunities for library staff. Only half agreed or strongly agreed they had a library strategic plan connecting its services and resources with the school curriculum or goals. These differences suggest a gap between the perceived beliefs and aspirations of some school leaders and the practical actions they take to support and integrate library services within the curriculum and priorities of the school.

Equity issues were also evident, with respondents from small schools and rural schools more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the statements “Ongoing funding is provided for library staffing” and “PLD opportunities are provided for library staff”.

School libraries benefited learning, reading engagement, and wellbeing

The most frequently identified benefits in having library spaces, resources, and services included:

- access to a curated collection tailored to the school community
- support for curriculum, teaching, and learning
- support for recreational reading
- support for student wellbeing.

These benefits are well aligned with current cross-government priorities for a knowledge-rich curriculum, and for improving student engagement, achievement, mental health, and attendance.

Shifting attitudes and funding were challenges for school libraries

The main challenges faced by survey respondents fell into two main categories. The first was challenges associated with changing attitudes to the value of books, reading, and libraries in schools and society more generally. The second was challenges associated with funding of library resources and library staff.

These challenges were also unevenly distributed, with some schools more likely to experience them than others. Respondents from small schools, rural schools, and schools with more socioeconomic barriers were more likely to rate lack of funding for paid library staff hours and lack of funding to provide a balanced and broad collection as challenges. Schools with more barriers were also more likely to rate finding engaging resources to cater for a range of reading abilities, low staff use of the library's resources, and students' decreased interest in reading books as challenges. In addition, respondents from small schools were more likely to identify difficulty staffing the library at lunch or break times and low staff use of the library's resources as a challenge. Respondents from rural schools were also more likely to identify difficulty staffing the library at lunch or break times as a challenge.

Findings from the case studies

The challenges highlighted in the survey data associated with changing attitudes to the value of books, reading, and libraries were less pronounced in the case study schools. Although they faced many of the same funding challenges that survey respondents identified, the case study schools had found ways to meet the needs of their students and staff. Despite the challenges, they were able to provide a range of library services to support recreational reading, curriculum learning, information skills, critical thinking, and wellbeing.

Our interviews with staff and students at each case study school identified several key factors underpinning the success of their school library.

School leaders understood, valued, and invested in their school library

Leaders and library staff at the case study schools valued and promoted use of library spaces, resources, and services. These leaders and library staff had set up schoolwide systems to ensure school staff understood, valued, and used library spaces, resources, and services to support curriculum, teaching and learning, recreational reading, and student wellbeing. These systems supported close connections between library and teaching staff. For example, one school had a committee of teachers representing a range of class levels and learning areas who met regularly with library staff to discuss upcoming needs, and another school had library staff who taught library-related skills (such as library, information, or digital literacies) for, or with, teachers so they could learn from each other.

Library staff were skilled, trained, and well-connected

Case study schools identified their library staff as key to the success of their library. Most of the case study schools employed staff with library qualifications. Many library staff were actively engaged in further professional development and regular networking within the school library sector to maintain and build their knowledge.

The positive relationships library staff had with school leaders, teachers, students, and the wider community helped ensure the library was welcoming, engaging, and responsive to the needs of the school community.

Teachers and students were advocates for the library

Teaching staff at the case study schools were vocal in their support of the library and incorporated regular use of the library into their teaching and their own reading for pleasure, while encouraging others to do so as well.

The case study schools actively encouraged student involvement in the school library, including opportunities to help with day-to-day operations, organising and running events and activities, and input into decision making about the library. This gave students a sense of agency and ownership of the library, and helped created a “buzz” about the library within the school.

What are the implications for equitable provision?

Findings from this study show variable provision of library spaces, resources, and services across schools, with inequities for students attending small schools, rural schools, and schools with more socioeconomic barriers. This variability is echoed in other Western jurisdictions, including in Australia, the USA, and the UK (Dix et al., 2020; Merga, 2019; Teravainen & Clark, 2017). It is also evident in the results of national surveys of Aotearoa New Zealand school libraries undertaken by the National Library and SLANZA since 2018.

Schools that are small, rural, and face more socioeconomic barriers were hardest hit

The impact of inequitable school library provision is particularly pronounced for small and rural schools, as well as those serving communities with greater socioeconomic barriers to achievement. These schools often have fewer financial and staffing resources, making it more difficult to maintain a dedicated library space, employ qualified library staff, and build a well-rounded, up-to-date collection. Geographic isolation can further limit access to other library services, professional development opportunities, and community partnerships that could help supplement their resources. For some students in these schools, the school library may be one of the only places where they could freely access books, digital resources, and learning support outside of the classroom. Without equitable access to school libraries, these students risk being further disadvantaged in their learning, literacy development, and engagement.

This variable and inequitable provision matters because libraries are a vital resource for building engagement in both school and wider communities, with librarians being crucial members of these communities (Wilkinson et al., 2020). School libraries provide freely accessible books and other resources that can be shared in and between households, and support school and community cultures of reading (Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa—National Library of New Zealand, 2021, 2022). Furthermore, school libraries and school librarians may support teaching and learning, research and inquiry, literacy outcomes, and student wellbeing (Dix et al., 2020).

Addressing the challenge of funding

Findings from the case study schools show that they had variously addressed the challenges for their libraries in meeting curriculum, teaching, learning, and recreational reading needs by:

- investing Operations Grant funding in their library
- using voluntary unpaid time for library work
- fundraising, seeking philanthropic funding, and using grants to cover library costs.

These last two options rely on external input and may not be possible for all school communities to access—they should not be relied on as systemic. Other solutions are clearly needed. One solution identified by numerous survey respondents is a per capita pool of funding—separate from the Operations Grant—dedicated to school libraries to ensure more equitable access to library spaces, services, and resources across schools.

1. Background to the research

This report presents the findings of a research project carried out by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) for the School Library Association of New Zealand Aotearoa Te Puna Whare Mātauranga a Kura (SLANZA) and the National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa (the National Library) Steering Group (the Steering Group) in 2024.

School libraries focus primarily on supporting educational outcomes, by providing a range of resources and services supporting the teaching and learning needs of the school community. Resources and services aimed at improving student wellbeing are also important. School library services are most effective when there is leadership—within the school and the library—to ensure that services are aligned with the school’s goals, plans, and curriculum, developed and delivered by staff with the necessary skills and expertise, adequately resourced, and valued by the school community. Depending on the school community’s needs, the types of school library services required could include those that support reading for pleasure, literacy development, curriculum learning, information literacy, wellbeing, and inclusion (including digital inclusion).

The research focused on the provision of library spaces, resources, and services across English-medium schools² in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The two main methods for data collection in this mixed methods study were:

- a survey of school librarians or other school staff responsible for the library
- case studies of six schools.

The research questions were:

- What library spaces, resources, and services are provided by schools across Aotearoa New Zealand?
- How equitable is the provision of library spaces, resources, and services?
- How do leaders support the provision of library spaces, resources, and services?
- What are the benefits and challenges for schools in providing library spaces, resources, and services?

The survey approach

We created a short, confidential, online survey aimed at the person with the greatest responsibility for the library at a range of primary, intermediate, secondary, and composite schools. The survey took about 10–15 minutes and included closed questions (check boxes and Likert scales) and two open-ended questions. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

In the survey, we asked separate questions about library spaces, staffing, services, collections, and leadership. However, it is important to understand that these elements of library provision are interconnected. The presence of one element, such as a dedicated library space or a collection

² The Steering Group is considering separately how they might approach Kura Kaupapa Māori and Kura-a-iwi about their views on library services.

of books, does not on its own guarantee that students, staff, parents, and whānau have access to effective library services. The various elements need to be combined so that library services are delivered in the places where they're needed, by staff with the necessary expertise, using library collections and other resources, made possible through the actions taken by school leadership.

The survey also asked questions focused on the benefits and challenges for schools in providing library spaces, resources, and services.

We used a convenience sampling approach designed to maximise survey response rates. This involved directly contacting people with known library responsibilities. We compiled an initial contact list from two databases used by the National Library to manage communications with schools. We asked the National Library to send the contacts in these databases an information email about the survey that included the option to opt out. We then developed new databases that did not include anyone who had opted out. We merged the two revised databases and sent a survey link and an information sheet to one contact per school. In total, we contacted 1,831 people from around 75% of English-medium schools.

We checked the representativeness of the final contacts against a range of variables from the Ministry of Education (MOE) school database including Schooling Equity Index (EQI) group,³ school size, type, and location. We found that the sample was reasonably reflective of these variables, but slightly underrepresented schools with “More” socioeconomic barriers to achievement.

Once over one-third of possible respondents had completed the survey, we reviewed responses by EQI grouping, with the aim of ascertaining whether we needed to top up the survey numbers with additional schools with “More” barriers. We then sent a survey invitation to the 239 schools in this group that were not included in our initial contact database.

Our final response rate from the main survey was 627 (a 34% response rate). This number was then supplemented by a top up of 32 schools with “More” barriers, giving a total of 659 respondents from individual schools.

The final dataset slightly underrepresented schools with “More” barriers, and slightly overrepresented schools with “Fewer” barriers, compared with the number of schools in these groups nationwide. However, the “More” EQI group included just over 20% of all these schools. Therefore, we considered we had sufficient data to do an analysis of this group.

The survey was aimed at the person with the greatest responsibility for the library at a range of primary, intermediate, secondary, and composite schools. We contacted 1,853 staff from individual schools representing around 76% of English-medium schools. We received a total of 659 responses, giving a response rate of 35% of English-medium schools.

We analysed the fixed-choice survey data using descriptive statistics, data visualisations, and inferential statistics (hypothesis testing) to identify patterns. We tested key differences between groups of schools for statistical significance using Fisher's Exact tests. For example, we looked for differences between schools in different EQI groups. The terms “significant”, “more likely”, and “less likely” are used in the text to indicate there is evidence of difference between groups that is unlikely to be due to chance. We considered hypothesis tests to be statistically significant if the *p*-value was less than 0.05. We analysed open-ended qualitative questions thematically, with the assistance of Microsoft Excel.

3 The MOE EQI divides schools into seven EQI groups of equal size and three larger categories (Fewer, Moderate, Most). We used these categories. The “Most” group includes schools with “Many” or “Most” socioeconomic barriers to achievement. See <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/data-services/guidelines/school-equity-index-bands-and-groups>

Limitations of the survey approach

The use of a convenience sampling approach for the survey is likely to have resulted in a higher overall response rate but also some bias. The results may be skewed towards schools that have library spaces and paid library staff, which tend to be those with “Few” socioeconomic barriers, urban schools, and larger schools. Schools that were slightly underrepresented in the final sample included: schools with more socioeconomic barriers (those schools in the top two of the seven MOE EQI categories); smaller schools (schools with rolls equal to or less than 300); and rural schools (Rural Other and Rural Settlement). Readers should, therefore, be cautious about generalising the findings to all schools.⁴

Reading the survey data

Survey data are mostly reported in the text or summarised in graphs. We have presented meaningful significant differences in responses for small, urban, and “more barriers” schools in the findings. There is a small amount of missing data for most questions that are not included on the graphs. Not all respondents could reply to all questions as they were directed to skip questions that were not relevant to their school context. For example, if a respondent indicated they did not provide any library services at their school, they were directed to the final two questions. The total number of people responding to each question is shown on each graph as (N = X).

Quotes are provided from the two open-ended questions in the survey. Small edits have been made to enhance readability. The second of the two open-ended questions in the survey asked respondents if there were any final comments they would like to make about school library spaces, services, or resources. Many of the responses related to questions asked earlier in the survey and we have included a sample of these in the sections of the report they pertain to.

The case study approach

We used a multiple case study design (Creswell, 2008; Punch & Oancea, 2014; Yin, 2018). A multiple case study design focuses on exploring one issue or phenomenon, by capturing evidence from multiple study sites or settings to gain a fuller picture. This design enables the research team to undertake in-depth analysis within and among cases, and to examine how an issue or phenomenon manifests in different settings. A multiple case study design also allows us to consider the context of the school library and to consider questions of equity, diversity, and opportunity.

To select schools, we worked with the Steering Group to purposefully (Patton, 2002) identify a “long list” of schools from which to select six as case studies. Given that the Steering Group was interested in the impact of effective school libraries with high-quality services, we wanted to select schools known for the positive impact they have in their schools and communities. We also wanted schools representing a range of contexts including type (primary, intermediate, composite, and secondary), Schooling EQI (low, medium, and high), enrolment by ethnicity, location (rural and urban), and geographic spread (including North and South Islands). We used advice from the Steering Group and our own connections to select the case study schools.

We used semistructured interviews with individuals or small groups, depending on the school context and the preference of participants. The interviews were carried out via Zoom.

⁴ A breakdown by school characteristics can be found in Appendix B and a breakdown by respondent characteristics can be found in Appendix C.

The case study schools included a range of school types, including one full primary, one contributing, one intermediate, two secondary, and one composite. All the schools were English-medium with one that also contained a Māori-medium rumaki reo akoranga unit. The case study schools spanned a range of Schooling EQI numbers. There were two “most” schools (540 and 512), two “above average” (492, 486), an “average” (457), and a “below average” school (442). The schools ranged in location from the South Island to the upper North Island, with two being “main urban” schools, two being “minor urban” schools, and two being “rural” schools. The size of the case study schools ranged from less than 100 students to over 1,500 students.

At each school, we ran interviews (individual and focus group) during term 2 of 2024 with school leaders, library staff (including trained librarians and teacher aides), teachers, and students. In total, we interviewed six school leaders, eight library staff, 14 teachers, and 25 students (ranging from Year 4 to Year 13).

The interview questions focused on:

- the nature and history of the library, and how it was resourced, managed, and used
- the role of those responsible for running the library
- spaces, resources, and services provided for teachers, students, and whānau
- the perceived impact of the library in terms of literacy, wellbeing, and other outcomes important to the school and community
- the perceived benefits and challenges for schools in providing library spaces, services, and resources
- factors that enabled the case study school libraries to operate effectively.

We developed a coding framework and template for recording school-level data. We analysed the data for cross-case themes and to identify commonalities, differences, and highlights across the case study schools’ data.

Overview of the report

The next chapter of this report focuses on findings from the survey. This is followed by chapters on the library spaces, resources, and services at the case study schools and on the factors that enabled the libraries at these schools to operate effectively to meet the needs of their staff, students, and communities. The report ends with a summary and discussion of the main findings across both survey and case study data.

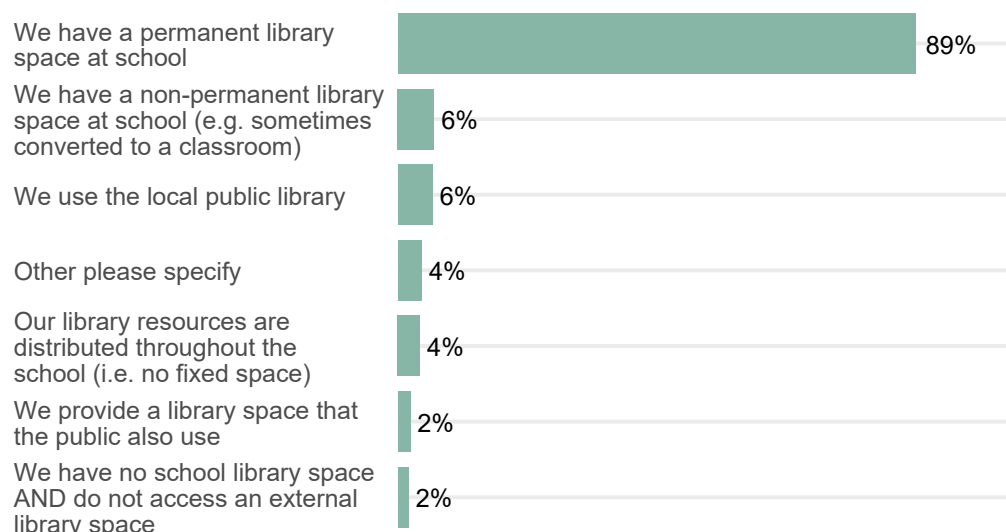
2. Findings from the national survey

This chapter presents findings from our analysis of data from the survey of primary, intermediate, secondary, and composite schools. The survey questions focused on library spaces, staffing, resources, and services. There were also questions about the challenges and benefits of providing library spaces, services, and resources in schools, and about school leadership.

Library spaces

Most responding schools (89% of respondents) had a permanent onsite library space (see Figure 1). A small proportion had a non-permanent library space, distributed their library resources throughout the school, or used the public library.

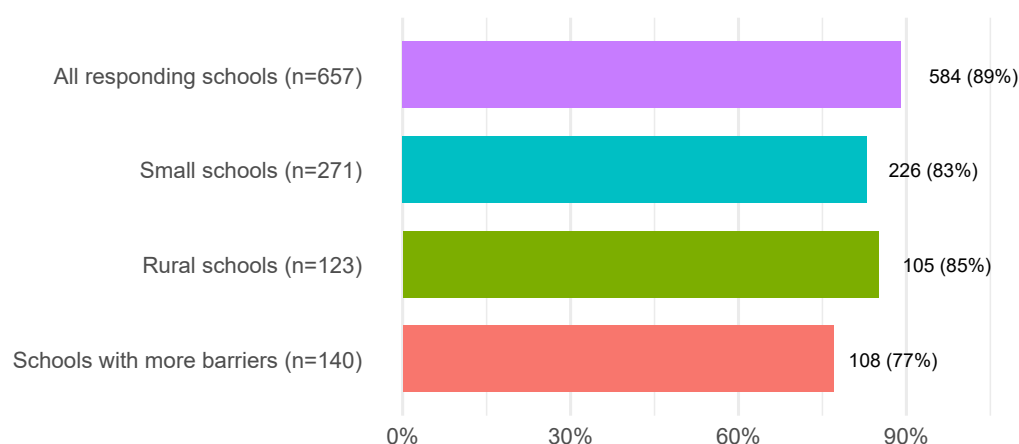
FIGURE 1: Access to library spaces (N=657)



Schools with more socioeconomic barriers were significantly less likely to have a permanent library space. Staff who indicated that they had no library space and that they did not access an external library space were all from schools with “more” or “moderate” socioeconomic barriers.

Figure 2 below shows the proportion of small, rural, and “more barriers” schools with a permanent library, as compared with all schools.

FIGURE 2: **Proportion of small, rural, and “more barriers” schools with a permanent library, compared to all schools**



Variation in the suitability of library spaces across schools

This section draws on comments from the final open-ended survey question to illustrate the wide variation in the availability of library spaces across schools in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Schools with permanent library spaces

While most schools had a permanent library space, responses to the final open-ended survey question suggest considerable variability across schools in the utility of the space. Some survey respondents described purpose-built, well resourced, permanent library spaces:

We have a very large space which is widely used by classes and outside groups use it for meetings. It has lots of windows for light, a variety of books and new carpet and lighting with furniture that is readily available. Students comment on how much they enjoy the school library both for the variety of books and the large quiet space itself which can be used during break times too.

We have a fantastic library space, that is warm, light and well used with plenty of room.

However, in some cases, the permanent library space was used for multiple purposes, which could inhibit the functioning of library services:

We currently have a shared library and high school study space which makes it challenging to provide a library space for our primary aged children. Currently, only high school tamariki have access to the library at break times. The primary students only get to visit the library once a week with their class.

Recent closure of the Year 13 Common Room has led to the library being the only ‘hanging out’ space available—which, while that does mean we are busy, perhaps it is not that useful when students want to do some work in study/free periods.

Other respondents described library spaces that were too small:

After having had to move our library space several times we finally have a home, but it is very small, and not all our collection is housed there. We have a small satellite library for Senior fiction books.

Our library has had to decrease in size by two-thirds due to the fact the Ministry views the area as underutilised and space that [is] needed to be used. Unfortunately, this has decreased the scope of what we can offer students and teachers.

In some cases, the library space was run down or not fit for purpose:

The library is overdue for a refurbishment to bring it up to a flexible, multi-purpose space. New fixtures and fittings, as well as acoustic panels, would enhance the space greatly.

Due to a lack of available resourcing, time and the physical space being unfit for purpose, the teachers are also discouraged from utilising a dedicated library space and instead have classroom libraries with little to no rotation of books.

Sometimes the location of the library was a challenge:

Our library is located away from the main areas of the school and students need to walk through a staff carpark and driveway to get to the library.

Schools with non-permanent library spaces

A small proportion of respondents indicated that they had a non-permanent library space which, in some cases, was regularly relocated due to competing school needs:

The library is likely to need to be used as a classroom in time. All shelving is now on wheels, just in case.

Some schools had a space that only operated as a library for certain times of the year. For example, one school regularly lost its library space in the last term of the year:

We have a dedicated library space which needs to be given up to a new entrant class regularly come term 4.

It would be wonderful to ... be secure in the knowledge that the library will not have to move!

Schools with no library spaces

Some respondents who had only recently got a permanent library space commented on their earlier experiences of not having one:

In previous years, the library has had to be used for classroom space which is very challenging and impacts on access to books for our students.

[It] ultimately got closed 6 years ago to make space for a classroom and [a] temporary library was squashed in a small room next door to [a] staff toilet until a rebuild space was acquired!

Our school has not had a library for 3 years due to lack of space and using the library as a classroom. This year we have moved to a newly built school with a small area for a library. It is a nice library, and the students love it.

Those respondents with no library spaces were simply hoping to get one:

We want a library space and more funding for books.

Unfortunately, our library was closed due to an influx of enrolments ... the library space was made into a classroom. I am hoping that next year it will be reinstated.

Library staffing

A total of 450 respondents (68%) reported that their school had paid library staff who either worked full or part time. Most of these schools had one (59%) or two to three (24%) paid staff members. A small number had four to five paid staff.

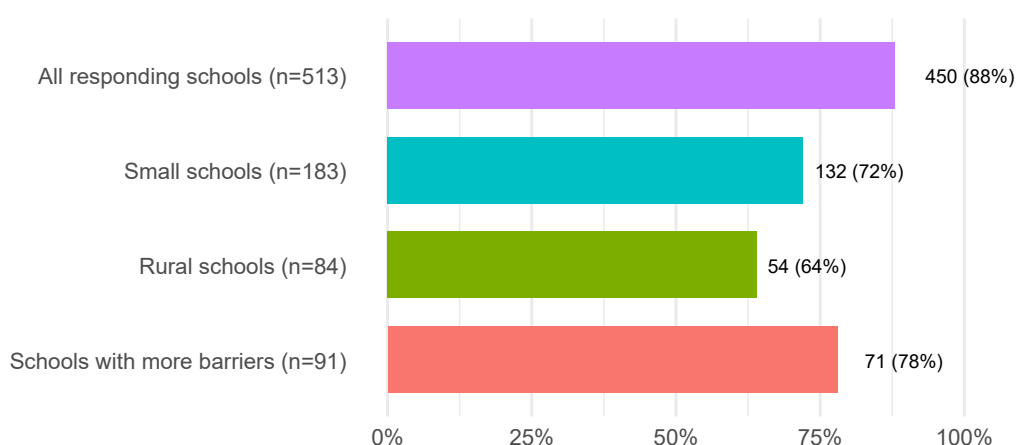
The number of hours of paid time allocated to the library per week varied from no hours to 81+ hours. The most common amount of time was between 11–40 hours (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: Hours of paid time allocated per week by school roll (N=513)

Paid hours	All (n=513)	0–100 (n=57)	101–300 (n=126)	300–500 (n=136)	500–1,000 (n=126)	1000+ (n=68)
No paid hours	12%	53%	17%	6%	3%	0%
1–5 hours	15%	35%	24%	13%	5%	1%
6–10 hours	11%	7%	24%	12%	5%	0%
11–20 hours	16%	4%	19%	29%	12%	1%
21–30 hours	16%	0%	10%	24%	28%	1%
31–40 hours	16%	0%	3%	11%	32%	31%
41–80 hours	11%	0%	1%	1%	16%	51%
81+ hours	3%	0%	2%	1%	0%	13%
Not sure	1%	2%	1%	3%	0%	0%

As shown in Figure 3 below, smaller schools, rural schools, and schools with more socioeconomic barriers were less likely to have paid staff hours dedicated to library work.

FIGURE 3: Proportion of small, rural and “more barriers” schools that have paid staff hours, compared to all schools.



Roles and qualifications of library staff

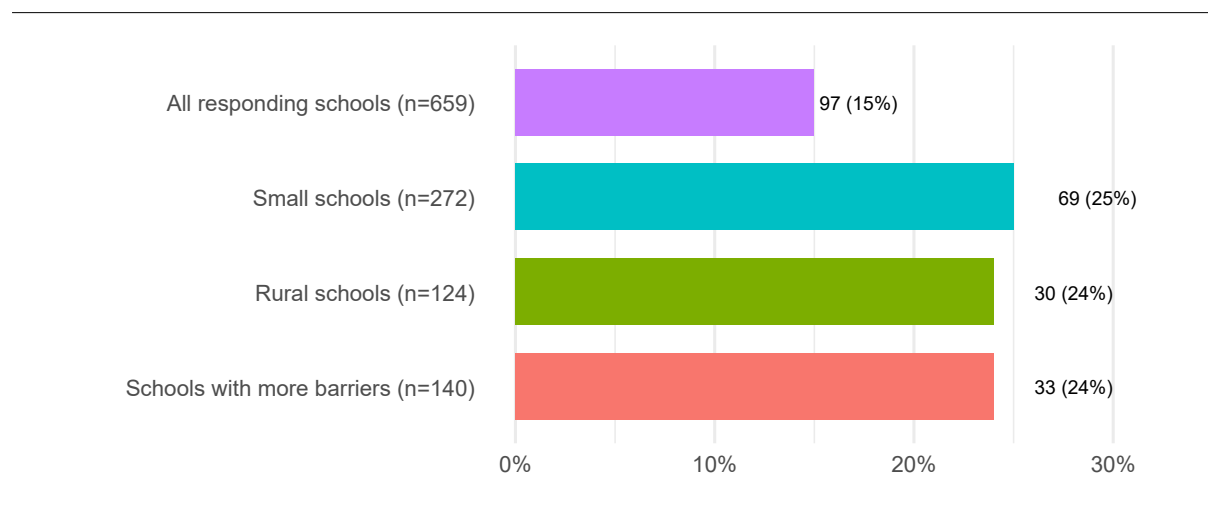
We asked that the survey be filled out by the school staff member with the greatest responsibility for running the library. We asked these respondents to identify, from a list provided, their main role in the school. Table 2 below shows the main role respondents were employed for at their school.

TABLE 2: Main school role respondents were employed for (N=659)

Main role employed for at the school	Count	Percentage
Head of department/head of curriculum/middle leader	14	2
Library staff member (e.g., library assistant, librarian, library manager) employed as support staff	377	57
Other (please specify your main role)	29	4
Other support staff (e.g., teacher aide, office administrator)	97	15
Principal/assistant principal/deputy principal	52	8
Teacher	23	3
Teacher-librarian	17	3
Teacher with library responsibilities	50	8

As shown in Figure 4, respondents from small, rural, and “more barriers” schools were more likely to be employed as support staff, such as teacher aides or office administrators, than as library staff.

FIGURE 4: Proportion of respondents from small, rural, and “more barriers” schools employed as support staff, compared to all schools



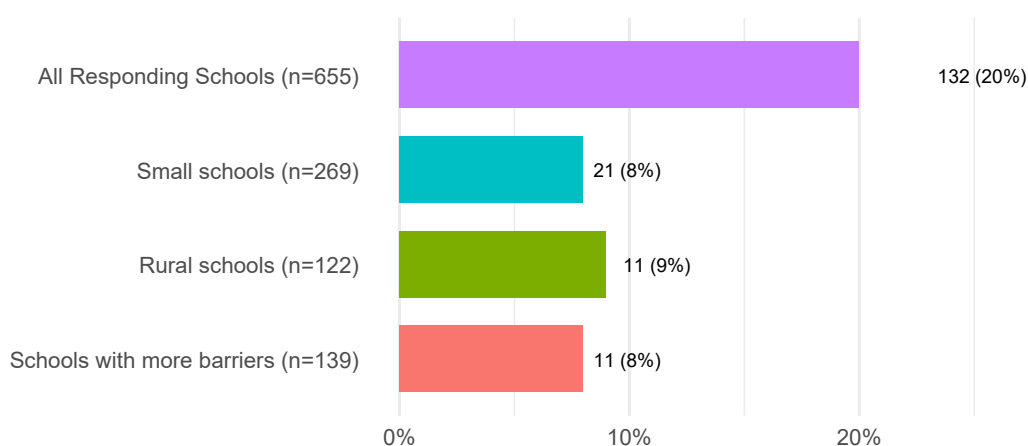
We also asked respondents to identify, from a list provided, their tertiary qualifications. Their responses are shown in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3: Respondents' tertiary qualifications (N = 655)

Qualification	Count	Percentage
Degree qualification(s) in another field	224	34
No tertiary qualifications	155	24
Teaching certificate or diploma	121	18
Postgraduate qualification(s) in another field	108	16
Other, please specify	98	15
Degree or diploma qualification in library and information studies (LIS)	92	14
Postgraduate qualification in library and information studies (LIS)	45	7

Respondents responsible for running the library in small, rural, and “more barriers” schools were less likely to have postgraduate qualifications, and less likely to have a degree or diploma qualification in LIS. This is shown in Figure 5 below.

FIGURE 5: Proportion of library staff from small, rural, and “more barriers” schools with a degree or diploma qualification in LIS, compared to all schools



Library services

We also asked respondents to identify, from a list provided, the library services (in school or from offsite locations) their school provided. Responses are shown in Figure 6.

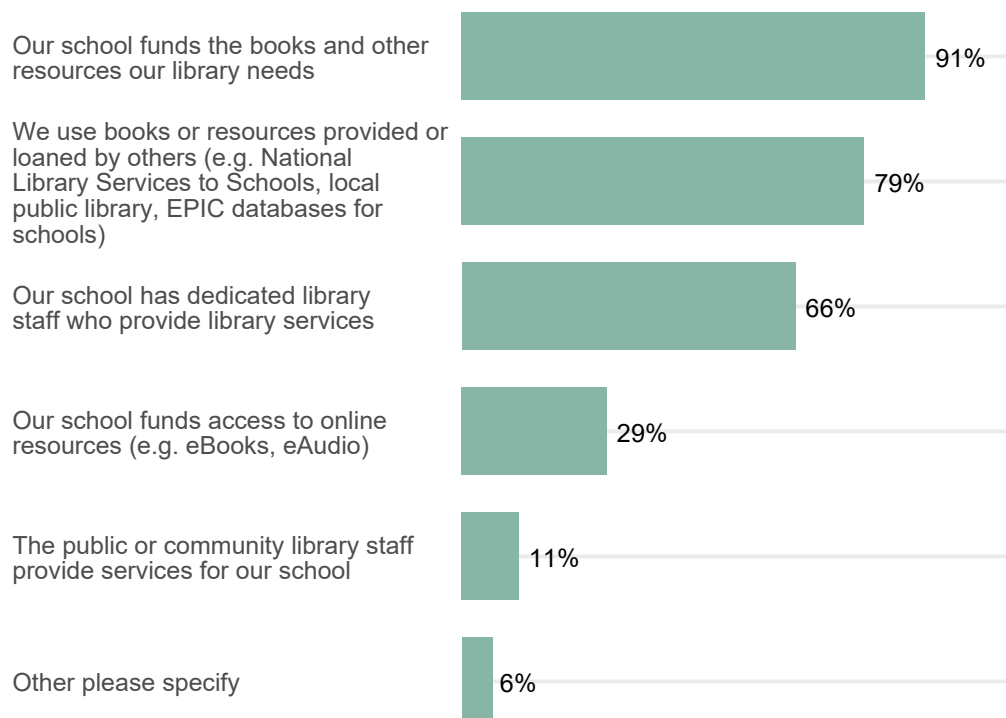
Most responding schools (81%) provided library services of some form. Respondents from smaller schools and schools with “more barriers” were less likely to indicate that their school provided any library services (72% and 70% respectively).

In the schools that offered library services, most respondents (91%) reported their school funded the books and other resources their library needed (see Figure 6). Many (79%) used resources loaned by others (such as the National Library). Using funding to access online resources (such as subscription databases or eBooks) was less common (29%).

Respondents from small, rural, and “more barriers” schools were less likely to have staff dedicated to providing library services (small 41%, rural 39%, “more barriers” 54%).

Respondents from small and rural schools were less likely to fund access to online books and resources (small 18%, rural 17%).

FIGURE 6: **School access to library services (in school or from offsite locations) (N = 524)**



Library services for students, school staff, and whānau

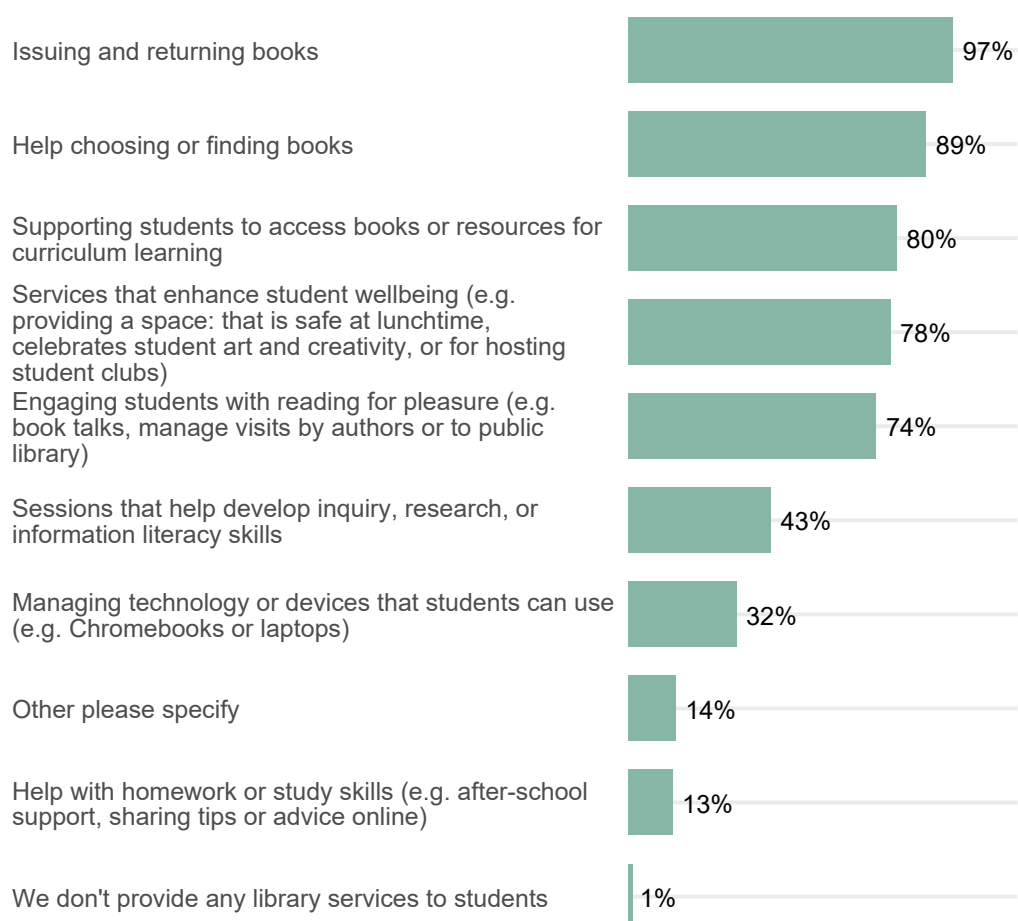
The survey asked respondents to identify, from a list provided, the library services provided for students, school staff, and whānau. A summary of responses to these questions is provided below.

Services for students

Of the schools that provided library services, nearly all (97%) provided some form of service for students (see Figure 7). The most common student services provided were issuing and returning books (97%), helping students to choose or find books (89%), supporting students to access books or resources for curriculum learning (80%), and providing services to enhance student wellbeing (78%).

Respondents from primary schools were less likely to describe their school as helping students with homework or study skills and managing technology such as Chromebooks or laptops.

FIGURE 7: Library services provided directly to students (in school or from offsite locations) (N=24)



The most frequently mentioned “other” services included mentoring student librarians and providing support with technology.

Apart from issuing and returning books, respondents from small and “more barriers” schools were less likely to describe their school as providing the services for students listed. (See the three figures below.)

FIGURE 8: **Proportion of small, rural, and “more barriers” schools providing students help with choosing or finding books, compared to all schools**

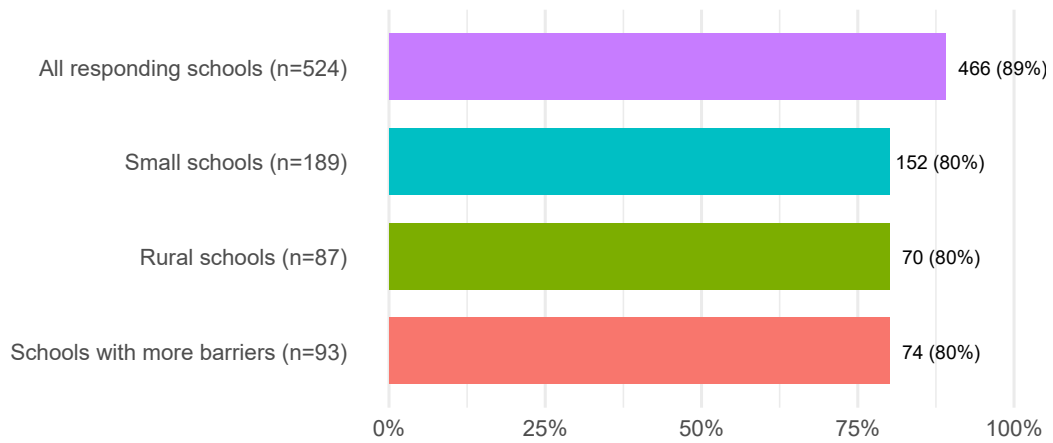


FIGURE 9: **Proportion of small, rural, and “more barriers” schools supporting students to access books or resources for curriculum learning, compared to all schools**

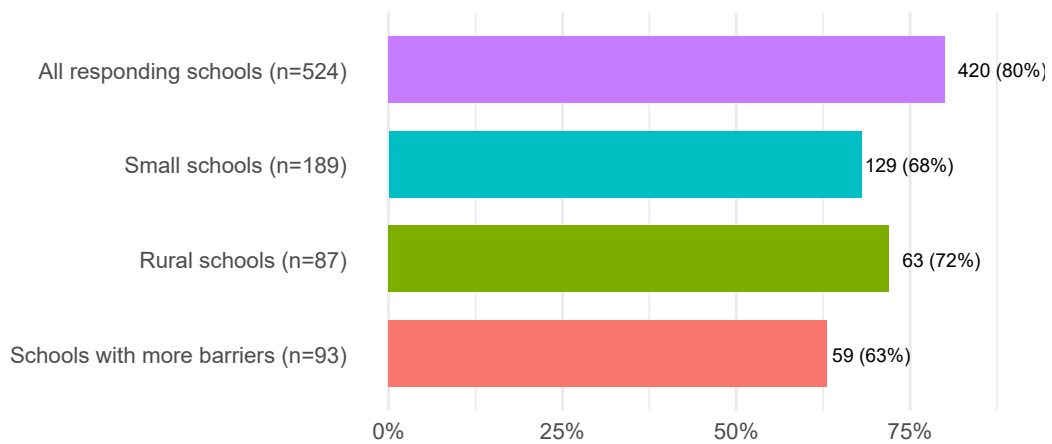
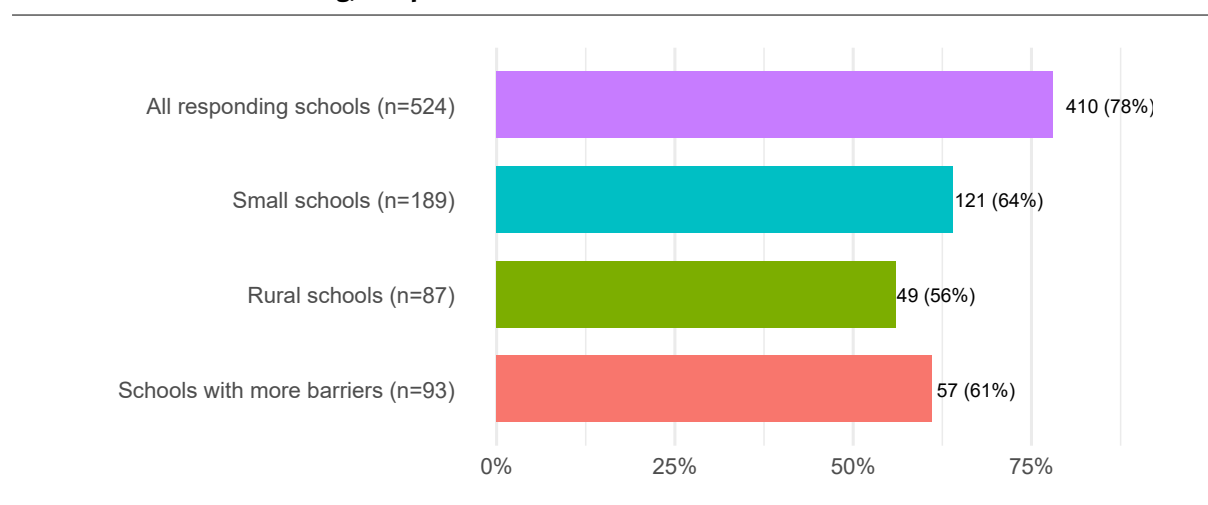


FIGURE 10: **Proportion of small, rural, and “more barriers” schools providing services that enhanced student wellbeing, compared to all schools**



In addition, respondents from rural schools were less likely to describe their school as managing technology or devices for students (21%).

The following comments from the final, open-ended question provide information about the nature of services provided to students:

Training students to use Access-it on the computer and iPads, lessons on the Dewey Decimal system and genres, a book club, encouraging writers to submit articles to the local newspaper, supporting the Learning Support Co-ordinator and children with special needs and their teacher aides with CD books, board books and a safe place to pop in and relax. Supporting children transitioning back to school.

We provide a nurturing environment where our students feel safe, warm and connected. We provide services of learning information skills and developing our students' potential to the highest standards they can achieve at. We also do reporting twice a year to assess our students and their ability at understanding and accessing information in a variety of resources.

In terms of students, I build relationships, help them find books that interest them and that build on current interests, run reading challenges, etc.

Our children are taught how to use digital databases from the age of about 7. Reading for pleasure is a huge focus as is learning how to choose books and making sure of availability for everyone. I'm lucky to have great staff and principal support. My student librarian team is taught really well and look after the days I am not at school.

Services for staff

Of the schools that provided library services, most (81%) provided services for staff (see Figure 11). The most common staff services were:

- informing teachers about new books or resources (81%)
- providing books or resources to support curriculum learning (72%).

Respondents from small schools, rural schools, and schools with “More” barriers were less likely to describe their school as providing the following services to staff:

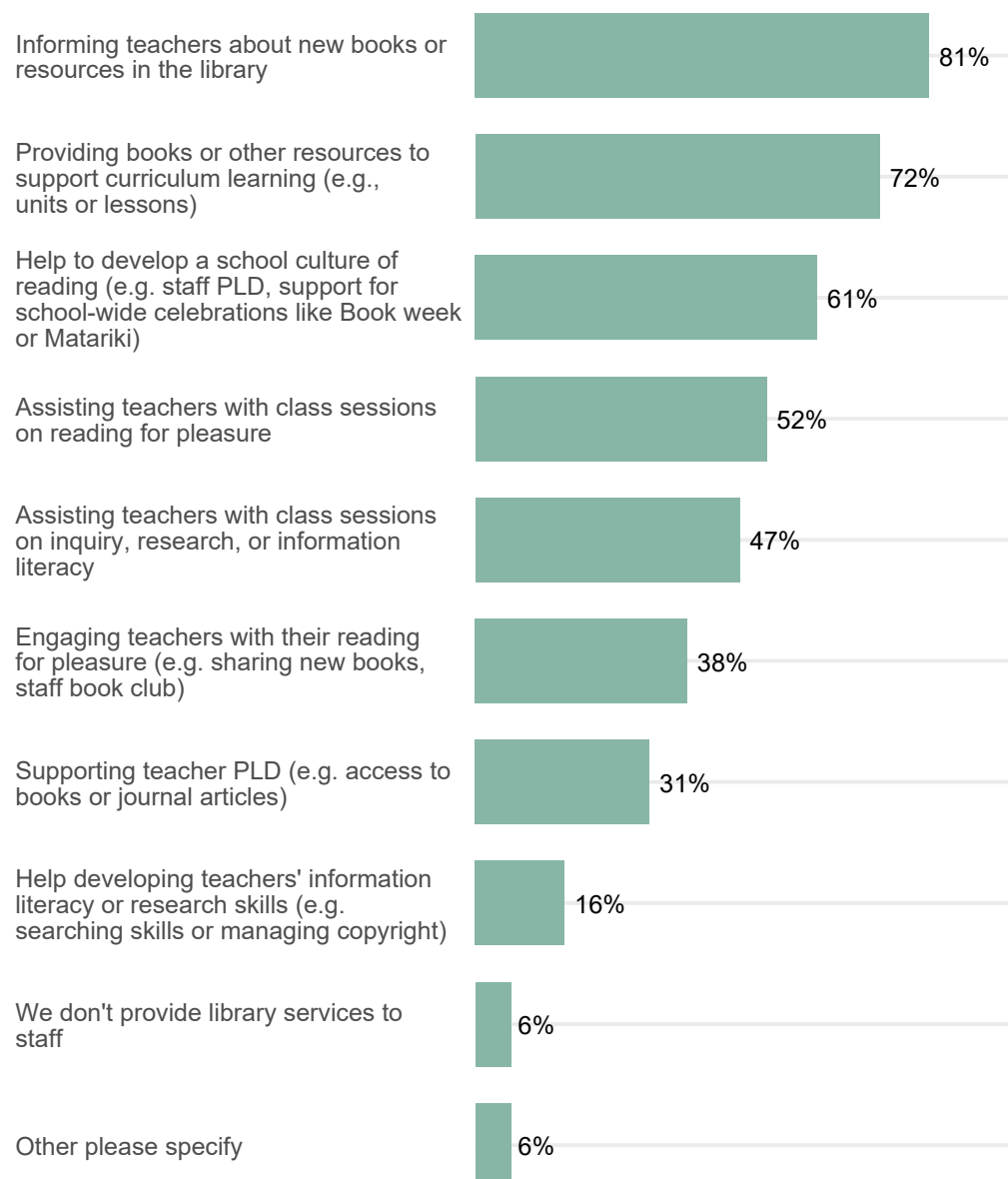
- providing books or other resources (such as units or lessons) to support curriculum learning (small 62%, rural 63%, “more barriers” 57%)
- helping to develop a school culture of reading (small 47%, rural 53%, “more barriers” 41%)
- assisting teachers with class sessions on reading for pleasure (small 33%, rural 37%, “more barriers” 36%)
- assisting teachers with class sessions on inquiry, research, or information literacy (small 28%, rural 27%, “more barriers” 33%).

In addition, respondents from smaller schools and rural schools were also less likely to describe their school as:

- offering help developing teachers’ information literacy or research skills (small 5%, rural 7%)
- supporting teacher PLD, such as access to books or journal articles (small 15%, rural 20%)
- engaging teachers in reading for pleasure (small 18%, rural 19%).

Respondents from primary schools were less likely to describe their school as helping to develop teachers’ information literacy or research skills, and engaging teachers in their own reading for pleasure.

FIGURE 11: **Library services provided directly to staff (in school or from offsite locations) (N=521)**



The following comments from the open-ended questions provide further information about the nature of services provided to school staff:

I see my role as providing support to staff for resources, as well as up-to-date knowledge on new books/suitable read alouds (providing teacher notes/resources where possible), working together to encourage students reading for pleasure etc.

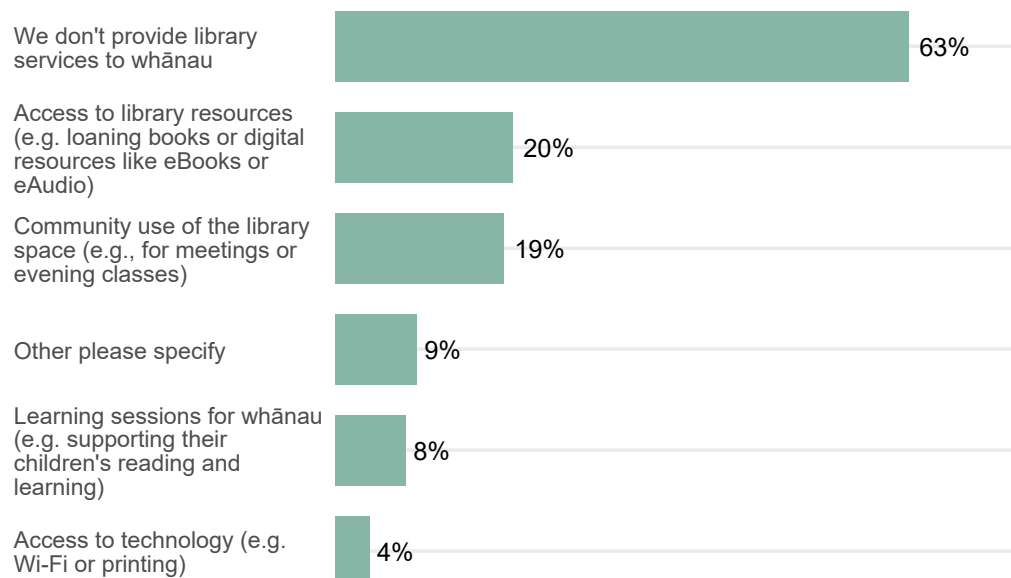
Accessing digital resources and showing staff how to use them.

Services for whānau

It was less common for schools to provide services for whānau, with over half of respondents (63%) reporting that their school did not do this. The main services provided for whānau were access to library resources (20%) or library spaces (e.g., for community meetings [19%]) (see Figure 12).

Primary schools were more likely to offer services for whānau than secondary schools.

FIGURE 12: Library services provided to whānau (in school or from offsite location) (N=501)



The following comments from the open-ended questions provide further information about the nature of services provided to whānau. Overall, comments most frequently focused on providing whānau with opportunities to use the library spaces and to borrow books and other resources:

Whānau are invited to use [the] library with their tamariki before school and during onsite visits.

Family members are welcome to visit the library and borrow books with or without their children.

We support whānau in financial need by providing Chromebooks.

Some schools provided a section of library books specifically for parents, and some provided parents with information or ideas about how to support their children with reading at home:

We have a small Parent/Whānau Library in the Office area for them to access.

An e-platform offered to parents as support for their children and a staff library which is open to parents.

Supporting parents with information for their children with reading difficulties.

Whānau are resourced to support reading at home.

Some library staff communicated regularly with whānau via the school newsletter and were available for parent-teacher interviews:

I have a regular spot in the newsletter to let families know what is happening in our library, talk about new books, podcasts, even book-based TV shows that might be of interest to their families.

At parent-teacher meetings, the librarian can be chosen as a teacher if parents want to talk about books for their children.

Some library staff ran family book clubs and events supporting reading for pleasure:

Family Nights at the Library (author events and story times) and a Family Book Club.

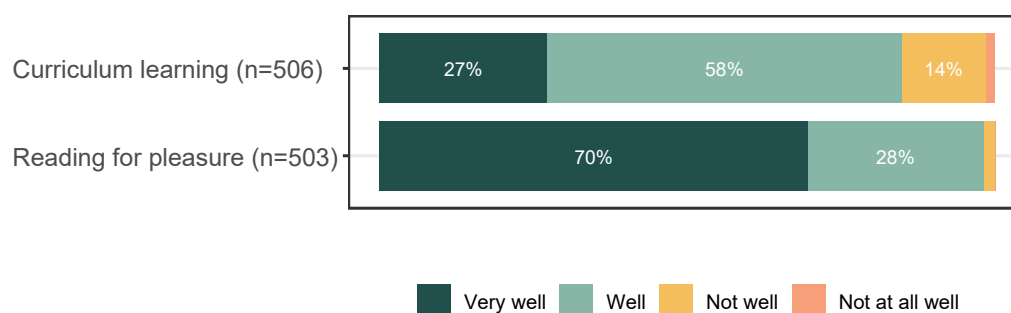
Library collections

Collections that support curriculum and reading for pleasure

Of the schools that provided services, nearly all (98%) had their own collection of library books or digital resources.

Figure 13 shows that nearly all these schools felt their collection provided “well” or “very well” (98%) in terms of reading for pleasure, and most (75%) felt their collection provided “well” or “very well” for curriculum learning.

FIGURE 13: How well the school library collection provides for two core areas



Respondents from small schools, rural schools, and “more barriers” schools were less likely to rate their school as providing “very well” for both curriculum learning and for reading for pleasure.

FIGURE 14: Proportion of respondents from small, rural, and “more barriers” schools that rated their library collection as providing “very well” for curriculum learning, compared to all schools

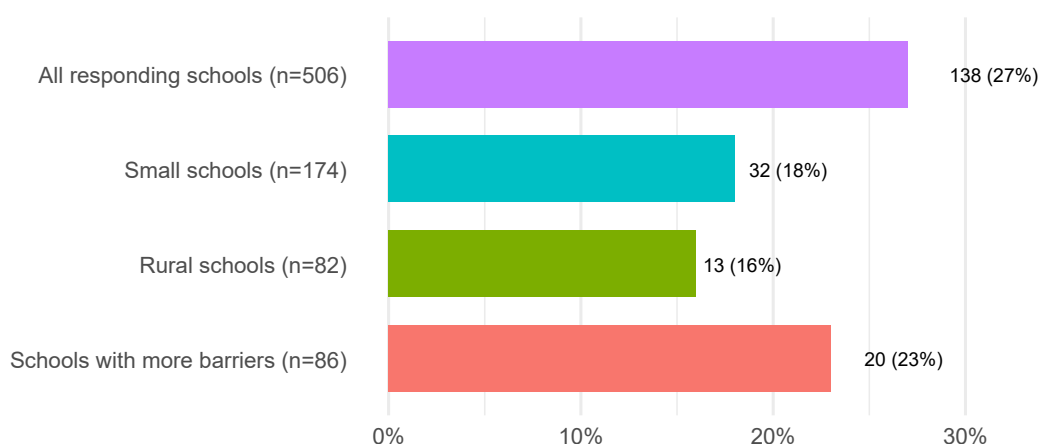
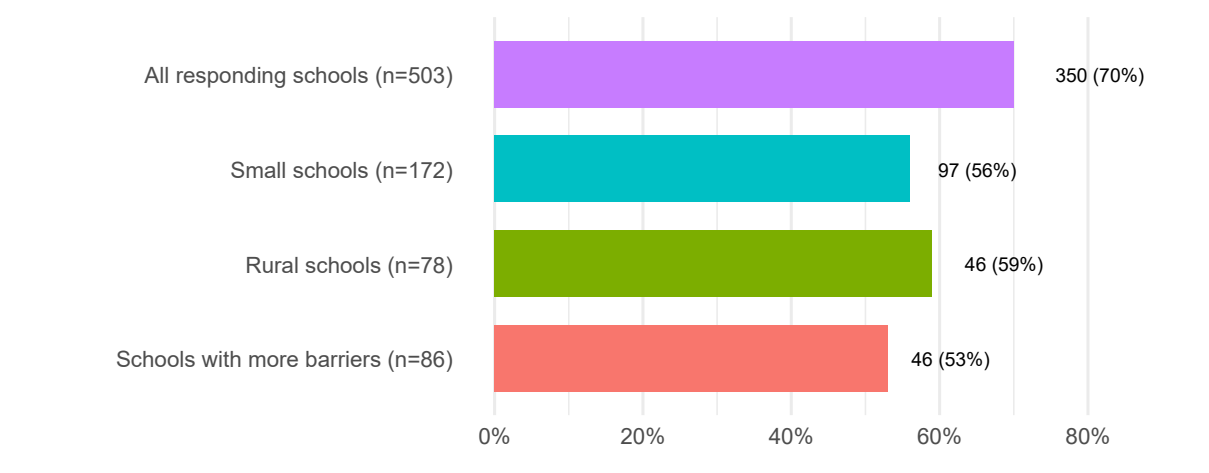


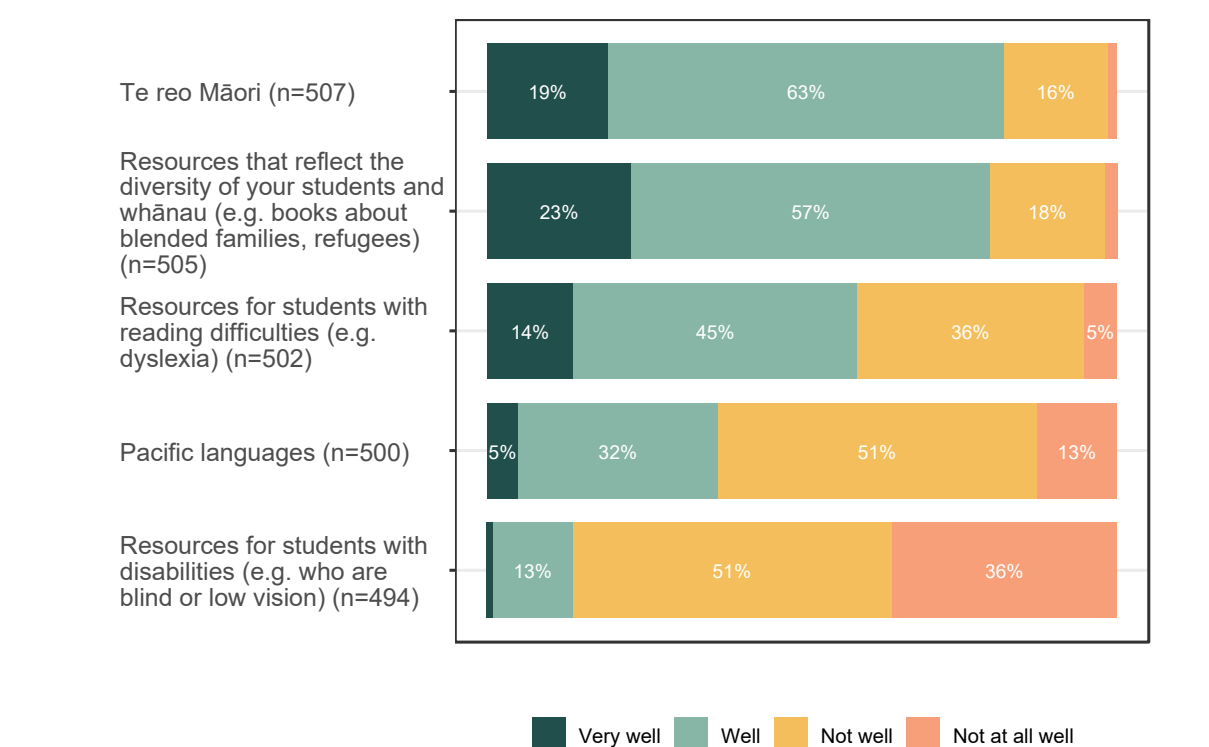
FIGURE 15: **Proportion of respondents from small, rural, and “more barriers” schools that rated their library collection as providing “very well” for reading for pleasure, compared to all schools**



Collections providing for diverse needs

Figure 16 shows most respondents (82%) rated their school collection providing resources in te reo Māori “well” or “very well”. Most (80%) also considered their library provided resources reflecting the diversity of their school students and whānau, “well” or “very well”. However, only around one-third thought their collection provided resources in Pacific languages “well” or “very well”. And a very small proportion of respondents considered that their collection provided “well” or “very well” for students with disabilities.

FIGURE 16: **How well the school collection provides for diverse needs (Possible N=513)**



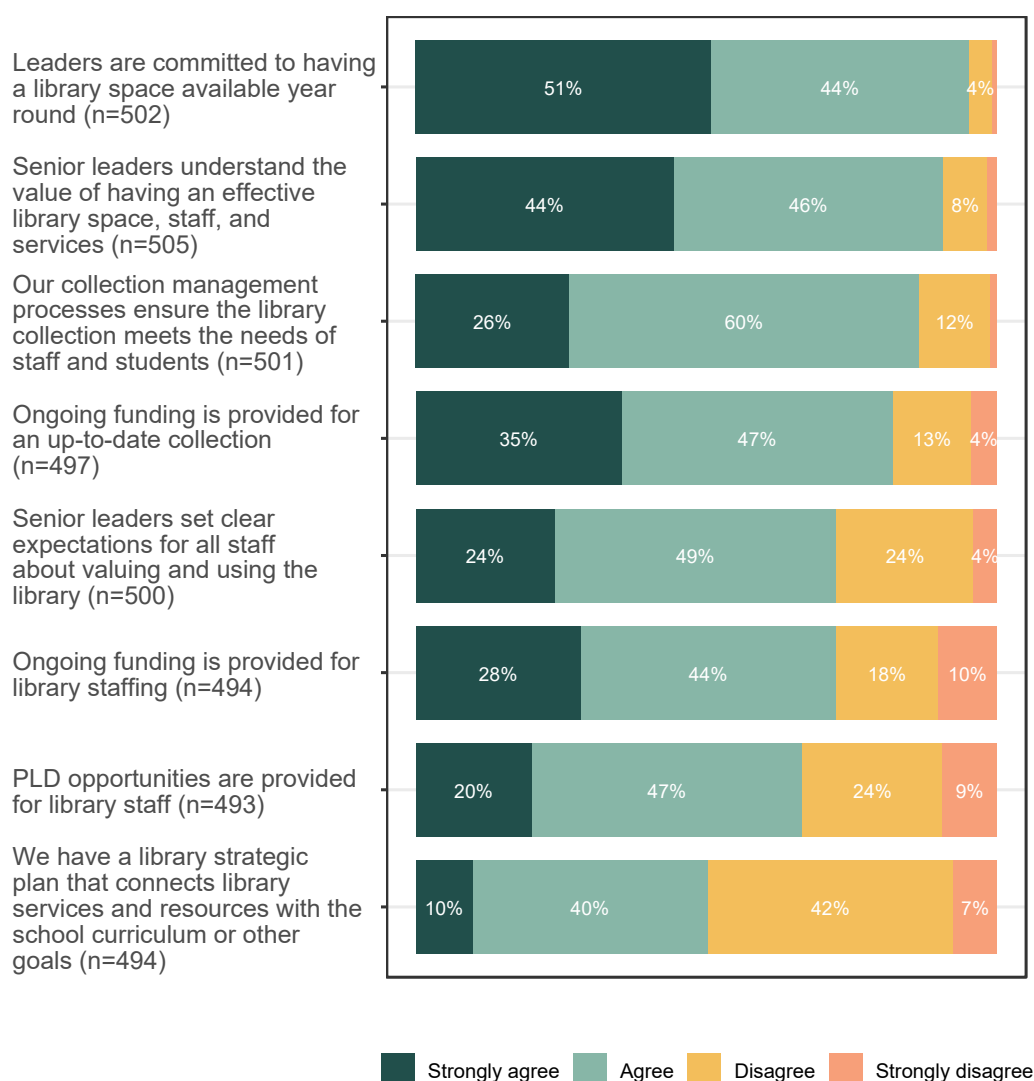
Respondents from small schools and rural schools were more likely to rate their collection as providing “not at all well” for students speaking Pacific languages (small schools 21%, rural schools 28%) and “not at all well” for students with disabilities (small schools 46%, rural schools 49%).

Library leadership

The survey included a block of questions about library leadership. These included some questions about leaders’ beliefs and aspirations, such as their commitment to having a library space year-round, and their understanding of the value of effective libraries. There were also questions about the practical actions that school leaders can take, such as setting expectations about the use of the library, providing funding for library staffing and PLD, and having a strategic plan to connect the library with the school’s curriculum and other goals. The 513 respondents at schools that had an onsite library collection were able to answer these questions.

As shown in Figure 17 below, most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their school leaders were committed to having a library space year round and understood the value of an effective library. However, less than half agreed or strongly agreed that their school had a strategic plan connecting library resources and services with the school curriculum or other goals.

FIGURE 17: Library leadership (Possible N = 513)



Respondents from smaller schools and rural schools were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the statements, “ongoing funding is provided for library staffing” and “PLD opportunities are provided for library staff”.

FIGURE 18: Proportion of respondents from small and rural schools disagreeing that “ongoing funding is provided for library staffing”, compared to all schools

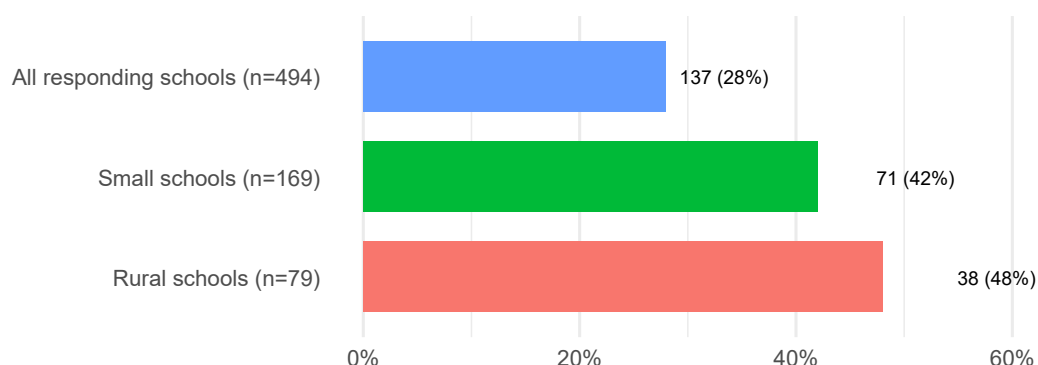
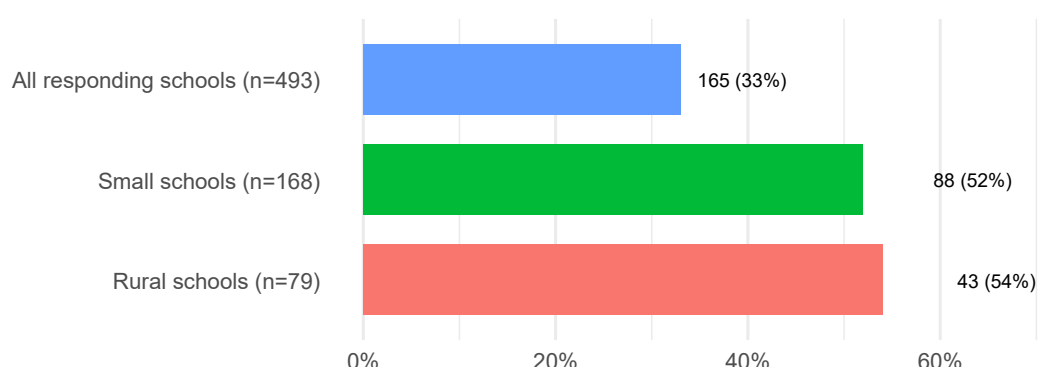


FIGURE 19: Proportion of respondents from small and rural schools disagreeing that “PLD opportunities are provided for library staff”, compared to all schools



A difference in the perception of leaders’ aspirations and actions

The data in Figure 17 show that, in general, survey respondents rated school leaders’ commitment to the library more highly than the actions they carried out to support it. Comments from the open-ended question at the end of the survey support these quantitative findings.

Overall, survey respondents at schools with a library considered that school leaders had high aspirations for use of their library spaces, resources, and services. Nearly all agreed or strongly agreed that school leaders were committed to having a library space all year round, and understood the value of having effective library spaces, staff, and services. Most agreed or strongly agreed that their school’s collection management processes ensured that the collection met staff and student needs; and that ongoing funding was provided for an up-to-date collection:

At our school the library is a very highly valued place. I, as a librarian, feel very valued by students, teachers, parents/caregivers, management and the board as an important resource.

We are lucky to have a supportive leadership team who does provide the budget to be able to keep an up-to-date and diverse collection.

We have an amazing library with good selections of books and resources. It is a pleasure to work here ... Leadership is supportive, and I make the most of making our library the best for all.

However, fewer respondents agreed or strongly agreed that senior leaders set clear expectations for all staff about valuing and using the library. Respondents commented on how important leadership expectations were, but how even a well-resourced and well-staffed library can be under-utilised when leadership does not adequately communicate expectations about its value and use:

I know I am very lucky at my school to have a new custom built facility, proper staffing and a very large book budget; however, this doesn't take away from the challenges of making sure the library, its resources and its staff are recognised for the enormous benefits and support we can provide. It is a huge struggle to get SLT [senior leadership team] to trust its well-paid and well-resourced staff with the autonomy to do our jobs, respect our knowledge and let us make decisions in the library and work closely within the curriculum.

Likewise, fewer respondents agreed or strongly agreed that ongoing funding was provided for library staffing and that PLD opportunities were provided for library staff:

At our school there aren't enough paid hours to do the job to a high standard. The timetable is too full to get everything done and there is no time for PD or even engaging in local librarian groups.

There is an expectation at schools and within the larger librarian community that librarians will do a lot out of love for the job/community. Lots of meetings and PD are done outside of paid hours ... Having senior leadership onboard with the importance of libraries makes a big difference to the school library.

Fewer than half of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "We have a library strategic plan that connects library services and resources with the school curriculum or other goals". Comments in the final, open-ended question illustrate how a lack of leadership planning linking library services with curriculum may filter through to teachers' use of library services and resources for teaching and learning:

It is a challenge to get any engagement/support from staff regarding resources to support their curriculum areas.

Changes to senior leadership have meant less support for the library. There is also less support for the need to have a diverse and representative collection.

There seems to be no recognition from Board of Trustees and some staff of the actual relationship of a library to developing literacy and literate students.

Our Library is seen as an optional 'nice to have' amenity, and its value as the school's heart of literacy is not recognised. Funding cuts to staffing reflect this attitude.

The finding that survey respondents rated their leaders' commitment to the library more highly than the actions that leaders carried out is captured in the following quote from the final open-ended question:

This has made me depressed ... Senior Leadership say one thing but do another.

Benefits in providing library spaces, resources, and services

The survey asked respondents to identify the three main benefits that their students, staff, or community gained from their school library. In total, 488 people provided answers to this question.

The most frequently identified benefits were having a curated collection tailored to the school community, support for student wellbeing, support for recreational reading, and support for curriculum, teaching, and learning.

A curated collection tailored to the school community

Just under one-third (30%) of respondents stated that a benefit of the school library was having access to a curated collection tailored to the needs of the school and its community. Examples included rich and varied texts reflecting students' languages, cultures, and identities; digital technology (including devices, printing services, and online reading materials); along with games and activities:

New books are continually being added to the collections. We are extending choice in graphic novels, young adults, te reo, and non-fiction especially.

[We provide] timely and direct access to new fiction and non-fiction that can be targeted to the needs of individual students such as LGBT students or those with particular needs.

[School location] is an isolated community with no other ready access to books.

Access to books without having to go to the town library.

Many of these respondents also commented on the services provided by library staff, such as support finding and using the school's resources and accessing resources from other organisations, such as the National Library:

Personalised service from the library staff.

Having a knowledgeable librarian who knows the collection well and can help find what customers are looking for.

Timely and direct access to new fiction and nonfiction that can be targeted to the needs of the individual.

Respondents viewed this access to library resources and services as a means of diminishing socioeconomic barriers, and engaging students, who might not otherwise be engaged, in reading and visiting the library:

We provide equitable access to all our students regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds—having a librarian and well-resourced library removes barriers to access and educational achievement for all students.

[The] huge variety of the collection means students have access to books they might not be able to afford.

Support for student wellbeing

Just over one-quarter of respondents (27%) highlighted that a key benefit of their school library was providing an inclusive, safe space where many students felt a sense of belonging and comfort. Respondents emphasised that school libraries can be more than a space for reading—they can foster a sense of ownership, community, and wellbeing for students and staff:

We create a comfortable, inclusive and safe space with an approachable and welcoming librarian. That creates an environment where pupils are valued and feel listened to. This can be vital to their wellbeing and ongoing development.

A safe space, a non-judgmental place where students feel safe and valued—this increases their wellbeing and self-esteem, leading to higher levels of confidence in school, schoolwork, and learning.

Support for recreational reading

Just under one-quarter (22%) of those who responded to the question about benefits commented positively on the support their school library provided for recreational reading:

We cultivate an environment to motivate and empower pupils in literacy and to develop a love of reading, so they become life-long readers.

A passionate, knowledgeable librarian to promote, encourage and inspire the love of reading which reflects in positive attitudes to learning.

Some respondents described engendering a school-wide culture of reading-for-pleasure through introducing book clubs, and book-related events and activities:

[We use] library events and creative ways to encourage a school-wide reading culture (recommended reading lists through 'Reading Trees', book-related activities like Book Character Day and Story Walks. Book Clubs and Reading Groups that are student-led (older children passing their love of reading down to the younger children).

Support for curriculum, teaching, and learning

A small proportion of schools (12%) emphasised the value of their school library in supporting curriculum. Examples of supports included assistance with planning, finding resources for teaching and learning, and providing displays and resources related to students' in-class learning:

Themed displays running alongside current topics, community and worldwide happenings (e.g., Olympics, Easter, Christmas, World Cup Events, ANZAC, Matariki).

A direct link for students to be able to read around the curriculum (e.g., if they are studying Greece or Rome students can be teamed up with a fiction book on that subject for both pleasure and immersion in that topic, and the close liaison with teachers means we can order in special books that will enhance the learning experience of tamariki).

A small proportion of respondents (<10%) identified the following as benefits:

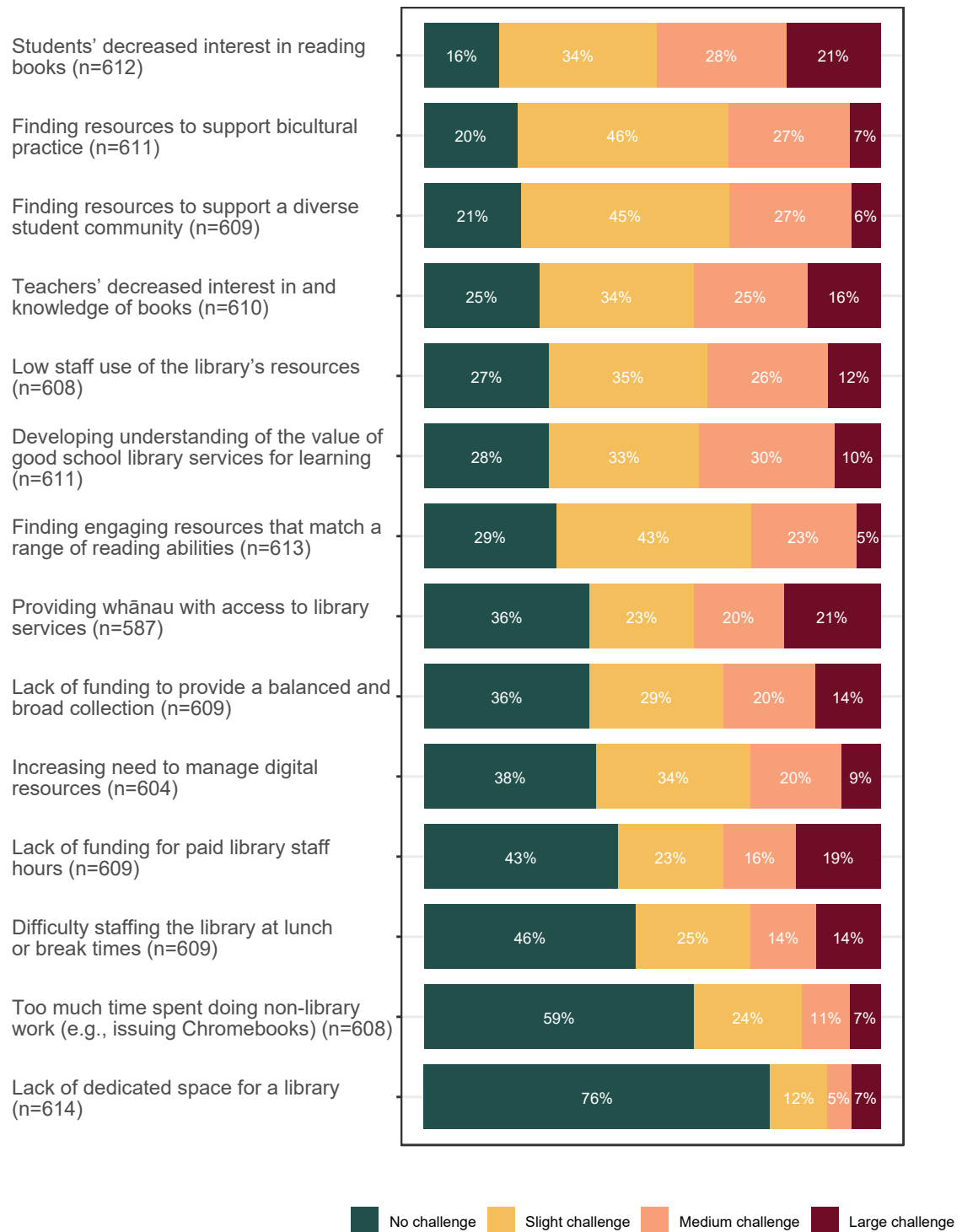
- supporting students' literacy learning outcomes (including fostering their information literacy and library-user skills and providing teaching and support for students with literacy learning difficulties)
- access to trained library staff able to recommend books and provide library services
- providing opportunities for student leadership (e.g., as student librarians).

Challenges providing library spaces, resources, and services

The survey included a question that asked respondents to rate a list of 14 possible challenges they faced in providing library services (see Figure 20). All 659 respondents were able to answer this question. The most frequently identified challenge was students' decreased interest in reading books, with 83% of respondents identifying this as a challenge. Over 70% of respondents rated the following as challenges:

- students' decreased interest in reading books
- finding resources to support bicultural practice
- finding resources to support a diverse student community
- teachers' decreased interest in and knowledge of books
- low staff use of the library's resources
- developing understanding of the value of good school library services for learning
- finding engaging resources that match a range of reading abilities.

FIGURE 20: Challenges in providing library resources and services



2. Findings from the national survey

As shown in Figures 21 and 22 below, respondents from small, rural, and “more barriers” schools were, in general, more likely to rate the following as a challenge:

- lack of funding for paid library staff hours
- lack of funding to provide a balanced and broad collection.

FIGURE 21: **Proportion of respondents from small, rural, and “more barriers” schools who identified lack of funding for paid library staff hours as a challenge**

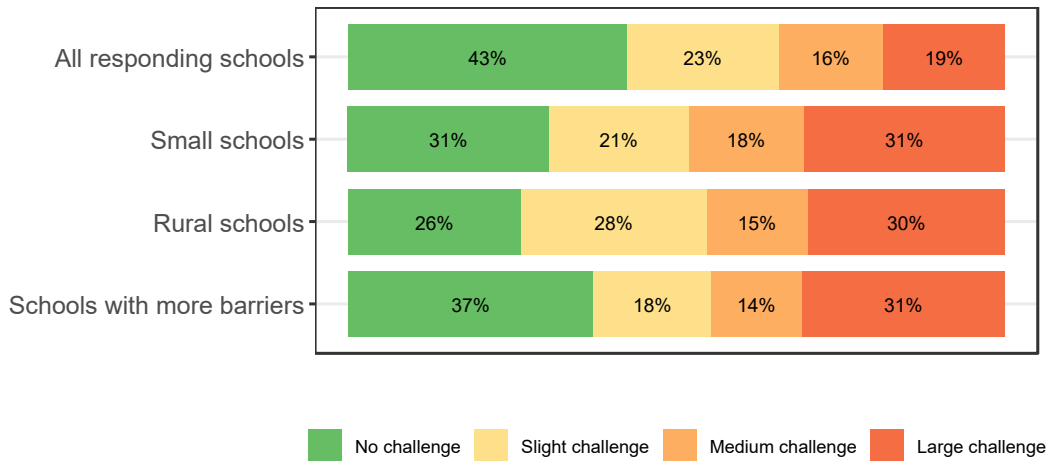
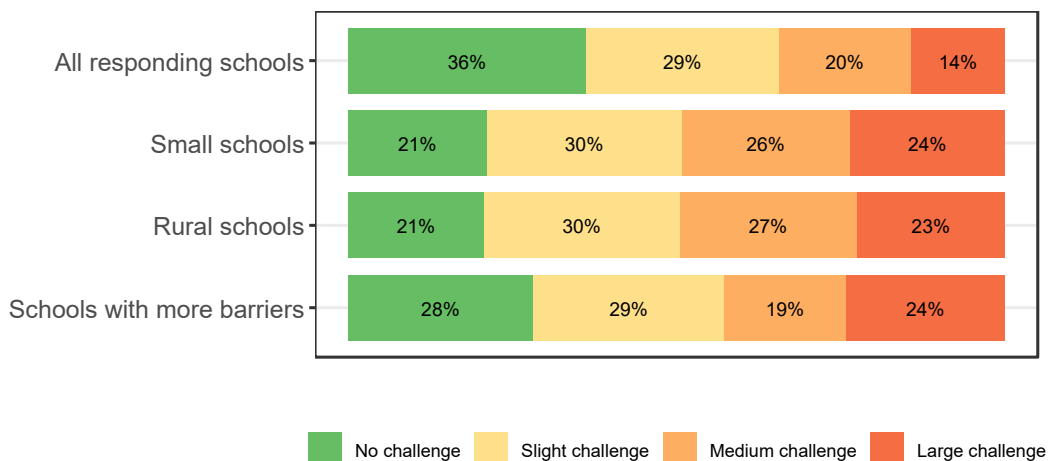


FIGURE 22: **Proportion of respondents from small, rural, and “more barriers” schools who identified lack of funding to provide a balanced and broad collection as a challenge**



In addition, respondents from small schools were more likely to identify as a challenge:

- difficulty staffing the library at lunch or break times (no challenge 44%, slight challenge 19%, medium challenge 17%, large challenge 20%)
- low staff use of the library’s resources (no challenge 32%, slight challenge 34%, medium challenge 24%, large challenge 9%).

Respondents from rural schools were also more likely to identify as a challenge difficulty staffing the library at lunch or break times (no challenge 47%, slight challenge 15%, medium challenge 15%, large challenge 22%).

Interestingly, respondents from rural schools were less likely than those from urban schools to identify “students’ decreased interest in reading books” as a challenge (no challenge 22%, slight challenge 37%, medium challenge 33%, large challenge 8%).

As shown in Figure 20, the most frequently identified challenges overall relate to changing attitudes to libraries, books, and reading—in schools and in society more generally. These challenges relate to students’ decreased interest in reading books, the difficulty in finding books reflecting diverse student populations in Aotearoa New Zealand, and teachers’ decreased knowledge of books, interest in books, and appreciation of how library services can support learning. Comments from those who responded to the final open-ended question provide further insight into the nature of the main challenges identified.

Students’ decreased interest in reading books

Most (83%) of the survey respondents rated students’ decreased interest in reading books as a challenge, and responses to the final, open-ended survey question illustrate the nature of the challenge:

Engaging students to read is getting harder every year.

Students are very disengaged from reading. This is a huge problem as literacy rates are dropping.

There were related comments on a perceived drop in students’ reading perseverance, resilience, and abilities:

More and more students will not read any long texts.

I feel concerned for the future of many of our students who often do not move beyond picking up a ‘quick read’ as their reading book.

There is an increasing demand from students for accessible graphic novels and texts which are easy to read as reading ability has lowered.

Difficulty sourcing resources to support equity, diversity, and inclusion

Most (80%) of the survey respondents rated finding resources to support bicultural practice as a challenge, and most (78%) rated finding resources to support a diverse student community as a challenge:

Sometimes the books we need just haven’t been published, we would love more books in other languages and English, we would love more manga for younger students, we would love more easy-to-read books on popular relevant topics.

Many staff and students are ESL speakers and while we have e-books with translation facilities, creating a culture of reading (and using the library for research) is a challenge.

As the LSC—sourcing books—age-appropriate—for our children with vision/hearing and learning needs is extremely challenging.

Finding engaging, age-appropriate materials in Pacific and other languages is a challenge.

Teachers' decreased knowledge of books and use of library services

Three-quarters (75%) of the survey respondents rated teachers' decreased interest in books and knowledge of books as a challenge:

It is also a challenge to bring staff on board who are not readers themselves and don't see the value of reading.

Just under three-quarters (73%) of respondents rated developing staff understanding about the value of school library services for learning as a challenge:

Staff don't seem to realise the importance of a library.

I find that teachers are not aware of how libraries function/operate, what is available and how to access it, and how best to encourage reading for pleasure, as well as how to carry out simple research.

Even getting some teachers to engage in the library is a challenge with their workload. Library sessions are given up, to catch up on other teaching.

Just under three-quarters (73%) of respondents rated low staff use of the library's resources and services as a challenge:

Provision of resources is good but staff and student use of these resources is poor.

The challenge is getting teachers to use their library sessions to support reading for pleasure for all their students.

We see an increasing disengagement of teachers with the library.

Despite having a well-funded, cheerful library, with well-trained and welcoming staff, our services are used less and less.

Several respondents considered that the school library was less valued by younger staff members and put this down to the ubiquity of new technologies and online sources:

Younger staff means they are totally computer based and do not view the library as a place for them to be.

The new cohort of teaching staff are not library aware. As the older staff move on, this will become an increasing challenge for us.

Equitable access to library spaces, resources, and services

As noted at the beginning of this report, the last question in the survey asked respondents if there were any final comments they would like to make about school library spaces, resources, and services. Many of the responses related to questions asked earlier in the survey and we have included a sample of these in the relevant sections of the report.

There were also responses that focused on areas that did not directly pertain to the survey questions. These responses fell into three related categories:

- the importance of school libraries for student outcomes
- the importance of the National Library in supporting schools
- the importance of equitable access to school library spaces, services, and resources.

This section provides a summary of the responses in each category, starting with the importance of school libraries.

Importance of school libraries for student outcomes

Responses relating to the importance of school libraries tended to focus on the benefits afforded by the library, particularly the potential for positive impacts on students' reading engagement, literacy achievement, and wellbeing. Examples typifying these responses are shown below:

Libraries and librarians are key players in lifting literacy achievement and generating a community that reads for pleasure. Sustained and deep reading from books is crucial for development of comprehension skills. Reading fiction is essential for stimulating empathy in individuals, and access to a wide range of reading material is critical to ensuring a literate society made up of individuals with the ability to discern, who are able to think critically, and with imagination.

Clearly the falling literacy scores year-in-year-out of children are not being correlated with the devaluation of school libraries. With new teachers failing to be literacy champions, librarians and libraries are needed more than ever.

If funded and staffed school libraries were an essential and mandated component of every New Zealand school, then students' literary levels across New Zealand would rise!

Importance of the National Library in supporting schools

Many respondents expressed appreciation of the National Library's Schools Lending Service to "top up", "supplement", "refresh", or keep "up to date" their school library collection; to access resources they could not afford to purchase themselves; and to access resources meeting niche needs, such as books for students with print disabilities:

Having the free access to National Library books this year is a very welcome addition to what we can supply for our students⁵.

In all areas I use the public library and National Library services to supplement our collection as required.

Positive responses about the availability of resources from the National Library often came from staff at small schools who relied on National Library loans to provide an up-to-date collection:

We are a relatively small Full Primary School ... I am committed to providing books that engage and interest our students, given the budget ... we 'borrow' books from the National Library, as and when required by teachers, for Inquiry Units and special interest topics.

We have just begun the National Library service for small schools ... and this is great so far!

Respondents also valued the advice and PLD provided by the National Library:

The Services to Schools team have been very helpful as I have navigated this new role as librarian. The PLD they provide is relevant and accessible. Their website is amazing, and I often refer to it when I need guidance. Their knowledge of books is also invaluable when sourcing books for tamariki and kaiako.

I am new to being a school librarian this year so am still figuring things out. The support from National Library staff has been invaluable in guiding me about what a librarian role could/should look like.

⁵ The National Library's standing order of books offer is a 2-year programme available to schools with a roll of 100 or fewer students. Standing order of books | Services to Schools

Importance of equitable access to library spaces, resources, and services

A related theme in responses to the final open-ended question was a concern about inequitable access to library services for students across Aotearoa New Zealand. These respondents argued that all students, regardless of where they went to school, should have access to quality library spaces, services, and resources:

Every school should have a school library and funding from the government should be of top priority. Librarians should also be offered professional development on a regular basis to keep up with the changes through technology and advancement in the world. Funding needs to be of the utmost importance in every school in New Zealand.

Several respondents suggested changes to the funding model for school libraries. These respondents argued that funding for school library spaces, resources, staffing, and services should not come from the Operations Grant or be at the principal's discretion. Rather, all schools should be allocated per capita funding dedicated to the school library. This, they argued, would ensure more equitable access:

[It] would be ideal to have a reliable and consistent source of funding for the school library and librarians. There should be centralised funding from government to all schools in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Libraries and librarians are at the mercy of the personal preferences of principals and heads of departments. Being reliant on non-targeted funding sources (operational grants) gives discretion for budgets to be unilaterally cut or slashed without notice and really no redress available. Once budgets are slashed, they are rarely reinstated and so the collection starts to age and struggles to look fresh and be engaging. This then leads to a drop in attendance of classes.

The only solution to this problem is for libraries to be recognised and protected by the Ministry, with a funding stream that allows for adequate staffing and budgets that are based on a per student basis. Without this protection, funds will continue to be diverted to digital devices, sports equipment and whatever else is the preference of school leaders at the time.

Libraries at primary level are utterly dependent on the views of their current school leaders. We need to be centrally funded, and that funding needs to be earmarked as exclusively for library use. It is very frustrating to work hard at providing a needed service (with almost no money) and to have that always only a 'great idea' away from being dismantled and put into colourful plastic crates in a hallway.

One respondent described equitable access to library services as a human rights issue:

There is not enough support from government or MOE to make libraries mandatory in every school in New Zealand. Our literacy levels have dropped, and they keep cutting out libraries and librarians. This is a human rights issue as it takes away children's rights to have free access to books they want to read for pleasure in the school they go to.

Summing up

Most respondents came from schools that had a permanent onsite library space; their own collection of library books and digital resources; and a range of library services for students and staff. Nearly all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their school leaders were committed to having a permanent library space, and understood the value of library spaces, resources, and services. According to survey respondents, the main benefits in having a school library included: student wellbeing; access to up-to-date, curated, age-appropriate resources; support for curriculum learning; and support for recreational reading.

However, analysis of survey data shows a range of equity concerns, especially for smaller schools, rural schools, and schools with “more” socioeconomic barriers. These schools were significantly less likely to have permanent library spaces, staff employed in library roles, and to provide a range of library resources and services. Respondents from these schools were also less likely to rate their school collection as providing “very well” for curriculum learning and for recreational reading. Further, the extent of this equity issue is likely to be underestimated given that slightly fewer small schools, rural schools, and schools with “more barriers” replied to the survey. Consistent with these quantitative findings are comments from survey respondents expressing concern about inequitable access to library spaces, resources, and services across schools in Aotearoa New Zealand.

3. Libraries at the case study schools

This chapter presents the findings from the case study component of the research. As mentioned at the beginning of this report, we selected six case study schools from a list recommended by the Steering Group as having library spaces, resources, and services particularly effective at meeting the needs of their school staff, students, and community. We interviewed a sample of staff and students at these schools.

Library spaces and resources

All the case study schools had library spaces. Although these spaces differed according to school context, there were several features they had in common. Library spaces and resources were fit for purpose and accessible, Te Tiriti honouring and place-based, inclusive, safe, and knowledge-rich.

Fit for purpose and accessible

The case study schools varied in terms of size, type, location, and context, and their library spaces differed accordingly. For example, the smallest school ran their library from a purpose-designed flexi-space that was also used as the school staffroom and for holding school assemblies. The shelving was on wheels and could be pulled out and pushed away as needed. The large, composite school had a library with three parts. On one side was a library area for the Years 7–13 students, on the other was an area for the primary students, and in the middle was an area of shared seating where groups from either part of the school could mingle.

Case study participants across all schools described their school library as “accessible” due to its central location, its availability at break times, and timetabling that ensured all students had regular opportunities to use it. It was seen physically and metaphorically as the “heart of the school”:

It’s a central place that you know to come back to. (Student, secondary school)

The library is in the centre of the Years 7 and 8 block. It is very central and easily accessible. It’s the heart of the school. (Teacher, intermediate school)

The case study schools had a library timetable to ensure every student had opportunities to regularly use it. All but one of the libraries were open at break times and several were also open before and after school:

Having a library open at breaks is crucial for students who need a refuge—need a safe space. (Teacher, secondary school)

It’s open all the time. (Student, intermediate school)

Many of the case study libraries had different zones to cater for different student needs and interests:

Different sections for games and reading and study—some areas are quieter. (Student, secondary school)

Our library has so many different spaces within it—spaces for socializing, gaming, reading, using computers ... (Student, secondary school)

Students described their library space as warm, comfortable, and inviting:

It has bean bags and warm fans. (Student, secondary school)

The library is a calm, quiet, cosy space, and has different types of seating and areas to rest in. You can be by people without being crowded. (Student, secondary school)

Many students found the library a calm and quiet place for reading:

It's my favourite place. It's because it's quiet. So, you don't really have to deal with all of the noise, and I just really love reading. (Student, composite school)

I mean, in lunchtime I sometimes read my book outside until the library is open, because in here it's not so windy, not so loud. (Student, composite school)

I just really like the library, because when I get to read in a quiet place, it's just kind of like escaping, but into a book. So, you don't have to deal with like the naughty kids. (Student, composite school)

Consequently, library spaces were well-used, popular places for students to be.

Te Tiriti honouring and place-based

The case study schools had libraries that were, to varying degrees, Te Tiriti honouring and place-based. For example, te reo Māori was prominent in most of the school libraries and te ao Māori was evident in the physical environments, including pictures on the walls of atua, and of marae and koro from the local area:

I've got a mātauranga Māori area, and around that area I've got pictures of our local marae and things. And there's a flyer up and it says, 'Which marae is yours?' I've had junior students who would come in and they see one of the pictures and they say, 'I've been there', or 'That's mine', and it kind of makes that connection. (Library staff, composite school)

We've got a big, huge poster of one of the local koros. (Library staff, composite school)

There were also resources in te reo Māori and other languages:

There are Māori books with English translations so lots of people can read them. (Student, full primary school)

There are puzzles with Māori gods. (Student, full primary school)

Library staff described creating displays of books and resources to celebrate important times of the year such as Matariki and Māori Language Week:

We've already done our Matariki display where we had the students colouring in stars, and then on the stars it had their name in Māori ... what hapū, things like that. We hung them up and that was all part of our Matariki display. (Library staff, composite school)

The leader of the contributing school described how she was giving their librarian responsibility for collating and making available for staff resources and stories associated with the history of the school and the local area:

That local history project is something that I want [librarian] to get her teeth into, so collating a bank of photographs and of resources that relate to the history of our kura. (Leader, contributing school)

The composite school leader considered the local content to be one of the main strengths of their library:

The local content that we have. So, there's actually really specific books on this area ... And we've got a good section of local history and marae and stuff in our library. (Leader, composite school)

Inclusive

School staff described their library as an inclusive space and students confirmed that different sorts of people could be found in the library:

All different sorts of people go to the library and feel they, like, belong. (Student, secondary school)

Lots of people come to the library—everyone feels comfortable. (Student, full primary school)

The physical space of the library was inclusive, and students could see themselves represented in the collection, on the walls, and through displays celebrating important cultural and community events, such as Matariki, Diwali, and Pride Week:

I've got [a] 'Where do you come from?' [display] just to try and include everybody. I've put in our school newsletter they can bring a photo of where they're from ... if they bring a photo then it goes up on our wall just to try and find ways to connect all our students to our library and to our school. (Library staff, composite school)

It's really inclusive ... There is a new display every week, like for Cook Islands Language Week. (Student, secondary school)

Library staff supported students by providing resources to cater for their differing interests and needs. This involved providing reading material in a range of languages, modes, formats, difficulty levels, genre, and topics:

I make sure to buy books in English and Māori because we often get students from the kura who mainly read Māori ... And then I also have the copies in English so that they've still got both there. I've done that for a very long time knowing that we do get students who come back over from the kura. That's all part of getting to know your students. (Library staff, composite school)

[The library] caters for the ability to read different quantities of texts—from decodables to graphic novels, picture books, and larger novels. There has been a huge shift in the collection over the last few years with many more graphic novels and novel series. (Teacher, secondary school)

Another strength will be, I guess, the small books that are good for boys who don't like to read. (Leader, composite school)

The library staff also made the library inclusive by providing a wide range of activities to cater for different student interests:

We run activities at lunchtime—Lego, cards for special occasions, murder mystery games, activities that draw on students' favourite books, lots of crafts, quizzes, guessing games, competitions, puzzles. These things are good for building connections between students from different levels. (Librarian, secondary school)

The library has increasingly become wellbeing focused—board games, crocheting, loom bands, poker, puzzles, maps, chatting—lots of different groups come to enjoy. (Leader, intermediate school)

Library staff considered these activities provided students with something to do, and enabled them to make connections with others, and develop a sense of belonging:

Kids support and help each other even when they don't know each other well or are not as social otherwise. (Librarian, secondary school)

The students we spoke with also observed that the library provided a space where students who wouldn't normally mix in the classroom or playground could interact:

It's easier to mix with different people in the library because you might both like the same books. They have games where lots of different people from different year levels will play them, like chess and poker, and snap. (Student, secondary school)

The library breaks down walls, puts you at ease. You feel comfortable being yourself and talking to other people who are there. (Student, secondary school)

One student observed that students who did not usually get along, did so when in the library:

[In the library] other people that usually fight they end up getting along. People who are arguing, instead, they might end up being friends without even noticing. (Student, composite school)

Emotionally, socially, and physically safe

School staff considered one of the main reasons the library attracted such a diversity of students was that it was a safe place, where everyone was welcome and belonged:

It provides a space away from the more chaotic elements of the school. It gives kids a quiet and calm space. It's very inclusive, and kids can feel comfortable in themselves. (Teacher, secondary school)

A lot of socially awkward students gravitate towards library for safety, security, and wellbeing. (Teacher, secondary school)

A pastoral centre really, for wellbeing and belonging. [It's] an in-between space where students come to offload and are not expected to get anything finished. (Library staff, intermediate school)

Library staff created and maintained the library as a "safe" space by setting boundaries for acceptable behaviour, that were reinforced by other school staff and students:

[Librarian] keeps students accountable for keeping the library a safe and recovery, learning-focused space. The purpose is always there. (Teacher, secondary school)

She has bred a culture of self-management and co-operation with other students. There is an expectation of respect. The kids live this. (Teacher, secondary school)

[The librarian] also sets high expectations and a positive climate in the library—a space for people to feel safe. (Leader, intermediate school)

Library staff provided emotional support for students and were able to talk to them in a way that may not have been possible in a classroom or playground context:

Sometimes they [librarians] pick up on wellbeing aspects that are not covered by other teachers, and make referrals to counsellors, teachers, and nurses. They can offer an impartial voice to support teachers and students. It's important to spend time with students and talk with them—the games have been a great way to do this. (Librarian, secondary school)

Students have great conversations—they talk freely with teachers and more comfortably in the library. (Leader, intermediate school)

The words and phrases focus group participants used to describe the library suggest that it operated as a "third space" between the educational space of the classroom and the social space of the playground:

There's no dominating by certain groups. It's a less formal space. It is respected by all. Everyone belongs and is valued but no one owns it. (Teacher, secondary school)

There's no elitism in the library, no expectation for producing, no stress or anxiety like might be evidenced in a classroom where work is expected. It's just a space for being on your own. No one questions the reason why a student is in the library. (Teacher, secondary school)

It's a democratic space—there's no social hierarchy or territorial behaviours even at break times.
(Teacher, secondary school)

The students we spoke with described how the library supported different aspects of their wellbeing, whether as a calm relaxing environment, a place where it felt safe to be alone, a place where there was something to do, a place to get help, find people to talk to, or simply to get a hug:

There are many things to do in the library that keep you busy. You can be alone but not feel lonely or bored. It's okay to be by yourself. You can be alone but not feel alone. (Student, secondary school)

It's safe and calm—there are books and Whaea is there—she is helpful and gives hugs. (Student, contributing school)

It's just like a peaceful place to go away from all the stressful things that you might have to take care of. (Student, composite school)

Most of the time it does [helps me]. It lets me calm down. (Student, composite school)

Knowledge rich

Case study participants, and especially students, saw their library spaces as being centres for knowledge. For some, the library was synonymous with knowledge, as illustrated in the quotes below:

Very well set up, and like knowledgeable, knowledgeable, and always ... [What do you mean by knowledgeable?] So, it's like, not just like books about, like stories. It's like knowledgeable and like fun in there as well. (Student, full primary school)

An essential place for communication, knowledge, a place of central knowledge, and comfort. (Student, secondary school)

Useful to all, 'resource-full' for all. (Student, secondary school)

The librarians we spoke to were passionate about ensuring equitable access to this knowledge. One librarian recounted her experience as a school student of feeling unwelcome in the school library despite being a passionate reader. This experience was key in motivating her to provide a library space where there was equitable access to books and other resources:

You didn't really feel welcome when you came in ... I felt that because we were Māori students we were looked upon like, 'They're not going to read properly anyway. What do they want?' I just felt that. I loved reading when I was at school, so I'd end up going to the public library [instead]. That was because the librarian there was also Māori. She was happy to see you. She would say, 'Oh, what do you like? I've got that.' It was exactly the type of person that I wanted to be when I started [my job]. (Librarian, composite school)

Students also saw the school library as a place where access to knowledge was equitable. For example, a group of intermediate school students had the following conversation:

I feel like it's educational ... We have to read for our homework, and if you don't have a book that you like at home, you can get it out. (Student, full primary school)

Yeah, some kids might not have access to like technology at home. So, it's kind of good to be like, 'Oh, I want to know about dogs', and then they can find a dog book. (Student, full primary school)

I guess it's a bit easier for kids who don't have like technology or books at home, that we have a library at school. So, it's more, it's fairer. So, everyone gets a chance to get the information and the reading material they want. (Student, full primary school)

A comment from the full primary school leader helps contextualise these comments by highlighting the particular importance of school libraries in small towns like theirs, which may be some students' only opportunity to access books and digital resources:

I guess, in our small town, you're opening them up to a world. Yeah, there's so much that they can learn through reading. (Leader, full primary school)

Library services

Libraries at the case study schools provided a wide range of services for students, teachers, and, in some instances, whānau. These services were designed to support recreational reading; teaching and learning across the curriculum; and library, information, and critical thinking skills.

Encouraging recreational reading

Library staff were passionate about engaging students in reading for pleasure. For example, the intermediate school librarian described how she “really promotes reading right from entry of the first Year Sevens”. She gave as examples, engaging a group of girls in reading by introducing them to historical fiction, and the success she has had with dyslexic students. Library staff, teachers, and students from other schools had similar stories:

Doesn't matter who they are, if they come through our door and if they want to come and read then we'll find something. (Library staff, composite school)

She spends hours with individuals of all ages to find just the right book for them. She is invaluable. Even most reluctant readers leave the library with a book. She helps students to move past excuses for not reading. (Teacher, secondary school)

[The librarian] expresses genuine interest in what kids are interested in. If a student is fixated on X then [librarian] will find out information and resources that are available—she shows interest in it and engages with students individually. She knows all students by name. (Teacher, secondary school)

Library staff also promoted reading material by creating displays of new books and resources on specific topics of interest or important community events such as Māori Language Week, Pride Week, or ANZAC Day. They organised events and activities such as book fairs, Duffy Books in Homes book week and assemblies, Lit Quiz, author visits, and theatre productions:

She runs a lot of text-related activities supporting reading for pleasure. Hands on tasks, STEAM based. She makes the library an attractive and fun place. (Teacher, secondary school)

The inter-house reading competition—it has helped people read more and go to the library more. (Student, secondary school)

The students had stories of how talking with library staff motivated them to begin reading for pleasure, to read more often, or to extend their reading range:

She [librarian] recommends books to students—she knows all the books and students. (Student, intermediate school)

I remember last term she recommended a book to me which I like. It was a book called *Nine Girls*. She told me she wanted to read it, but not before letting me read it first. (Student, composite school)

I have this book series that I'm reading, but the library helps me kind of branch out, and sometimes, like, read different like types of books. (Student, full primary school)

I came across this book. *A Tale is Like the Oldest Time* I think it was called. I used to only read graphic novels with pictures because I couldn't focus on the words. But after I read that book, it got me more interested. (Student, full primary school)

Library staff also helped to build a reading culture across the school, and teachers saw the impact of this promotion of recreational reading filtering through into their classrooms:

Having someone at the library to offer personalised book recommendations to all students is beneficial—it flows on to the daily reading for pleasure time slot ... it's especially important in a sporty school. The library filters through to the classroom. (Teacher, intermediate school)

Librarians are proactive in building a school reading culture and encouraging students to read for pleasure. (Teacher, secondary school)

Teachers described how the library staff also supported their own professional and recreational reading:

She provides access to PLD resources and courses, journals, books—across all areas of PLD. She keeps us up to date with current teaching trends and provides personal book recommendations. (Teacher, contributing school)

Supporting teaching and learning across the curriculum

Library staff supported teaching and learning across the curriculum by consulting with heads of departments, groups, and individual teachers about the resources needed for upcoming topics:

We just would include our teacher of English and our DP in charge of curriculum, as connection points just to make sure that what's being offered in the library can match as much as it can to the curriculum. So, she has a good relationship with those two. (Leader, composite school)

Library staff then sourced the relevant resources from the school library, the National Library, and other organisations:

In terms of the New Zealand history curriculum [librarian] connects with the social studies teachers to show lists of books that could be purchased. She finds information and books that students and teachers can use for learning. She uses many different sources ... She goes to museums, Alexander Turnbull library, government websites ... (Teacher, secondary school)

The National Library is used within the school and by [library staff]. It provides many different resources that are not always present in schools. (Teacher, intermediate school)

At some schools, library staff had set up online content curation systems so that staff could easily find resources on certain topics:

[She] collates resources online and shares them on a resource map—online and offline. (Teacher, secondary school)

Library staff also contacted individual teachers if resources in their areas of interest became available:

They look at new publications and check with teachers if they want the resources to be bought. (Teacher, secondary school)

[Librarian] sends personalised emails about topics like Matariki, te ao Māori. She thinks about what is relevant and useful to the teacher and the class. She is very responsive to our needs and willing to research and look for the right resources. She listens to what teachers need. (Teacher, contributing school)

Teachers valued the services library staff provided as it made their own jobs easier:

She had done the hard work to find the resources. It's a huge time saver. (Teacher, secondary school)

Library staff also worked with classroom teachers to help promote a particular topic and the related resources available to students:

She also team teaches to launch a unit or topic—she will present to classes what books are available and display books to engage students. (Teacher, secondary school)

[Librarian] does a fortnightly time slot in the library where she offers classroom support—different displays promoting books, recommending books to individual students and to teachers for learning. (Teacher, intermediate school)

Once a week our team teaches with [librarian]. The topic is a shared decision. Then students can choose books that [librarian] recommends. It sparks curiosity and encourages reading. It's a huge boost in the literacy programme ... It engages students and excites them in topics and books they would not read about otherwise. It's a weekly, powerful exposure. (Teacher, secondary school)

Library staff also worked directly with students to support their curriculum learning:

She helps students with articles for NCEA, like, if they need access. She's just available on a needs basis. They'll just ask, 'Do you know if there's a good book or an article?' and she often finds other stuff too. (Leader, composite school)

Students also commented on the help they got from library staff to access resources for different learning areas:

They have a trolley of books that are related to topics you are learning about. (Student, secondary school)

She recommends books to read related to the topics in class and helps you to find books related to different topics. (Student, secondary school)

Teaching library, information, and critical thinking skills

Library staff helped with teaching library and information skills, either in the library or through visiting individual classrooms:

[Librarian] takes lessons on relevant topics—like on atlases, encyclopaedias, authentic information sources, historical narratives. (Teacher, intermediate school)

We have fortnightly library sessions involving activities run by librarians to familiarise students with the library, research skills, and information literacy. (Teacher, secondary school)

She [librarian] demonstrates how to choose and use books—ISBN, index pages, especially at the beginning of the year. (Teacher, secondary school)

At some schools, library staff ran sessions on critical thinking:

[Librarian] helped to develop a programme focused on using non-fiction to learn about critical reading, misinformation, sources of information, using books for information, AI, reading for information. (Teacher, secondary school)

She models having discussions and debates with teachers in front of students—like, around the war in Ukraine. She models how to have hard discussions and shows how the conversations should go—by referring to knowledge, concepts, sources of research. (Teacher, secondary school)

The students we spoke with clearly valued opportunities to learn these skills:

She helps you to learn about the library and where the books are. (Student, contributing school)

There's a lot of talks about cyber safety and misinformation. (Student, secondary school)

She taught about the Palestine/Israel war, the origin of Santa Claus—she teaches knowledge we might not get to know about. (Student, secondary school)

She knows a lot about current events and topical things happening in the community. (Student, secondary school)

Developing literacy skills

Library staff also supported teachers by working alongside students with English as an additional language or those struggling with decoding and comprehension:

[She is] actively involved in schoolwide literacy rates and thinks about what she can do to contribute ... She talks with the SENCO about reading programmes that can benefit the students. (Teacher, secondary school)

With the reluctant readers in the Year 11 literacy class, [Librarian] and [teacher] developed *Hot Topic*. The topics students chose were gangs, drugs, and crimes. [Librarian] was fantastic at adapting how to talk with students about these topics. She used print and digital newspapers to find resources. (Teacher, secondary school)

The school pays to access eBooks and audiobooks from a commercial e-platform. I liaise with SENCOs so students can use them, and we use free decodables and levelled readers to support literacy. (Librarian, secondary school)

In some cases, library staff supported parents:

We spoke about the sounds of the alphabet instead of the names of the alphabet. Mum was there and I talked to Mum about how to go through them with her and they took them home and apparently, she is doing amazing. Mum came in and issued some books for herself. If parents would come in and take books home to work with their children at home, I'm happy for that to happen. (Library staff, composite school)

Mentoring student librarians

At all the case study schools, library staff provided students with opportunities to become student librarians and mentored them in this role:

[Librarian] chooses students who might not be picked for other leadership opportunities. It's really mana-enhancing and empowering. (Teacher, secondary school)

She welcomes anyone who wants to be a librarian—often shy, autistic, or socially isolated students. She creates a haven for these students and gives them a purpose for their breaks. They have a useful role within the school. (Teacher, secondary school)

Student librarians learnt to carry out library tasks that ranged from issuing and shelving books to creating displays and running events:

We put books away, play games, give out tokens [for good behaviour]. (Student, contributing school)

We scan and put away books, keep the library quiet, help people find books, show people the different kinds of books in the library, and help them find books they might like. (Student, contributing school)

We celebrate special days like Harry Potter's birthday. Sometimes the library prefects come up with ideas. (Student, secondary school)

At the full primary school, eight students learnt how to use Accessit library management software and took responsibility for running the library when the other classes in the school visited. They helped younger children choose and find books, issued books, and shelved returns, freeing up the teacher to manage the class.

Other services

Library staff were also responsible for other services such as running the STEAM room or the teaching resources room, supporting Te Kura students working independently in the library, supporting students who needed “time out” from the classroom, hosting visiting authors, and fundraising.

Challenges in providing a well-functioning school library

The challenges highlighted in the survey data associated with changing attitudes to the value of books, reading, and libraries was less pronounced in the case study schools. This was because leaders and library staff had set up schoolwide systems to ensure school staff understood, valued, and used the library to support curriculum, teaching and learning, recreational reading, and student wellbeing. These systems supported close connections between library and teaching staff. For example, one school had a committee of teachers representing a range of class levels and learning areas who met regularly with library staff to discuss upcoming needs, and another school had library staff who taught library-related skills for, or with, teachers so they could learn from each other.

The case study schools did, however, face many of the same challenges in funding the library as those identified by survey respondents. This section describes these challenges and how staff at the case study schools responded to them.

Challenges providing library spaces

Several of the case study schools had experienced many iterations of their school library over time as space was needed for other things and then became available again. Stories from two of these schools are shown below:

I was employed 21 years ago. I started in an office. The library had been packed up and I had 6 months when the library, resource room, and IT suite were built as a purpose suite. Then about 10 years ago the library was shifted into a much smaller classroom—it felt stagnant. About 18 months ago we shifted into two pre-fabs that had been turned into open plan. It’s not purpose built but we make it work. (Library staff, intermediate school)

When I first arrived in 2021, the room that I'm in right now, was filled with a load of books that had been higgledy-piggledy chucked into containers, and that was the school library. And so there hadn't really been an effective school library happening in the school. There had previously been a small building, but it had become damp and not a good place to store books. And for a school this size there probably wasn't a great collection of books, to be fair. Over the last 4 years we have gone through some significant building projects. We have tried to sort of have a library happening in some capacity, but nothing had been very successful because we didn't have the space. We tried having a trolley with books or having books in classrooms. But there also wasn't an issuing system. Then, as part of the building project, we had to move all the books out into a Portacom, and that leaked and destroyed quite a significant number of books. And it hasn't been until this year [we got a library]. It's a multi-purpose space, and we've been able to finally set up a proper library system in there that's involved using the Accessit library system for issuing. So, processing all the books through Accessit, and teaching the staff, and then the students how to manage it. Purchasing the furniture, the shelving. And now every class is on a roster so that on different days of the week they go over to the library and they're able to issue books. So that's been a significant journey. And our next steps are to purchase more books. (Leader, full primary school)

Like many survey respondents, some of the case study schools had spaces that were too small to meet the needs of the student population (or soon would be), and leaders worried about the costs involved in extending or rebuilding them:

We are so short of space around the school and so it would be really, really easy to gobble up that library space and use it for 10 other things ... Lots of tumuaki end up turning their library space into classroom teaching spaces. Maintaining that space and keeping it as a library space is a real challenge. (Leader, contributing school)

The space that we've got—I would hate to lose that because it's needed for a classroom. Balancing the space needs for a growing roll and the need for a school library [is a challenge]. (Leader, intermediate school)

The space ... I think in time that's going to limit how many books we can potentially house at one time. (Leader, full primary school)

Staff at the case study schools responded to the challenges of library space through:

- timetabling to ensure all students had library access during class time
- using adjoining rooms as extensions of the library space
- limiting numbers allowed into the library during break times
- having library staff work with students in their classrooms—as well as, or instead of, in the library.

Challenges providing library resources

The case study schools faced several challenges associated with providing the resources needed to meet staff and student needs. Staff at several schools commented on the challenges they faced in sourcing resources in the home languages of their student population:

We've got a big Pasifika and a big Kiribati community at our school. And I think that's an area that's quite challenging, because there's not a lot of things written in these languages to be able to have. But this is our focus ... we've got a section with Māori literature and stories from the Pacific as well. (Leader, secondary school)

Others commented on the cost of resources for students with disabilities or additional learning needs.

School staff also found the cost of maintaining an up-to-date collection a challenge. This was especially so for non-fiction books:

Financially to keep updating collections is expensive. (Leader, secondary school)

Finances. Really, obviously, books are expensive. We are fortunate to have Toi Foundation funding. So that's about \$3,700. I guess that's a guaranteed every year. So that's a good little head start for us. (Leader, full primary school)

There was also a range of challenges associated with providing access to online, digital resources. For some schools, funding the technology needed to enable students and staff to search for, access, and use digital resources was a challenge. One leader commented on the problems associated with storing digital material:

Years ago we were keeping digital resources on CD-ROMs, and then we were keeping digital resources in tiny little flash drives, and then we're keeping digital resources on our databases. And then we're keeping them up in the cloud. Time to find ways to keep them accessible is really an ongoing challenge. So, your librarian can't be that little old lady who's not up to date with IT. It's got to be someone whose quite IT proficient. We're fortunate that [librarian] is. (Leader, contributing school)

Staff were also grappling with safety online and the limitations of a reading diet consisting only of digital, online texts:

Safety and accessibility of digital resources is also an ongoing challenge. The librarian needs to be aware of this and IT proficient to be able to deal with it. (Leader, contributing school)

I worry about the digital shift ... We need to have careful conversations about the value reading has. (Leader, intermediate school)

Staff at the case study schools responded to the expense involved in providing a balanced and up-to-date collection through:

- prioritising use of the Operations Grant for library staffing (sometimes at the expense of meeting other school needs)
- fundraising, seeking philanthropic funding, or using Scholastic book fair credits to purchase books
- putting popular books "on hold" so students had access to them when in the library
- supplementing the collection with resources from the National Library and other organisations
- supplementing the collection with second-hand books.

Challenges providing library services

The main challenge in providing library services related to the cost associated with funding adequate staffing:

We're only open till 3, like we're only paid till 3:30. I'm happy to stay [after school] and take the time somewhere else—there is always that option. (Library staff, secondary school)

This was especially so at the smallest school that only had one hour of paid library time per week at the time of the interview:

The main challenge is probably because just I'm doing it ... It's an extra, you know. I've got an extra hour [for running the library]. So, I find, like, I can do things maybe after school ... I'll stay sometimes. At the beginning of the year when I was barcoding all the books, I'd be staying an hour and a half to two hours after. You know I'd be going home at five every day. (Library staff, full primary school)

Several leaders saw succession planning as a potential challenge. At one school, the librarian, who had been there for many years, was due to retire, and the leader expressed concern about finding someone who could replace her:

When [librarian] retires, we will need to be able to carry on this amazing resource in our school without losing its strength because of who you employ. They absolutely need to have the same passion and knowledge about running a great library ... The person and the knowledge are very important. (Leader, intermediate school)

Staff at the case study schools responded to the challenge of staffing their library through:

- prioritising use of the Operations Grant for library staffing (sometimes at the expense of meeting other school needs)
- allocating teacher aide or administration staff time to library-related tasks
- relying on unpaid work volunteered by school staff (leaders, teachers, support staff), community members, and student librarians to complete library-related tasks
- limiting opening times of the library.

Enablers in providing a well-functioning school library

While the case study schools faced many of the same challenges identified by survey respondents, they had managed to provide library spaces, resources, and services to meet the needs of their staff and students. In this section, we consider how they managed to do so. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, it was the people who made the difference—the leaders, the library staff, the teachers, and the students, working together as a community. As one librarian observed:

It's the people and users who make a library what it is. (Librarian, intermediate school)

The enablers at the case study schools included school leaders who valued and invested in the school library; qualified, skilled, and well-connected library staff; along with teachers and students who valued and used the school library.

Leaders who valued and invested in the school library

The six case study schools had senior leaders who believed in the value of school libraries for supporting a culture of reading, teaching and learning, and wellbeing. The library was a priority for these school leaders when making funding, policy, and curriculum decisions. For example, re-establishing the school library was the “first mission” for the full primary school leader:

This is the second time I've gone into a school where they haven't had a functioning library, and the first mission is to get a library up and running because there's just so much value that you can see in the children having a culture of reading within the school, and how that impacts their learning. (Leader, full primary school)

This leader described the library as “integral to the vision of the school” and to students’ “overall success in their education”:

I think it [the library] is integral to the vision of the school. Yeah, in terms of developing a love of reading and the importance of that for students' engagement in literacy and success in literacy. Then it's integral, I guess, to their overall success in their education. (Leader, full primary school)

School leaders understood that their support of the library was important:

Like everything, if your leadership team doesn't promote the library or doesn't see it as the strength that it could be, then you don't get those initiatives and support happening. (Leader, contributing school)

A strong library is reflective of leadership who are supportive and value libraries, literacy, and reading. (Leader, secondary school)

Leaders showed they valued the school library through their actions; for example, by using it themselves, by participating in library events, and by establishing and promoting library initiatives:

You dress up and that kind of stuff because [librarian] wants more school activities that kind of foster a love for reading. I dressed up as a rainbow fish! (Leader, composite school)

We got it [the library] all water blasted and we're replacing all the roofing, and the guttering and then just employed a local artist ... That's just all being painted, and murals are being put on the outside. She [librarian] liked it that the space was appreciated now. (Leader, composite school)

At some schools, leaders set aside a regular space in the school newsletter for library news, at others they had dedicated library sites on their school website.

Importantly, school leaders used the library to help build a schoolwide reading culture:

The SLT has explicitly built a reading culture—a whole-school approach—for teachers and students. They encourage [staff] reading [and] book recommendations from teachers. Books are promoted in assemblies, the SLT is an active presence in the library, and [we have] a great budget! (Library staff, secondary school)

School leaders valued the expertise of their library staff, trusted their judgement on matters pertaining to the library, and provided them with autonomy in the running of the library. This included providing library staff with leadership opportunities, such as leading staff meetings on topics pertaining to library services and resources:

The SLT needs to show the librarians are respected and valued. It is important to have a presence in the library. (Leader, secondary school)

I just let her run it how she sees fit, and if she has any problems, or she needs anything, she just comes and sees me. If she's got any concerns, if it's maintenance to resources, she just comes and lets me know. She knows what she's doing. (Leader, composite school)

She [librarian] has a regular meeting with me, and I think that school leadership having links into the library is key. (Leader, contributing school)

School leaders also consulted with library staff when making decisions about buildings, resourcing, timetabling, curriculum, teaching, and learning. The quote below provides an example of how one principal sought advice from library staff during a rebuild project:

We have a big building project going on and so I have been involving her in looking at how we physically organise resources around the school. So, I don't just see the library as being the books that are in that one room, you know. The library is also the resources available to our teachers, and how we organise those in our new building. (Leader, contributing school)

In all but the smallest case study school, school leaders invested in PLD for their library staff. One principal, for example, had approved the funds for the school librarian to complete her level 6 library diploma, offered moral support and encouragement, and proofread her diploma assignments for her. Another leader funded attendance at SLANZA conferences every second year.

Leaders who set clear expectations about valuing and using the library

School leaders set and maintained expectations that staff would value and use library resources and services. They expected that classes would regularly visit the library during class time and had library timetables to ensure this happened. School leaders also made sure the library was open to students during break times. For example, at some schools, support staff were rostered to supervise the library during these times or teachers were expected to do so as part of playground duty. School leaders ensured that library staff had power and autonomy and were given the same level of respect as teachers and other staff.

Leaders who were future-focused and visionary

Leaders at the case study schools were future-focused and visionary. They saw the library as an evolving, rather than fixed, space that would grow and change with the school:

It's just growing into what the staff and student needs are. So, it's always evolving. (Leader, composite school)

They had future goals and aspirations for the school library they had developed in conversation with library staff. One leader, for example, described her vision for evolving the traditional concept of “the library” to include a makerspace:

We are currently setting up a theme room right next door to the library, so that theme room is going to have sewing machines and laser cutters, and those kinds of things. So, creating that ... how to use your library in a sort of 22nd century kind of a way. I do think if you only think of a library as a place of books then you will be really limiting your thinking. (Leader, contributing school)

This leader had also been thinking about how school library staff could work together across the Kāhui Ako and how to make the library more inclusive of the wider community:

Our Kāhui Ako is successful I think because we have three primary schools who all feed one high school ... I do wonder if librarians could be shared between schools in a more cost-effective way. Yeah, and connecting librarians together I think would be useful too—it can be quite a lonely job. (Principal, contributing school)

Trying to get out into the community and get the community connected in ... I was out at [school name] before I was here, and their library is a community library ... The community can come in and borrow books, and I think again moving forward nationally in terms of resourcing libraries if we had some ways to do that. That might be another way of bringing people into libraries. (Principal, contributing school)

Qualified, skilled, and well-connected library staff

In general, the leaders, teachers, and students we spoke with considered the library staff to be key to the success of the library and its use throughout the school:

She [the librarian] has huge input and the library is intertwined into planning, learning, and social aspects of our school culture. The library and the librarian are present in all parts of the school day. (Teacher, intermediate school)

Library staff were valued for their professional knowledge and expertise. Most of the case study schools employed staff with library qualifications. Many library staff were engaged in ongoing professional development in library studies, including watching webinars, attending conferences, and taking on roles in national librarian bodies; for example, SLANZA committees:

We sign up for webinars and put closed signs up in the library, we attend the Accessit roadshow and always read their emails, then we think about what we should do and what we should change from what's suggested in them. (Library staff, secondary school)

We access webinars, and can use school hours for PD. We have 2 days a year to attend conferences and attend National Library meetings after school. We use emails from Accessit to discuss updates to the library. (Library staff, secondary school)

Library staff also engaged in other forms of professional development. For example, one was learning te reo Māori so that she could offer students from the schools' rumaki reo unit a library experience fully in te reo. Others had engaged in professional development on topics related to curriculum.

Library staff also used their connections with other libraries and librarians to keep up to date with new library ideas, resources, technologies, and processes:

She connects with other librarians through the Kāhui Ako. They visit each other's spaces. She also has relationships with external libraries and a great connection with the local iwi. (Leader, contributing school)

I have connections with other libraries—I have breakfast with librarians from different schools where we share ideas and discuss what students do and don't know. (Library staff, intermediate school)

I liaise and network with other school librarians in the region—we can't be an island. SLANZA workshops, the school library list server, the National Library website are all networking opportunities. (Library staff, secondary school)

Some library staff also used these connections to support transitions for their students from one school to another:

I take students to the local college library to promote that love of reading throughout the transition between schools. (Library staff, intermediate school)

Library staff who built relationships with teachers, students, and whānau

Leaders and teachers valued the effort library staff made to understand and respond to their teaching and personal reading needs:

I think one of the things about [librarian] is that she is really a go-getter, and she will come to me and tell me about the things that she wants to do. A lot of other librarians don't feel they have a voice. She gives herself a voice. (Leader, contributing school)

She has come to understand ways of communicating with teachers. She is aware of their workloads. (Leader, contributing school)

School staff also commented positively on the effort their library staff made to build relationships with students:

She draws students to the library—she gets positive responses from students and gets on with those who normally don't get on well with other teachers. (Teacher, full primary school)

Students' comments about their relationships with library staff were consistent with those of leaders and teachers. For example, when we asked the students from one of the secondary schools what they

most liked about their school library, the unanimous response was the librarian, largely because of her interpersonal skills:

You feel welcomed from the first time you step into the library; you can tell she cares about you as a person.

She makes the library more comfortable—she’s very inclusive of everyone, outgoing, helpful, talkative, friendly, and kind. She talks with you about everything.

She doesn’t stop people from asking questions.

Some of the library staff had been in their roles for over 20 years and deeply knew the school and its community. Others had only been in their role for just a few years. But all were committed to building connections with the wider community:

Our librarian has had a lifelong impact on encouraging people to be who they want to be. She knows everyone. Parents tell her that they feel their child will be okay and safe in the library space. (Teacher, secondary school)

Our school runs book fairs for whānau. We time these with events when parents are in-school after hours; for example, parent evenings, gala day, lamb and calf day. We want to maximise connections between whānau and kids with the library. (Leader, contributing school)

Our librarian invited mana whenua to the school to introduce their books and share their journey of becoming authors. (Teacher, contributing school)

Teachers who valued and used the library

The case study schools had teacher advocates for the library. Some of these were in a library advocacy role such as the teacher with library responsibilities. Others were curriculum leaders and classroom teachers who were vocal about the value of the library in supporting teaching and learning, recreational reading, and wellbeing. These teachers regularly used library spaces, services, and resources to support teaching and learning, and encouraged their students, and other teachers, to do so as well.

Because school leaders valued and invested in the library and library staff, and because a core group of teachers advocated for the library, other teachers at the case study schools began to value and use the library. For example, one teacher described the library as a treasure, and another as “essential for fostering literacy”:

The library is a treasure in the school. (Teacher, intermediate school)

Having a library is essential to fostering literacy. Even if money is reinvested into reading programmes, students miss out on the environment of reading in person. (Teacher, secondary school)

These teachers used library resources and services for their planning, teaching, and personal, as well as professional, reading. As well as modelling use of the library themselves, these teachers encouraged students to do so. This, in turn, led to students who valued and used the library.

Students who valued and used the library

Because leaders and teachers valued and used the school library, many students did so as well. The case study schools had student advocates for the library who were often, but not always, student librarians. These students had a sense of ownership of the library because of the responsibilities that library staff had given them. As the leader of one school observed:

Student leaders run sessions in the library. The role for these students is huge. (Leader, full primary school)

The student librarians we talked with demonstrated this sense of ownership and agency. These student librarians were clearly proud of their role:

Sometimes me and my friends help with designing some of the posters. We give people recommendations on a good book or series. [My friend] asked me for a really, really good book, and I suggested this book to her, and she actually really liked it. She said it was now one of her favourite books. (Student, secondary school)

There's a system to buying new books—the [student] librarians get to read them first and help choose which books get bought. (Student, secondary school)

My best library experience is when, like all the little kids come and like they just look for books together. And then I like how they sit on a big bean bag and read to each other. (Student, full primary school)

At one school, becoming a student librarian was so popular there was a waiting list. Students could then progress to becoming school library prefects in Year 11 and could also become a head student librarian.

At the case study schools, students, in general, also tended to value and use the library. Again, this was often because school leaders, teachers, or library staff had given students a sense of ownership of the library and how it operated. For example, at the full primary school, the staff member responsible for running the library had sent out a survey to all students about the titles, topics, genres, and authors they wanted available in the library and used the responses to inform purchases:

It'll further encourage kids, because it'll be like, 'Well, look you, you, answered the survey for us. And look, here's the books you've asked for' ... We'll definitely keep giving the kids a voice ... They've got some agency, you know ... (Library staff, full primary school)

At other schools, there were suggestion boxes for purchasing new books:

People can also write down suggestions in a book and the librarian will buy it for the school maybe. (Student, secondary school)

At the intermediate school, any student could suggest library activities which changed according to students' interests and needs. As one of the teachers at this school observed:

She is responsive to students' ideas—she will take them and make them happen. (Teacher, intermediate school)

At the time of our interviews, there were spaces set aside for colouring in, crochet, and games of poker, among other things.

The enthusiasm these students demonstrated was infectious and helped create a “buzz” that contributed to the popularity of the library across the school:

The space is very popular, especially before school. They have had to cap the number of students allowed in. (Leader, secondary school)

Sometimes it gets crowded—it's very popular. (Student, intermediate school)

It's so popular that sometimes it gets closed. (Student, secondary school)

Summing up

The case study schools faced many of the same challenges identified by survey respondents, including those associated with providing adequate spaces, services, and resources within a limited budget. However, these schools had found ways to meet the needs of their students, staff, and communities within the constraints that they faced.

The challenges of decreased interest in reading, knowledge of books, and use of library services for learning highlighted in the survey data were less pronounced in the case study schools for four main reasons. The first was having school leaders who understood the value of the library and who actively supported its use for recreational reading, curriculum teaching and learning, and for wellbeing. The second, was having passionate trained and knowledgeable library staff with strong interpersonal skills who were able to anticipate staff and student needs and were proactive in meeting them. The third was having at least some members of the teaching staff who were advocates for the library and who both used and promoted its resources and services to their colleagues and students. And the fourth was having students with a sense of ownership and agency in the running of the library whose enthusiasm was infectious, making the library a popular place to be. All these factors were interrelated, creating a virtuous cycle which led to increasing use of the library by teachers and students over time.

4. Summary and implications

This final chapter pulls together findings from research focused on the library spaces, resources, and services available to primary, intermediate, and secondary students in English-medium schools. The aim of this research was to provide evidence about the value and impact of school libraries, particularly on literacy for young people in Aotearoa New Zealand; and to provide an up-to-date snapshot of the current number, distribution, and types of services provided by school libraries across the motu.

The research—comprising a national survey and six case studies—highlights the main benefits experienced by schools providing library spaces, resources, and services; the main challenges they faced; and identifies some inequities in access within and between schools in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Most schools provided a library space, collection, and services

Most respondents (89%) came from schools that had a permanent, onsite library space and their own library collection. Most provided library services for students and staff. But only around one-third provided services to whānau, most commonly access to library spaces and resources.

Nearly all respondents (98%) considered their collection supported reading for pleasure either “well” or “very well”. Most respondents said their collection met the needs of the school community “well” or “very well” for curriculum learning (85%), te reo Māori (82%), and in reflecting student and whānau diversity (80%). However, responses showed that collections performed less well in meeting other needs within the school community. Notably, only around one-third considered their collection supported Pacific languages “well” or “very well”. A very small proportion considered their collection supported students with disabilities “well” or “very well”, highlighting equity concerns for these groups of students.

Most schools had staff with at least some paid hours for library work and offered a range of library services to students and staff. Services for students included support with choosing or finding books, issuing and returning books, accessing resources for curriculum learning, recreational reading, and wellbeing. The services provided to staff included informing teachers about new resources, providing resources to support curriculum learning, helping to develop a school culture of reading, and assisting teachers to run class sessions on reading for pleasure. Less than half of the responding schools provided library services to support students’ inquiry, research, and information literacy skills, and only 16% of responding schools provided library services to help teachers develop these skills.

There is variability in library spaces, resources, and services

Although nearly all respondents came from schools with their own library collection, there was variability in the utility of their library spaces, resources, and services. Schools with more socioeconomic barriers were less likely to have a permanent library space. Small schools, rural schools, and schools with “more” socioeconomic barriers were less likely to:

- have a collection that provided “very well” for reading for pleasure and for curriculum learning
- have staff dedicated to providing library services and to have paid staff hours dedicated to library work

- have staff with library qualifications (and more likely to have library work carried out by support staff such as teacher aides or office administrators)
- provide any library services for students other than issuing and returning books
- provide any library services to teachers other than informing teachers about new books and resources in the library.

Respondents from small schools and rural schools were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the statements, “Ongoing funding is provided for library staffing” and “PLD opportunities are provided for library staff”.

School leaders’ aspirations are not always matched by actions

Nearly all respondents at schools with a library agreed or strongly agreed that school leaders were committed to having a library space all year round (95%); understood the value of having effective library spaces, staff, and services (90%); and had collection management processes that met staff and student needs (86%). Most agreed or strongly agreed that ongoing funding was provided for an up-to-date collection (82%). However, fewer agreed or strongly agreed that school leaders set clear expectations about valuing and using the library (73%); that ongoing funding was provided for library staffing (72%); and that library staff had opportunities for PLD (67%). Only half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the school had a strategic plan connecting library services and resources with the school curriculum or goals. These findings suggest a gap between the perceived beliefs and aspirations of some school leaders, and their actions.

Schools experienced both benefits and challenges

Benefits

Survey responses show that the most frequently identified benefits in having a school library were:

- access to a curated collection tailored to the school community
- support for curriculum, teaching, and learning
- support for recreational reading
- support for student wellbeing.

These findings are consistent with a considerable body of research showing the positive relationship between student achievement and access to libraries and qualified library staff,⁶ and about the contribution libraries can make in supporting literacy, learning, and student wellbeing (Dix et al., 2020; Merga, 2019, 2020, 2022; School Library Association of New Zealand Aotearoa, 2022).

Findings from the case studies illustrate that supportive leaders who understand and value the library, as well as investment in the school library, are essential to ensuring that students do, in fact, experience the benefits of access to effective library services.

Challenges

The main challenges faced by survey respondents fell into two main categories. The first was challenges associated with changing attitudes to the value of books, reading, and libraries in schools and society more generally. The second was challenges associated with funding of library resources

6 <https://www.lrs.org/data-tools/school-libraries/impact-studies/>

and library staff. These challenges were unevenly distributed, with some schools more likely to experience them than others.

Respondents from small, rural, and “more barriers” schools were more likely to rate as a challenge, lack of funding for paid library staff hours, and lack of funding to provide a balanced and broad collection. Schools with “more barriers” were also more likely to rate as a challenge, finding engaging resources to cater for a range of reading abilities, low staff use of the library’s resources, and students’ decreased interest in reading books. In addition, respondents from small schools were more likely to identify as a challenge, difficulty staffing the library at lunch or break times and low staff use of the library’s resources. Respondents from rural schools were also more likely to identify as a challenge, difficulty staffing the library at lunch or break times.

Strong leaders and trained library staff can make a difference

The challenges highlighted in the survey data associated with changing attitudes to the value of books, reading, and libraries was less pronounced in the case study schools. This was because leaders and library staff at the case study schools valued and promoted use of the library. These leaders and library staff had set up schoolwide systems to ensure school staff understood, valued, and used library spaces, resources, and services to support teaching and learning, recreational reading, and student wellbeing. These systems supported close connections between library and teaching staff.

The case study schools faced the same challenges highlighted in the survey data related to funding library spaces, resources, and services but had found ways to meet the needs of their students and staff. These included extensive use of their Operations Grant (and sometimes prioritising spending from this funding on library costs over other school needs), using volunteer unpaid time for library work, and by fundraising or seeking philanthropic funding to cover library expenses.

The case study schools provided a range of library resources and services to support recreational reading, curriculum learning, information skills, and critical thinking. Case study participants described their libraries as fit for purpose and accessible, Te Tiriti honouring, inclusive, safe, and knowledge-rich.

Implications for equitable provision

Findings from this study show variable provision of library spaces, resources, and services across schools, with inequities for students attending small schools, rural schools, and schools with more socioeconomic barriers. These are the very schools with students most in need of school library spaces, resources, and services. For students in small towns without public libraries, school may be their only opportunity for accessing age-appropriate, curated resources and services tailored to their interests, strengths, and needs.

This variability in provision is echoed in other Western jurisdictions, including in Australia, the USA, and the UK (Dix et al., 2020; Merga, 2019; Teravainen & Clark, 2017). It matters because libraries are a vital resource for building engagement in both school and wider communities, with librarians being crucial members of these communities (Wilkinson et al., 2020). Furthermore, school libraries and school librarians may support students’ wellbeing and capacity for research and inquiry, support teaching and learning and student literacy outcomes, and can provide a safe space for students (Dix et al., 2020).

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: School survey

Access, use, and value of library services

Kia ora

You don't have to have a school library to answer this survey. The questions are about library *services and resources* that are made available for your students and school community.

This survey is for the person at your school who has the main responsibility for managing library services and resources. This survey has about 20 questions.

Read more about the survey (link to PDF information sheet)

You and your school

This section can be answered even if your school does not have an onsite library.

1) *This school's name is: (Drop-down list school name MoE list)*

2) *What is the main role you are employed for at this school? (Select one)*

Library staff member (e.g. library assistant, librarian, library manager) employed as support staff

Teacher-Librarian

Teacher with library responsibilities

Head of Department/Head of Curriculum/Middle leader

Principal/AP/DP

Teacher

Other support staff (e.g. teacher aide, office administrator)

Other (please describe your main role)_____

3) *What tertiary qualifications do you have? (Select all that apply)*

Post-graduate qualification in library and information studies (LIS)

Post-graduate qualification(s) in another field

Degree or diploma qualification in library and information studies (LIS)

Degree qualification(s) in another field

Teaching certificate or diploma

No tertiary qualifications

Other (please describe.....)

Library spaces, services, and resources

This section can be answered even if your school does not have an onsite library.

- 4) Which statements describe your school's access to library spaces? (Select all that apply)
- We have no school library space AND do not access an external library space
 - We use the local public library
 - We provide a library space that the public also use
 - Our library resources are distributed throughout the school (i.e. no fixed space)
 - We have a permanent library space at school
 - We have a non-permanent library space at school (e.g. sometimes converted to a classroom)
 - Other (describe).....
-
- 5) Does your school provide any **library services** (such as buying books or running library sessions) including those that come from outside school (such as access to National Library books or local libraries)?
- Yes
 - No (Branching GOTO Q17 Challenges)
-
- 6) Which statements describe your school's access to **library services** including those that come from outside school? (Select all that apply)
- Our school funds the books and other resources our library needs
 - Our school funds access to online resources (e.g. eBooks, eAudio, online databases)
 - Our school has dedicated library staff who provide library services
 - We use books or resources provided or loaned by others (e.g. National Library Services to Schools, local public library, EPIC databases for schools)
 - The public or community library staff provide services for our school
 - Other (describe)
-
- 7) What **library services** does your school provide directly to **students** from your school library or offsite locations? (Select all that apply)
- We don't provide any library services to students
 - Issuing and returning books
 - Help choosing or finding books
 - Engaging students with reading for pleasure (e.g. book talks, manage visits by authors or to public library)
 - Supporting students to access books or resources for curriculum learning
 - Sessions that help develop inquiry, research, or information literacy skills
 - Services that enhance student wellbeing (e.g. providing a space: that is safe at lunchtime, celebrates student art and creativity, or for hosting student clubs)
 - Managing technology or devices that students can use (e.g. Chromebooks or laptops)
 - Help with homework or study skills (e.g. after-school support, sharing tips or advice online)
 - Other services for students (please describe...)
-

8) What library services does your school offer directly to **staff**? (Select all that apply)

- We don't provide library services to staff
- Help to develop a school culture of reading (e.g. staff PLD, support for school-wide celebrations like Book week or Matariki)
- Informing teachers about new books or resources in the library
- Providing books or other resources to support curriculum learning (e.g., units or lessons)
- Assisting teachers with class sessions on reading for pleasure
- Assisting teachers with class sessions on inquiry, research, or information literacy
- Supporting teacher PLD (e.g. access to books or journal articles)
- Engaging teachers with their reading for pleasure (e.g. sharing new books, staff book club)
- Help developing teachers' information literacy or research skills (e.g. searching skills or managing copyright)
- Other services for staff (please describe)_____

9) What library services does your school offer directly to **staff**? (Select all that apply)

- We don't provide library services to staff
- Help to develop a school culture of reading (e.g. staff PLD, support for school-wide celebrations like Book week or Matariki)
- Informing teachers about new books or resources in the library
- Providing books or other resources to support curriculum learning (e.g., units or lessons)
- Assisting teachers with class sessions on reading for pleasure
- Assisting teachers with class sessions on inquiry, research, or information literacy
- Supporting teacher PLD (e.g. access to books or journal articles)
- Engaging teachers with their reading for pleasure (e.g. sharing new books, staff book club)
- Help developing teachers' information literacy or research skills (e.g. searching skills or managing copyright)
- Other services for staff (please describe)_____

10) What **library services** does your school offer directly to **whānau**? (Select all that apply)

- We don't provide library services to whānau
 - Access to library resources (e.g. loaning books or digital resources like eBooks or eAudio)
 - Access to technology (e.g. Wi-Fi or printing)
 - Learning sessions for whānau (e.g. supporting their children's reading and learning)
 - Community use of the library space (e.g., for meetings or evening classes)
 - Other services for whānau (please describe)_____
-

Library collection and leadership

<p>11) Does your school have its own collection of library books or digital resources?</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No (Branching) GOTO Q14XX Staffing</p>	
<p>12) How well does your library collection provide for each area below?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading for pleasure • Curriculum learning • Other (Please describe:.....) 	<p>4 Point SCALE</p> <p>Not at all well</p> <p>Not well</p> <p>Well</p> <p>Very well</p>
<p>13) How well does your collection meet the diverse needs of your school community?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Te reo Māori • Pacific languages • Other languages • Resources for students with reading difficulties (e.g. dyslexia) • Resources for students with disabilities (e.g. who are blind or low vision) • Resources that reflect the diversity of your students and whānau (e.g. books about blended families, refugees) • Other (Please describe:.....) 	<p>4 Point SCALE</p> <p>Not at all well</p> <p>Not well</p> <p>Well</p> <p>Very well</p>

Leadership

<p>14) How much do you agree with each statement about library leadership at your school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior leaders understand the value of having an effective library space, staff, and services • Senior leaders set clear expectations for all staff about valuing and using the library • Leaders are committed to having a library space available year round • We have a library strategic plan that connects library services and resources with the school curriculum or other goals • Our collection management processes ensure the library collection meets the needs of staff and students • Ongoing funding is provided for an up-to-date collection • Ongoing funding is provided for library staffing • PLD opportunities are provided for library staff 	<p>4-point SCALE</p> <p>Strongly disagree</p> <p>Disagree</p> <p>Agree</p> <p>Strongly agree</p>
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Library staffing

15) *Including yourself, how many staff are paid (full or part-time) to provide library services? This includes staff with Management Units.*

- No paid staff
- 1 person
- 2-3 people
- 4-5 people
- 6+ people
- Other:

16) Across all paid staff, approximately how many hours of paid time are allocated to the library each week during the school term?

- No paid hours
- 1-5 hours
- 6-10 hours
- 11-20 hours
- 21-30 hours
- 31-40 hours
- 41-80 hours
- 81+ hours
- Not sure

Summing up

17) *What are the 3 main benefits your students, staff, or community gain from your school's library services or resources? (OPEN-ENDED)*

- 1
 - 2
 - 3
-

BRANCHING

Goto: ALL OTHER schools with no library services join back in here

18) Please rate the following **challenges for your school**.

Developing understanding of the value of good school library services for learning

Lack of dedicated space for a library

Lack of funding for paid library staff hours

Lack of funding to provide a balanced and broad collection

Difficulty staffing the library at lunch or break times

Too much time spent doing non-library work (e.g., issuing Chromebooks)

Low staff use of the library's resources

Finding engaging resources that match a range of reading abilities

Students' decreased interest in reading books

Teachers' decreased interest in and knowledge of books

Finding resources to support bicultural practice

Finding resources to support a diverse student community

Increasing need to manage digital resources

Providing whānau with access to library services

Other (please describe) _____

4-point scale:

Large challenge

Medium challenge

Slight challenge

No challenge

19) Are there any final comments you'd like to make about library spaces, services, or resources?
(OPEN-ENDED)

Kia ora and thank you for your time.

If you want to enter a draw for an NZCER publication of your choice, please fill in the next section. Otherwise please submit your responses.

Submit Publication draw

If you want to enter the publication draw, please fill in your name and school email below. These details will not be connected to your survey responses or your school.

Your name: _____

Your school email: _____

APPENDIX B: Characteristics of survey schools

Responded schools				
Variable	options	count	total	percent
Location	Large urban area	95	659	14%
	Major urban area	307	659	47%
	Medium urban area	58	659	9%
	Rural other	76	659	12%
	Rural settlement	48	659	7%
	Small urban area	75	659	11%
School type	Composite	39	659	6%
	Primary	451	659	68%
	Secondary	169	659	26%
EQI Band	Fewer	237	659	36%
	Moderate	268	659	41%
	More	140	659	21%
	not applicable	14	659	2%
Total School Roll	0-100	87	659	13%
	101-300	185	659	28%
	301-500	165	659	25%
	501-1000	149	659	23%
	1000+	73	659	11%

APPENDIX C: Characteristics of survey respondents

What is the main role you are employed for at this school?			
Options	n	Total responses	Percentage
Head of Department/Head of Curriculum/ Middle leader	14	659	2%
Library staff member (e.g. library assistant, librarian, library manager) employed as support staff	377	659	57%
Other (please specify your main role)	29	659	4%
Other support staff (e.g. teacher aide, office administrator)	97	659	15%
Principal/AP/DP	52	659	8%
Teacher	23	659	3%
Teacher-Librarian	17	659	3%
Teacher with library responsibilities	50	659	8%
What tertiary qualifications do you have? (Select all that apply)			
Options	n	Total responses	Percentage
Degree qualification(s) in another field	224	655	34%
No tertiary qualifications	155	655	24%
Teaching certificate or diploma	121	655	18%
Post-graduate qualification(s) in another field	108	655	16%
Other please specify	98	655	15%
Degree or diploma qualification in library and information studies (LIS)	92	655	14%
Post-graduate qualification in library and information studies (LIS)	45	655	7%

