

Secondary teachers' perspectives from the 2025 national survey

Uiuinga ā-Motu o ngā Kura



**Jo MacDonald, Rachel Bolstad, Jessie Dong,
Sally Boyd, Bronwyn Gibbs, Jackson Rowe-Williams,
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2026

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Conducting the NZCER National Survey of Schools is a collaborative effort that involves survey redesign, data collection, data cleaning and analysis, report writing, and feedback on drafts. We extend our thanks to our colleagues whose work contributed to this report in any of these ways.

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He whakarāpopototanga | Executive summary

NZCER conducted the National Survey of Secondary Schools in Term 4 2025 and early Term 1 2026. We invited principals and teachers from all English-medium secondary schools (including composite schools and teen parent units) in Aotearoa New Zealand. This report presents the findings from the teacher survey. The findings from the principal survey are presented in a separate report (MacDonald et al., 2026).

Data collection took place from 27 October 2025 to 6 March 2026. All teachers from the 435 schools in the sampling frame were invited to complete the survey, and we received at least one teacher response from 131 schools. After data cleaning, 830 teacher responses from 126 schools were included in analysis, resulting in a 29% school response rate.

NZCER has run a National Survey of Secondary Schools regularly since 2003, with the last survey of secondary school teachers taking place in 2021. This enables us to monitor trends over time. This report presents the findings in each of the six survey domains alongside a section on teachers' working experiences and future plans.

Key findings

Teaching and learning

- Less than half of teachers indicated having sufficient support to teach students with additional learning needs such as students with disabilities, students with learning difficulties, students with physical or mental health or behaviour issues, and neurodivergent students. Most teachers taught students learning English as an additional language but less than half indicated they have skills and knowledge to do so or have sufficient support.
- Building on prior knowledge, managing cognitive load, and responding to individual learners are central to how teachers approach teaching in classes where they feel most effective. Opportunities for open-ended, dialogic, and community-connected learning are less frequent, but used at least occasionally by most teachers. Two-thirds of teachers were feeling under time pressure to get through content either frequently (33%) or always/nearly always (33%).
- Compared with 2018 and 2021, more teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they incorporated tikanga Māori and te reo Māori into their teaching. Kaiako Māori were more likely to use te reo Māori in their classrooms at higher proficiency levels.
- Two-thirds of teachers said they were currently integrating generative artificial intelligence (AI) into their teaching practices. The most common use was to develop learning materials. Teachers who don't use AI in their teaching practice were concerned about quality, bias, and ethical impacts.
- Just under half of teachers said climate change was a focus in some of their teaching. In these teachers' classes, students often learnt about climate impacts and solutions, but were less likely to be undertaking climate action.

Curriculum and assessment

- A majority of teachers thought NCEA should be “improved rather than removed”. There were mixed views on whether the proposed new qualifications were going in the right direction, with questions about the rationale for the change.
- Teachers had mixed views about the direction of curriculum change, but clear concerns about pace and engagement with the teaching profession.

Inclusion

- Most teachers thought Te Tiriti o Waitangi was widely enacted in school values and day-to-day activities.
- Teachers reported high use of inclusive and culturally responsive practices such as group learning, peer support strategies, and knowing which cultures their students identify with. There were lower levels of agreement for practices connecting with Pacific learners.

Wellbeing

Teacher wellbeing

- Teachers' views on job satisfaction, morale, and workload have remained largely consistent over time. Most teachers enjoy their job. Morale has improved to 2018 levels, after a decline in 2021, which may have been associated with additional demands and uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Around a third of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed that their workload is manageable (31%), that their level of stress is manageable (35%), and agreed or strongly agreed that their workload is so high they cannot do justice to their students (34%).
- There is a small proportion of teachers (14%) who do not report that their school cares about the wellbeing of its staff, but this has declined from 24% in 2021.
- Nearly all teachers (91%) perceived they have sufficient autonomy in teaching but only half agreed they have opportunities to participate in school decisions.

Student wellbeing

- More teachers (86%) agreed or strongly agreed that student wellbeing is a strong focus in their school compared with 2021 (72%).
- Students still have unmet support needs. Only 60% of teachers indicated that vulnerable students can get timely external support.
- Three-quarters of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their school had an effective school-wide approach for encouraging positive behaviours. However, somewhat fewer (60%) agreed or strongly agreed that their school had an effective school-wide approach for managing student behaviour across the school. Most teachers felt safe, but disruptive behaviour has increased since 2015.

Support and resourcing

- Around three-quarters of teachers get the support they need from their school to do their job effectively.

- More teachers than in 2021 and 2018 have had training to recognise mental health warning signs in students.
- Teachers had mixed views on the usefulness of PLD they have had in the past 3 years. Around two-thirds of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they had had useful subject specialist PLD from teacher networks or subject associations (66%) and useful school-wide PLD (62%, up from 30% in 2021).
- Teachers have diverse future PLD needs, but PLD about AI is wanted by the highest proportion of teachers.
- Most early career teachers felt well supported (79%) and guided into effective practices (78%). Most mentors felt valued by school leaders but still face challenges in getting time allocated or useful professional learning.

Collaborative relationships

- Most teachers (70%) agreed or strongly agreed they had opportunities to see and discuss the work of other teachers in their department or subject area, but fewer (48%) had these opportunities across subject areas.

Teachers' working experience and future plans

- Interest in being principal has remained stable at around 10% of teachers. These teachers are most attracted to being able to set the direction of a school. Teachers who are not interested in becoming a principal are put off by being diverted from teaching, and the workload.
- Teachers' career plans have remained stable over the past decade, with 40% intending to continue in their role, and 32% wanting to build their leadership skills.
- The most-selected changes that teachers would like to their work were a reduction in the scale and pace of change (71%) and more support staff/teacher aides (62%). Since 2015, the proportion of teachers wanting more support staff has increased each survey cycle.

Responding to the research questions

The 2025 National Survey of Secondary Schools addresses five research questions on how the education system in Aotearoa New Zealand is progressing over time in: 1) honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi; 2) serving ākonga Māori; 3) serving Pacific students; 4) achieving equitable outcomes for all learners; and 5) supporting the success of everyone within the system.

Most teachers thought **Te Tiriti o Waitangi** was widely enacted in school values and day-to-day activities, though there was more variability in views on whether a school had a shared understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. These findings align with principals' perspectives (MacDonald et al., 2026). Māori words or phrases, such as greetings and farewells, are used in most secondary classrooms—12% of teachers said they avoided using te reo Māori due to lack of confidence. Kaiako Māori and teachers in schools with more socioeconomic barriers were more likely to use te reo Māori in their classrooms at higher proficiency levels, and kaiako Māori at all proficiency levels were also more likely than non-Māori teachers to report using te reo Māori in a wider range of ways. This highlights differences in confidence and capability and points to the importance of ongoing support to build wider teacher capability in te reo Māori across the workforce.

While many teachers and schools are working actively to support **ākonga Māori**, some ākonga may face environments where culturally responsive practices are less visible or embedded. Future efforts should continue to focus on PLD related to te ao Māori, and ensuring all schools can consistently provide culturally sustaining and affirming learning experiences for ākonga Māori.

There is room for improvement in the system to ensure that all **Pacific students** are known by their teachers and have culturally sustaining and affirming learning experiences. Only around one-third of teachers reported receiving practical help from PLD for teaching Pacific students or building connections with Pacific students and their families.

In addressing the broader goal of **achieving equitable outcomes for all students**, the survey shows equity is not yet fully realised for students with additional learning and wellbeing needs. Data from this 2025 national survey and the 2025 Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey (Ministry of Social Development, 2026) both indicate there are still substantial numbers of vulnerable students who are not accessing professional and/or external mental health support. More secondary teachers are seeking support to teach students with learning support needs, including additional teacher aides. Unequal access to generative AI tools is an emerging issue.

Finally, regarding **support for all people in the system**, the majority of teachers reported a collaborative, mutually supporting school culture, the school caring about the wellbeing of its staff, and having opportunities to participate in school decision making. However, this is not the experience for all teachers, and there is room for improvement. There is a clear need for ongoing efforts to support teachers, particularly in this period of significant change in the sector. Teachers need school-level, and sometimes external, support to respond to students with additional learning and wellbeing needs. Strengthening approaches to promoting positive behaviour and managing behaviour is an ongoing need. The system also needs flexibility to meet the PLD needs of individual teachers, schools, and the wider system.

The 2025 national survey has provided a snapshot of teachers' perspectives amidst a period of significant shifts within the sector. The value of the longstanding NZCER national survey is its ability to monitor educational trends and policy impacts over time. The next national survey of secondary schools is likely to be 2028, when we can gain teachers' perspectives on the impacts of changes that are being introduced now.

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1. He kupu whakataki | Introduction

About the national survey

The purpose of the national survey is to monitor educational trends and policy impacts over time. The intention is to provide a comprehensive national picture of education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

NZCER began regular surveys of English-medium primary schools in 1989 when the Tomorrow's School reforms were implemented. In 2003, a regular survey of English-medium secondary schools was added to the suite. The national surveys have run on a 3-yearly cycle since then¹ (see Figure 1 for the most recent cycles).

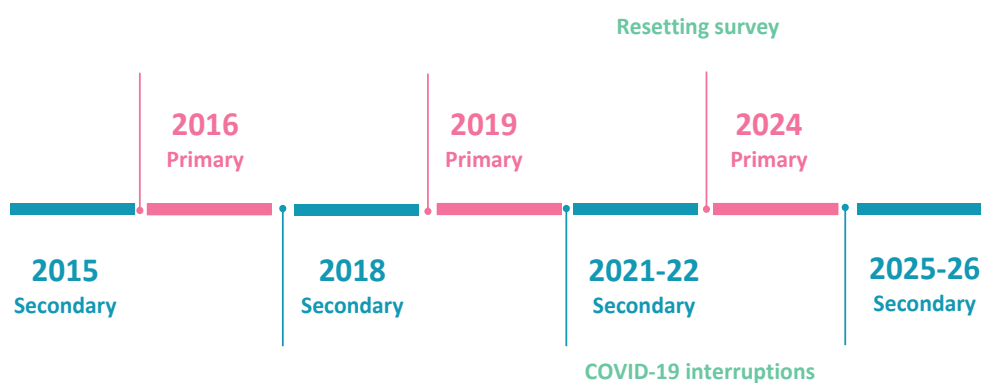


FIGURE 1 Timeline of NZCER national surveys 2015-25

Research questions

In 2025, the principal and teacher surveys were re-designed, with the aim to continue to monitor educational trends and policy impacts in Aotearoa New Zealand over time, by addressing the following research questions:

Question 1: To what extent and in what ways is the system honouring and enacting Te Tiriti o Waitangi? What are the effects of key policy changes? Where are the strengths and areas for improvement?

Question 2: To what extent and in what ways is the system serving ākonga Māori? What are the effects of key policy changes? Where are the strengths and areas for improvement?

Question 3: To what extent and in what ways is the system serving Pacific students? What are the effects of key policy changes? Where are the strengths and areas for improvement?

¹ There were two surveys of Early Childhood Education (ECE) services, in 2003-04 and in 2007.

Question 4: To what extent and in what ways is the system designed and supported to achieve equitable outcomes for all students? What are the effects of key policy changes? Where are the strengths and areas for improvement?

Question 5: To what extent and in what ways are all people in the system supported to succeed? What are the effects of key policy changes? Where are the strengths and areas for improvement?

Reading the report

This report is organised into the following sections:

- Section 1 He kupu whakataki | Introduction
- Section 2 He tukanga | Methodology
- Section 3 He kitenga | Findings from six survey domains as listed below, alongside a section on teachers' working experiences and future plans:
 - o Teaching and learning
 - o Curriculum and assessment
 - o Inclusion
 - o Wellbeing
 - o Support and resourcing
 - o Collaborative relationships
- Section 4 He matapaki | Discussion

2. He tukanga | Methodology

Participants

The 2025 national survey invited **principals** and **teachers** from all English-medium secondary schools, composite schools, and teen parent units in Aotearoa New Zealand. This report presents the findings from the teacher survey. The findings from the principal survey are presented in a separate report (MacDonald et al., 2026).

Data collection took place from 27 October 2025 to 6 March 2026. All teachers from the 435 schools in the sampling frame were invited to participate in the survey and we received at least one teacher response from 131 schools. After data cleaning, 830 valid teacher responses from 126 schools were included in analysis, resulting in a 29% school response rate. Assuming a 95% critical value with infinite population, the margin of error for the teacher survey ranged from 3.4% to 4.0%, based on the lowest and highest number of respondents across survey questions.² The responses are broadly representative by school Equity Index (EQI) groups,³ area, and region. Full information about participating teachers' demographics (gender, ethnicity, curriculum learning areas taught, levels of responsibility, years' teaching) and school characteristics (school EQI group, area, region, and school type) are shown in the Appendix.

Survey implementation

As of October 2025, there were approximately 435 English-medium secondary schools (including secondary, composite, and teen parent units) in Aotearoa New Zealand, according to Education Counts. A stratified sampling approach was used to draw a nationally representative sample of schools initially. On 27 October 2025, an email invitation was sent out to principals of 205 sampled schools. The email to principals included instructions about engaging their teachers along with two survey links: one for principals and the other for teachers in their schools. Principals were asked to forward the email with the teacher survey link to all teachers in their school, or in composite schools, all teachers who taught secondary-aged students.

After sending the initial email invitation and weekly reminders, we followed up with a phone call to many of the schools from which no principal or teacher responses had been received. Additionally, we publicised the survey through the NZCER newsletter and worked with sector bodies to improve its visibility.

After 4 weeks, when we still needed more responses to draw a national picture of secondary schools, we opened the survey to all secondary schools and emailed principals who had not previously received the invitation. The survey remained open over the summer break. In February 2026, we emailed principals who had not completed the survey to let them know they still had the opportunity. We again worked with sector bodies to boost responses. The survey closed on 6 March 2026.

² The sampling design in the teacher survey doesn't permit exact calculation of the margin of error.

³ There are three school EQI groups (Fewer [socioeconomic barriers], Moderate, and More) as indicated in the diagram from <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/data-services/guidelines/school-equity-index-bands-and-groups>

Data analysis

The focus of our data analysis approach was on providing survey respondents and key educational agencies and organisations with timely feedback and survey results.

Individualised school summary

Our goal was to provide a summary report to each school with more than 10 teacher responses.⁴ A school summary was produced based on aggregated data from the teacher survey, with the aim of providing valuable insights for schools and encouraging principals and teachers to participate in the national surveys in the future.

Descriptive analysis

The analysis and reporting of previous national surveys have predominantly relied on descriptive results. This year, we continued to utilise descriptive analysis to illustrate the overarching patterns that emerged. The advantage of descriptive analysis lies in its ability to succinctly summarise and present key findings, providing a clear understanding of the data without necessitating complex statistical techniques.

Hypothesis testing⁵ was conducted for closed survey questions to identify statistically significant associations between teachers' views and key school characteristics (e.g., school EQI group, size, type, and region), as well as individual characteristics (e.g., years of teaching experience and ethnicity). Several statistically significant associations were identified, and those deemed meaningful have been included and discussed in this report.

When the same items were asked of teachers in the 2021 national survey of secondary schools, we report notable changes (i.e., over 10 percentage points). This provides some indication of whether teachers' views have changed over time. However, the potential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education sector should be considered when interpreting comparisons with the 2021 findings.

Some items in the current survey were also asked of primary school teachers in NZCER's 2024 National Survey of Primary Schools (Li et al., 2025). Where relevant, those findings are included in this report for comparison between sectors, though as the surveys were administered at different time points, comparisons should be viewed as suggestive only.

Limitations

Initial response numbers were lower than desired when the survey was sent to a sample of schools in October 2025. This was likely due to the length of the survey, end-of-year pressures on teachers, and the timing of survey implementation, which coincided with the release of the updated curriculum for Years 0–10. To increase participation, the survey invitation was extended to all secondary schools within the sampling frame.

⁴ At the end of the teacher survey, consent was obtained from teachers for their data to be included in the school summary. Fourteen schools had more than 10 teachers who consented and received a school summary.

⁵ Chi-square tests for independence were used throughout the report. P-values were adjusted using the FDR (False Discovery Rate) method to control the expected proportion of false positives among significant findings. Reported results were limited to those that remained statistically significant after adjustment.

As there is no database of teachers' email addresses, we could not invite teachers directly. We were reliant on principals or school administrative staff forwarding our email with the survey link. Some principals may not have forwarded the email, wanting to protect their teachers' time.

We report only differences of 10 percentage points or more and avoid placing weight on smaller differences, particularly for subgroup comparisons or comparisons across years.

The survey relies on self-reported data from teachers, which introduces the potential for recall error and social desirability bias. The risk of social desirability bias was reduced by administering the survey anonymously. Although we also surveyed principals, the national survey did not gather the perspectives of students, whānau, or school board members.

3. He kitenga | Findings

Te whakaako me te ako | Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning was the largest domain in the 2026 teacher survey. The domain included questions on teaching students who need additional learning support, teaching English language learners, teaching practices, using evidence to improve teaching and learning, and teachers’ use of te reo Māori with their students. Two topics were included to give us a national picture of contemporary issues: use of generative AI and educating for a changing climate.

Teaching diverse students

Secondary school teachers were asked for the first time in 2025 to rate their experiences teaching students who need additional learning support—such as students with disabilities, students with learning difficulties, students with physical or mental health or behaviour issues, and neurodivergent students (Figure 2).

Under half of teachers indicated they have sufficient support to teach students with additional learning needs

Most teachers (71%) agreed or strongly agreed that they do a good job of teaching students with additional learning needs, although one-fifth were neutral and 8% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Around two-thirds (64%) agreed or strongly agreed that they have the skills and knowledge to support students who rely on digital technologies to access the curriculum. However, fewer than half (40%) agreed or strongly agreed they have sufficient support to teach students with additional learning needs in their classes, and a similar proportion (38%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

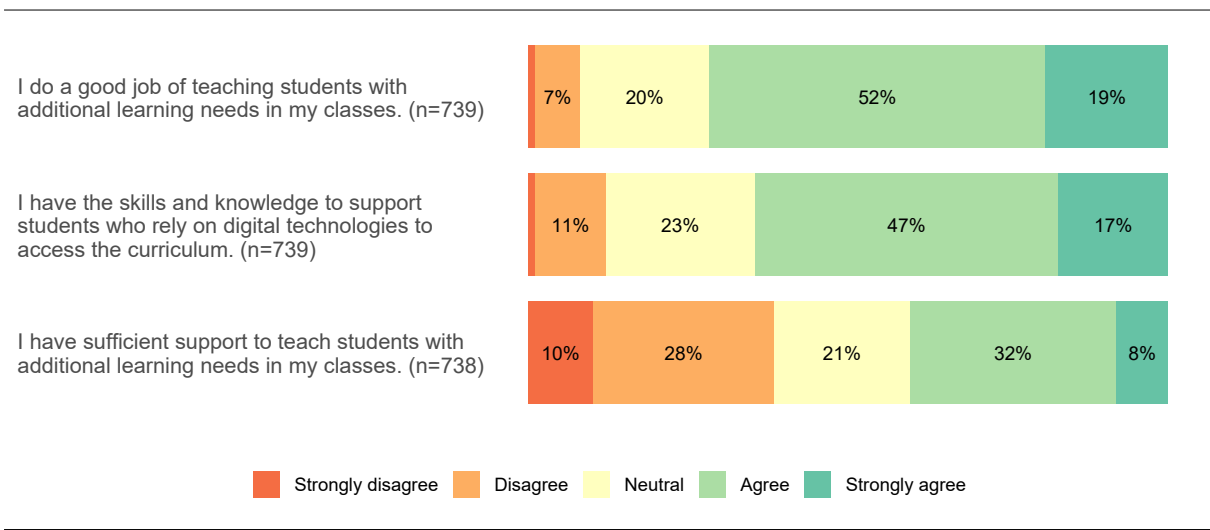


FIGURE 2 Teachers’ views about teaching students who need additional learning support

The findings suggest a need to better understand what types of additional supports teachers require to help students with additional learning needs learn effectively in class.

Further analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between a school's EQI group and the item "I do a good job of teaching these students [who need additional support] in my class". Teachers working in schools facing more socioeconomic challenges were significantly more likely to strongly agree that they did a good job teaching these students (24%), compared with teachers from schools facing fewer socioeconomic challenges (13%). In contrast, teachers working in schools facing fewer socioeconomic barriers were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree (10%), compared with just 3% of teachers in schools facing more socioeconomic challenges. No teachers from schools in the Moderate or More EQI groups strongly disagreed with the statement. We don't have other information to explain this pattern, but it could be explored further.

Teaching English language learners

Students who speak English as a second or additional language represent a growing population in Aotearoa New Zealand schools. The number of students receiving ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) funding has increased over time. ESOL funding statistics show that 90,771 students across 1,754 schools were funded in May 2026. Nineteen percent of these students, approximately 17,000, were in Years 9–15.⁶

The NZCER national survey has included questions about support for English language learners in primary schools since 2019; this is the first time these questions have been included in the secondary school survey.

Most teachers taught students learning English as an additional language but less than half indicated they have skills and knowledge to do so, or have sufficient support

Most teachers (74%) reported that they teach students who are learning English as an additional language.⁷ We asked these teachers about their own skills and knowledge to cater for these learners, and their access to sufficient support.

Figure 3 shows that less than half (42%) agreed or strongly agreed that they had the skills and knowledge to cater for the English language learners in their class. A similar proportion (40%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had access to sufficient support to help their English language learners. Thirty percent selected a neutral response to each item.

⁶ <https://www.education.govt.nz/bulletins/esol-migrant-refugee-news/10-06-26#period-1-2026-statistics-1> We do not know how many secondary schools these students attend.

⁷ This is consistent with 70% of primary teachers who said they taught English language learners in 2024.

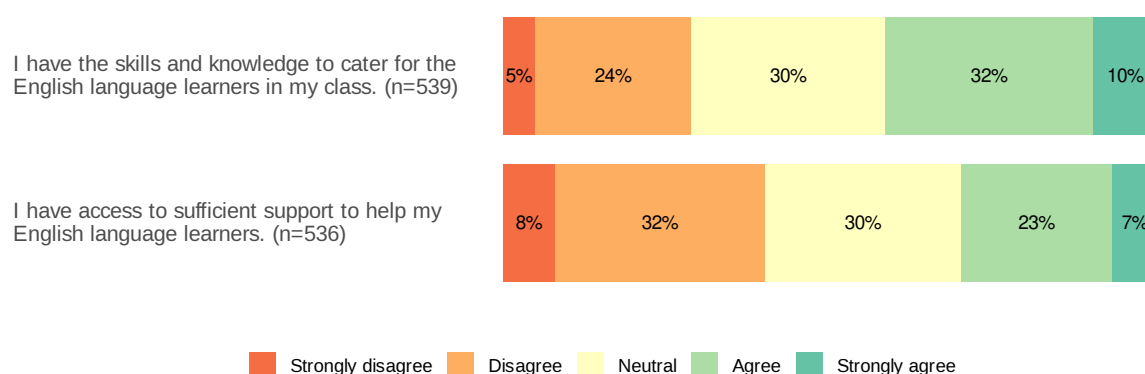


FIGURE 3 Teachers' views about teaching English language learners

We can compare these data with primary teachers' responses in 2024. Primary teachers were more likely than secondary teachers to indicate that they have the skills and knowledge to cater for the English language learners (57%, compared with 42%) and more likely have access to sufficient support (46%, compared with 30%).

Teaching practices

A design challenge when surveying secondary teachers about teaching practices is the diversity of learning areas they teach across. This year we approached this by asking all respondents to think about a class where they feel able to teach most effectively. We then asked about frequency of a range of pedagogical approaches, teaching practices, and student learning opportunities. These items provide insight into what teaching looks like in contexts where teachers perceive conditions for effective practice are in place.⁸

Teachers used a wide range of practices with classes

Figure 4 shows that most practices we asked about were used by teachers at least occasionally. The two least reported were:

- "[I] present tasks for which there is no obvious solution" (one-fifth of teachers never/almost never do this, and 41% occasionally do).
- "[I] give students opportunities to take part in activities that contribute to their class/school/community" (17% of teachers never/almost never do this, and 39% occasionally do). Teachers in less advantaged contexts were more likely to report giving students these opportunities. Teachers in schools with fewer socioeconomic barriers were more likely to report never/almost never providing opportunities for students to take part in activities that make a difference to their class, school, or community (27%), compared with those in schools with the most socioeconomic barriers (9%).

The top four practices, used by all teachers—and by over 90% of teachers either always/nearly always or frequently—align with principles of the science of learning and explicit teaching:

- linking new learning to recently learned content (50% always/nearly always, 46% frequently)

⁸ We drew on previous national survey cycles and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD's) Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) to develop these items. In New Zealand, 2,733 teachers across Years 1–10 and 227 principals took part in TALIS in mid-2024. The report is available at <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/schooling2/large-scale-international-assessments/talis-2024-first-report>

- taking into account how much information students can process in a lesson (49% always/nearly always, 45% frequently)
- considering students' prior knowledge and needs when planning (48% always/nearly always, 47% frequently)
- working one-on-one with students when they have difficulties (46% always/nearly always, 45% frequently).

There was slightly less frequent use of practices that connect learning to students' lives and experiences. Fewer teachers reported they always/nearly always used these practices, although most did at least occasionally:

- discussing different worldviews and ways of looking at things (31% always/nearly always, 44% frequently)
- teaching through contexts that incorporate students' interests and cultures (28% always/nearly always, 49% frequently)
- referring to everyday contexts to demonstrate why learning is useful (25% always/nearly always, 52% frequently)
- giving students opportunities to discuss and debate their ideas (18% always/nearly always, 46% frequently).

These findings suggest that building on prior knowledge, managing cognitive load, and responding to individual learners are central to how teachers approach teaching in classes where they feel most effective. Opportunities for open-ended, dialogic, and community-connected learning are less frequent, but used at least occasionally by most teachers. This may be related to time pressures, with two-thirds of teachers feeling under time pressure to get through content either frequently (33%) or always/nearly always (33%).

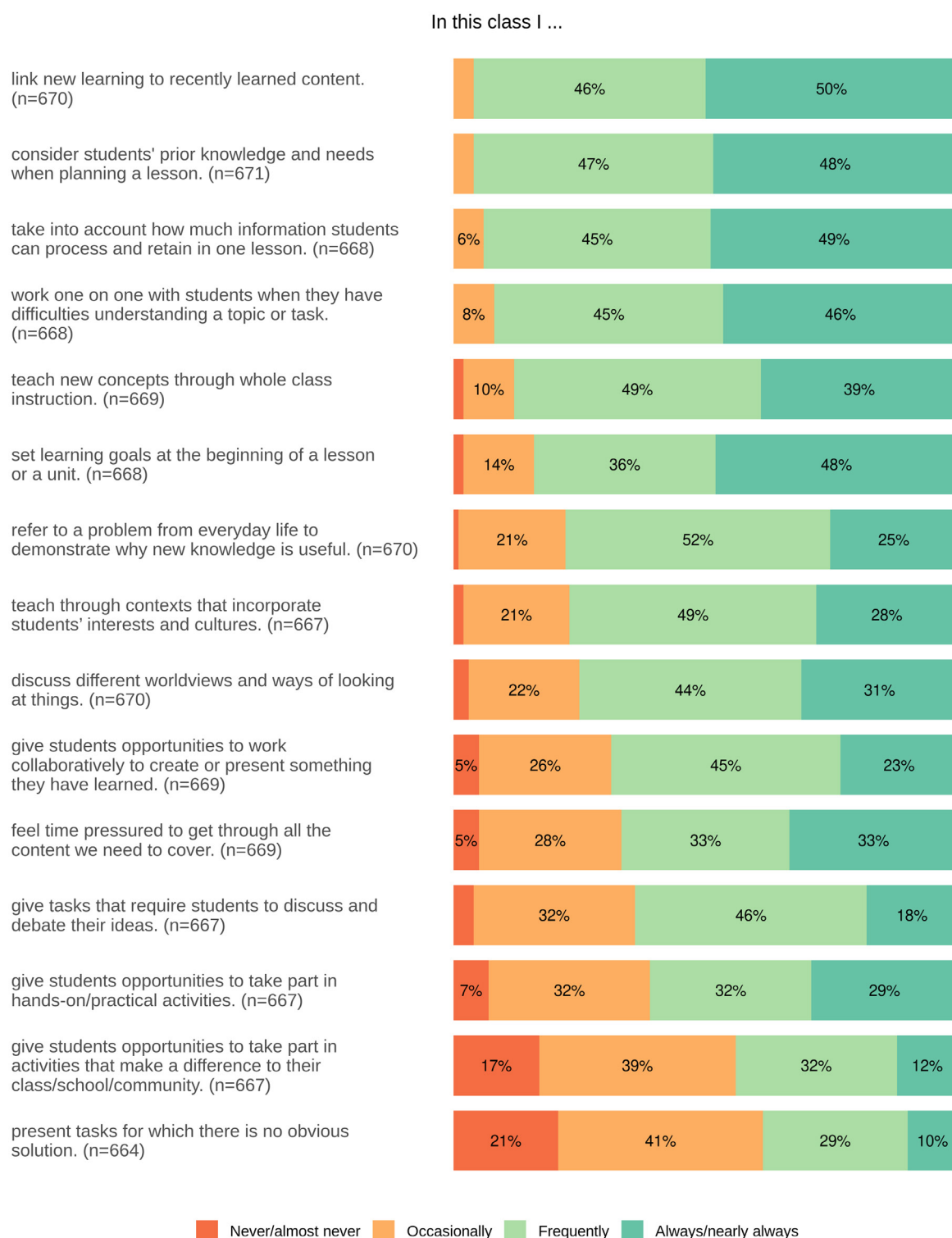


FIGURE 4 Teachers' reported use of a range of teaching practices in a class where they feel able to teach most effectively

Teaching literacy

We introduced a new question about the extent to which teachers support literacy development in their subject area teaching (Figure 5), in light of the updated curriculum and its focus on literacy.

Most teachers saw explicit teaching of literacy skills as part of their responsibility

Most teachers agreed (38%) or strongly agreed (39%) that it was their responsibility to explicitly teach literacy skills. A small proportion disagreed (6%) or strongly disagreed (1%) and 15% were neutral.

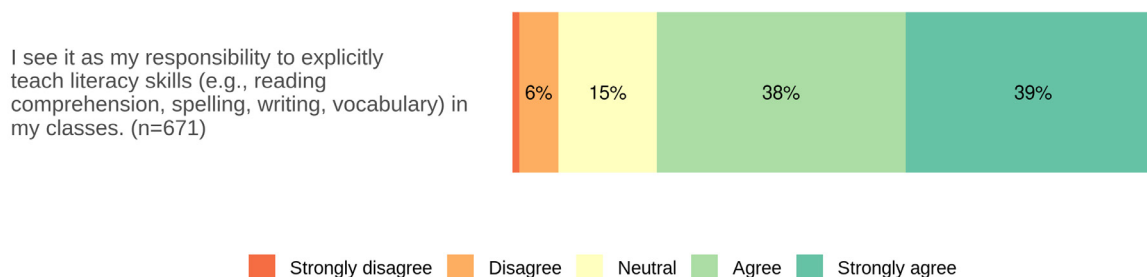


FIGURE 5 Teachers' views on explicitly teaching literacy skills

Looking at the data by learning area, nearly all teachers of English, te reo Māori, and learning languages saw it as their responsibility to explicitly teach literacy skills. Teachers of technology and careers and transition were least likely to agree with this statement.⁹

Using evidence to improve teaching and learning

Teaching is an iterative and adaptive process, requiring teachers to routinely draw on data and evidence to fine-tune their practice. In the 2025 survey, we asked teachers a new question about how often they draw on a range of data sources and evidence to inform their teaching (Figure 6).

Most teachers analysed and used student data to improve their practice

Overall, teachers used student data and evidence to improve their practice, more often than feedback from colleagues or research:

- Most teachers (79%–87%) said they frequently or always used student data (achievement, feedback, attendance, behaviour, and wellbeing) to improve their practice.
- Around two-thirds of teachers (68%) said they frequently or always used research or feedback from colleagues to improve their teaching.

⁹ Sixty percent of technology teachers agreed or strongly agreed, 25% were neutral, 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed; 65% of careers and transition teachers agreed or strongly agreed, 18% were neutral, 18% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

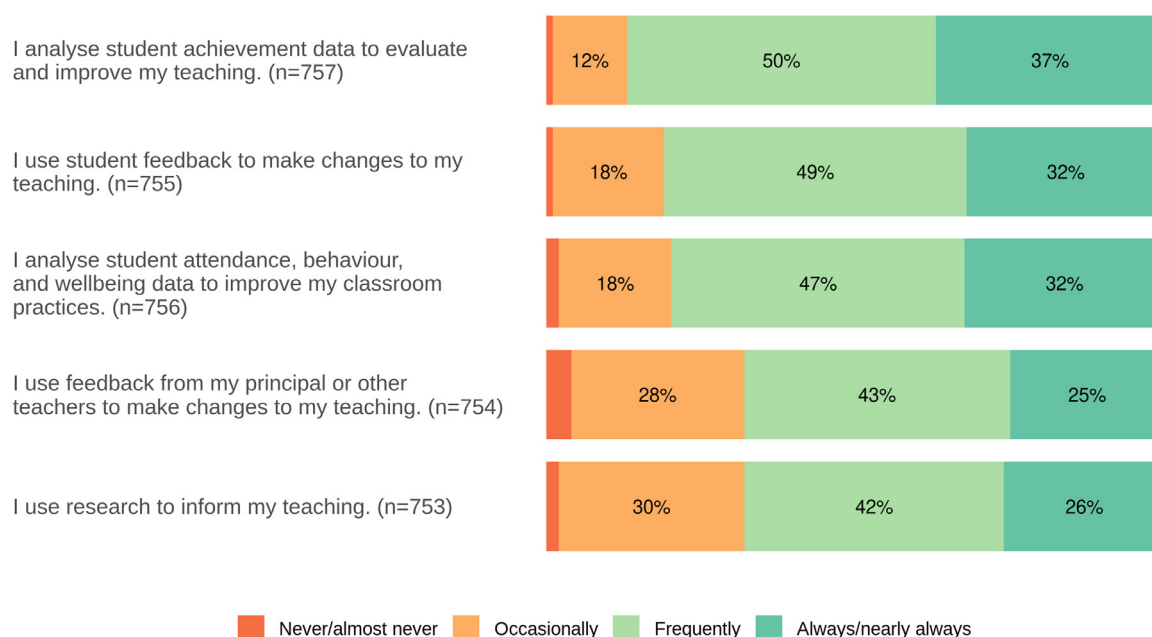


FIGURE 6 Teachers' views on their use of data and evidence

Teachers' use of te reo with students

This section explores teachers' reported use of te reo Māori in their interactions with students. This was a new question, taken from the 2024 National Survey of Primary Teachers. Teachers were first asked to describe their current level of use of te reo Māori with their students by selecting one of three levels: "he kākano (emerging/limited)", "he whanake (developing)", and "panekiretanga (strong/confident)". They were then presented with a set of statements describing different practices, tailored to each level. Together, these questions provide insight into both the extent and nature of reo Māori use in classrooms, from basic phrases through to more immersive teaching practices.

Most teachers said they used te reo Māori at "he kākano (emerging)" or "he whanake (developing)", with higher levels of use by kaiako Māori

Of the 673 teachers who responded to this question, most (55%) selected "he kākano (emerging/limited)" or "he whanake (developing)" (42%), with only a small proportion (3%) reporting a "panekiretanga (strong)" level of use (Table 1). In comparison, primary teachers surveyed in 2024 selected "he kākano" (31%), "he whanake" (64%), and "panekiretanga" (5%).

As Table 1 shows, kaiako Māori were more likely to use te reo Māori in their classrooms at higher proficiency levels. The differences were statistically significant.

TABLE 1 Teachers' reported level of use of te reo Māori with their students

	Total respondents (n=673)		Kaiako Māori (n=91)		Non-Māori teachers (n=582)	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
He kākano (emerging)	371	55	25	27	346	59
He whanake (developing)	281	42	51	56	230	40
Panekiretanga (strong)	21	3	15	16	6	1

A statistically significant pattern was also observed between teachers' level of use of te reo Māori with their students and school EQI. Teachers in schools with more socioeconomic barriers were more likely to report stronger use of te reo Māori (7% at "panekiretanga"), compared with those facing moderate (2% at "panekiretanga") and fewer socioeconomic barriers (1% at "panekiretanga"). In contrast, teachers in schools with fewer socioeconomic barriers were more likely to report "he kākano (emerging/limited)" use (65%), compared with teachers in schools facing moderate (53% at "he kākano") and more socioeconomic barriers (52% at "he kākano").

Most teachers at "he kākano" level reported using a few Māori words or phrases

Among the 371 teachers at the "he kākano (emerging/limited)" level, nearly all (89%) reported using a few Māori words or phrases, such as greetings and farewells (Figure 7). Fewer reported using te reo Māori in more sustained ways: around one-quarter (23%) used class karakia and waiata, 13% indicated that students supported their reo development, and 12% said they avoided using te reo Māori due to lack of confidence.¹⁰

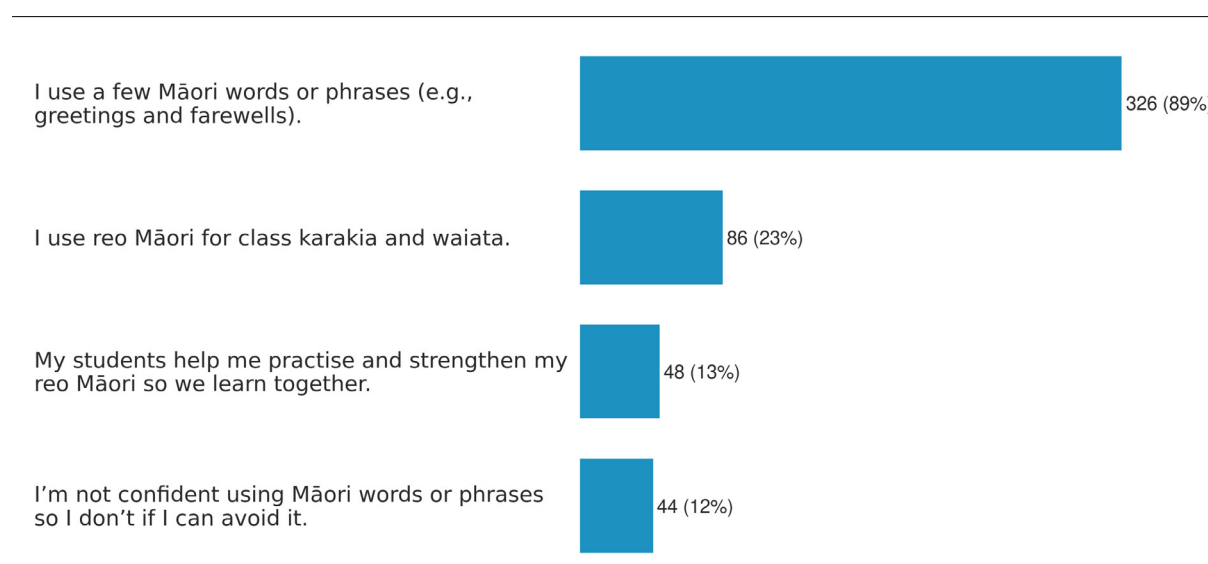


FIGURE 7 Teachers' use of te reo Māori, "he kākano (emerging/limited)" level (n=371)

¹⁰ Seventeen of the 44 teachers who said they avoided using te reo Māori because of a lack of confidence also selected "I use a few Māori words or phrases", four used class karakia and waiata, and two said students helped them practise and learn together.

Differences between Māori and non-Māori teachers were also evident within this group. Kaiako Māori at “he kākano” level were more likely than non-Māori teachers to report using te reo Māori for practices such as karakia and waiata (40%, compared with 22%) and were less likely to report avoiding its use due to lack of confidence (4% of kaiako Māori, compared with 13% of non-Māori teachers).

Teachers at “he whanake” level reported a wider use of te reo Māori

Teachers who identified as being at “he whanake (developing)” level reported using te reo Māori in varied ways. Most (76%) used te reo Māori for classroom instructions, and just over half used it for karakia and waiata (53%) or described learning alongside their students (53%). Around two-fifths (41%) reported using phrases and short sentences beyond instructions, and just over one-quarter (28%) explicitly taught te reo Māori words and phrases to their students (Figure 8).

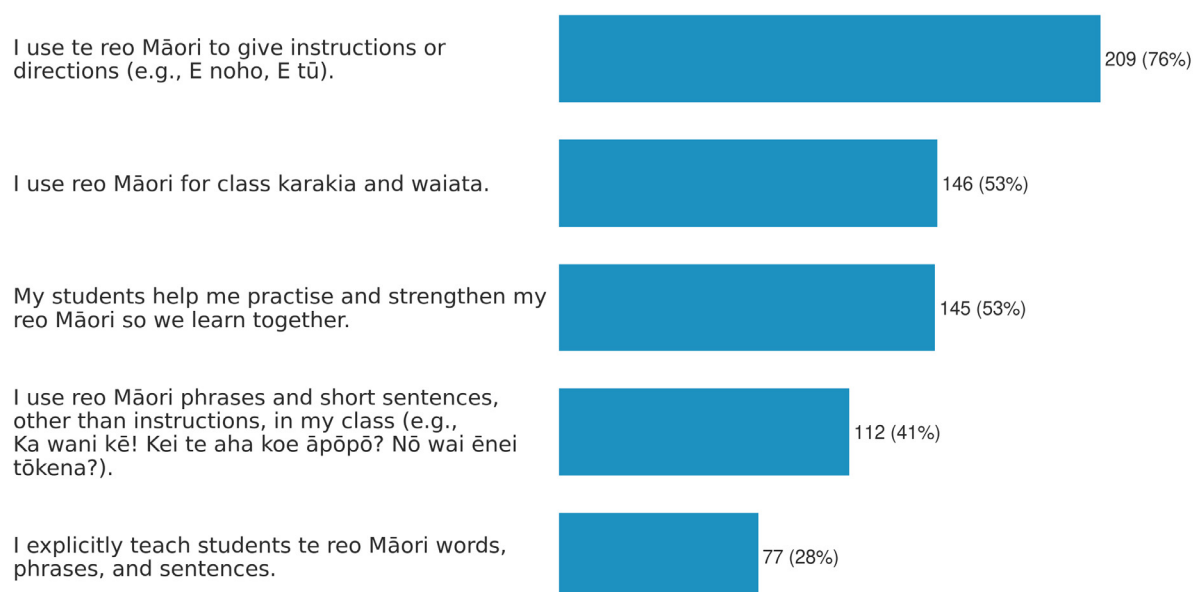


FIGURE 8 Teachers' use of te reo Māori, “he whanake (developing)” level (n=281)

Differences by ethnicity were again apparent. Kaiako Māori at this level were more likely than non-Māori teachers to report using te reo Māori across a wider range of practices, including karakia and waiata (76%, compared with 48%) and using phrases and short sentences beyond instructions (61%, compared with 36%).

Most teachers at “panekiretanga” level explicitly taught words, phrases, and sentences to their students

Among the small group of teachers reporting a “panekiretanga (strong)” level of reo Māori use (n=21), nearly all (95%) used Māori phrases and sentences in class, and most (86%) explicitly taught the language. Around one-third reported teaching some learning areas in te reo Māori only (33%), with smaller proportions teaching short lessons (29%) or across the curriculum (14%) in te reo Māori (Figure 9).

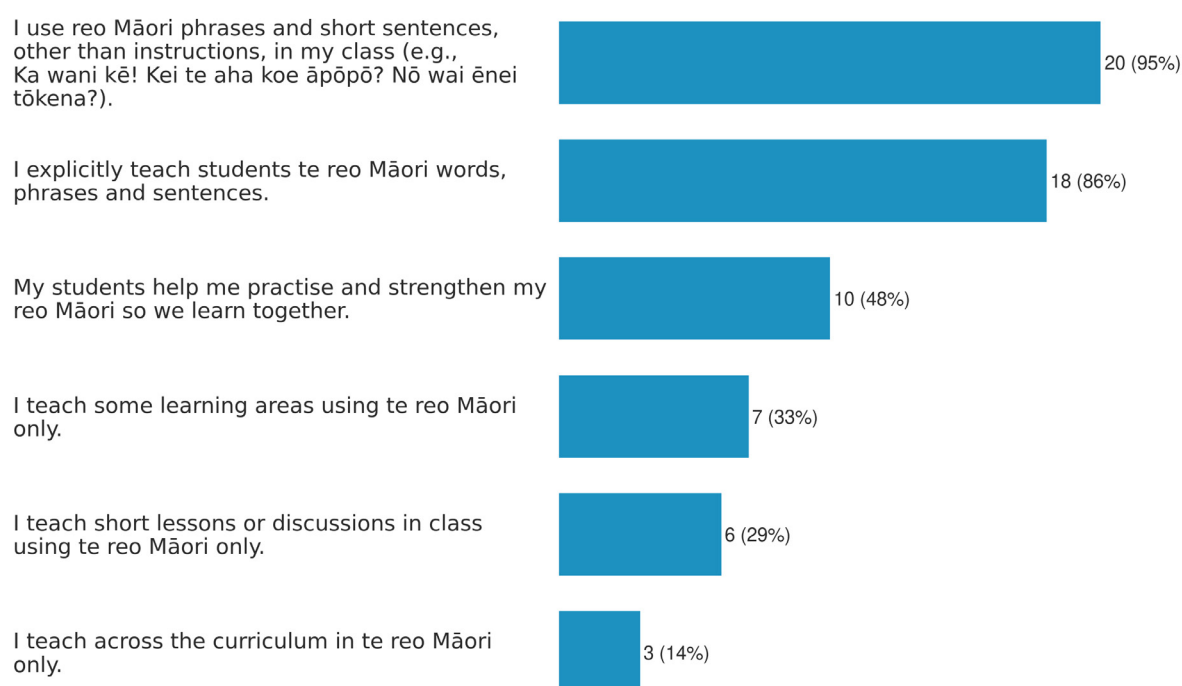


FIGURE 9 Teachers' use of te reo Māori, "panekiretanga (strong)" level (n=21)

Patterns were broadly similar for Māori and non-Māori teachers at this level, although the number of respondents in the "panekiretanga" group—particularly non-Māori teachers—was small.

Teachers' use of AI

This is the first time we have asked secondary teachers about their use of AI in the national survey. As generative AI has quickly become part of everyday life, including in education, it is important to understand how teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand are using these tools in their work.

Recent studies show that teachers are starting to use AI tools in a range of ways, from preparing lessons to supporting student learning, although access to AI is uneven and many teachers have concerns and need more training in its use. For example, generative AI can help create educational content, enhance engagement, and personalise learning experiences (Kasneci et al., 2023). An earlier exploratory study of the use of AI conducted by NZCER found that primary teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand are widely experimenting with free generative AI tools with limited access to premium tools and low confidence in responsible use (Coblentz et al., 2025).

The most common use of AI was to help develop learning materials

We asked teachers whether they were currently integrating generative AI into their teaching practices: nearly two-thirds (65%) said they were. These teachers were asked to indicate the ways they used generative AI (Table 2).

The most common use is to help develop learning materials. Nine out of 10 teachers who used AI said they used it for this purpose. Teachers also used AI to save time on administrative tasks (60%), such as writing emails or preparing documents. About half (52%) used it to support their understanding of curriculum areas, which suggests AI was also being used as a quick way to build knowledge or confidence in teaching areas that needs support.

Fewer teachers were using AI for marking, with only 22% reporting this use. This may reflect concerns about whether AI can assess student work fairly and accurately.¹¹ The Ministry of Education's (MoE's) guidance on generative AI use affirms that teachers remain fully responsible for marking decisions, and human oversight is essential when AI is used to assist marking (Ministry of Education, 2024c).

A small proportion of teacher respondents (8%) described "other" uses of AI. These uses included AI as a tutor or learning support tool for students, as a tool to assist students with research and preparation, as a source of formative feedback on students' work, and as a way to differentiate lessons and improve accessibility and inclusive learning. Some teachers also mentioned using AI to give students opportunities to develop their own resources based on their learning goals.

TABLE 2 **How teachers report using generative AI tools in their teaching practice (n=431)**

Response	Count	Percent
To help me develop learning materials	388	90
To streamline administrative tasks	257	60
To help me prepare for teaching areas where my understanding of the curriculum needs support	222	52
To foster innovation and creativity in student projects	193	45
To assist in marking students' work	94	22
Other uses (please describe)	34	8

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% as teachers could select more than one response option.

Teachers' access to premium AI tools is limited, raising potential consistency and equity concerns

Over three-quarters (79%) of the 434 teachers who use AI in their teaching practice reported using free AI tools (Figure 10). Just under a third (30%) reported that their school provides the AI tools they use. One-fifth (19%) indicated paying for AI tools themselves and a few (3%) were unsure.¹² This suggests that access to AI is largely driven by individual initiative rather than school-level provision.

Paid versions of generative AI tools are generally more advanced, offer stronger data security, and have fewer usage limitations than free versions. Differential access to these tools may create inconsistencies in how teachers use AI in their work, along with possible data security and equity implications.

¹¹ See the principal report (MacDonald et al., 2026) for principals' perspectives on school policy about teacher use of AI for marking and feedback.

¹² Note that teachers could select more than one option. Some teachers may use free tools as well as having AI tools provided by the school, or paying for premium tools themselves.

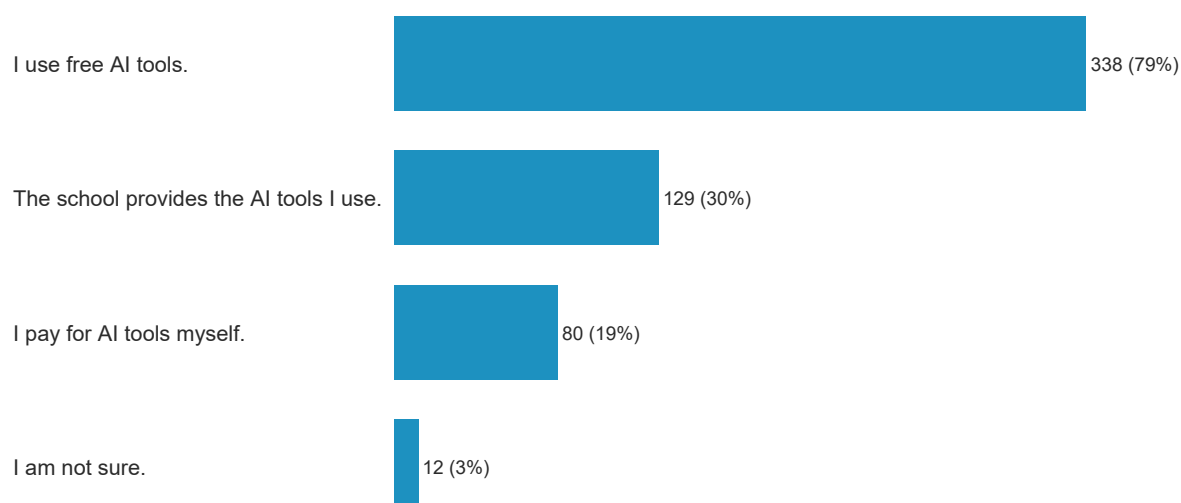


FIGURE 10 How teachers get access to generative AI tools they use in their teaching practice (n=429)

Teachers who don't use AI in their teaching practice were concerned about quality, bias, and ethical impacts

For the one third (35%) of teachers who said they don't use AI in their teaching practice, the biggest concern was the quality and possible bias of AI-generated information, reported by 66% of non-using respondents (Table 3). Many teachers had ethical concerns (60%), along with worries about data privacy and security (47%). These findings suggest that teachers may benefit from more guidance, training, or discussions about how generative AI handles data and how ethical and privacy and security concerns might be addressed

Nearly half of teachers (48%) who don't use AI for teaching said they prefer traditional teaching methods. A similar proportion of teachers are unsure about how effective AI is in education (46%). A lack of knowledge or training was reported by 39% of respondents who don't use AI for teaching.

TABLE 3 Barriers to integrating AI tools into teaching practice (n=236)

Response	Count	Percent
Concerns about the quality or bias of AI information	156	66
Concerns about ethical impacts of AI	142	60
Preference for traditional teaching methods	114	48
Concerns about data privacy and security	112	47
Scepticism about the effectiveness of AI in education	108	46
Lack of knowledge or training on AI tools	92	39
Concerns about environmental impacts of AI	79	33
Lack of school policy or guidelines	48	20
Other (please describe)	43	18
Limited access to AI resources or tools	28	12

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% as teachers could select more than one response option.

One-third of non-AI using teachers (33%) had concerns about the environmental impacts of AI. A statistically significant difference by years of teaching experience was evident. Less experienced teachers were more likely to report this concern, with the highest proportions among those in their second year (22%) and first year (18%). Concern was notably lower among more experienced teachers, particularly those with more than 15 years of experience (6%). One possible explanation is that newer teachers may have had more recent exposure to discussions of sustainability and the environmental costs of digital technologies.

Teachers' views on generative AI were mixed, with both optimism and concern

We asked all teachers (whether they currently used AI or not) the extent to which they agreed with three statements about generative AI (Figure 11) and school support and equity (Figure 12).

A majority (71%) agreed or strongly agreed that they were concerned that the use of generative AI will undermine students' learning. At the same time, over a third of teachers (36%) indicated that they were enthusiastic about the future of generative AI. A similar-sized group were neutral (35%) and 30% were not enthusiastic.

While about a quarter of teachers felt confident in guiding students' use of AI, a larger proportion (34%) were neutral, and nearly 40% expressed a lack of confidence to provide this guidance. This reinforces the need for PLD about AI, identified later in this report.

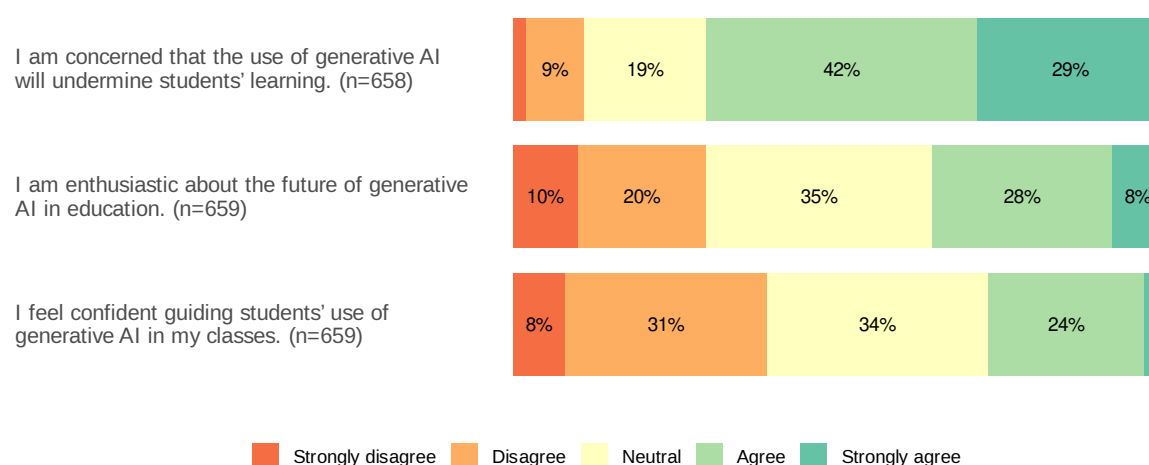


FIGURE 11 Teachers' attitudes towards AI use in education

Teachers' perceptions of school support for generative AI and views on equity were also mixed (Figure 12). Just over a half of teachers (56%) agreed or strongly agreed that their school leadership encourages experimentation with AI, while a substantial proportion (32%) remained neutral. Only 41% of teachers agreed they felt supported to prevent and detect inappropriate use of AI in assessment, with a similar proportion (39%) not feeling supported.

When asked whether unequal access to generative AI tools was an issue for students in their classes, 40% of teachers gave a neutral response. Just over 20% agreed or strongly agreed that it was an issue, while 39% disagreed. This suggests that many teachers are either uncertain about equity concerns or have not yet considered them closely in relation to AI use.

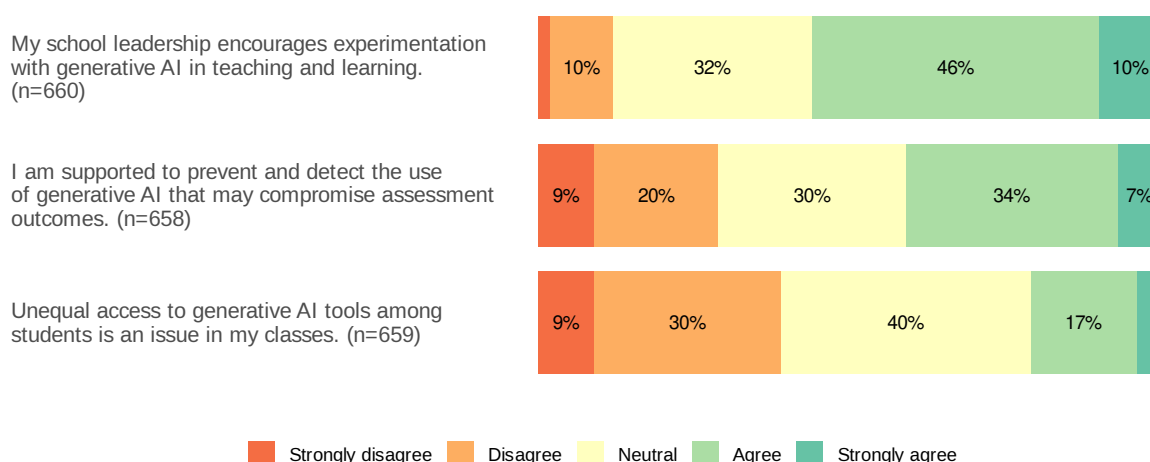


FIGURE 12 Teachers' views on school support and equity in generative AI use

A statistically significant difference was observed across EQI groups in teachers' perceptions of unequal access to generative AI tools among students. Teachers in schools with more socioeconomic barriers were more likely to agree that this was an issue (29%), compared with those in schools with fewer barriers (14%), with those in schools facing moderate socioeconomic barriers falling in between (20%). In contrast, the disagreement decreased correspondingly from 53% for teachers in schools with fewer barriers to 25% for those in schools with more barriers. Although many teachers chose neutral (33%–46%), the overall pattern indicates that concerns about unequal access are more pronounced in schools with more socioeconomic barriers. This likely reflects underlying socioeconomic disparities that may affect students' access to generative AI tools.

Education for a changing climate

Questions related to climate change have been included in NZCER national surveys since 2019. While some climate questions were included in the 2022 secondary principal survey (Alansari, Wylie et al., 2022), there were no questions on this topic in the 2021 teacher national survey. However, a separate NZCER study in 2020 gathered information about secondary school climate change teaching practices (Bolstad, 2020). We incorporated some of these questions into the 2025 national survey. These findings can be considered alongside findings from the principal survey about schools' experiences of climate impacts, and school-wide approaches to climate and sustainability actions (MacDonald et al., 2026).¹³

Just under half of teachers said climate change was a focus in some of their teaching

We asked teachers whether climate change was a focus in any of their teaching. Just over half (53%) said climate change is not a focus in any of their teaching, and the remaining 47% said it was at least a minor focus in at least one class they teach (Table 4).

¹³ The 2024 global TALIS study also included a series of questions about teaching climate change and environmental sustainability. At the time of writing, data from these sections of TALIS have not yet been reported, so we are not able to compare and contrast our findings with this larger global dataset.

TABLE 4 Is climate change a focus in your teaching? (n=659)

	Count	Percent
No—it is not a focus in any classes I teach	348	53
Yes—it is a minor focus in at least one class I teach	185	28
Yes—it is a moderate or major focus in at least one class I teach	126	19

The next bank of items was only presented to the 47% who indicated climate change was a minor or moderate to major focus in any of their teaching. Table 5 shows the subject areas and year levels in which climate change was a focus. Science, social science, and sustainability subjects were the most common contexts; however, there were examples indicated across every learning area, as well as examples of integrated or interdisciplinary programmes. Amongst the “other” contexts teachers named were religious studies, careers, trades subjects, food-related subjects, health and PE subjects, outdoor education programmes, learning support, and whānau class time. Several teachers indicated they also addressed climate change in Years 7–8 classes.

TABLE 5 Subjects in which climate change is a teaching focus (n=310)

Subject area	Years 9–10		Years 11–13	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Science subjects	82	26	68	22
Social science subjects	82	26	42	14
Sustainability	70	23	42	14
An integrated/cross-disciplinary or “passion project” programme	52	17	34	11
English	50	16	31	10
Technology	33	11	24	8
The arts	15	5	11	4
Agricultural and horticultural science	12	4	17	5
Te reo Māori	13	4	6	2
Mathematics and statistics	9	3	14	5
Languages	7	2	5	2
Other (please specify)	25	8		

Students learnt about climate impacts and solutions, but were less likely to be taking action

Figure 13 shows teachers' responses about what students did in classes where climate change was a focus. This often included learning about the impacts for Aotearoa New Zealand (82%), global causes and consequences (81%), exploring a range of solutions to climate challenges (74%), and exploring the social, emotional, and cultural impacts for themselves and their communities (73%).

It was much less common for students to be carrying out action projects to reduce or offset their school's emissions (32%), or social and community actions to support local or national climate action (26%). These two items also had the highest levels of disagreement from teachers.¹⁴ Other Aotearoa New Zealand research has highlighted some of the challenges for secondary students to learn through involvement in school-based and local action-taking contexts. These include timetabling constraints, the individualised nature of most senior secondary assessments, and the time and workload demands they place on students (Bolstad, 2024; Bolstad & Durie, 2024). These studies also provide examples of what it can look like when secondary students are engaging in these kinds of activities, such as nature restoration or food garden projects, campaigns to support sustainable school transport, and students acting as facilitators for community engagement in local and regional climate policy and action plans.

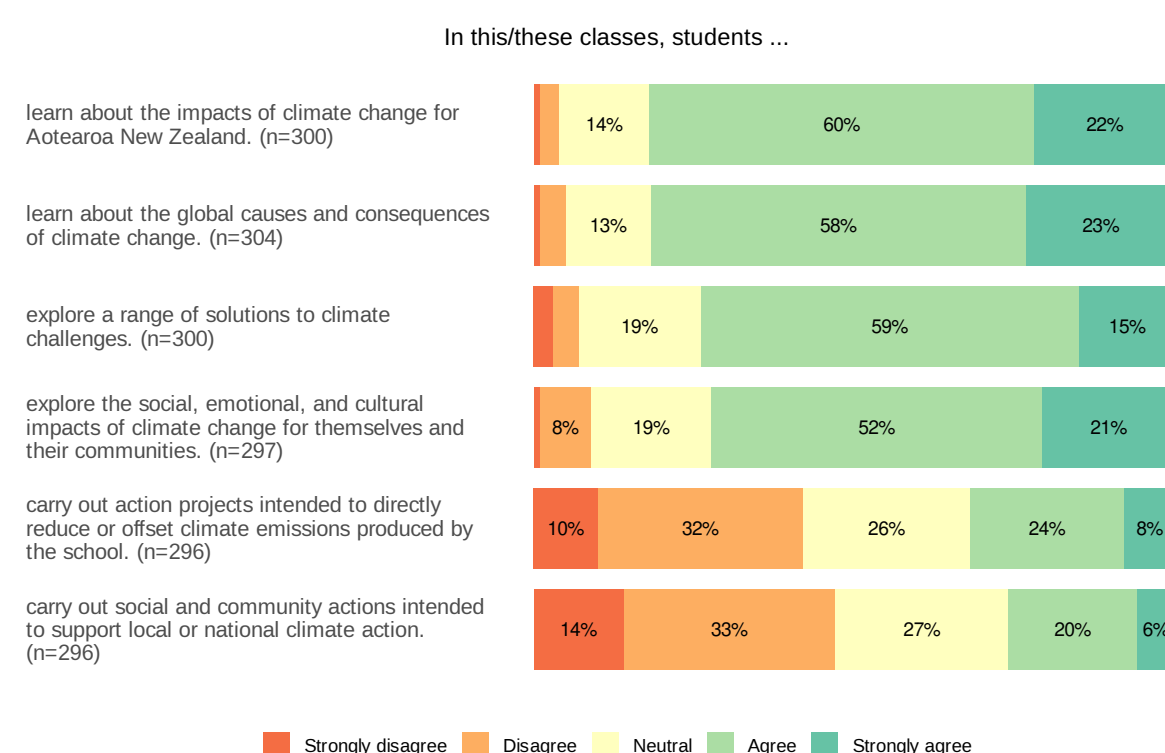


FIGURE 13 Teachers' views on what students do in classes where climate change is a focus

Te marautanga me te aromatawai | Curriculum and assessment

Curriculum and assessment were in a substantial period of change when we undertook the national survey. The update to the New Zealand curriculum is the most significant period of national curriculum change since the release of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) (Ministry of Education, 2007) in 2007 and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* (TMoA) (Ministry of Education, 2008) in 2008. When we sent the national survey to principals and teachers at the end of October 2025, it coincided with schools being able to see the whole of the updated curriculum for Years 0–10 for the first time, though some parts

¹⁴ An earlier study (Bolstad, 2020) suggested that learning about individual actions was a more common focus in the classroom than collective or systemic actions.

were still in draft.¹⁵ The updated Years 11–13 curriculum documents were not yet out for feedback. In addition, consultation on a proposal to replace NCEA with a new qualifications pathway for senior secondary took place in August and September 2025, prior to our survey being implemented.

In this period of transition and flux, we garnered teachers' perspectives on these substantial changes and on their own assessment practices. The findings give a snapshot at that moment in time.¹⁶ Due to the changes in the policy context for curriculum and assessment since our last survey, most of the questions in this section were new items. One bank of items (assessment for learning) was retained, enabling comparisons with previous surveys.

Assessment for learning

We asked teachers about how often they gave students opportunities to be involved in assessment for learning. Engaging students in classroom assessment practices is an important element of formative assessment practice. Such opportunities can encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning and develop a sense of agency.

Most teachers said students had opportunities to engage in assessment for learning practices at least occasionally

Figure 14 shows that some opportunities for students to engage in assessment for learning practices occur in most teachers' classes:

- Teachers were most likely to give students opportunities to assess their own work against set criteria (only 6% said they never/almost never do this, 43% occasionally, 51% frequently or most of the time).
- Teachers were least likely to give students opportunities to help set expected outcomes/success criteria for assigned work (29% said they never/almost never do this, 42% occasionally, 29% frequently or most of the time).

¹⁵ Updated English and Mathematics and statistics content was released on 19 October 2025, replacing previously gazetted curriculum content for Years 1–6 English and Years 1–8 Mathematics and statistics which was in place from January 2025. On 28 October 2025, draft curriculum content for Years 1–10 for all remaining learning area was released. More information about the changes including timelines, is available at tahurangi.education.govt.nz/draft_curriculum_years0to10

¹⁶ As we finalised this report in May 2026, the Government revised the timeline for curriculum implementation (see [tahurangi.education.govt.nz/our-story](https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/details-ncea-replacement-confirmed)) and confirmed details of the replacement to NCEA (see <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/details-ncea-replacement-confirmed>)

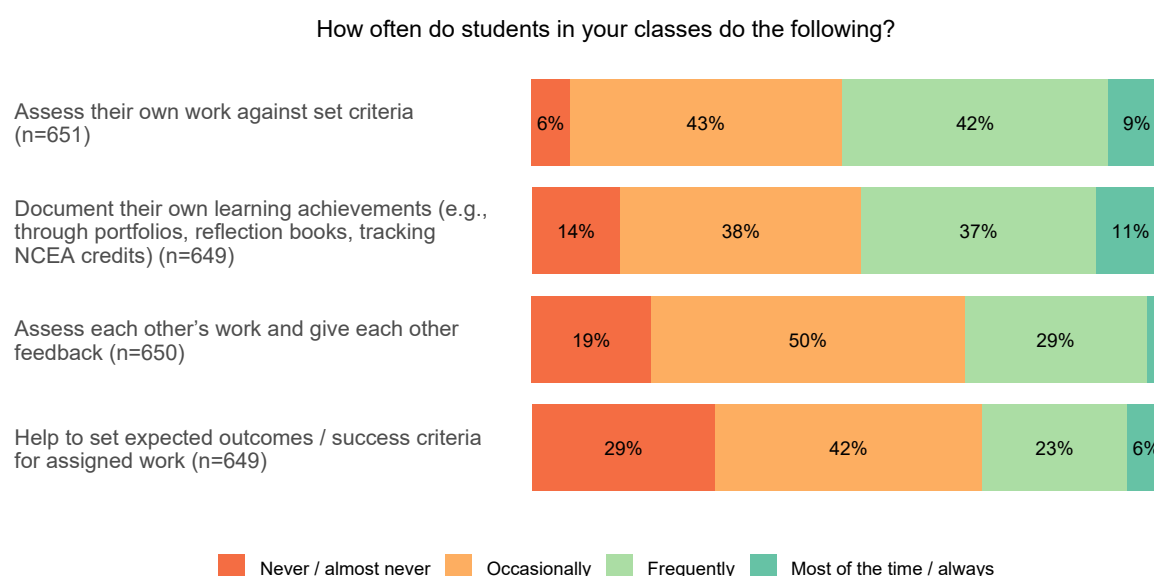


FIGURE 14 Teachers' reported frequency of opportunities for students to participate in assessment for learning practices

Two items showed an increase from 2021 in the proportion of teachers giving students opportunities frequently or most of the time/always. Both returned to proportions reported in 2018, possibly indicating a pattern related to COVID-19:

- assessing their own work against set criteria (51%, compared with 34% in 2021 and 54% in 2018)
- documenting their own learning achievements (48%, compared with 34% in 2021 and 40% in 2018).

NCEA and senior secondary qualifications

NZCER's national surveys have been asking questions about NCEA and senior secondary qualifications since 2003, with questions reviewed and revised each cycle to ensure relevance to the policy context at the time.

Following a 2018 review of NCEA that identified concerns about complexity, inequity, and an overemphasis on credit accumulation, the Government confirmed a major NCEA reform package in 2020 (Kōrero Mātauranga, 2019) and began phased implementation through to 2023. When we last surveyed secondary teachers in 2021, these changes were largely still in the design and early implementation phase.

There has since been an even more significant policy shift, with the Government in 2025 proposing to replace NCEA entirely with a new national qualification system (including removing Level 1 and introducing new Year 12 and Year 13 certificates).¹⁷ Given these changes, none of the items we asked about in 2021 were directly relevant to ask again in late 2025. Instead, we asked new items to capture the current status of NCEA, including recently implemented changes, and further changes on the horizon. Some of these items were also included in the principal survey.

¹⁷ This was proposed in August 2025 and was confirmed by the Government in March 2026.

A majority of teachers thought NCEA should be “improved rather than removed”

Most teachers indicated agreement (71%, with 45% strongly agreeing) that NCEA should be improved rather than removed, with almost as many (68%) indicating concern that the proposed changes will limit the learning opportunities and pathways for students in their school (Figure 15).

More teachers indicated disagreement (44%) than agreement (24%) that the proposed change to the new Year 12 and Year 13 certificates was going in the right direction, and nearly a third chose a neutral response. The highest rate of disagreement (54%, with 33% strongly disagreeing) was that the proposed changes to senior secondary qualifications will reduce existing inequities in student outcomes. Only 16% agreed that this would be the case, with 30% choosing a neutral response.

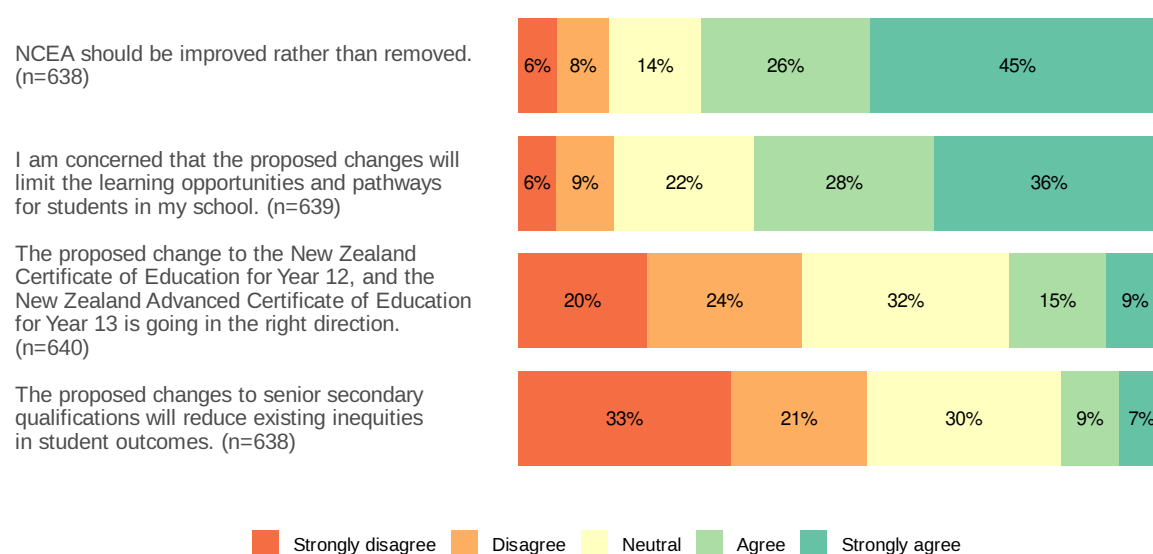


FIGURE 15 Teachers' views on NCEA and proposed changes to senior secondary qualifications

One hundred teachers responded to an open question inviting comments about the proposed changes to NCEA and senior secondary qualifications. We noticed that quite a few comments also addressed curriculum change and the fate of particular subjects within the change proposal. This is understandable given the tight relationship between curriculum and assessment at the senior secondary level—and the fact that curriculum updates for Years 11–13 were not yet available at the time of this survey (with the exception of English and Mathematics and statistics, which had been shared as drafts for feedback in 2025). The survey did not include a specific open question about the curriculum updates for this reason.

The most common theme (about a third of the comments) questioned the rationale for the change, with some teachers saying they had too little information yet, while also feeling it was “rushed”:

I am perturbed by the pace of change and lack of transparency and consultation. The lack of engagement with subject associations is highly problematic. This seems to be driven by ideology rather than data.

The lack of transparency about what is going to change, how it will change, and who is involved in the process is concerning.

The timeline is too rushed, with little time to prepare and understand the changes. At this point, we have no clear indication of what will be taught, and how it links to the junior school.

Around one-fifth of comments raised concerns about student equity, identifying particular student groups teachers felt may experience greater disadvantage as a result of the proposed changes:

I am concerned that there seem to be (at this point in time) few alternatives for less able students to experience success (particularly those students with literacy needs or specific learning difficulties).

The ESOL students and neuro diverse students will be at a severe disadvantage with the new proposed changes. Those from a low socioeconomic background will get pushed out of higher achievements at school and leave early with little to no qualifications.

These changes will have a significant impact on future generations and not for the better. I am not against change, but only if it is based on empirical evidence that shows direction/purpose which is not happening at present.

It will severely disadvantage any students with special learning needs, and students of other cultures/ languages. It will further hierarchise the subjects/learning areas.

Another set of concerns related to specific subject areas or pathways:

I am really angry that the Government is talking about disestablishing Food and Nutrition as a stand-alone university approved subject.

I am very concerned that Education for Sustainability is removed as a standalone NCEA subject.

Loss of significant curriculum areas is of concern. It is worrying that students will have less choice and these subjects are being seen as insignificant.

Teacher workload, stress, and loss of agency was also of concern:

I feel like the change process is a 'done to' rather than 'done with' process. I am concerned about staff retention with the frequency of poorly rolled out/executed changes.

Whatever occurs should not come at the expense of teachers' agency to contextualise and localise curricula.

There was acknowledgement that some aspects of NCEA need addressing

While there were more comments expressing concerns or uncertainty about the proposed changes, there were also comments about issues with NCEA, including what's working, not working, or could be improved:

NCEA is an issue when students are picking and choosing what they will and will not participate in (e.g., not attempting or showing up to exams because they do not need the credits).

I understand the idea behind being more consistent so that a student coming out from any school will have similar knowledge. However, why not just modify the NCEA? It feels like we are taking a step back in time prior to NCEA. The ideas behind NCEA were to cater for diversity. How is this now going to happen?

Should be grade/percentage based rather than achieved etc. Exams should be compulsory. Perhaps don't release any marks until the end of the year, so students can't say 'I've already passed, so I don't need to do this'. Or all work/exams need to be completed to a minimum standard.

Finally, some teachers commented in support of the change, ranging from tentative to unequivocal:

I support simpler grading and comparison with international standards. Still too many unknowns so far with the proposed changes for me to make an informed decision on whether I support or [am] against some of the changes.

I am highly enthused about the proposed changes and see them as long overdue. NCEA is a failed experiment; I champion and applaud its demise.

The updated *New Zealand Curriculum*

As outlined above, NZC has been undergoing a period of significant change, with ongoing revisions and staged releases of new content. At the time of the survey, schools had access to updated curriculum content for Years 1–10 English and Mathematics and statistics in NZC and Te Reo Rangatira and Pāngarau in TMoA which were scheduled for required use from the start of 2026. Schools also had access to draft curriculum content for the remaining Years 1–10 learning areas for NZC from October 2025, scheduled to be implemented from 2027.¹⁸ The period in which our survey was conducted overlapped with the consultation period for all draft components of the curriculum up to Year 10. Curriculum development at the senior secondary level was still in progress. Draft Years 11–13 curriculum content was not yet available for feedback at the time of the survey, with release scheduled for 2026 and phased implementation planned from 2028. This meant schools were engaging with newly available curriculum content while other components were still being developed, providing an important context for understanding teachers' responses.

Teachers had mixed views about the direction of curriculum change, but clear concerns about pace and engagement

Figure 16 shows that more teachers indicated disagreement (42%) than agreement (28%) that the updated NZC changes were going in the right direction, while 29% chose a neutral response. Teachers had much more consistent views about the pace of change, with 72% indicating disagreement (41% strongly) that the changes were going at an appropriate pace. More than three-quarters (76%) indicated disagreement (52% strongly) that the changes have involved sufficient engagement with the teaching profession.

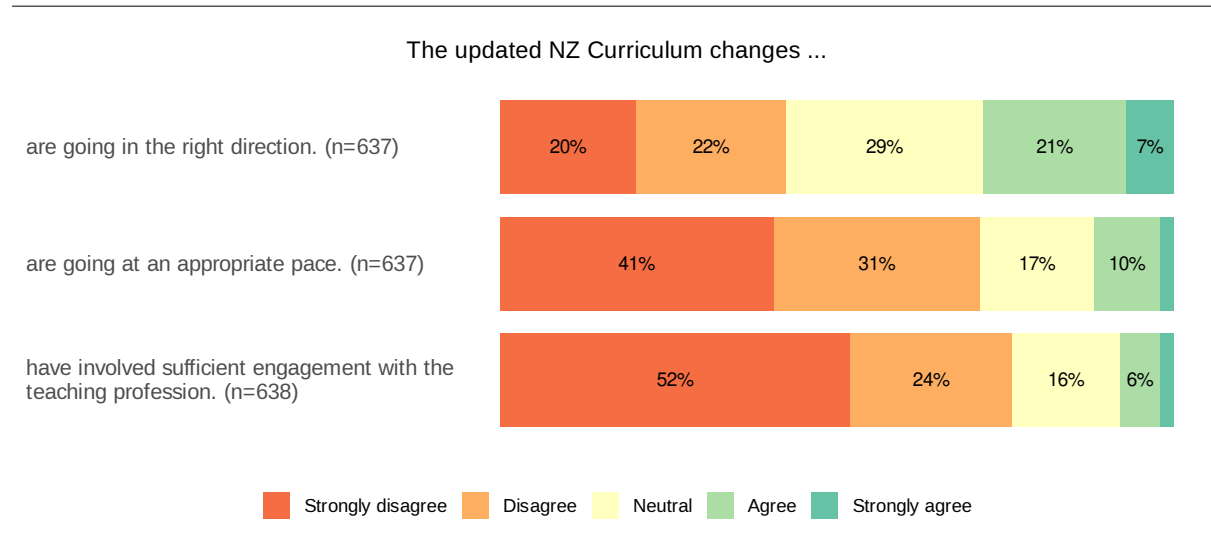


FIGURE 16 Teachers' views on the updated NZC

¹⁸ The remaining draft wāhanga ako for TMoA were only available from January 2026, so would not have been seen by principals who completed the survey in late 2025.

Te hao i te katoa | Inclusion

The Inclusion domain in the teacher survey focused on teaching practices to support inclusion, and on how their school gives effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.¹⁹

Enacting Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Three survey items examined teachers' perspectives on how schools give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Figure 17). These items are of interest in the current policy context, where expectations for how schools give effect to Te Tiriti are shifting.

Most teachers thought Te Tiriti o Waitangi was widely enacted in school values and day-to-day activities

Most teachers (87%) agreed or strongly agreed that Te Tiriti o Waitangi was enacted in their school values and day-to-day activities. Agreement was a little lower for whether their school had a shared understanding of what giving effect to Te Tiriti looks like, where 74% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed and 18% selected a neutral response. Similarly, 70% agreed or strongly agreed that their department or learning area actively explores how to honour Te Tiriti in teaching, with 20% selecting neutral and 10% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

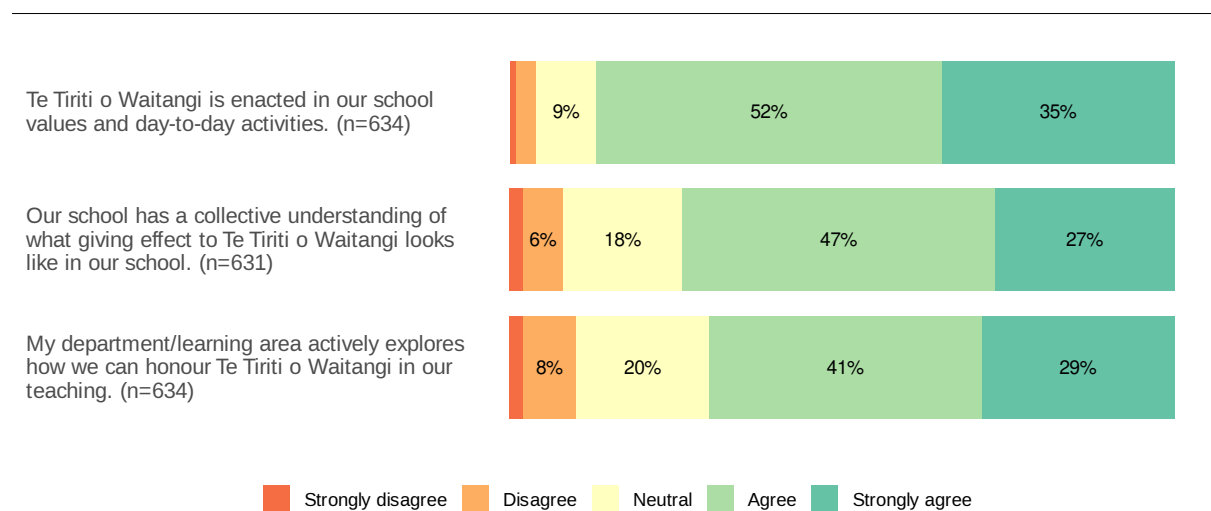


FIGURE 17 Teachers' views on how schools give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Teaching for inclusion

Teachers were asked about the extent to which they use a range of classroom strategies to support inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments. Most of these items were asked in previous cycles, providing a comparison over time.

¹⁹ The principal survey included a broader set of questions on inclusion at a school-wide level.

Teachers reported high use of inclusive and culturally responsive practices

Figure 18 shows that teachers generally reported using strategies to support inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments.

The most commonly reported practices were using group learning or peer support strategies (86% agreed or strongly agreed, up from 72% in 2021), knowing which cultures their students identify with (83% agreed or strongly agreed, not asked in 2021), and using inclusive practices for learning (80% agreed or strongly agreed, up from 69% in 2021).

Most teachers also indicated agreement with the two items about te reo and tikanga Māori, and one of these has showed an increase over time:

- 80% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they promote Māori cultural values with all students (no notable change from 2021 or 2018)
- 72% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they incorporate te reo Māori and tikanga Māori into their teaching (compared with 62% in 2018 and 66% in 2021).

There were lower levels of agreement for practices involving Pacific learners. These items also had the highest proportion of neutral responses, suggesting greater variability or uncertainty in this area:

- Around two-thirds of teachers reported that they know which Pacific cultures their students identify with (68% agreed or strongly agreed, no notable change from 2021 and 2018) and provided Pacific students with opportunities to work together and support each other (53% agreed or strongly agreed, no notable change from 2021 and 2018).
- Just under half (47%) agreed or strongly agreed that they incorporated Pacific students' cultures in their teaching (an increase from 38% in 2021, returning to the 45% reported in 2018).

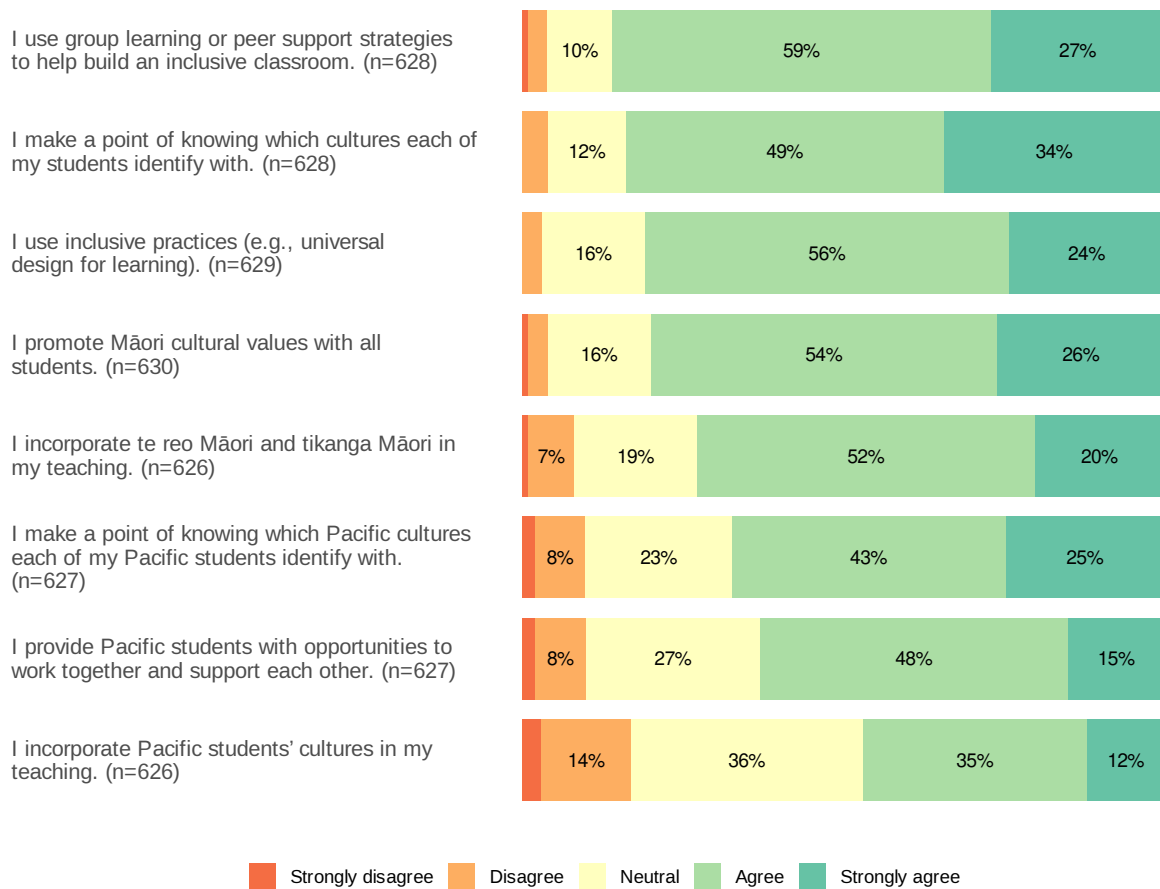


FIGURE 18 Teachers' views on their use of inclusive practices

There were statistically significant differences by school context for four items: promoting Māori cultural values; incorporating te reo Māori and tikanga Māori; incorporating Pacific students' cultures; and providing opportunities for Pacific students to work together and support each other. Across these items, teachers in schools with more socioeconomic barriers were more likely to agree—and particularly to strongly agree—that they used these practices than those in schools facing fewer barriers. Ākonga Māori and Pacific students are more likely to attend schools facing more socioeconomic barriers. We found that:

- 40% of teachers in schools facing more socioeconomic barriers strongly agreed with “I promote Māori cultural values with all students”, compared with 23% of teachers in schools with moderate barriers, and 15% of teachers in schools facing fewer socioeconomic barriers
- 32% of teachers in schools facing more socioeconomic barriers strongly agreed with “I incorporate te reo Māori and tikanga Māori in my teaching”, compared with 18% of teachers in schools with moderate barriers, and 13% of teachers in schools facing fewer socioeconomic barriers
- 22% of teachers in schools facing more socioeconomic barriers strongly agreed with “I incorporate Pacific students' cultures in my teaching”, compared with 9% of teachers in schools with moderate barriers, and 5% of teachers in schools facing fewer socioeconomic barriers

- 26% of teachers in schools facing more socioeconomic barriers strongly agreed with “I provide Pacific students with opportunities to work together and support each other”, compared with 13% of teachers in schools with moderate barriers, and 7% of teachers in schools facing fewer socioeconomic barriers.

Te toiora | Wellbeing

The Wellbeing domain explored teachers' perspectives on their own, and students', wellbeing. We asked teachers about their own wellbeing through questions about stress, job satisfaction, and workload. We also asked about their perceptions of school culture factors and ways of working that support teacher wellbeing (e.g., protection of teaching time, autonomy). Another important focus was teachers' perceptions of student wellbeing and support for managing problematic student behaviour. Many of these areas have been the focus of questions in previous cycles of the national survey, allowing us to report on trends over time.

Teacher wellbeing

The NZCER national survey has tracked teachers' job satisfaction, morale, and workload across multiple survey cycles. We also track hours worked.

Teachers' views on job satisfaction, morale, and workload have remained largely consistent over time

National survey data continue to show that secondary teachers enjoy their job (Figure 19). In 2025, 86% strongly agreed or agreed with this statement, and 8% were neutral, very similar to the 2021 data.

In 2021, we reported a decline in morale, compared with previous cycles. We speculated that this may have been associated with the additional demands and uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2025 data appear to support this, as there is a return to morale levels seen in 2018 and in earlier cycles. Half of teachers agreed with the statement “My overall morale is good” and 20% strongly agreed.²⁰ This compares with just 45% of teachers who reported their morale as very good or good in 2021.²¹

Around two-thirds of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that people's expectations of communication were reasonable (66%) and that their school cares about the wellbeing of its staff (65%, up from 54% in 2021). Although there is still a group of 14% who do not report that their school cares about the wellbeing of its staff, this has also declined from 24% in 2021.

20 This year we changed the scale for teachers to rate their morale, to bring this item into alignment with the items on workload and stress, and with the data we have from primary teachers. In previous cycles, teachers have been asked to rate their morale on a scale comprising very poor, poor, satisfactory, good, very good.

21 Although the scale change means it is not possible to make a direct comparison across years, keeping a 5-point scale means we consider it reasonable that “very good” and “good” from previous cycles align with “strongly agree” and “agree” in 2025.

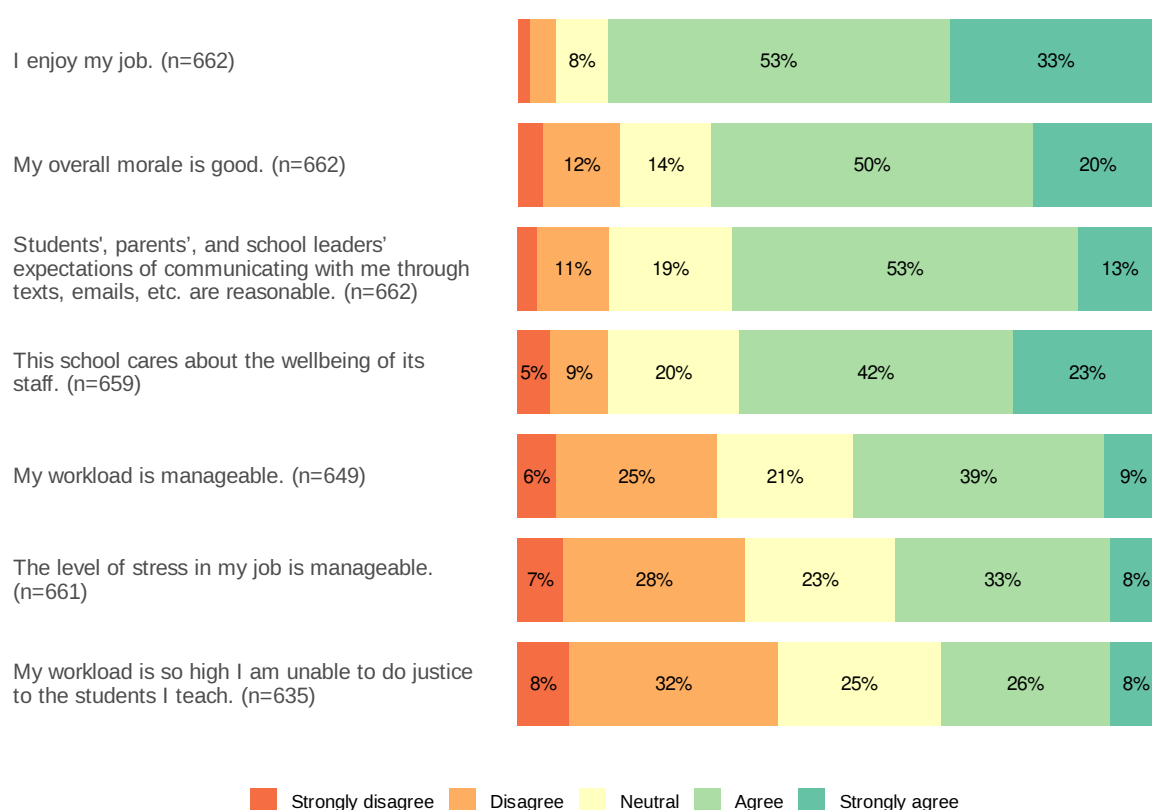


FIGURE 19 Teachers' views on workload, morale, and stress

Figure 19 also shows that around a third of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed that their workload is manageable (31%), that their level of stress is manageable (35%), and agreed or strongly agreed that their workload is so high they cannot do justice to their students (34%). There is no notable change from 2021. Table 6 shows that 50% of teachers worked 7–15 hours a week outside the times when students are required to be on site. One-fifth (19%) of secondary teachers reported working 21 hours or more. This has stayed much the same over the past decade.

TABLE 6 Teachers' reported hours worked per week outside of the times when students are required to be on site (n=663)

Hours worked	Count	Percent
0	4	1
1–6	68	10
7–10	165	25
11–15	163	25
16–20	139	21
21–25	83	13
26–30	18	3
More than 30 hours	23	3

There was a statistically significant relationship between reported hours worked and teachers' years of experience. There was not a simple linear relationship, but here are some patterns we observed.

- More experienced teachers were more likely to work 16–20 additional hours: 24% of teachers with more than 15 years' experience reported working an additional 16–20 hours, compared with 22% of teachers with 11–15 years' experience, 20% of teachers with 6–10 years' experience, 16% of teachers with 3–5 years' experience, 17% of teachers in their second year, and 10% of teachers in their first year of teaching.
- Teachers in their first or second year were most likely to report working 11–15 hours outside times when students are required to be on site (31% of first-year teachers and 39% of second-year teachers reported this, compared with 21%–24% of more experienced teachers).
- Teachers in their first year of teaching were more likely to report working 1–6 additional hours (31% of first-year teachers, compared with 7%–17% of other teachers).

Nearly all teachers perceived they have sufficient autonomy in teaching but only half agreed they have opportunities to participate in school decisions

In 2025, we asked about school-level factors that shape teachers' classroom practices and work experiences, and contribute to job satisfaction and morale (Alansari, Wylie et al., 2022). Additional analysis of the 2021 national survey data concluded that “teacher wellbeing could be better enhanced through consistent school-wide approaches and empowerment rather than through individual or isolated changes to teachers' practice” (Alansari, Li et al., 2022, p. 8).

Figure 20 shows that nearly all teachers perceive they have sufficient autonomy over planning, teaching, and assessing learning (91%), and are confident to try new practices (87%). Most also agreed or strongly agreed that messages about the school vision are consistent (81%), and that their school has a focus on ongoing teacher learning (71%).

Fewer perceive that they have a collaborative, mutually supporting school culture (63%) or that they had opportunities to participate in school decision making (53% agreed or strongly agreed, 27% were neutral, and 22% disagreed or strongly disagreed). Even fewer agreed (32%) or strongly agreed (8%) that teaching time was protected from unnecessary interruptions.

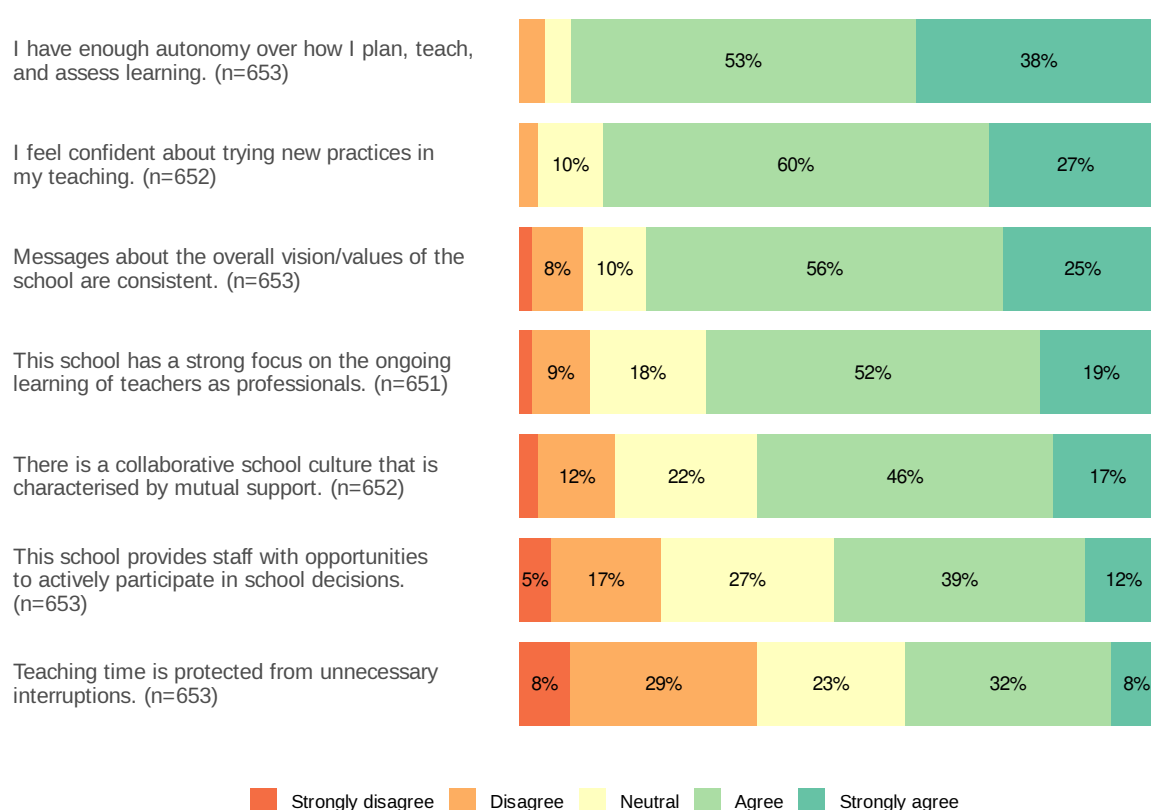


FIGURE 20 Teachers' views on school factors that contribute to teacher satisfaction and wellbeing

Student wellbeing

Over the past two decades, student wellbeing has been increasingly emphasised as critical to students' learning and educational outcomes. Since 2015, the national survey has increased the focus on questions relating to students' opportunities to learn about wellbeing and school-wide supports for wellbeing. The 2025 findings show an increase in focus on some aspects of wellbeing, as well as little change in some important school-wide practices and processes.

Most teachers considered student wellbeing to be a strong focus at their school

Reflecting the increased focus on student wellbeing mentioned above, in 2025 (see Figure 21), more teachers (86%) agreed or strongly agreed that student wellbeing is a strong focus in their school compared with 2021 (72%). This encouraging finding may indicate that a COVID-related spike in student mental health and attendance concerns has diminished. This finding may also be related to the introduction in 2021 of the free Awhi Mai Awhi Atu | Counselling in Schools initiative. The fact that most teachers (78%) agreed or strongly agreed that vulnerable students can get timely school-based support suggests this may be the case.

The data also suggest students still have some unmet support needs. In 2025, 72% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that mental health issues are occurring among students more often than 2–3 years ago (a drop from 82% in 2021). Those who had been teaching for longer (11+ years) were more likely to think this was the case. In addition, only 60% of teachers indicated that vulnerable students can get timely external support (no change from 2021).

Similar to the 2021 survey, less than half of teachers (45%) thought their school was good at acting on students' ideas about how to support their wellbeing, suggesting school processes for developing wellbeing policies and practices do not routinely involve student input. The idea that students have knowledge that is useful in creating new ways forward is a core principle of youth development. An Aotearoa New Zealand report (Stubbing et al., 2023) about what we know and don't know about young people's mental health, concluded we need more input from a diverse range of adolescents so we can design better needs-based approaches to mental health.

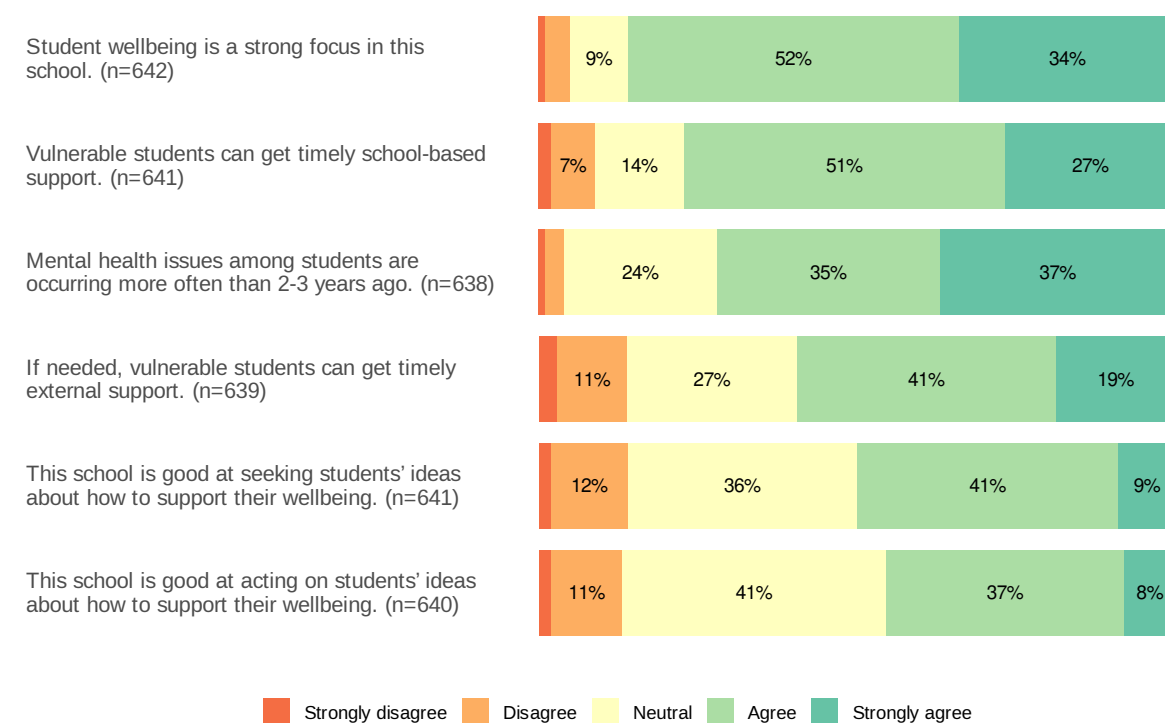


FIGURE 21 Teachers' views on student wellbeing and access to school support

Promoting positive behaviour to support learning

For many years, the national survey has asked questions about school-wide approaches to behaviour management, disruptive behaviour, and teachers' views on their own safety.

Forty percent of teachers did not agree that their school had an effective school-wide approach for managing student behaviour

Three-quarters of teachers (75%) agreed or strongly agreed that their school had an effective school-wide approach for encouraging positive behaviours (Figure 22). However, somewhat fewer (60%) agreed or strongly agreed that their school had an effective school-wide approach for managing student behaviour across the school. As in past years, around one-quarter of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed that an effective school-wide approach was in place to manage student behaviour across the school (24%), or to teach students how to resolve conflicts (26%).

There was a statistically significant relationship between teachers' responses and their school EQI. Teachers in schools with more socioeconomic barriers were less likely to agree or strongly agree that their school had an effective school-wide approach for managing student behaviour (48%, compared with 64% of teachers from schools with moderate socioeconomic barriers and 67% of teachers from schools with fewer socioeconomic barriers). The same pattern was evident for the item about teaching students how to resolve conflicts.

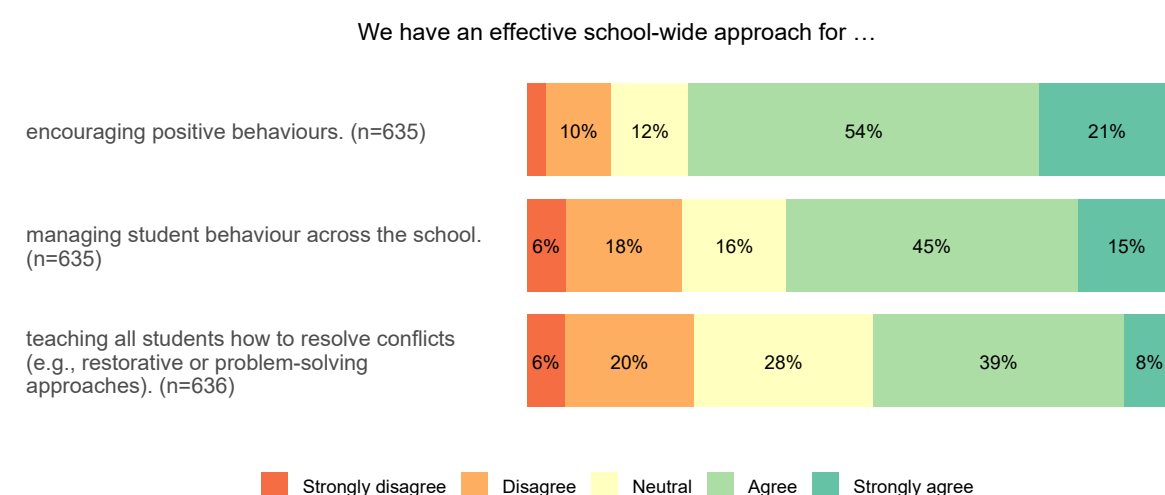


FIGURE 22 Teachers' views on promoting positive behaviour

Just over half of teachers indicated that their school had effective processes for addressing a range of unwanted behaviours

Teachers' views suggest there is an ongoing need to strengthen school-wide approaches to addressing different forms of student and staff discrimination or aggression. Figure 23 shows that just over half (53%–58%) of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their school had clear school-wide processes to address the different behaviours included in this block of items. The items we can track over time show no notable change.

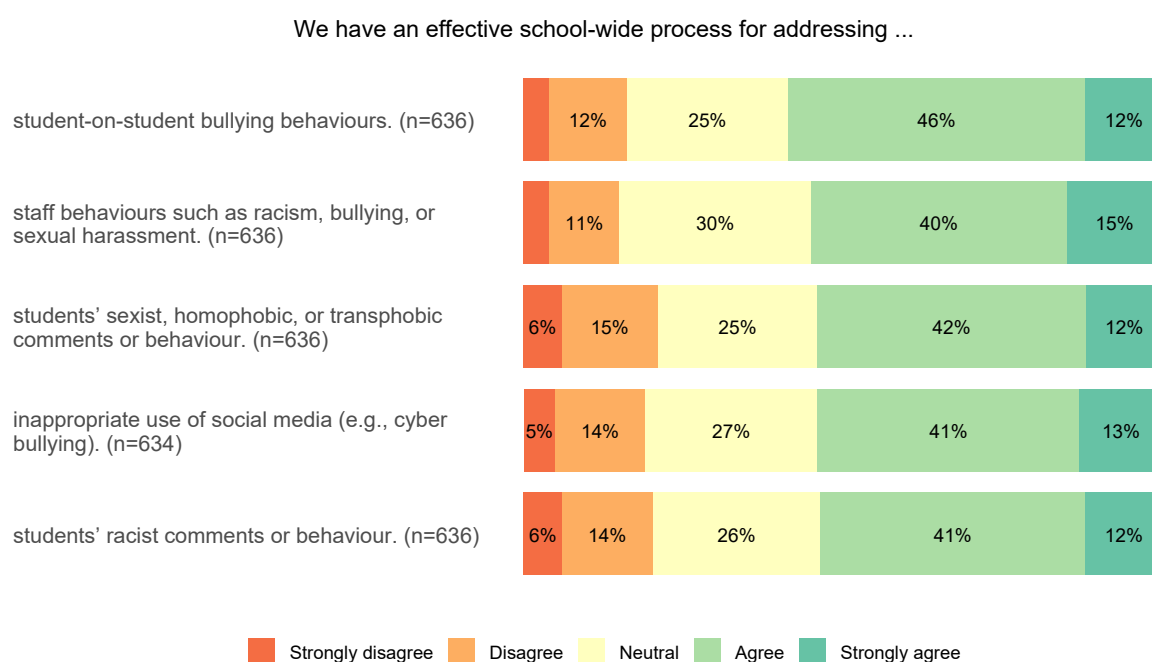


FIGURE 23 Teachers' views on school-wide processes for addressing unwanted behaviours

There was a statistically significant relationship for one item between teachers' responses and their school EQI. Teachers in schools with more socioeconomic barriers were less likely to agree or strongly agree that their school had had effective processes for addressing inappropriate use of social media (44%, compared with 55% of teachers from schools with moderate socioeconomic barriers and 62% of teachers from schools with fewer socioeconomic barriers).

Most teachers felt safe, but disruptive behaviour has increased since 2015

Most teachers reported they "rarely" felt unsafe in their class (88%) or in the areas outside of classrooms (86%) (see Figure 24). Teachers in schools with more socioeconomic barriers were least likely to report they rarely felt unsafe in their class (81%, compared with 89% of teachers from schools with moderate socioeconomic barriers and 93% of teachers from schools with fewer socioeconomic barriers). No teachers from schools with moderate or fewer socioeconomic barriers reported they "often" felt unsafe; 4% of teachers from schools with more socioeconomic barriers did.

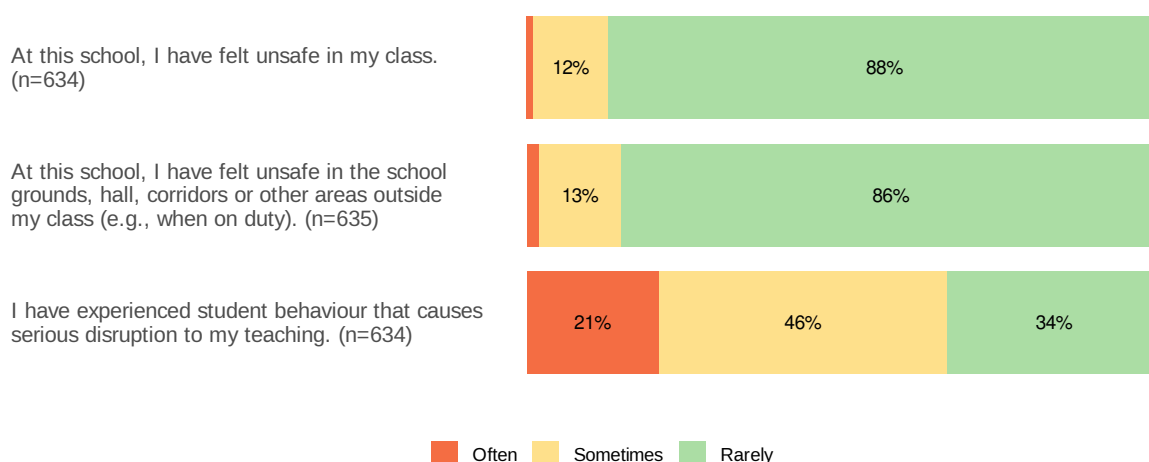


FIGURE 24 Teachers' views on safety and unwanted behaviour

In 2025, 67% of teachers “sometimes” or “often” experienced student behaviour that caused serious disruption to their teaching. This has increased over time, from 48% in 2015, 57% in 2018, and 61% in 2021. Table 7 shows these data from 2012–25. Since 2015, there is a trend for more teachers to report experiences of student behaviour that cause serious disruptions to their teaching, “often” or “sometimes”.

TABLE 7 Teachers' experiences of disruptive behaviour, 2012–25

I have experienced student behaviour that causes serious disruption to my teaching	2012 (n=1,266)	2015 (n=1,777)	2018 (n=707)	2021 (n=861)	2025 (n=634)
Often	18%	11%	18%	19%	21%
Sometimes	41%	37%	39%	39%	46%
Rarely	40%	50%	42%	42%	34%

Behaviour that causes disruptions to teaching was more commonly reported by teachers in schools with more socioeconomic barriers. In 2025, three-quarters (75%) of teachers in these schools reported they sometimes or often experienced this, compared with 66% of teachers in schools with moderate barriers and 56% in schools with fewer barriers. In past years, similar patterns by school decile were evident.

Te tautoko me ngā rauemi | Support and resourcing

The Support and resourcing domain of the teacher survey explored teachers' experiences of, and perspectives on, access to support and PLD. Teachers were invited to reflect on their past PLD experiences, such as the opportunities and practical help they received from PLD. Additionally, in response to the broader efforts to enhance the education workforce within Aotearoa New Zealand (McChesney et al., 2024), the national survey introduced a question asking teachers about areas they would like to receive future PLD on. Targeted questions were asked of early career teachers and mentors, focusing on the support each group received.

Access to support

We asked teachers to indicate whether they had access to support they needed to do their job well (Figure 25). We also asked about whether teachers felt they had sufficient training to recognise mental health warning signs and trauma-related responses in students (Figure 26).

Around three-quarters of teachers get the support they need from their school to do their job effectively

Teachers indicated that they received more internal, school-based support than support from outside the school:

- 83% agreed or strongly agreed that they have access to the non-contact or release time they are entitled to
- 73% agreed or strongly agreed they get the in-school support they need to do their job effectively
- Fewer than half (46%) agreed or strongly agreed they get the support from outside the school to do their job effectively, with one-third (33%) neutral about this.

Compared with 2021 data, there was no notable change in the proportion of teachers who indicated they got support from outside the school to do their job effectively (around half), remaining higher than 38% reported in 2018. There has been an increase in the proportion of teachers who say their can get support from inside their school (73% in 2025, compared with around 60% in both 2021 and 2018).

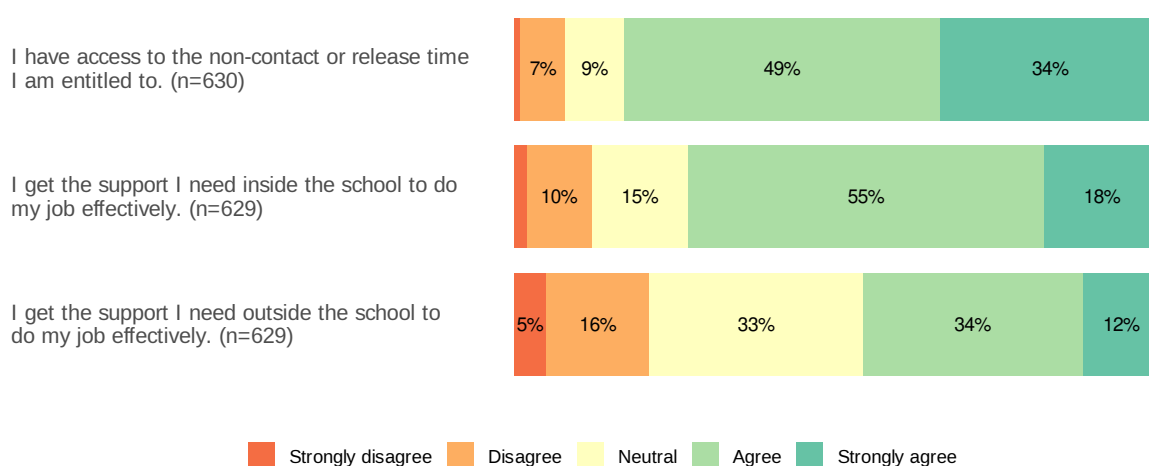


FIGURE 25 Teachers' views on access to support

More teachers have had training to recognise mental health warning signs in students

In previous years, our national surveys indicated that some of the wellbeing and behaviour concerns raised by teachers did not seem to be met with increased support such as PLD and training (Alansari, Wylie et al., 2022). Data from 2025 show a positive shift—half (50%) of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they have had sufficient training to recognise mental health warning signs in students, up from 36% in 2021, and 30% in 2018.

In a new item, 42% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they have had sufficient training to recognise trauma-related responses in students. We will track this item in future cycles of the national survey.

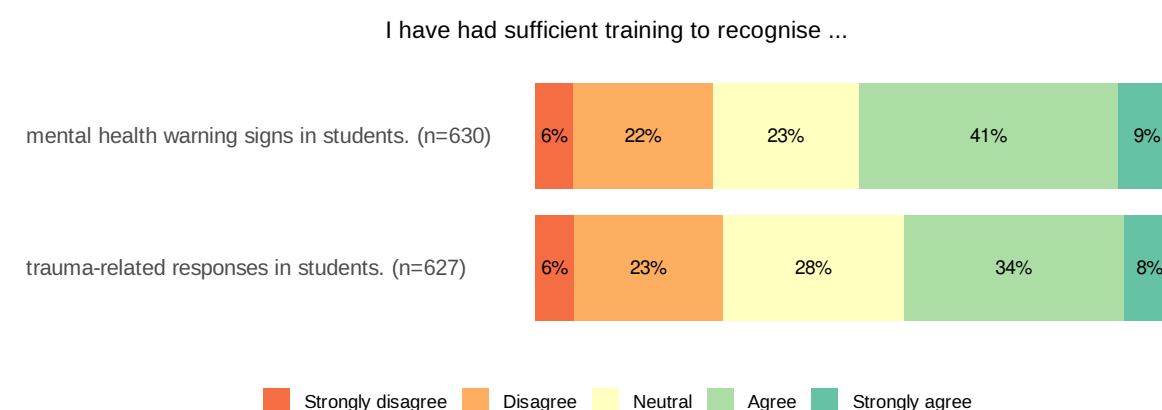


FIGURE 26 Teachers' views on receiving training to recognise mental health warning signs and trauma-related responses

Professional learning and development

This section highlights teachers' experiences of past PLD as well as their future PLD needs. We asked teachers to specifically think about the PLD opportunities they have had over the past 3 years, and whether their professional learning has provided practical help with a range of areas of their practice.

Most teachers have had their assumptions challenged as a result of PLD

Figure 27 shows that most teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they have been challenged through PLD to rethink some of their assumptions about what effective teaching looks like (70%), as well as about what their students can do (68%, no notable change from 2021).

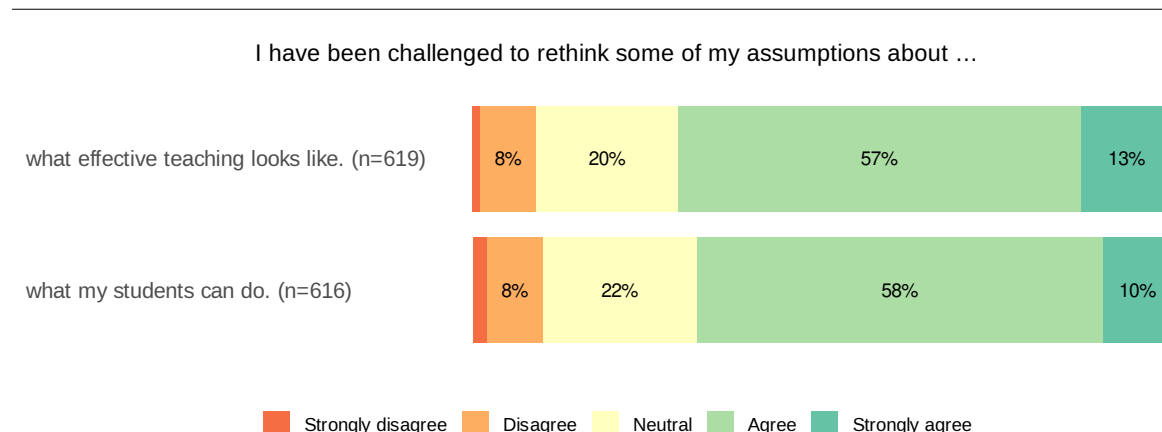


FIGURE 27 Teachers' views on whether PLD has challenged them to rethink assumptions

Teachers had mixed views on the usefulness of PLD they have had in the past 3 years

Figure 28 shows that, when asked to think about their PLD over the past 3 years, teachers' views were mixed. Around two-thirds of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they had had useful subject specialist PLD from teacher networks or subject associations (66%, no notable change from 2021) and useful school-wide PLD (62%, up from 30% in 2021).

Fewer indicated they had a good balance of PLD that met their own needs, the needs of their school, and those of the wider system (47%, not asked in 2021) or had good opportunities to deeply explore ideas and theory that underpin new approaches (45%, no notable change from 2021). A group of teachers (17%–28%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with these items, suggesting that they have either not had access to PLD, or that PLD has not been useful for them.

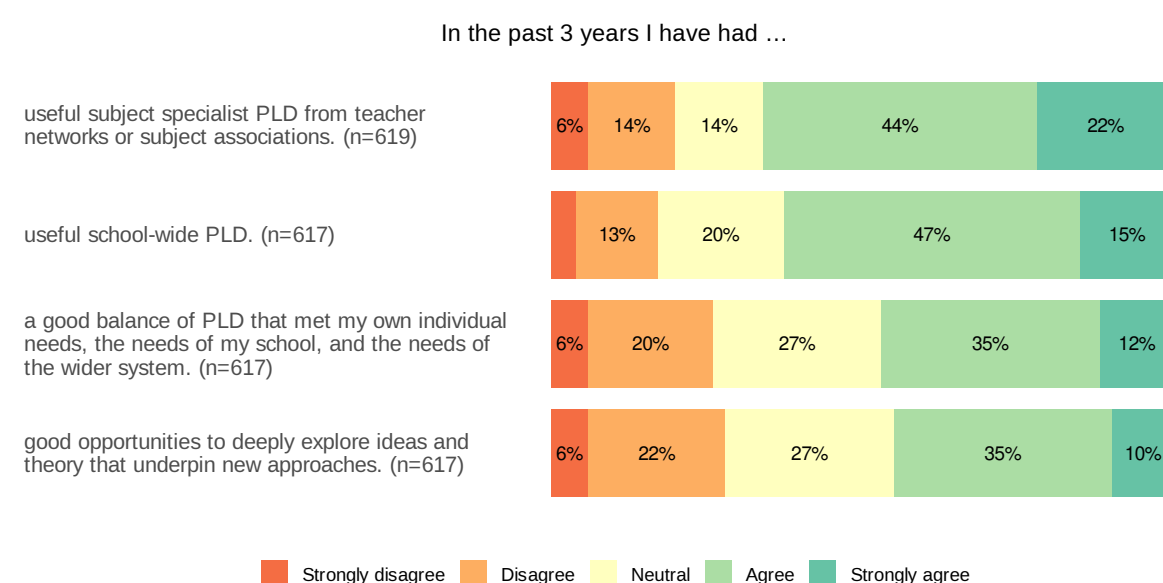


FIGURE 28 Teachers' views on the usefulness of PLD

Figure 29 presents teachers' views on the extent to which PLD had provided them with practical help, in relation to ākonga Māori, Pacific students, and students with learning support or wellbeing needs. The data show a mixed picture, similar to Figure 28.

Over half of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that professional learning has provided practical help with tikanga Māori (64%), learning te reo Māori (59%) and using te reo Māori (57%), teaching ākonga Māori (58%), and building connections with ākonga and whānau Māori (53%). There was no notable change from 2021 data in items we could compare.

Fewer teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the items relating to Pacific students:

- 37% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that professional learning had provided practical help with teaching Pacific students
- 36% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that professional learning had provided practical help with building better connections with Pacific students and their families. In 2021, the item only referred to building connections with Pacific students ("and their families" was not included), and the level of agreement was higher (61% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed).

Around half of teachers (58%) agreed or strongly agreed that professional learning had been helpful for improving their teaching of students with learning support needs, but fewer (47%) indicated that it had been helpful for improving their teaching of students with complex social and emotional needs.

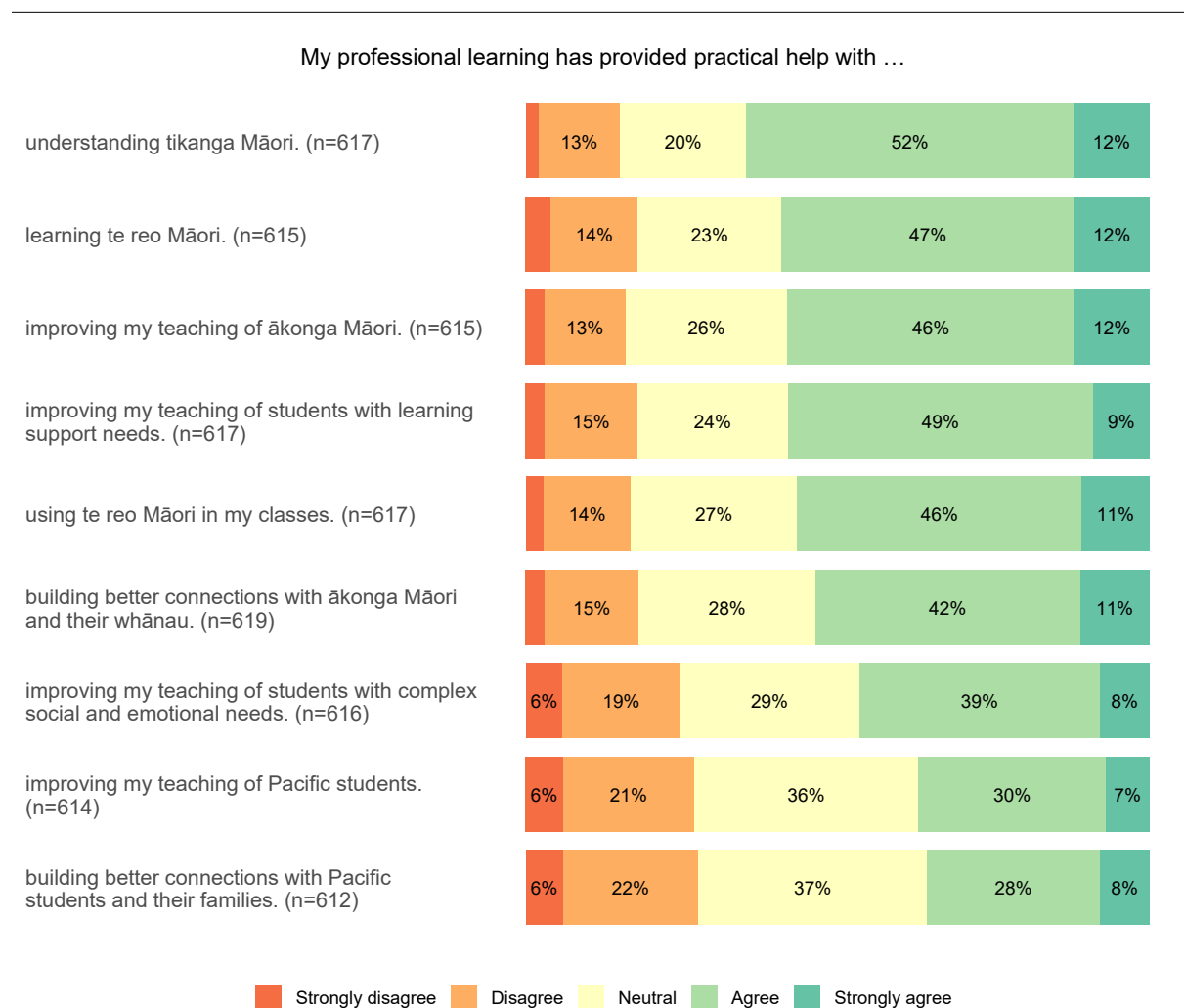


FIGURE 29 Teachers' views on whether PLD has provided practical help

Aligning with the Government's education priorities to strengthen teaching capacity and support ongoing professional growth (Ministry of Education, 2024a), a new question asked about teachers' future PLD needs. This was also asked in the primary survey in 2024.²² These findings help inform the development of PLD initiatives, ensuring they align with teachers' identified needs and contribute to the overall improvement of educational outcomes.

²² There was considerable overlap in the lists presented to primary and secondary teachers, but they were not identical.

Teachers have diverse future PLD needs, but PLD about AI is wanted by the highest proportion of teachers

Teachers were asked to select the top five areas they would like PLD on, and could also identify areas not listed (Figure 30). The resulting top four areas—selected by more than one-third of teachers—were:

- using AI (48%)
- curriculum design and development (44%, more than the 27% of primary teachers, perhaps due to the stage of implementation of new curricula)
- supporting students' mental health and wellbeing (39%)
- Mātauranga Māori (36%).

Our findings show that teachers' PLD needs are diverse and are not necessarily concentrated in one or two areas of practice. Most options were selected by under one-third of teachers. In addition, 54 teachers used the "Other" option to provide a topic not included in the list. The main area mentioned was subject-specific PLD, followed by PLD to work with students with complex needs, including trauma-informed teaching.

Of note is that PLD about AI was also the top selection for primary (56%) and secondary (57%) principals, and second for primary teachers (53%). This shows a clear need for—and interest in—opportunities to learn about use of AI in education.

A statistically significant relationships was found between teachers' years of experience and some of the areas in which they wanted PLD:

- Teachers with more than 15 years' experience were most likely to want PLD on using AI (44% of these teachers, compared with 20%–29% of teachers with less experience). These experienced teachers were also somewhat more likely to indicate they wanted to develop their use of digital technologies (26% of these teachers, compared with 10%–20% of teachers with less experience).
- Teachers' selection of "classroom management and behaviour approaches" decreased with their years of experience (54% of second-year teachers, 38% of first-year teachers, 35% of teachers with 3–5 years' experience, 30% of teachers with 6–10 years' experience, 22% of teachers with 11–15 years' experience, and 16% of teachers with more than 15 years' experience).
- Second-year teachers were most likely to want PLD on assessment and evaluation (37%, compared with 12%–24% of other teachers).
- Mid-career teachers were most likely to want PLD on leadership and management (27%–29% of teachers with 3–15 years' experience, compared with 19% of teachers with more than 15 years' experience, 12% of second-year teachers, and 8% of first-year teachers).
- Teachers' selection of "inclusive education and diversity" generally decreased with years of experience²³ (39% of second-year teachers, 32% of teachers with 3–5 years' experience, 25% of teachers with 6–10 years' experience, 24% of teachers with 11–15 years' experience, and 18% of teachers with more than 15 years' experience).

23 An exception was first-year teachers: 20% of them wanted PLD on inclusive education and diversity.

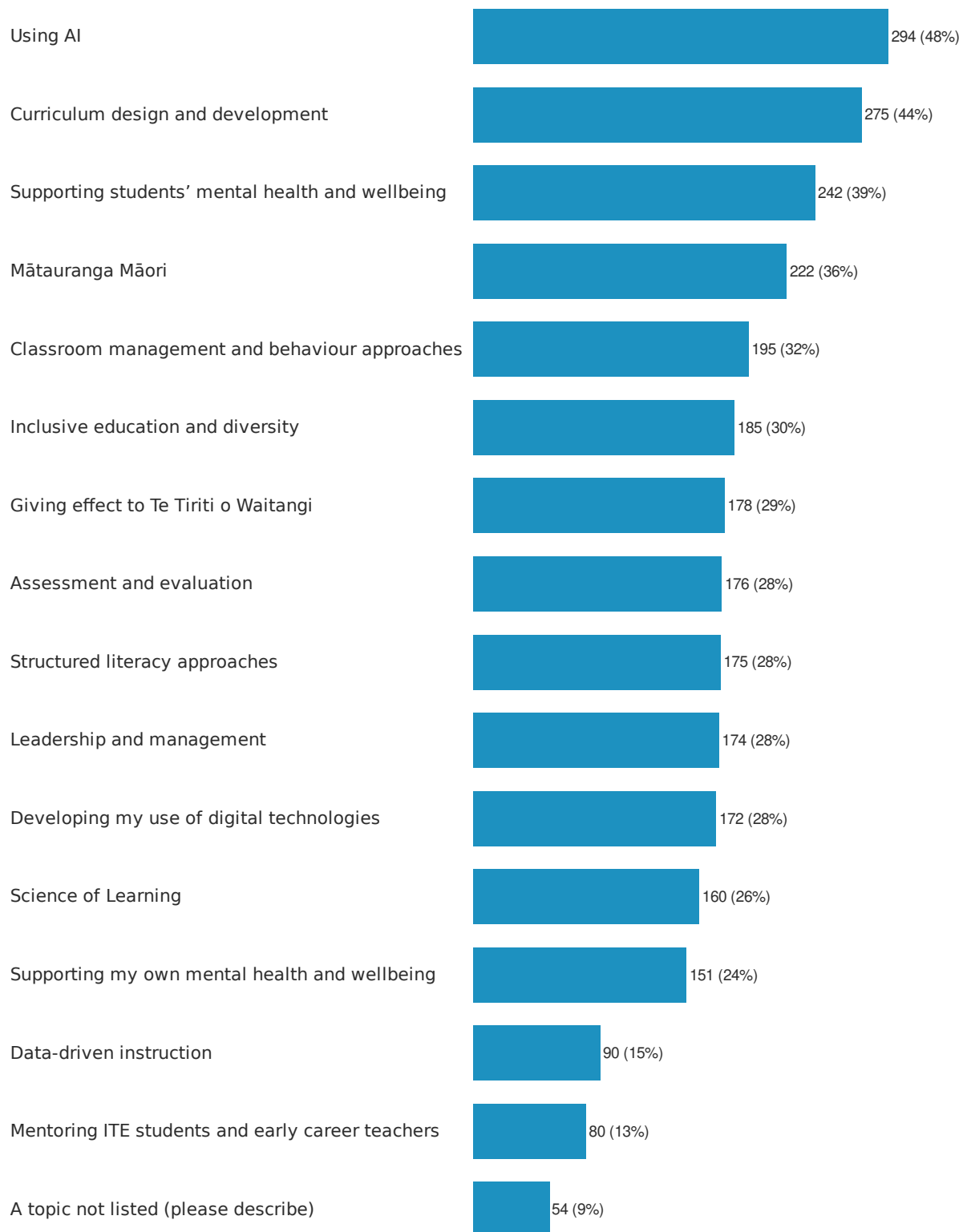


FIGURE 30 Professional development areas that teachers would like in the future (n=618)

Support for early career teachers

Eleven percent of teachers who responded to the survey were in their first (6%) or second (5%) year of teaching. These 87 teachers were asked about support they received.

Most early career teachers felt well supported and guided into effective practices

As shown in Figure 31, most first- and second-year teachers indicated that they were well supported (79%) and were “guided into practices that are effective for our students” (78%). Only a small proportion disagreed with either statement, although 15%–16% were neutral.

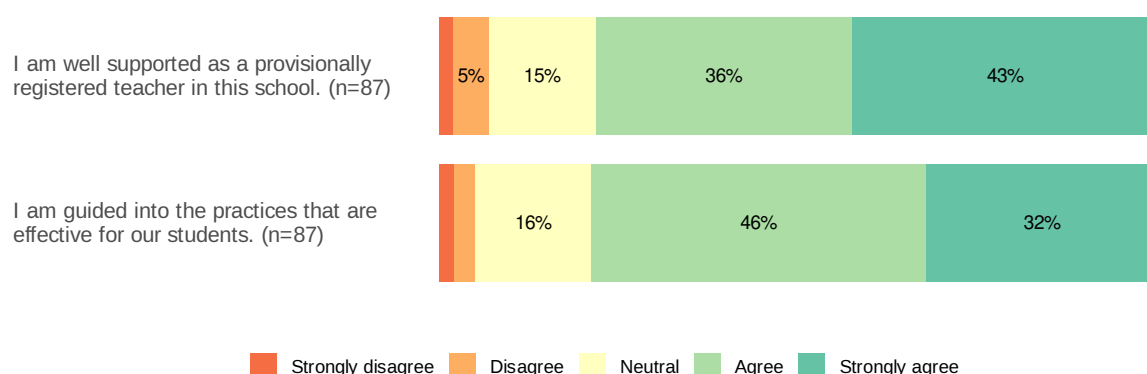


FIGURE 31 First- and second-year teachers' perspectives on support (n=87)

Support for mentors

This section focuses on the experiences of respondents who were either associate teachers (9%), mentors (8%), or both (3%), constituting 20% of all teacher respondents (Figure 32).

Most mentors felt valued by school leaders but still face challenges in getting time allocated or useful professional learning

About two-thirds of teachers with mentoring responsibilities agreed or strongly agreed that mentoring is an important part of their career pathway (68%, no notable change from 2021). Compared with 2021, mentors are more likely to feel valued by school leaders (65% agreed or strongly agreed, up from 56% in 2021), and less likely to feel left to “sink or swim” in their mentoring role (20% agreed or strongly agreed, down from 32% in 2021).

However, some aspects of teacher mentors' work do not seem to have improved:

- Less than half (45%) agreed or strongly agreed they get time allocating for their mentoring role, down from 56% in 2021.
- One-third (34%) agreed or strongly agreed they have had useful professional learning focused on being an effective mentor, no improvement from 39% in 2021.

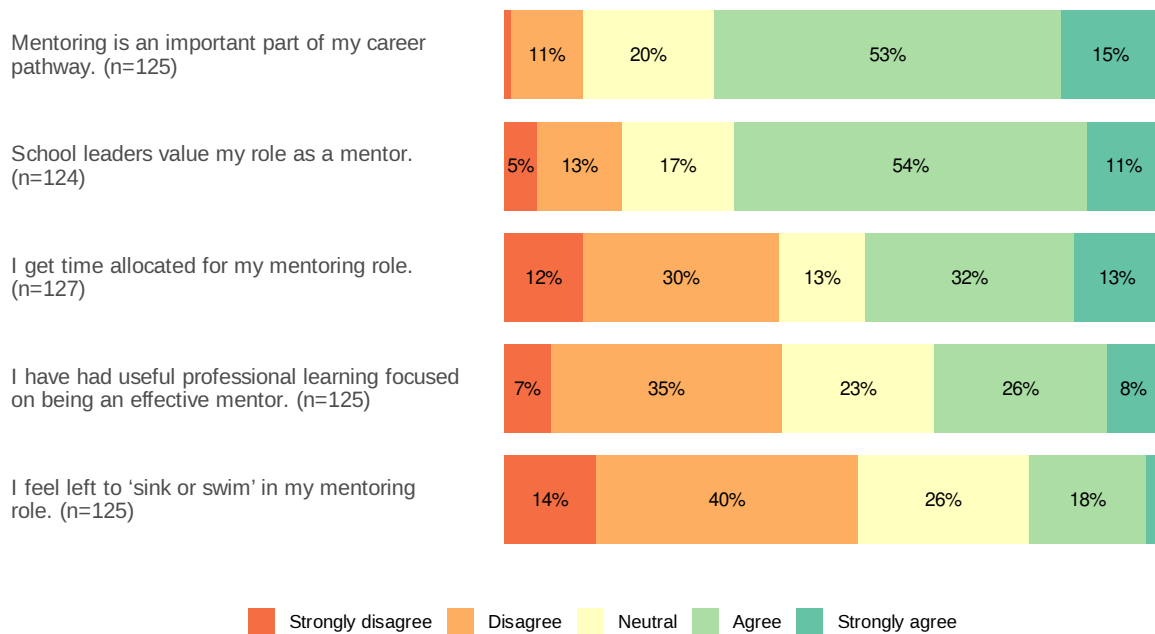


FIGURE 32 Mentors' experiences of their role (n=125)

He hononga pāhekoheko | Collaborative relationships

Strong collaborative relationships are a key feature of effective school cultures and are closely linked to improved teaching practice, professional growth, and student outcomes.

Opportunities to collaborate with other teachers

The Collaborative relationships domain comprised one question about opportunities teachers have to collaborate with and learn from other teachers within their own subject area and beyond (Figure 33).²⁴

Teachers reported strong collaboration within departments, but less across subject areas

Overall, 70% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they have opportunities to see and discuss the work of other teachers in their department or subject area, and 66% reported working with others to collectively examine student work.

Just under half of teachers (48%) reported having opportunities to see and discuss the work of teachers in other subject areas, with one-quarter (24%) selecting neutral, and 28% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

²⁴ The principal survey included more questions to explore perspectives on relationships across the wider education system, including connections with other schools, hapū and iwi, and Pacific families and community leaders (see MacDonald et al., 2026).

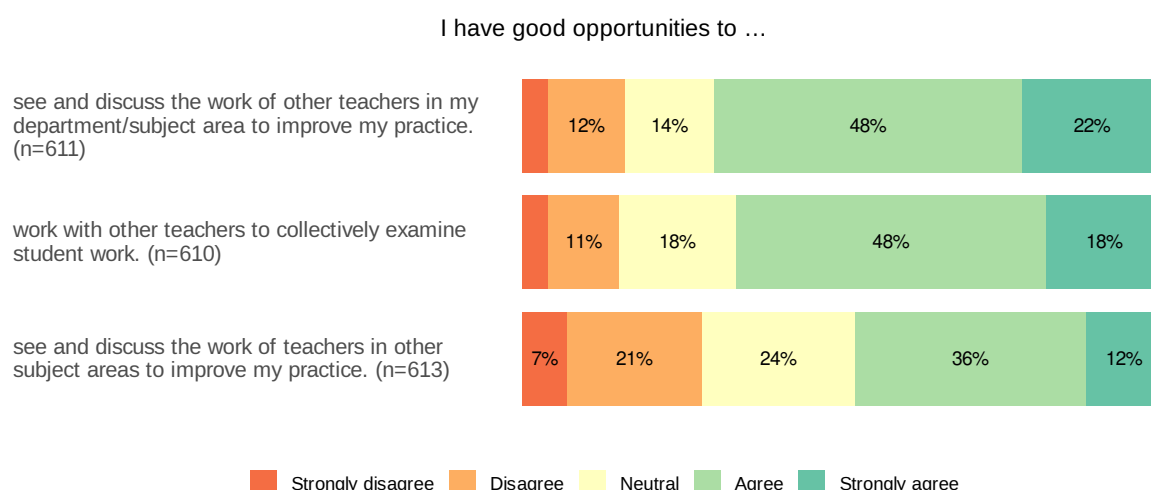


FIGURE 33 Teachers' views on their opportunities to collaborate with others

Teachers' working experiences and future plans

This final part of the Findings section focuses on teachers' individual working experiences, providing a more personal lens on the profession. This includes insights into the changes teachers would most like to see in their work, their career progression opportunities and future career plans, as well as their interest in becoming a principal. These reflections offer valuable context for understanding how broader system-level factors intersect with day-to-day professional experiences and long-term workforce sustainability.

Career progression and career plans

As in previous cycles of the national survey, teachers were asked about their plans for the next 5 years, and their interest in pursuing a principalship. A new question asked about teachers' perceptions of career progression opportunities.

Half of teachers saw career progression opportunities within their own school

Figure 34 presents teachers' perceptions of career progression opportunities within and beyond their current schools. The same proportion of teachers (53%) believed they could progress their careers within their current school or in another school. Fewer (39%) saw opportunities in education outside schools. Note that a high proportion of teachers selected the neutral option, perhaps suggesting that they do not know or have not considered the extent of these opportunities.

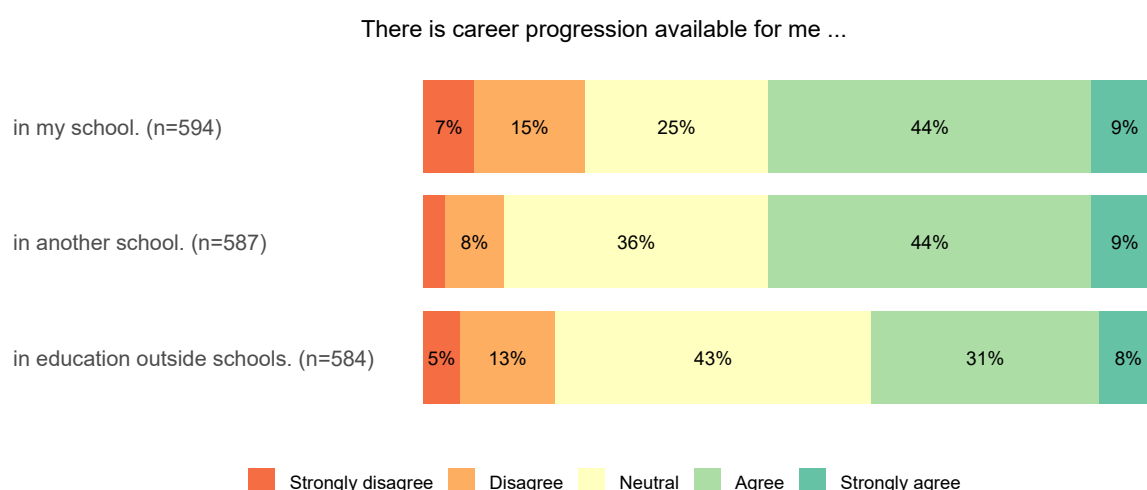


FIGURE 34 Teachers' perceptions of career progression opportunities

Interest in being principal has remained stable at around 10% of teachers

As in previous cycles, we asked teachers about their interest in becoming a principal in the future. This year we changed from “yes”, “no”, “not sure” options to a more nuanced 4–point scale (Figure 35).

Eleven percent of teachers said they were interested in becoming a principal, 3% “definitely” and 8% “probably”. This is much the same proportion as we have reported over the past decade, stable at around 10%.²⁵ Over half of teachers (61%) said they were “definitely not” interested, with around a quarter (28%) “probably not” interested.

There was a statistically significant relationship between teachers' responses to this question and the EQI group of their school. Teachers in schools with more socioeconomic challenges were most likely to say they were “definitely” interested in being a principal (7% of these teachers, compared with 1% of teachers from schools with moderate socioeconomic challenges and 2% of teachers from schools with fewer socioeconomic challenges).

²⁵ Interestingly, 19% of teachers were interested in becoming a principal when asked in 2012.

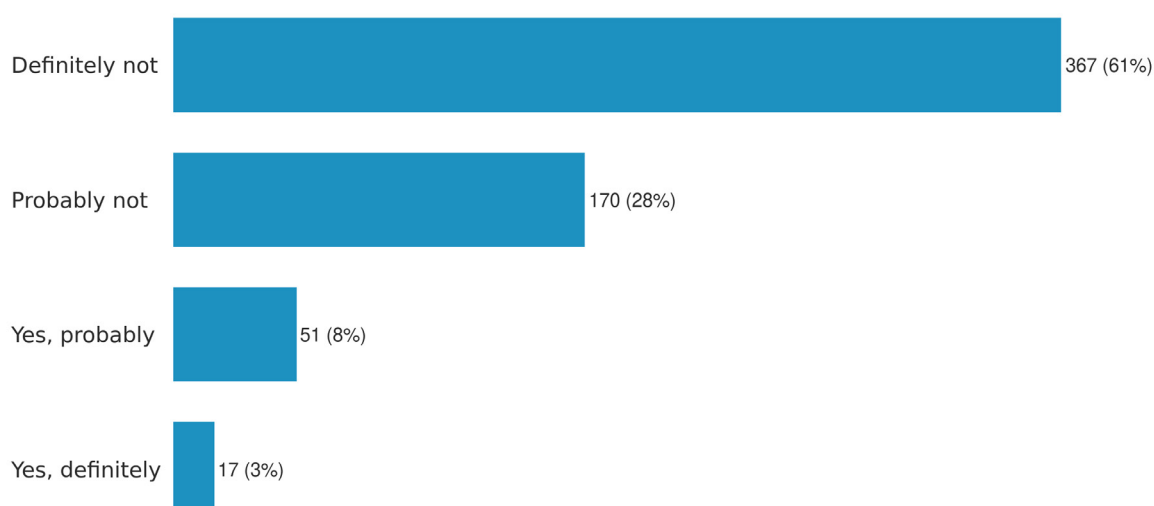


FIGURE 35 Teachers' interest in being a principal in the future (n=605)

We followed this initial question with two new open questions:

- What aspects of the principal job are most appealing to you?
- What aspects of the principal job are least appealing, or are putting you off?

Sixty-five teachers who were considering a future principalship shared what aspects of the job were most appealing to them. Three main themes emerged: setting and implementing the strategic direction of a school; having an impact on a different magnitude from being a teacher; and leading strong relationships with the community.

The most common theme (about a third of the comments) was being able to **set the direction of a school**, with some responses highlighting what that would look like, including a commitment to equity, inclusion, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and staff and student wellbeing:

I am driven to lead a school that prioritises cultural responsiveness, supports teacher wellbeing, and addresses broader societal challenges like post-COVID recovery, teacher shortages, and economic inequities affecting families. By stepping into this role soon, I aim to champion holistic student success, beyond rigid benchmarks, empowering communities to thrive in a bicultural Aotearoa, ensuring every child's potential is nurtured with empathy, innovation, and resilience.

The responsibility to build a school which is strong on a culture of academic excellence and appropriate social behaviour. A school where there is a strong focus on developing teachers and teaching abilities. This is based on the belief that the teacher is the single most impactful tool in the teaching arsenal for student development.

The aspects of the principal role that most appeal to me are the opportunity to shape a clear, values-driven vision for the school and to create the conditions where both students and staff can thrive ... making courageous, equity-focused decisions, advocating for students, and ensuring the school remains a safe, inclusive, and future-focused place of learning.

Related, but distinct to this, was the opportunity to **have an impact on a different magnitude from being a teacher**:

You seem to be able to interact with students, teachers, whānau etc. at a fundamentally different level as a principal. You also help provide a direction for learning and community which seems very rewarding.

The ability to have a wider impact on the educational experience of more ākonga.

Guiding and supporting teachers through the challenging times.

The ability to make positive change, not just within a classroom.

A third theme was teachers who saw appeal in the opportunity to **lead positive relationships with the community** as a principal:

Being a beacon for the community in uplifting a school.

Good principals can be transformative for communities, so it would be a privilege to do that job.

The ability to work alongside whānau, iwi, and the wider community to ensure the school reflects its community and honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi is also deeply motivating for me.

A handful of teachers saw appeal in the opportunity to **improve operational policies and processes** of a school:

More responsibility and control over policies and procedures that actually work for our students and community. The ability to implement planned, meaningful change, not change just for the sake of change.

The ability to streamline the processes to maximise student outcomes.

A couple of teachers highlighted principals' opportunities to **have a wider impact on education**, beyond their school:

Being able to work with other principals to have an impact on NZ education from the school context.

Over 400 teachers told us what aspects of the principal job were least appealing to them or were putting them off considering a principalship. Some said they just didn't want to do it or were too close to retirement to consider it. A few indicated they had been a principal before and didn't want to do it again. Only a handful of respondents mentioned remuneration as a least appealing aspect or something that was putting them off.

The largest theme in responses was not wanting to be **taken away from teaching**, to deal with administration, "paperwork", and management:

Being in the classroom with students is why I got into teaching, not for managing adults.

Too much paperwork.

I love teaching not managing.

Secondly, many teachers mentioned **workload**, and the number of hours their principal worked:

The hours expected to work/be seen at school activities are astronomical.

You have to live and breathe the principal's job to be effective.

A third major theme was concern about stress from the **responsibilities** principals have, including managing parental demands:

... being behind a desk dealing with everyone else's problems—parents, staff, the community, etc. It feels like a lot to put on my shoulders, and I don't think I would ever want that much responsibility.

The fact that you always are 'on'. The changing nature of society and parents' expectations.

The stress, the workload, work/life balance, the negativity and conflict with staff.

Finally, a small group of teachers said that dealing with "constant change" and not getting enough support from government agencies put them off being a principal:

I don't feel schools and therefore principals have the support or respect of the public. Too much change in education.

The administration, the pressure, the constant changes and demands of the MoE, NZQA, society and the community.

Seems to me that being a principal is perhaps the most thankless task in education at this time—subject to the whims of whoever the current Minister of Education is and whatever rhetoric the current government is most enamoured by. Teaching is an art as well as an applied science—not a political football.

Teachers' career plans have remained much the same over the past decade

When we asked teachers to consider their career plans for the next 5 years, the most common response was “continue as I am now” (40% of teachers). This was followed by one-third of teachers (32%) wanting to build their leadership skills. As we have reported before, career plans show remarkable continuity over time. Table 8 presents these data over the past decade. Although there appear to be a few small increases comparing 2021 and 2025 data, none are sufficient to be reported as a notable change.

TABLE 8 Teachers' career plans in the next 5 years, 2015–25

Career plan	2015 (n=1,777)	2018 (n=705)	2021 (n=816)	2025 (n=602)
Continue as I am now	37%	40%	39%	40%
Build my leadership skills	*	22%	24%	32%
Leave teaching or change to a career outside education	8%	14%	14%	19%
Take on leadership role with management units	*	12%	15%	18%
Apply for a study award/sabbatical/fellowship	21%	16%	18%	17%
Increase level of responsibility within teaching	*	*	11%	16%
Reduce their hours	*	*	*	15%
Begin or complete a postgraduate qualification	15%	14%	14%	15%
Leave New Zealand to teach overseas	*	*	*	14%
Change schools	14%	14%	18%	14%
Change to a different role within education	9%	10%	11%	14%
Retire	14%	16%	15%	13%
Take on middle management role	*	10%	13%	10%
Not sure	7%	4%	8%	7%
Take on senior management role	*	15%	8%	7%
Decrease level of responsibility	*	*	*	6%

*=not asked

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% as teachers could select more than one response option.

There were some statistically significant relationships between teachers' years of experience and their career plans:

- Teachers with more than 15 years' experience or 3–5 years' experience were most likely to plan to reduce their hours.
- Teachers in their second year or with 3–5 years' experience were more likely to plan to leave Aotearoa New Zealand to teach overseas (27% of second-year teachers selected this, and 17% of those with 3–5 years' experience, compared with 7%–10% of others). Again, this most likely relates to life stage, and the “overseas experience” sought by many young people.²⁶
- Early- to mid-career teachers (teachers in their second year, or with 3–5 or 6–10 years' experience) were most likely to plan to change schools, take on a leadership role with management units, or take on a middle management role. This interest in leadership is consistent with our earlier finding that mid-career teachers were most likely to want PLD on leadership and management.
- Experienced teachers were most likely to plan to leave teaching or change to a career outside education (18% of teachers with more than 15 years' experience and 15% of those with 11–15 years' experience. After this, the pattern did not neatly follow years' experience, although just 2% of teachers in their first year selected this option).

Teachers' desired changes about their work

Teachers were asked to identify the main aspects of their work they would like to change, with the option to select multiple responses. This has been a longstanding question in the national survey.

Teachers want a reduction in the scale and pace of change

Most teachers (71%) identified “reduce pace of change or number of initiatives at any one time” as a main change they would like to their work. This is consistent with other findings in this report about teachers' concerns with the pace of curriculum and assessment changes.

Table 9 shows that, compared with previous cycles, there was an increase in the proportion of teachers who would like the following changes to their work:

- more support staff/teacher aides (selected by 29% of teachers in 2015, 39% in both 2018 and 2021, increasing to 62% of teachers in 2025)
- better pay (selected by 45% of teachers in 2021, increasing to 57% in 2025, but not up to the levels of 2018, prior to the 2018 collective contract negotiations).²⁷

However, a smaller proportion of teachers selected the following as changes they would like to their work:

- reduce administration/paperwork (a trend downwards from 75% of teachers in 2018 to 55% of teachers in 2025)
- more non-contact time to work with other teachers (down from around half of teachers in previous cycles to 35% in 2025).

²⁶ The survey was undertaken at a time when people were leaving Aotearoa New Zealand in “record numbers”. In the 12 months to September 2025, Aotearoa New Zealand citizen departures were up 8% on the previous year. Nearly 40% of those leaving were aged 18–30. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/579704/the-record-number-of-kiwis-leaving-new-zealand>

²⁷ Note that secondary school teachers, represented by the PPTA, agreed a new Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement on 4 December 2025. This was in the middle of our data collection period, which was October–December 2025 and February 2026.

There has been little change over time in the proportion of teachers (around half) who say that a main aspect of their work they would like to change is a reduction in class sizes, improving teachers' status in society, or more time to reflect/plan/share ideas.

TABLE 9 Changes teachers would like in their work, 2015–25

Change	2015 (n=1,777)	2018 (n=705)	2021 (n=818)	2025 (n=602)
Reduce the pace of change or number of initiatives at any one time ²⁸	*	*	*	71%
More support staff/teacher aides	29%	39%	39%	62%
Better pay	60%	76%	45%	57%
More time to work with individual students	*	*	*	56%
Reduce administration/paperwork	64%	75%	64%	55%
Reduce class sizes	41%	53%	51%	54%
Improve teachers' status in society	*	55%	49%	54%
More time to reflect/plan/share ideas	57%	62%	54%	52%
Reduce assessment workload	46%	56%	37%	36%
More non-contact time to work with other teachers	51%	55%	53%	35%
Other (please describe)	4%	10%	20%	10%

*=not asked

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% as teachers could select more than one response option.

Ten percent of teachers selected the “Other” option, with the most common themes being:

- more PLD
- being more highly valued (by school leaders, the MoE)
- improved student behaviour and support for behaviour management
- more support to cater for the diversity of students in their classrooms.

Other comments focused on initial teacher education, administrative processes, perceived political interference in education, and career progression.

There was one statistically significant relationship. First-year teachers were less likely to select “reduce the pace of change or number of initiatives at any one time” (24% of first-year teachers selected this, compared with 49%–54% of other teachers). Potential explanations for this are that teachers in their first year of teaching do not have a point of reference to compare the current rate of change with, or that they are focused on surviving the challenges of being a first-year teacher.

²⁸ This is a combination of two previous items: “reduce the pace of change” and “reduce the number of initiatives at any one time”. In previous cycles, teachers were more likely to want to reduce the number of initiatives (57% in 2021) than the pace of change (32% in 2021).

Final comments from teachers

Ninety-one teachers wrote final comments at the end of the survey. There were five clear (and overlapping) themes, each addressed in 20%–35% of the comments:

- Teachers love their job “but” ...
- Teachers feel undervalued and worry for the future of the profession.
- Teachers were frustrated by politics and pace of change in education.
- Student needs and behaviours are a challenge.
- Teacher stress, workload, and burnout were key concerns.

Teachers love their job “but” ...

A third of the comments began with teachers loving the job—almost always qualified with comments about the difficult or demoralising aspects of their work:

I love teaching and have many wonderful memories of teaching at a number of schools. However, the increasing devaluation of the profession from the Government and growing disrespect from the general public is very concerning. There are constant changes for changes sake and more needs to be done to help those with learning/behavioural needs or those from migrant families where English is a second language.

There are aspects of my job that I really love. However, the current political climate means that I am looking forward to retiring and making resources.

Teachers feel undervalued and worried for the future of the profession

Nearly a third of comments were about feeling professionally and economically undervalued. Many were concerned for the future of the teaching profession:

I do not think it is an attractive career anymore. There are a lot easier ways to make a living.

There is lack of respect for the profession from politicians. Just because we work with children and teenagers does not mean we should be treated like children or teenagers. Teachers are professionals and want the best for our students—we need to be consulted and listened to.

Underpaid, undervalued, not respected.

Some felt that initial teacher education was increasingly inadequate:

The profession is being devalued. Subject specialists are not being trained.

Student teachers are expected to find their own way, and I think a big problem in education is how we are training them, or lack of training them. It's too philosophical and not practical.

Teachers were frustrated by politics and pace of change in education

As we have already reported, teachers were frustrated by the current educational policy context. More than a quarter of comments expressed frustration about politics and/or the pace of changes in education:

Why are we always treated as a political football. Education is not about a contest of ideas.

Politicians need to stop using education as a voting hook.

I believe Aotearoa needs a more stable and unified approach to education. At present, each government brings its own agenda and direction for teaching, learning, and assessment. Constant

change, particularly to systems such as NCEA, places significant pressure on teachers and takes time away from the work that matters most: supporting students in the classroom and preparing them for their future pathways.

Student needs and behaviours were a challenge

Around one-fifth of comments were about challenging student needs and behaviour:

We need to put the students first and look at their overall wellbeing. Be the ambulance at the top of the hill and not as we always seem to be at the bottom.

I'm only 3 years into teaching and have been physically assaulted 3 times by students, breaking up physical fights. There is little to no consequences for students that show this antisocial behaviour. Some days I go home exhausted and overstimulated from being everything for these students. Some days I feel like a social worker, a nurse, a referee and a parent to the class.

Students are coming to school well behind where they should be developmentally and academically with a long list of behavioural issues that we are expected to deal with that is now no longer within the scope of what we've been taught how to deal with.

Some included parents and families in their comments, and some referred to impacts of technology:

[I have] experienced a decrease in the level of respect shown to teachers from students and parents. Some are hostile, and act in bad faith.

Students are addicted to technology and struggle to engage with any patience-requiring tasks.

I love working with students, but there are so many issues that they bring into the classroom that are barriers to their learning. There is a sense of entitlement among students and parents.

Teacher stress, workload, and burnout were key concerns

A similar number of comments highlighted concerns about teachers' stress, workload, and burnout—often linked with all the other matters already commented on:

The burnout is real and widespread. I see it in myself, my colleagues, and my students. The current system and support is not sustainable or effective; it is built on a faulty foundation.

If the Government doesn't slow down the changes, then education is going to a) tank and b) lose a lot more teachers to overseas or out of teaching. My colleagues are losing heart and passion fast.

There is way too much paperwork which is making us teachers drown. I am a HOD and my workload has been so massive that I have resigned to be a reliever instead.

4. He matapaki | Discussion

This final section discusses how the 2025 national survey findings can be used to monitor educational trends and policy impacts over time, specifically addressing the high-level research questions we have pursued since 2024:

Question 1: To what extent and in what ways is the system honouring and enacting Te Tiriti o Waitangi? What are the effects of key policy changes? Where are the strengths and areas for improvement?

Question 2: To what extent and in what ways is the system serving ākonga Māori? What are the effects of key policy changes? Where are the strengths and areas for improvement?

Question 3: To what extent and in what ways is the system serving Pacific students? What are the effects of key policy changes? Where are the strengths and areas for improvement?

Question 4: To what extent and in what ways is the system designed and supported to achieve equitable outcomes for all students? What are the effects of key policy changes? Where are the strengths and areas for improvement?

Question 5: To what extent and in what ways are all people in the system supported to succeed? What are the effects of key policy changes? Where are the strengths and areas for improvement?

Honouring and enacting Te Tiriti o Waitangi

The Education and Training Act 2020 stated that one of the primary objectives for boards was to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi by:

1. working to ensure their plans, policies, and local curriculum reflect local tikanga Māori, mātauranga Māori, and te ao Māori
2. taking all reasonable steps to make instruction available in tikanga Māori and te reo Māori
3. achieving equitable outcomes for Māori students.²⁹

A few weeks into our survey implementation, in early November 2025, the Government announced a decision to remove this obligation for schools to give effect to the Treaty of Waitangi.³⁰ In the announcement, Education Minister Erica Stanford said the Treaty was the Crown's responsibility, not schools'. A sizeable group of schools and sector bodies pushed back against this decision.

In this section of the discussion, we summarise what the national survey findings tell us about how effectively the system was honouring and enacting Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Most teachers thought Te Tiriti o Waitangi was widely enacted in school values and day-to-day activities, though there was more variability in views on whether a school had a shared understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. These findings also align with principals' perspectives (MacDonald et al., 2026). Policy developments in the last 5 years, including the introduction of the Aotearoa New Zealand Histories (ANZH) curriculum and the requirements under Section 127(1)(d) of the Education

²⁹ <https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/legislation/education-and-training-act-2020/te-tiriti-o-waitangi>

³⁰ See <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/577761/teachers-shocked-by-government-decision-to-remove-treaty-of-waitangi-requirement-in-schools>

and Training Act 2020, may have played a role in schools' and teachers' engagement with Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Bolstad et al., 2025).

The integration of te reo Māori into everyday teaching practice serves as an indicator of the education system's responsiveness to Article 2 of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, which affirms Māori language as a protected taonga. Our findings indicate that Māori words or phrases, such as greetings and farewells, are used in most secondary classrooms—12% of teachers said they avoided using te reo Māori due to lack of confidence. However, there was less reported use of te reo Māori in more sustained ways such as class karakia and waiata, and use of te reo phrases and sentences.

Kaiako Māori and teachers in schools with more socioeconomic barriers were more likely to use te reo Māori in their classrooms at higher proficiency levels. Kaiako Māori at all proficiency levels were also more likely than non-Māori teachers to report using te reo Māori in a wider range of ways.

This highlights differences in confidence and capability, and points to the importance of ongoing support to build wider teacher capability in te reo Māori across the workforce. Over half of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that professional learning in the past 3 years had provided practical help with learning and using te reo Māori, no change since 2021. In the principal survey, most principals reported providing or funding PLD for te reo Māori, although this had declined since we surveyed principals in 2022 (MacDonald et al., 2026). The discontinuation of initiatives like *Te Ahu o te Reo Māori*³¹ may have contributed to this decline, by lessening access to PLD that builds confidence and fluency in both language and tikanga. With the removal of *Te Ahu o te Reo Māori*, and if schools are no longer obligated to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, time will tell if progress occurs, stalls, or regresses.

Serving ākonga Māori

In response to research question 2, teacher and principal findings provide some indication about how effectively the education system is serving ākonga Māori. We acknowledge that this study did not garner the perspectives of ākonga themselves.³²

The principal report described widespread use of practices that affirm the identities of ākonga Māori such as access to co-curricular activities, clear goals for academic achievement and cultural, social, and emotional wellbeing, and access to positive Māori role models. Since 2022, there has been an increase in principals reporting that te reo Māori and tikanga Māori are incorporated into daily school-wide practices (MacDonald et al., 2026).

Teachers also reported high use of many practices that support inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments. Most teachers reported promoting Māori cultural values with all students and incorporating te reo Māori and tikanga Māori in their teaching. The latter showed an increase from 2021. There were differences by school context. Teachers in schools with more socioeconomic barriers were more likely to agree or strongly agree that they used inclusive and culturally responsive practices than those in schools facing fewer barriers. In one sense this is positive, as ākonga Māori are more likely to attend schools facing socioeconomic barriers. However, it also points to inconsistent experiences for ākonga Māori depending on their school setting. Some ākonga may face environments where these values and practices are less visible or embedded.

31 A professional learning programme to strengthen teachers' reo Māori capabilities. In September 2024, the Government announced this programme would cease, with funding redirected toward mathematics resources (see [https:// tahurangi.education.govt.nz/maths-pangarau-resources-coming-soon](https://tahurangi.education.govt.nz/maths-pangarau-resources-coming-soon)).

32 The MoE has developed and piloted a student voice survey. See <https://www.education.govt.nz/have-your-say/student-voice-survey/details>

Two-thirds of teachers reported that PLD in the past 3 years had provided practical support in understanding tikanga Māori. Over half of teachers said PLD had helped them teach ākonga Māori and build connections with whānau Māori. Looking ahead, Mātauranga Māori was one of the top four topics that teachers would like future PLD on.

Overall, while many teachers and schools are working actively to support ākonga Māori, equity challenges remain. Future efforts focused on continuing and expanding PLD related to te ao Māori, and ensuring all schools can consistently provide culturally sustaining and affirming learning experiences for ākonga Māori, will be essential to creating a more equitable and responsive education system.

Serving Pacific students

Pacific students make up 13.5% of all Years 9–13 students in English-medium schools. This broad grouping encompasses students from Samoa, Tonga, the Cook Islands, Tuvalu, Tokelau, Niue, Fiji, and other Pacific Island cultures, most born in Aotearoa New Zealand. Just 10% of principals responding to the 2025 survey (Macdonald et al., 2026) indicated that their school did not currently have students from Pacific cultures.³³

The 2025 national survey principal report (MacDonald et al., 2026) concluded that, although the majority of schools are working on the visibility of Pacific cultures within their school environments and practices, there is room for improvement in the extent of schools' use of approaches that affirm Pacific students' identities and interactions with Pacific families and community leaders. The teacher findings in this report add to this picture. As noted above, we acknowledge that this study did not garner the perspectives of Pacific students themselves.

Around two-thirds of teachers reported that they know which Pacific cultures their students identify with. Around half said they provided Pacific students with opportunities to work together and support each other, and that they incorporated Pacific students' cultures in their teaching. Comparing these data with 2021 showed a mixed picture of progress.

As reported in relation to ākonga Māori, there were differences by school context for incorporating Pacific students' cultures and providing opportunities for Pacific students to work together and support each other. Teachers in schools with more socioeconomic barriers were more likely to agree or strongly agree that they used these practices than those in schools facing fewer barriers. Pacific students are more likely to attend schools facing socioeconomic barriers, but these findings suggest there could be inconsistent experiences for Pacific students depending on their school setting.

The *2020–2030 Action Plan for Pacific Education* (Ministry of Education, 2024b, p. 30) identifies the goal to “enable every teacher ... to take co-ordinated action to become culturally competent with diverse Pacific learners” as one of five key system shifts. PLD is one such enabler; however, only around one-third of teachers reported receiving practical help from PLD for teaching Pacific students or building connections with Pacific students and their families. The action plan also identifies confronting systemic racism and discrimination in education as a key system shift. One item in the national survey monitors progress towards this shift; however, it shows no change from the 2021 survey to the 2025 survey—just over half of teachers in both cycles agreed or strongly agreed that they had an effective school-wide process for addressing students' racist comments or behaviour.

Overall, these findings suggest that there is room for improvement in the system to ensure that all Pacific students are known by their teachers and have culturally sustaining and affirming learning experiences.

³³ Note that this does not necessarily map to the teacher survey. We did not ask teachers if they taught Pacific learners, so some respondents may teach few or none.

Achieving equitable outcomes for all students

This section addresses the ongoing efforts required to achieve equitable outcomes for all students (research question 4). It considers how effectively the system is designed and supported to achieve equitable outcomes, assesses the impact of recent policy changes, and identifies areas requiring further investment and improvement to ensure all learners are supported to thrive.

A strong wellbeing foundation assists students to learn and thrive at school. In 2025, more teachers than in 2021 agreed that student wellbeing was a strong focus in their school, and fewer were reporting that student mental health issues had become more common. These encouraging findings may suggest that a COVID-related spike in student mental health and attendance concerns has diminished. These findings may also be related to the introduction of the free Awhi Mai Awhi Atu | Counselling in Schools initiative in 2021. However, data from this 2025 national survey and the 2025 Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey (Ministry for Social Development, 2026) both indicate there are still substantial numbers of vulnerable students who are not accessing professional and/or external mental health support.³⁴ Reflecting this, teachers' third top priority for future PLD was supporting students' mental health and wellbeing.

Most teachers taught students learning English as an additional language but less than half indicated they have skills and knowledge to do so or have sufficient support. Similarly, less than half of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they have sufficient support to do a good job of teaching students with learning support needs. When asked about what they'd like to change, 62% of teachers wanted more support staff/teacher aides, compared with 29% in 2015 and 39% in both 2018 and 2021. These findings align with the principal survey, where the majority of principals selected "supporting students with complex learning needs" (77%) and "providing or accessing support for vulnerable students" (64%) as issues facing their school.

As with principals, equity issues came to the fore in teachers' responses to questions about changes to NCEA and senior secondary qualifications. Finally, a challenge in achieving equitable outcomes for all students was evident in teachers' perceptions of unequal access to generative AI tools among students. The overall pattern indicates that concerns about unequal access are more pronounced in schools with more socioeconomic barriers. This likely reflects underlying socioeconomic disparities that affect students' access to generative AI tools. This adds to the finding in the principal report of inequities in students' access to digital technologies and connectivity at home. These findings have implications for schools' use of digital learning platforms, homework expectations, online assessment, and emerging uses of AI-enabled tools, all of which assume a level of access that is not available to all students and may not be available to students in the least advantaged contexts.

Supporting all people in the system

In response to research question 5, the 2025 National Survey of Secondary Schools provides a lens on how the education system ensures that all individuals—whether students and their whānau, teachers, or school leaders—are provided with the support they need to succeed in an equitable and sustainable way, while also examining the impacts of key policy changes. The question of how the education system supports "all people" can be explored in terms of how effectively it provides the structures, resources, and guidance necessary for success across these diverse groups.

³⁴ The 2025 Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey included screening tools which suggested that over one-fifth of students may benefit from mental health assessment; however, only 6% had accessed professional mental health support in the past year (Ministry for Social Development, 2026).

While the sections above discuss how students are supported, and the principal survey report addresses the support principals receive, this section focuses on how the system supports teachers.

In 2025, the Aotearoa New Zealand education system was going through the largest shift in education policy since 1989. The educational changes of significance to secondary teachers in 2025 included (but were not limited to) the Education and Training (System Reform) Bill, transition to new Teaching Standards, disestablishment of Kāhui Ako, changes to learning support funding, changes to NCEA and senior secondary qualifications, changes to approved senior subjects, consultation on draft curriculum for Years 0–10, and downgrading a legal requirement for schools to give effect to the Treaty of Waitangi. Teachers' concerns about the amount and pace of change were clear.

Despite challenges, national survey data continue to show that most secondary teachers enjoy their jobs. In 2021, we reported a decline in morale. We speculated that this may have been associated with the additional demands and uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2025 data appear to support this, as there is a return to morale levels seen in 2018 and in earlier cycles. However, around a third of teachers reported unmanageable workload and stress levels, and a workload so high they cannot do justice to their students. There was no notable change in this proportion from 2021, and it is also consistent with the principal data.

We explored school-level factors that contribute to job satisfaction and morale. Autonomy, confidence to try new practices, and access to non-contact or release time were reported by over 80% of teachers. The majority of teachers also reported a collaborative, mutually supporting school culture, the school caring about the wellbeing of its staff, and having opportunities to participate in school decision making. However, this is not the experience for all teachers, and there is room for improvement.

Most teachers agreed their school had an effective school-wide approach for encouraging positive behaviours and most rarely felt unsafe in their class or outside of classrooms. However, as in past years, around one-quarter of teachers, and particularly those in schools with more socioeconomic barriers, disagreed that an effective school-wide approach was in place to manage student behaviour across the school, or to teach students how to resolve conflicts.

The 2025 data also show a continuation of a long-term trend for more teachers to be experiencing student behaviour that causes serious disruption to their teaching. Teachers' reports identified an ongoing need to strengthen school-wide approaches to address different types of student or staff discrimination or aggression (such as students' racist behaviour or inappropriate use of social media). The findings suggest that strengthening approaches to promoting positive behaviour and managing behaviour is an ongoing need, particularly for schools with more socioeconomic barriers. New solutions and innovations may be needed to address these entrenched patterns.

Career plans show remarkable continuity over time, as does interest in being a principal in the future (around 10%). Secondary teachers' PLD needs are diverse and are not necessarily concentrated in one or two areas of practice. However, one clear area of need for development is AI. Mid-career teachers were most likely to want PLD on leadership and management. Most—but not all—early career teachers in their first or second year of teaching indicated they were well supported. They were more likely than other teachers to want PLD on classroom management and behaviour approaches, and inclusive education and diversity.

Overall, we report a mixed picture of how the system supports teachers. Positive experiences are not universal. There is a clear need for ongoing efforts to support teachers, particularly in this period of significant change in the sector. Teachers need school-level, and sometimes external, support

to respond to students with additional learning and wellbeing needs. Strengthening approaches to promoting positive behaviour and managing behaviour is an ongoing need. The system also needs flexibility to meet the PLD needs of individual teachers, schools, and the wider system.

Looking ahead

The 2025 national survey has provided a snapshot of teachers' perspectives amidst a period of significant shifts within the sector, with uncertainty about where some proposed changes will settle. The value of the longstanding NZCER national survey is its ability to monitor educational trends and policy impacts over time. The next national survey of secondary schools is likely to be 2028, when we can gain teachers' perspectives on the impacts of changes that are being introduced now.

He āpitahanga | Appendix

Teacher demographics and school characteristics

TABLE A1 Teachers' gender (n=830)

Response	Count	Percent
Female	382	46
Male	195	23
Prefer not to say	18	2
Gender diverse	7	1
Missing	228	27

TABLE A2 Teachers' ethnicity (n=830)

Response	Count	Percent
NZ European/Pākehā	450	54
Māori	91	11
Other (please describe)	82	10
Prefer not to say	27	3
Indian	18	2
Chinese	11	1
Samoan	4	0
Cook Island Māori	5	1
Tongan	3	0
Missing	230	28

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% as teachers could select more than one response option.

TABLE A3 Teacher respondents' curriculum learning area taught (n=830)

Curriculum learning area	Count	Percent
English	187	23
Social sciences	179	22
Mathematics and statistics	171	21
Science	155	19
Technology	120	14
Other (please specify)	106	13
The arts	80	10
Health and physical education	78	9
Careers and transition	43	5
Te reo Māori	31	4
Learning languages	25	3

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% as teachers could select more than one response option.

TABLE A4 Teacher respondents' levels of responsibility (n=830)

Level of responsibility	Count	Percent
I am a teacher receiving one or more management units or allowances (e.g. head of department, dean).	405	49
I am a fully certificated teacher (not currently receiving any management units or management allowances).	241	29
I am a provisionally certificated teacher (PCT).	86	10
I am an associate, deputy, or assistant principal.	57	7
I have a Limited Authority to Teach (LAT).	23	3
None of the above. Please describe your role.	18	2

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% as teachers could select more than one response option.

TABLE A5 Teacher respondents' years' teaching experience (n=830)

Years of teaching experience	Count	Percent
More than 15 years	440	53
11–15 years	110	13
6–10 years	107	13
3–5 years	82	10
I'm in my first year	50	6
I'm in my second year	41	5

TABLE A6 Profile of teacher respondents' school by EQI groups (n=830)

EQI Group	Count	Percent
Fewer barriers	192	23
More barriers	231	28
Moderate barriers	407	49

Note: Our teacher responses are broadly representative of secondary schools by EQI group.

TABLE A7 Profile of teacher respondents' school by area (n=830)

Urban/Rural	Count	Percent
Rural other	8	1
Rural settlement	24	3
Large urban area	113	14
Medium urban area	163	20
Small urban area	212	26
Major urban area	310	37

Note: Our teacher responses are broadly representative of secondary schools by area (urban/rural).

TABLE A8 Profile of teacher respondents' school by region (n=830)

Region	Count	Percent
Gisborne	16	2
Marlborough	16	2
West Coast	17	2
Northland	18	2
Hawke's Bay	25	3
Tasman	28	3
Bay of Plenty	30	4
Nelson	30	4
Southland	41	5
Manawatū-Whanganui	46	6
Otago	54	7
Taranaki	55	7
Wellington	98	12
Auckland	111	13
Canterbury	115	14
Waikato	130	16

Note: Our teacher responses are broadly representative of secondary schools by region.

TABLE A9 Profile of teacher respondents' school by school type (n=830)

School type	Count	Percent
Restricted composite (Years 7–10)	1	0
Composite (Years 1–10)	4	0
Teen parent unit	4	0
Secondary (Years 11–15)	6	1
Composite	87	10
Secondary (Years 7–15)	152	18
Secondary (Years 9–15)	576	69

Note: Our teacher responses are broadly representative of secondary schools by school type.

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