

School planning and reporting in action: the early years of the new framework

Rosemary Hipkins, Chris Joyce, and Cathy Wylie



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Executive summary

Starting in 2003, the planning and reporting framework has meant that all state and state-integrated schools are required to use data about their students' learning and school engagement in their school-wide planning, setting targets that can be used in annual reporting and review of the school programme and allocation of funds. This report describes what the planning and reporting framework has meant for New Zealand's primary and secondary schools, and its initial impact on teacher practices and learning.

The report combines findings from two 2006 national surveys, both funded by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER's) purchase agreement with the Ministry of Education (MOE), with some comparisons with previous national survey data. These surveys are the:

- NZCER's planning and reporting surveys of a nationally representative sample of 186 primary school principals and 279 teachers from the same schools
- NZCER's 2006 National Survey of Secondary Schools (unpublished), which combines four separate surveys of: all state and state-integrated secondary school principals; a random sample of teachers; the board chairperson and one other trustee; and a random sample of parents from a cross section of 27 schools. Planning and reporting was one of the themes included in these surveys, particularly for principals, trustees, and teachers.

Key findings

The good news is that, since 2003, there have been positive shifts in awareness of the intended outcomes for the planning and reporting process. As intended, the main focus is seen to be on raising student achievement within the school, and schools are all now setting goals with the learning needs of their students in mind.

Schools reported that most planning and reporting goals addressed achievement in literacy and numeracy. These are the curriculum areas where both relevant professional development and a range of new assessment tools have been available to them, including tools that can be used both formatively to identify student learning needs, and to give a picture of overall student achievement levels, using national benchmarks. Seventy-three percent of the goals in literacy and/or numeracy given by principals were clear and measurable.

Some targeted other curriculum areas, or generic skills or competencies, but it seemed more difficult to write clear goals in these areas and then derive appropriate data to report on these. Secondary schools were more likely to say they had generic skills/competencies or ICT targets, and to target wider aspects of schooling—e.g., attendance, behaviour, and school climate.

Once goals have been determined a wide range of tools is being used to gather summative assessment data to report on overall achievement in target areas. Recently developed assessments with national benchmarks feature prominently, such as the numeracy diagnostic interview, Supplementary Tests of Achievement in Reading (STAR), and national exemplars. Around two-thirds of primary schools are using either Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning (asTTle) or Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT), or both. Two-thirds of secondary schools use National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) data for reporting purposes. In primary schools a very wide range of tools is being used for formative learning purposes: portfolios, exemplars, ARBs, self- and peer assessment are all being used formatively, as are teacher observations and teacher-designed tasks. Most primary teachers are confident about their ability to interpret achievement data and there has been a marked increase in self-reported confidence since the 1999 NZCER National Survey (Wylie, 1999), particularly in literacy and numeracy, with the latter particularly evident in low-decile schools. However, about a third of secondary school teachers say they need help with data analysis.

Is all this activity making a difference for students' learning? We can say that planning and reporting is providing a focus for ongoing teacher conversations and professional learning. Moderation conversations are now common and represent a profound change of culture in primary schools. They are less of a shift in secondary schools, because moderation is integral to NCEA implementation. Once schools have determined their goals, the most common initial response is to access appropriate professional development, and, in conjunction with this, to develop action plans to address goals.

Planning and reporting activities are widely seen to have made at least some impact on various aspects of school life and classroom activity, with many teachers and principals reporting positive impacts. Primary principals tend to be more positive about outcomes than their secondary counterparts. There is some evidence that low-decile primary schools are paying more attention to assessment than they were previously (deciles 1–2) suggesting that investment in professional development in these schools is bearing fruit.

A quarter of the primary schools have processes in place for discussing planning and reporting results with parents. Students' most common form of involvement is via individual goal setting, and self- or peer assessment for formative assessment purposes. Since 2003, secondary teachers have made modest gains in the use of these strategies.

Where targets have not been met, there is little evidence of schools taking the easy way out by lowering targets. Targets are likely to be revisited and the action plan adjusted, as intended within the framework structure. Potential obstacles are the time taken by the process and expectations on teachers to complete too many assessments. These are likely to be seen as either minor or moderate issues, with few respondents seeing them as major issues. Some primary schools see an inadequate student management system (SMS) as an obstacle to using planning and reporting data to improve classroom teaching. Congruent with this, about a third of primary schools have yet to begin using a SMS to manage data.

Actions likely to support the continuing bedding in of the planning and reporting framework include ongoing support for setting clear and measurable reporting goals (in about a third of primary schools this is not yet happening). The development of appropriate assessment tools in areas other than literacy and numeracy, and particularly in relation to important aspects of skills/key competencies, will be an interesting challenge, but this will need to happen if the scope of planning and reporting activities is to be widened. Another area of ongoing need for support is in continuing or extending the availability of professional development related to making data-supported teaching decisions—in data interpretation (both generally and in relation to the features of specific widely used tools), and in deciding what data trends mean in terms of likely “next learning steps” in specific curriculum/learning areas. Preferably schools will be supported to use assessment strategies that integrate both formative and summative purposes so that assessment is seen as integral to, not separate from, learning.

1. Introduction

This report documents schools' perceptions of progress with the implementation of the requirements of the 2001 planning and reporting legislation, as outlined in the National Administration Guidelines (NAG 2). These guidelines came into effect in 2003 and implementation of the planning and reporting framework is ongoing. The views of both primary and secondary principals and teachers are reported, along with views of secondary school members of boards of trustees. Progress is discussed within a framework of the intentions of this legislation, as briefly outlined in Section 2.

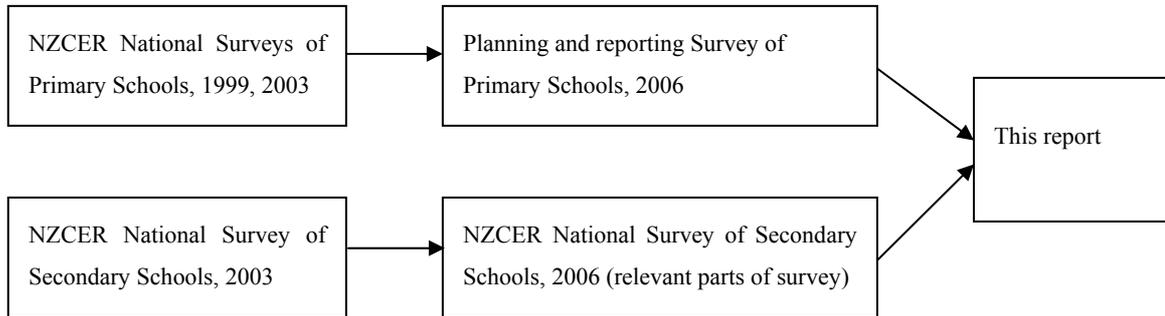
In 2003, NZCER conducted wide-ranging surveys in a nationally representative sample of both secondary and primary schools. These national surveys are actually four surveys in one because there is a version for each of principals, teachers, school trustees, and parents. In the 2003 surveys, questions directed to principals, teachers, and trustees on the then very new planning and reporting requirements gave an early snapshot of responses to the new legislation. These responses suggested some lack of knowledge of the intent of the change (see, for example, Hipkins & Hodgen, 2004, pp.157–158).

Building on the 2003 findings, in 2006 the next cycle of NZCER national surveys took place in secondary schools.¹ Again one subset of questions concerned planning and reporting. These data from the 2006 survey are reported in the secondary school-based Section 5 of this report. Three years on, the present report provides encouraging evidence of a substantial bedding in of awareness of intended outcomes from the planning and reporting process, particularly amongst secondary teachers.

Section 4 of the report documents findings from a different 2006 survey of principals and teachers in a national sample of primary schools that focused exclusively on planning and reporting. Some items from the 2003 NZCER National Survey of Primary Schools were used so that comparisons could be drawn. Figure 1 summarises the data sources used for this report. More detail about the 2006 surveys, and the nature of each sample, is provided in Section 3.

¹ Primary schools will be surveyed in Term 2, 2007.

Figure 1 **Data sources for this report**



Between 2003 and 2006 the MOE has invested considerable effort in ensuring schools have access to SMS that are sufficiently flexible to handle traditional administration records and the extended demands of keeping records for purposes such as planning and reporting. Section 6 provides a very brief snapshot of progress with SMS implementation. As for the planning and reporting process in 2003, this is an area of rapid change and it will be interesting to revisit the data presented here at the time of the next NZCER national survey.

Finally, Section 7 compares the current situation with respect to planning and reporting in primary and secondary schools, and discusses progress to date and issues that have emerged.

2. The intention of the planning and reporting framework

Background to the planning and reporting framework

The MOE's Schooling Strategy 2005–2010 has as an overarching goal that all students should be achieving their potential (Ministry of Education, 2005). The strategy notes that New Zealand student achievement compares well to student achievement internationally but that the gap between the highest and lowest achievers is wide, with Māori and Pasifika students and students from lower socioeconomic groups over-represented in the low-achieving group. Thus, in addition to raising student achievement overall, a goal of the Schooling Strategy is to lessen disparity between highest and lowest achievers.

The Schooling Strategy identifies the use of “evidence-based practices” (p. 16) as one means of reducing achievement disparities. Evidence is defined in this context as:

a combination of: research which links actions and behaviours to student academic and social outcomes; data and information about student learning progress (from assessments, teacher observations, student work samples, and feedback from students, families and whānau); and information about students and their lives outside school (Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 35).

Underpinning this emphasis on the use of evidence-based practice is the assumption that:

high quality teaching responsive to students' needs is reported to be the biggest factor influencing student achievement (MOE quarterly circular, April 2003).

The formative use of assessment is seen to be inherent in responsive teaching, but the focus is not just on the actions of individual teachers. School managers are required to use school-wide assessment data to plan achievement priorities for their school, to allocate the resources needed to achieve these priorities, and to provide for focused professional development that can support teachers to make effective changes to their teaching in response to assessment-generated feedback about their students' learning progress.

The processes for planning and reporting outlined in the 2003 legislation are intended to translate this aspiration (the use of evidence-based practice to strengthen achievement) into a reality.

New Zealand is not alone in facing challenges to reform assessment practices, and to bring assessment and learning into better alignment with each other. Two UK assessment researchers who analysed trends in assessment research over the last decade of the twentieth century

(Broadfoot & Black, 2004) identified the rapid evolution of a “global economy” in the “knowledge era” as the source of the imperative for assessment changes in education internationally. With this came a renewed focus on accountability, with the additional challenge that the increasingly widespread use of computers made the collection and presentation of data for accountability purposes more feasible than at any time in the past. In her contribution to the Reith Lecture series, philosopher Onora O’Neill located this change in education within a broader societal thrust for accountability in all areas of public service (O’Neill, 2002). She reflected on the danger of deepening distrust, rather than an increased trust, as a consequence of this international trend.

This certainly seems to be the case with respect to assessment reforms in some nations with which we compare ourselves. Both the UK and USA, for example, have responded to the accountability imperative by introducing low-trust models for national testing against predetermined standards, with associated sanctions for poorly performing schools. Those that ultimately fail to improve may face closure. Much has been written about the unintended consequences of this high stakes/low trust model of assessment for accountability (see, for example, Laitsch, 2006). These consequences include a narrowing of the curriculum as students are ‘taught to the test’. The narrowing of the curriculum can make learning less engaging for all students, but it is likely to impact on some students more than others, with those who are already relatively disadvantaged bearing the brunt of pretest drilling as schools seek to raise their overall performance. Some schools may also improve their overall scores by discouraging marginal students from sitting the test, in some cases moving them on and out of school, if they are near a transition point. In this way, high-stakes national testing can increase dropout rates. Another discouraging result is that seeming early gains often plateau (see, for example, Brooks & Tough, 2006)—perhaps because the above strategies are ultimately counterproductive. Some areas of the UK federation—for example, Wales and Northern Ireland—are now moving away from this model because of the difficulties they have experienced.

New Zealand has taken a somewhat different pathway to those followed by the UK and USA. It does not test every child every year, but uses national periodic samples to gain a picture of achievement for the country as a whole through the National Education Monitoring programme, (NEMP), and our participation in international comparisons such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). The assessment emphasis is more on formative assessment: tools that can help teachers in their work with their individual students. In recent years, the MOE has invested in tools of this kind that can also provide national benchmarks against which schools can measure themselves (e.g., AsTTle, the Assessment Resource Banks (ARBs)).

The planning and reporting framework is a high-trust/low-stakes model of accountability. It charges schools with planning and undertaking progressive self-improvement through using valid data on student achievement and engagement in school, and reporting progress in their annual reports which are shared with both the school community and the MOE as the national stakeholder. The MOE does not leave schools unsupported with this responsibility, but has in

recent years moved to provide more coherent professional development along with these more useful assessment tools. NZCER has also revised its frequently used PAT maths test and is in the process of revising its reading comprehension PAT test to provide schools with quicker and more easily interpreted results that can be analysed at the individual student, class, syndicate, or school level.

The planning and reporting legislation

National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) regulate ways schools acknowledge national education priorities in the development of their charter and implementation of their programmes. NAG 1 outlines national priorities for education. NAG 2 details legislative requirements for planning and reporting. Planning and reporting obligations were first signalled in changes to the NAGs in 2000 and formalised in 2001 amendments to the Education Act (the Education Standards Act 2001). Following these legislative changes, the planning and reporting framework for schools became mandatory when the NAGs were gazetted by the MOE in 2003.

NAG 2 requires schools to gather evidence about student achievement, identify areas for improvement, set goals for improvement, plan programmes to achieve this, and report on progress. The legislation requires schools to include in their charter:

- an introductory section that outlines the vision and values of the school, and how the objectives of NAG 1 will be met
- long-term strategic planning that includes specific targets for student achievement for the next 3–5 years, and how these targets will be achieved. These priorities should be based on an analysis of achievement evidence, and should signal intended changes in teaching practice, as well as how teachers will be supported to make these changes
- annual planning that outlines the priorities and targets for the coming year, and signals how these will be achieved.

Copies of each school’s updated charter and annual report are sent to the MOE. Whereas schools were formerly legally required to report annually on their financial performance, this is now just one component of a broader picture. The annual report must now include an analysis of variance that reflects on the extent to which schools have met their goals, and how they intend to adjust their targets and/or strategies in the light of these reflections on their successes (or not). Data that provide evidence to support the evaluation of achievement and decision making about any changes in teaching approaches is integral to the process. As well as reporting on their specific goals, schools also need to report on their delivery of other national priorities such as literacy and numeracy, outcomes for Māori students and, more recently, students’ physical activity levels. We will refer to all this activity as the “planning and reporting process” throughout this report.

Key messages about what matters

Beyond the dry bones of the legal wording of the NAGs, other MOE documents flesh out the translation of the intentions to practice. A number of resources have been produced by the MOE to inform and support schools in meeting the planning and reporting requirements. These resources include seminars, a series of brochures entitled *Planning for Student Outcomes: Kia Hangai te Titiro*, a CD Rom, support material on the Ministry website, and professional development opportunities. Schools were encouraged to have a “trial run” before the legislation came into force so they could be given feedback on their documentation.

A document analysis was carried out during the scoping stage of the research to identify the MOE’s key messages from these diverse sources. Key messages about practice include:

- **A reiteration of the emphasis on student achievement**—schools should focus on improving achievement for all students and reducing the historical disparity between high and low performers.
- **The central role of the teacher in raising achievement**—effective teaching is the most important school-based factor influencing the performance of students. Teachers should have high expectations for all students. Good teaching starts with decisions made as a result of analysing robust achievement data. Quality decision making and management improve student outcomes.
- **Some directives concerning the nature of evidence and its use**—schools need to collect dependable data to be able to analyse progress towards the targets set. The focus is on student outcomes and the evidence needs to relate to the impact of the interventions, not the implementation *per se*. Valid external reference points should inform expectations for achievement. However, just collecting data will not improve achievement. Schools need to make sense of the data, and use it to plan what needs to happen. The evaluation of the action plan is more important than whether or not the targets are achieved, because such evaluation may suggest future action. Progress towards targets should be monitored continually.
- **The need for coherence across school policies**—resource and personnel decisions should be aligned with targets for student achievement. The expectation is not that schools do more, but they may have to do things differently.
- **The importance of taking shared responsibility**—although the board of trustees of each school, guided by the principal, has the legal responsibility to set the strategic plan, teachers, students, family, iwi, and whānau should be involved in conversations about learning outcomes that are valued and prioritised by the school’s community. The school charter, targets, and annual report are public documents.

Is this a big change?

The use of assessments to check or report student progress is not new to New Zealand’s teachers and schools. What is new for schools in the planning and reporting framework is a more

systematic approach to assessment, at the class, syndicate or department, and school levels. This challenges individualistic focuses in teaching—either in the sense of seeing assessment as about each individual student looked at separately, or in the sense that each teacher should work in isolation from her or his colleagues, or that each syndicate or department might work in isolation from others, within the same school.

The then project manager of the Schools' Planning and Reporting Project, Tim McMahon (2002) stated that if changes made do not influence teachers' practice in their classrooms, then the impact on student outcomes will be minimal.

Thus, while the planning and reporting framework builds on what was already happening in schools, it also provides challenges. It is not something that one would expect to see immediately occurring in schools exactly as envisaged (and indeed, few policies ever are). We set out to chart what schools were doing nationwide, and what changes people in schools reported were occurring in their practice as a result of what they were doing with the planning and reporting framework. We found greater progress than we had expected over the first three years of its use in schools. We also found that schools will continue to need support to deepen their use of the framework if we are to see real gains in student learning and engagement arising from it.

3. Research methodology

The introductory section noted that this report includes findings from two different research sources. The overall methodology for each of these projects is outlined in this section, beginning with the primary-based project which was developed first.

The primary school planning and reporting research project

The planning and reporting research project focuses on New Zealand primary and intermediate schools. Secondary schools were omitted from this research because differences in key organisational aspects were seen as likely to impact on both their implementation processes and the issues they face. In large secondary schools there are also likely to be different issues across the different curriculum areas and levels of each school. The decision was made to seek some equivalent data from the 2006 Secondary National Survey, so that their perspectives would not be entirely omitted, but to focus the planning and reporting project on the experiences of primary schools.

The overarching research questions for the planning and reporting project were:

1. How are schools responding to the planning and reporting requirements?
2. In what ways do the planning and reporting requirements impact on classroom practice? Is there any evidence they lead to improved teaching and learning?
3. Three stages were initially planned for the planning and reporting project. Results of the document analysis, carried out as an initial scoping phase, have already been briefly outlined in Section 2. The design of survey questions for Phase Two was grounded in this analysis. Phase Three is to be developed with the findings from Phase Two in mind. It will involve a closer analysis of classroom practice because there are limitations to the insights a survey can provide. At the time of finalising this report (early 2007) this phase has yet to be planned in detail.

The survey stage of the project

Specific questions for the survey phase focused on:

- how decisions were made about what and what not to assess
- knowledge and beliefs about the purposes of assessment
- whether there was a shared school-wide view of assessment purposes and practices
- what tools were used (are there multiple measures?)

- how senior management used assessment data to inform policy and practices (e.g., allocation of resources, decisions about professional development)
- how classroom teachers used assessment data to inform teaching and learning (related to how assessment information is being collected and used in the classroom)
- the issues and challenges that arose for managers and classroom teachers
- what support the school had access to in terms of data management systems and interpretation of data.

Two versions of the survey were designed, one for principals and one for teachers. In each responding school, it was anticipated that the survey would be completed by the principal and two teachers. Preferably one teacher would be new to teaching, or otherwise new to the school, and the other would be a teacher who had been in the school for some time, or otherwise was an experienced teacher. This design anticipated an opportunity to investigate how well teacher training has supported teachers, comparing preservice and inservice levels, with respect to planning and reporting practices. In the event, a low return from new teachers precluded this comparison.

Some questions were common to both principal and teacher surveys, while other questions were targeted to either a management/leadership or teaching focus. The intention was to enable a comparison of views, while remaining mindful of different experiences and roles for teachers and school management.

The surveys were designed to be completed in approximately 20 minutes. To achieve this, while still covering the necessary ground, they largely comprised closed-response questions, but there were a few open-ended questions. Copies of the surveys are available from NZCER.

The planning and reporting sample

- In Term 3, 2006, surveys were sent to a representative sample of 500 schools. The sample was randomly stratified by decile and school type (primary, contributing, composite, intermediate), and then checked to see that size and location (urban, rural) were adequately represented. Independent schools were not included as they are not subject to the planning and reporting requirements. Appendix A shows the intended and achieved school samples. It compares the characteristics of primary schools nationwide with the characteristics of the schools from which we received principal and/or teacher responses. The comparison shows that the responding principals and teachers were broadly representative of primary schools nationwide. This appendix also summarises brief demographic details for responding primary school principals and teachers.

The overall school response rate was 43 percent. Although lower than hoped for, the sample remained broadly representative of New Zealand primary schools, as designed. One potential way the sample might not be fully representative would be if only more confident principals and teachers took part. The similarity of responses in the planning and reporting survey and in the

NZCER Secondary National Survey suggests this is not the case, and that the primary sample was representative of a range of planning and reporting experiences.

As Table 1 shows, even when schools did respond, they seldom returned a full set of responses, which meant that some potential analyses could not be carried out as planned. This situation doubtless arose because, even when a school agreed to participate, each respondent returned their survey individually. This was necessary to guarantee anonymity but obviously made it difficult for any one person to co-ordinate returns.

Table 1 **Planning and reporting primary survey response rates**

Nature of response	(n=500) %
Total school response rate	43
Principal and both teachers	13
Principal and one teacher	13
Principal only	8
One teacher only	6
Two teachers only	2
No response	57

NB: Numbers do not add to 100 because of rounding.

As would be expected, the professional experience of the respondents varied. Just over a third of the principals (35 percent) taught at least one day per week, and 12 percent taught three or four days each week. Their qualifications also varied. Ten percent had an MEd or an MA while at the other end of the qualifications spectrum 46 percent held a teaching diploma and had not upgraded to a BEd. Some were relatively new to the role, with 13 percent having been principals for less than two years, and a further 17 percent between two and five years. The majority were more experienced, with 21 percent having been principals for between six and 10 years, 23 percent between 11 and 15 years, while 24 percent had been principals for more than 15 years.

Fewer teachers (2 percent) held an MEd or an MA. More of them held a BEd (47 percent compared to 32 percent of principals) and 41 percent held a teaching diploma as their highest qualification. They were relatively less experienced than the responding principals. Nearly a quarter had been teachers for less than two years (24 percent), and a further 35 percent between two and five years. Seventeen percent had been teaching for between six and 10 years, 13 percent between 11 and 15 years, and just 10 percent for more than 15 years. Since our intention had been to balance responses from experienced and inexperienced teachers, this mix was almost as we hoped, despite the uneven response patterns from individual schools. Over a third of the responding teachers (37 percent) had school-wide responsibility for literacy, 29 percent for numeracy, and 26 percent for assessment. School-wide responsibility for specific learning areas was most often in the arts (21 percent) or PE (20 percent).

The secondary school research (National Survey)

NZCER's national surveys are carried out at periodic intervals. There are four different surveys in any one set—for principals, teachers, trustees, and parents. Each set of surveys is tailored to either early childhood, primary, or secondary education. Use of at least some repeat questions allows changes over time to be documented. Similarly, where relevant, the same item may be used to compare responses at different stages of education, for example, primary compared to secondary.

Planning and reporting was just one theme of the 2006 NZCER National Survey of Secondary Schools. Other themes for principals were: resources and staffing; curriculum, assessment, and ICT, including NCEA; innovations and initiatives; school-wide learning and leadership; relationships; the board of trustees (BOT); work as a principal; and looking ahead. The survey was comprehensive and required 80–90 minutes to complete. Material from this survey has been used in a recent paper on school governance (Wylie, 2007), and a report on experiences with, and perceptions of, the NCEA will be released later.

Themes for teachers were similar with minor modifications to reflect differing emphases in the different roles. The teacher survey was a little shorter, requiring about 60 minutes to complete.

Trustees were asked about aspects of planning and reporting relevant to their role. Other themes included: role as a trustee; funding and resourcing; NCEA; relations with school staff; human resources; contact with parents and the community; community consultation; BOT capacity, achievements, and issues; and external agencies and role with schools. This survey required approximately 30 minutes of response time. Parents were asked very little about planning and reporting, but where relevant their responses are also included in the report.

Questions about planning and reporting

Principal and teacher questions used to address this theme expanded on those used in the 2003 survey. New items represented a judicious selection of items from the planning and reporting survey. All items were modified as necessary to suit the contexts of secondary schools, or to take account of developments since 2003. Copies of the secondary surveys are available from NZCER.

The National Survey sample

Principals of all state and state-integrated secondary schools were invited to participate in the 2006 national survey.² In all these schools one in eight teachers were randomly invited to participate, with surveys distributed with the help of the PPTA representative and individually returned (or not) to preserve teacher anonymity. Every BOT chair was invited to respond, and to

² By contrast the 2003 Secondary National Survey was based on a random sample of 200 secondary schools, stratified by roll size and decile.

also invite one other trustee, who might be expected to have a differing viewpoint on some matters, to take part. Again, each trustee returned their completed survey individually.

Appendix B sets out the characteristics of secondary schools nationwide, the characteristics of the 2006 responding schools, for all three responding groups. It shows that the responding principals and trustees were broadly representative of secondary schools nationwide, while responses from very large main urban schools were somewhat over-represented in the teacher sample. This appendix also summarises demographic profiles for principals, trustees, and teachers, and summarises their professional experience in the role.

Response rates from the principals were particularly pleasing (62 percent of all state and state-integrated secondary principals, compared to 48 percent of a smaller sample in 2003).

Forty percent of the teacher sample responded compared to 48 percent in 2003—a small decrease, perhaps because we had no follow-up mechanism in 2006. Response rates from trustees remained steady (44 percent in 2006, compared to 45 percent in 2003).

Analysis of data

Many of the questions in both surveys were in the form of closed questions with boxes to tick. Frequency responses are reported for all these questions. Answers to open-ended questions and comments were categorised and coded. Such coding is reported where patterns of responses are discussed. Where closed questions were left blank, responses were recorded as “missing data”. Where the frequencies of such responses were unusually high, this is reported.

All closed responses were cross-tabulated with a set of school characteristics—size, location, socioeconomic decile rating, and school authority type (state or state integrated). It is worth noting that some of these school characteristics overlap, particularly the characteristics of low-decile ranking and small size for secondary schools. Cross-tabulations were done using SAS, and results tested for significance using chi-squares. Only differences significant at the $p < 0.05$ level are included. At the $p < 0.05$ level, a one-in-20 chance exists that a difference or relationship as large as that observed could have arisen arbitrarily in random samples. Tests of significance do not imply causal relationships, simply statistical association.

Because some questions allowed multiple answers, or because figures have been rounded to whole numbers, totals in some tables (reported in percentages) may add up to more than 100 percent.

Although comparison of proportions alone can seem to show differences, these differences may not be statistically significant once the size of the group is taken into account. In the report, the term “trend” refers to differences which were just above the $p < 0.05$ level, where a larger sample might have revealed them to be significant.

4. Findings from the planning and reporting survey of primary schools

Section 2 outlined the thinking behind the planning and reporting initiative. In this “high-trust” model of accountability, schools bring their professional expertise to bear as they address the challenge of proactively addressing the learning progress of all their students. The MOE, with the help of various school advisers, supports teachers and schools via the provision of appropriate resources, professional development, feedback, and guidance when required, but essentially it is the schools that are charged with making the process work. A change model of this scale and scope requires time to bed in and ongoing resourcing. How are things working out so far? This section reports a snapshot of progress in primary schools, three years on from the initial gazetting of the planning and reporting framework. The picture painted suggests much positive progress has been made in this time.

Perceptions about the planning and reporting framework

The planning and reporting process is intended to “assist schools (to) focus explicitly on raising achievement” (Ministry of Education, 2002, p.1). The broad requirements for the process are set out in NAGs 1 and 2, as outlined in Section 2, and currently have a particular focus on literacy, numeracy, and physical activity. The first two areas are also the ones which have received the most support in recent years through MOE-funded professional development and assessment tools. All schools have an obligation to respond within this prescribed framework. They also have wide-reaching autonomy to focus on areas of student achievement of importance to them, both curricular and extracurricular. The success of such a policy requires active involvement and co-operation of different groups in the school community and so will depend in part on how that policy is perceived as well as implemented. We were interested in exploring how the MOE’s intention corresponded to ways the policy has been interpreted in action in the surveyed primary schools. The patterns reported show widespread awareness of positive uses for planning and reporting processes in primary schools.

Perceptions of purposes

Table 2 reports principals’ and teachers’ perceptions of the purpose of the planning and reporting framework. A list of potential purposes was provided, and multiple responses were possible.

The two most frequently selected items both refer to raising achievement—the first explicitly and the second implicitly. Clearly, most respondents did indeed recognise the Ministry’s intention that this focus on achievement should be at the heart of the initiative. Furthermore, both principals and teachers largely located the intended benefits of planning and reporting processes in their *own* schools, including identifying what they are already doing well, not just what they needed to do better, and focusing on the learning needs of specific groups of their own students. Teachers were more likely than principals to place importance on developing classroom programmes. This difference in emphasis likely reflects their differing roles in the school. Only slightly more than a third of each group selected *national* policy development as a purpose, and very few individuals selected the sceptical response that the purpose was to allow government to tell schools what they should be doing.

Table 2 **Primary principals’ and teachers’ views of planning and reporting purposes**

Purpose	Principals	Teachers
	(n=186) %	(n=279) %
Help schools raise achievement for all students	86	85
Help schools set goals for student achievement	83	85
Help schools identify what they could be doing better	70	73
Help schools identify what they are doing well	66	66
Help schools raise achievement for underachieving groups, e.g., Māori and Pasifika students	64	58
Help schools develop classroom teaching programmes	59	67
Allow government to gather national data on student achievement for policy development	38	39
Allow government to gather data about each school to assist schools	17	17
Allow government to tell each school what to do	8	4
Other	5	2

Some of the items were repeated from the 2003 NZCER National Survey of Primary Schools, when principals were asked about the purposes they saw for the then very new planning and reporting framework. A direct comparison of the responses from the two surveys is not possible because the 2003 principals were asked to select one purpose whereas the 2006 principals could select multiple purposes. Nevertheless, Table 3 shows some interesting patterns. In 2006, as in 2003, the main purpose selected aligns with the policy intention (see Section 2). And, whereas in 2003, 11 percent of principals could not give even one purpose, none selected “not sure” as one of their responses in 2006.

Table 3 **Primary principals' perceptions of planning and reporting in 2003³ and 2006**

Purpose	2003 (n=254) %	2006 (n=186) %
Help schools set goals for student achievement	44	83
Allow government to gather national data on student achievement for policy development	17	39
Help schools identify what they could be doing better	11	73
Not sure	11	-
Allow government to tell each school what to do	6	8
Help schools identify what they are doing well	3	66

The extent of scepticism about the Government's intentions, expressed as a policy whose purpose is actually to allow the Government to "tell schools what to do", seems little changed, although this could be just one of several responses in 2006. The residual scepticism, which is probably inevitable, pales beside the positive understandings of the purposes of planning and reporting requirements.

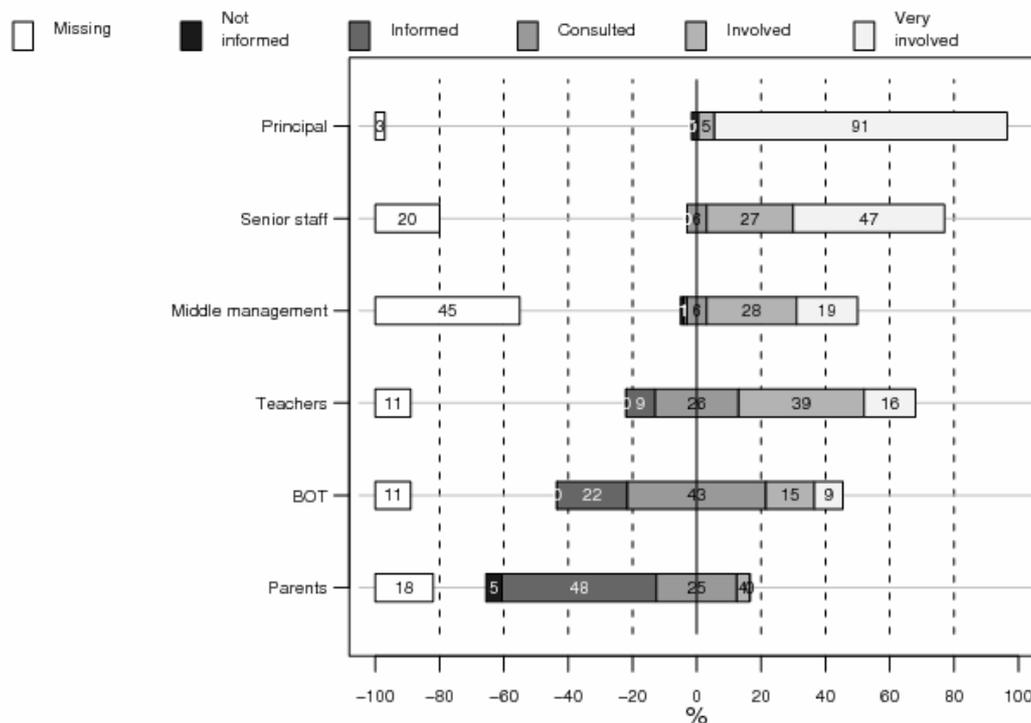
Perceptions of involvement

Section 2 documented the MOE's intention that planning and reporting would be a responsibility shared by the whole school community. With this in mind, principals were asked to indicate the extent of involvement of various groups in their schools when setting their targets for 2005 and teachers to identify how involved they *felt* they were in this process.

Figure 2 shows principals' perceptions of the degree of involvement of each nominated group. The pattern of responses shows that the more senior the staff, the more likely they were to be involved in planning and reporting. Just 16 percent of principals reported that teachers were very involved, while trustees and parents were more likely to have been consulted or informed than actively involved. In the "other" category, one principal mentioned that students had been consulted.

³ These data have not been previously published.

Figure 2 **Primary principals' perceptions of others' involvement in planning and reporting**



More teachers than principals felt they had been very involved in setting planning and reporting targets for their school (21 percent). A further 40 percent said they were involved, 15 percent responded that they were consulted, and 15 percent that they were informed, while 6 percent said they were not involved at all. Four percent did not respond to the question. Note that those who responded to the teachers' survey included some individuals whom principals were likely to have classified as middle or senior management.⁴ When this is taken into account, principals' and teachers' perceptions of teachers' involvement appear to be very similar.

To an extent, perceptions of involvement depend on how each individual delineated that "involvement" when answering. It is to be expected that principals and senior staff will be more involved in gathering and processing school-wide data for ongoing discussion of achievement within the school community, and the subsequent formal reporting to the MOE. That is their role. Did the teachers define involvement as extending to ways they collected and used data in their classroom programmes? Responses to other parts of the survey suggest they were also thinking about more formal involvement in school-wide goal setting and data collation when they answered this question about target setting. For example, we have already reported that 67 percent of teachers saw the ongoing development of classroom teaching programmes as a purpose for planning and reporting.

⁴ The 45 percent nonresponse by principals for the "middle management" category is a consequence of school size. Only larger primary schools have teaching staff designated in these positions.

Determining targets and setting goals

The intention that teaching decisions should be evidence-based is central to the planning and reporting policy. How is this playing out in practice? We first report on schools' targets for improvement—that is, the broad curriculum area or competency contexts in which action plans are located. We next describe how priorities for targets were determined and the nature of the evidence used. Following that, the specific achievement goals formulated to address these targets provide a finer grained analysis of the policy in action and the assessment tools used.

Targets for improvement

Principals and teachers were asked to identify the broad areas of schools' planning and reporting targets from a list. As Table 4 shows, both groups reported literacy as the most common target area, followed by numeracy. Many schools targeted both literacy and numeracy, or specific curriculum areas, or various competencies or behaviours. Health and physical education was the most commonly specified *curriculum* learning area, although less than 10 percent of either principals or teachers nominated targets in this area.

Table 4 **Principals' and teachers' perceptions of target areas for improvement in 2005**

	Principal (n=186) %	Teacher (n=279) %
Literacy	89	86
Numeracy	75	71
Generic skills/competencies (e.g., social skills, thinking skills, self-management, etc.)	12	12
ICT	10	13
Physical activities/fitness	9	8
Physical education	8	10
Health	7	6
Physical safety	7	2
Attitudes (e.g., attendance/behaviour)	7	7
Emotional safety	4	3
Arts	4	5
Te reo	3	4
Science	3	3

NAG 2 identifies literacy, numeracy, and physical activity as national priorities. Many schools are evidently aligning their own priorities accordingly, and Table 5 shows that this is a deliberate alignment for 62 percent of principals. As we shall shortly see the availability of suitable tools for

assessing achievement progress via numerical targets that can be benchmarked against national achievement patterns, doubtless also plays a part in making these areas the predominant focus for schools' goal setting.

Given the focus on these few areas of achievement, what happens when schools want to investigate achievement in some other part of the curriculum? Are they setting more goals than are manageable in order to accommodate achievement in areas in addition to literacy, numeracy, and physical activity? The evidence suggests most are not. Respondents were free to nominate as many target areas as were applicable in their school and we counted the number of target areas each person identified. Most principals nominated somewhere between 1–5 targets, and so did most teachers. The modal response for both principals and teachers was two target areas but because some people nominated considerably more the average was slightly higher (2.7 for principals, 2.6 for teachers). Three percent of teachers admitted to not being sure of the target areas for their school.

The small number of teachers and principals who nominated more than six target areas raises interesting questions of interpretation. In a subsequent open-response question principals were asked to write their specific goals, or to attach them to the survey. These are described in more detail shortly. Of all those who did so, no schools intended to address more than six target areas. It may be that some principals and teachers did not specifically know their schools' target areas and simply guessed from amongst the options provided. Or they may have responded in an aspirational way—seeing all these as potential targets, regardless of specific goals set for now.

Determining priorities

Table 5 shows principals' and teachers' reports of the types of feedback they considered when setting targets. For both groups, the most commonly selected category was “school data indicated a need”, although, as we shall shortly see, the nature of this data may be somewhat problematic to clearly determine. One interesting difference is that principals selected “classroom teachers' perceptions of a need” more often than did the teachers themselves. It may be that some teachers do not yet recognise how their conversations about learning needs feed into the overall process. More principals than teachers said they used school data, national priorities, and analysis of variance, probably reflecting their “bigger picture” view of the school. The most common principal responses in the “other” category were community/parent concerns (3 percent) or BOT wishes (1 percent).

Both principals and teachers tended to identify a number of factors that influenced decisions about targets. It seems the intention that diverse sources of evidence be used when undertaking planning and reporting processes is working at this stage of determining priorities.

Table 5 **How primary school planning and reporting targets were decided**

Purpose	Principals (n=186) %	Teachers (n=279) %
School data indicated a need	83	70
National priorities (e.g., literacy, numeracy, physical activity, improving achievement of Māori students)	62	48
Analysis of variance from previous year	58	39
Classroom teachers' perception of a need	54	43
Senior management/syndicate leaders' perception of a need	47	45
Points identified in ERO report	11	10
Feedback from MOE	>2	2
Other	7	3
No response	3	9

Principals were also asked to identify any other considerations that influenced decisions made about targets. As can be seen from Table 6, professional development that was already happening in the school was a major influence. As literacy and numeracy are the most common target areas identified by schools, and improving literacy and numeracy is also a national education priority supported by professional development opportunities for schools, this is not surprising. Another main consideration was the previous year's targets. Again, this is to be expected, as schools are required to develop a three-year strategic plan which is evaluated annually.

The availability of assessment tools also appears to be an important factor. Half the principals ticked this box, and just under a quarter indicated that ease of measurement and ease of showing progress were considerations. This may be one reason why so few schools included generic skills or attitudes as targets.

Table 6 **Other considerations for determining primary school planning and reporting targets**

Factors	Principals (n=186) %
Professional development in the target area was already happening in the school	65
2005 targets were related to previous year's school targets	63
Relevant assessment tools were readily available	49
Easy to measure	23
Easy to show progress	23
No [other considerations]	4
Not sure	2
Other	7

The most common response in the “other” category was to make a reference to the school’s current needs and priorities (2 percent).

Table 7 shows principals’ and teachers’ perceptions of the data sources used in their school for determining targets. Most respondents ticked multiple sources. In the interests of brevity, only those sources identified by at least a quarter of all respondents are listed here.

The pattern revealed provides support for the suggestion that literacy and numeracy are such predominant targets, at least in part, because there are a number of standards-based or nationally benchmarked tools available to measure aspects of learning in these areas, and to give a sense of how this progress might compare with that expected from a wider student group. By contrast, data-generating sources that might be used in other learning areas (e.g., portfolios, teacher observation, teacher designed tasks) weight decision making towards the professional judgement of teachers, who have a contextualised knowledge of their own students. This type of evidence adds an important dimension to the assessment mix and arguably makes a more direct connection between formative feedback and making decisions about changes in practice in order to address an identified learning need. Since making formative adjustments to teaching is at the heart of the whole planning and reporting initiative, this is obviously critically important.

Table 7 **Data sources used to determine planning and reporting targets by a quarter or more primary respondents**

Data source	Principals (n=186) %	Teachers (n=279) %
Running records	56	62
Numeracy diagnostic interview	51	53
Teacher observation	50	46
Teacher designed tasks/assessments	46	38
Supplementary Tests of Achievement in Reading (STAR)	43	45
Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT): Tests of Reading	36	38
National exemplars	34	32
6-year-net	34	35
Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning (asTTle)	32	38
Prose Reading Observation, Behaviour and Observation of Comprehension (PROBE)	29	36
Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT): Mathematics	29	31
Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT): Listening Comprehension	29	36
Portfolios	27	31
Standardised spelling tests (e.g., Proof-Reading Tests of Spelling (PRETOS), Schonell)	25	20

The dilemma of the availability of suitable tools for gathering standards-based evidence in a range of learning areas that extends beyond literacy and numeracy comes sharply into focus when formal achievement goals are written. We next take a closer look at the nature of the specific targets schools are currently writing.

A focus on specific targets

We now discuss data generated by the open-response question in which principals described their specific targets for 2005. A coding schedule for these responses was developed under three headings: type of target; target group; and how evidence of progress would be measured. Some targets could be coded in all three categories and others could not because one or more of these aspects was missing.

Seventy-three percent of principals (135 schools) submitted their targets. A high number of principals (27 percent) did not complete this section of the survey. It may be that these principals chose not to complete the open responses because of the additional time needed, or perhaps some could not easily recall and write down their school's targets.

All the targets submitted by 38 percent of the responding group were clear and measurable, while all the targets submitted by 7 percent of the group were very broad. Forty-three percent of principals described a mix of several types of targets or all targets that did not specify an actual benchmark for the target (see second row in Table 8). Twelve percent of this group provided only one target.

Types of targets

Seven broad types of targets were identified. Table 8 outlines and illustrates the nature of these targets and indicates the percentage of responding principals who described each type of target. As the table shows, the most common type of target was expressed as a percentage of students reaching a specified target—that is, a target related to some externally benchmarked achievement standard/tool. Sixty percent of schools had a target of this sort. The next most common group of targets had essentially the same intention, without being as explicit about how success in reaching the target could be measured.

Table 8 **The nature of learning targets described by primary principals**

Type of target	Example	% of schools (n=135)
Percentages with a specified target or improving/moving towards a target	Year 2, 85% of children will be at Stage 3 or above for addition and subtraction Years 1–4 students will progress at least one operational stage in numeracy	60
Improve/raise standard (sometimes providing a percentage of how many students) without specifying by how much	To improve pupils' mean scores in the STAR test for sentence and paragraph comprehension	35
Planning goals (not specific student goals)	To identify, assess, and evaluate effective practices that improve the learning of all students with moderate to very high special education needs in the school through a process of action research	22
Change of behaviour/specific performances/skills	To identify and reduce the numbers of "falls" in the playground by 15%	7
Very general	Achieve to the best of their ability	4
Attitudinal goals that are more difficult to measure	To enhance children's opinions of themselves as writers	4
Comparable results to similar schools	By the end of 2005 our Year 5 pupils will achieve results comparable to other Year 5 pupils from decile 8–10 schools in proportions and ratios	3

NB: Percentages add to more than 100 because some principals gave more than one type of target.

It is interesting that 22 percent of these schools had written at least some targets in terms of an action plan concerning what would happen in the school to raise achievement in a focus area, rather than as an expected outcome for students. Some examples of these types of targets were quite detailed and useful in terms of providing opportunities for teachers to learn before they set specific targets for student achievement. As schools have to submit an action plan, it is possible that some of these schools also had relevant student-focused targets, but did not for some reason include them. However, in other cases the school was obviously gathering data in preparation for subsequently setting more specific targets.

A small number of principals (11 percent) included a skill or attitudes target, for example "thinking skills". They struggled to write measurable targets that focused on student outcomes. If the intention to make key competencies central to the revised curriculum is to be adopted by schools (see Ministry of Education, 2006b) this is obviously an area where schools will need further support.

Target groups

The Schooling Strategy 2005–2010 sets as a goal “all students achieving their potential” (Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 4). The NAGs identify improving outcomes for students at risk and Māori students (who collectively have an historical record of low achievement in both national and international measures) as specific targets for reporting achievement gains. In view of this emphasis on narrowing gaps in achievement between different student groups, we wanted to know how schools defined these goals in relation to their student population. Did they shape broad targets for all students? Did they identify targets for specific groups of students? To investigate, principals’ stated targets were coded according to the group(s) of learners specified. The broad categories of groups are shown in Table 9.

As the table shows, schools were most likely to keep their targets broad, either by having one common target for all students, or by focusing on an entire cohort—e.g., one year level. Some schools combined both—that is, they first set out a broad target for all students, then broke this down into specific targets at each level. Some principals did describe targets aimed specifically at particular groups. For example, 16 percent of these schools targeted “underachievers”, which could incorporate areas of concern to MOE such as relatively lower achievement of Māori. Just 7 percent explicitly described Māori students as a target group, and even fewer targeted Pasifika students. These students would, of course, still be part of the overall cohort covered by the broader targets, but not singled out for more focused scrutiny, or presumably, differential levels of support.

No schools had a goal that specifically measured achievement of students they had identified as gifted and talented—rather, these targets were about setting up programmes or developing plans. Again such students are part of the broader cohort but it is possible that overall satisfactory achievement at the school level can mask *underachievement* relative to their potential (Smith, 2005). Smith makes the point that gifted students will easily “pass” national benchmarks, so any programme focused on maximising overall success, as measured by these benchmarks, risks neglecting their need for more demanding goals. This is a less-frequently reported critique of national testing models. On the other hand, labelling students in one “gifted and talented” category can have unintended negative consequences for such students long term, and risks missing the specific attributes of their giftedness (see, for example, Brettingham, 2007).

Smith’s analysis of the complexities of measuring both low and underachievement, and the likelihood of unhelpful conflation of the two types, suggests this is an area where schools will continue to need considerable support. It is a useful reminder that data-based decision making is complex, and great care is needed when making claims and determining actions that rest on soundly based analysis of evidence.

Table 9 **Groups of students in primary school planning and reporting targets**

Target groups	Example	% of schools (n=135)
All students—a common target	All students will achieve at or above their age-appropriate levels in basic facts	47
Particular cohort(s), e.g. Year 3	To increase the number of children in Year 4 who are reading at or above their chronological age	42
All students but defined by specific year or level targets	By end of Year 2, 90% of Year 2 children are reading fluently and with comprehension Level 12 or above	21
	90% of Year 4 children are reading fluently and with comprehension at or above an 8.5–9.0 reading age	
	By the end of Year 6, children are reading fluently and with comprehension at or above a 10 year reading age	
Underachievers	Currently 78% of our children reading below their age level are boys. Lift 90% of these boys up to their chronological age by November 2005	16
Māori	The majority of Māori students will be reading with understanding at or above their chronological age by the end of 2005	7
Boys	To raise performance in “surface features” of boys in Years 4–6 within 30 asTTLE scale points of the national mean	7
Gifted and talented	Develop a school-wide plan for gifted and talented students	4
Pasifika	95% of Pasifika students to gain at least one year in reading comprehension	3

NB: Percentages add to more than 100 because some principals submitted more than one type of target.

Measuring progress

In this category, the targets were sorted according to how progress would be measured (see Table 10). Not all goals gave an indication of how this would be done, for example, “to improve speaking and listening school wide”. There is obviously some crossover between the three coding categories. For example, if the target was to increase the reading age, it is likely that a standardised test could be used to monitor this. Standardised tests were counted as such if they were specifically mentioned or it was reasonably apparent that this was what would be used.

The analysis shows that over half the schools that gave us examples of their targets were using standards-based or nationally-benchmarked methods for measuring progress towards goals. Often these were standardised tests, but NEMP tasks and the numeracy framework, for which national data are available, were also being used. Exemplars provide a more contextualised type of performance standard and were also counted in this first category. School-developed tests or criteria, and curriculum levels, were used less often.

Table 10 **Primary principals' descriptions of plans to measure targets**

Measurement	Example	% of schools (n=135)
Standards-based or nationally-benchmarked measures of achievement	To have 90% of the current Year 7 cohort achieve at Proficient Level 4 ⁵ on a similar asTTLe test of Understanding in Reading (at Year 8 in March 2006)	57
Chronological age	That 80% of our students will be reading at or above their chronological age	37
School developed criteria/teacher observation	Syndicate 1—To take a digital photo unassisted Syndicate 2—To take a digital photo unassisted and download it Syndicate 3—To take a digital photo unassisted, download it, and save in own folder and then incorporate it in a piece of work	13
Curriculum levels	By the end of Year 8, 80% of students will be working at Level 4 in science in at least two of the strands	13

NB: Percentages add to more than 100 because some principals submitted more than one type of target.

As already documented, both teachers and principals indicated that many assessment tools and methods would be used for deciding targets. The same pattern was found with respect to gathering evidence of students' progress. It seems the *intention* to use diverse types of evidence accords with the multifaceted MOE description of the nature of evidence outlined in Section 2. However, the written targets provided in the open question do not suggest that schools are actually using this range of evidence when they write precise and measurable targets that specify how they will formally *report* progress. Instead it seems likely that the whole formal reporting process foregrounds certain types of tools and evidence and makes the use of other more informal or

⁵ The asTTLe scale, like the PAT scales, indicates the curriculum level at which a student is likely to be achieving. An important difference is that information about each level of the curriculum *describes a programme of learning* whereas these benchmarked assessment scales provide examples of what achievement at that broad level might look like. They are more precise—it is hard to see how “working at Level 4” might actually be measured without a more specific assessment tool reference.

qualitative evidence problematic. This, in turn, serves to keep the focus on those targets where suitable tools are available—that is, on literacy and numeracy in particular.

With this thought in mind, the principals’ targets were re-analysed to see how the various types of targets were distributed across different types of target areas. Table 11 shows the results. Note that data are presented in numbers, not percentages in this table because low numbers in some categories become misleading if written as percentages.

Table 11 **The alignment between types of targets and target areas in primary schools**

Type of target	Number of targets in different areas		
	Literacy or numeracy	Other learning areas	Skills (inc. ICT), attitudes, behaviours, competencies
1. A clear target and a method of measuring	204	5	9
2. Either a clear target but method of measuring not clear, or target does not state an acceptable standard	57	8	14
3. Very broad	15	4	6
4. Teacher or school target rather than student target	3	10	25
Total	279	27	54

As we predicted, this secondary analysis shows that the schools were more likely to set clear, measurable targets in literacy and numeracy—73 percent of targets in these two areas had a clear target and method of measuring. But just over a quarter of the provided literacy and numeracy targets needed some attention to either clarifying the target, or its measurement.

The picture is very different for other sorts of targets. While some schools were obviously interested in focusing on general skills or competencies, they appeared to struggle to succinctly define how progress would be measured. It is interesting that almost half of the targets in this area were expressed as school or teacher targets rather than as student targets, whereas for literacy and numeracy very few targets were written this way. This finding suggests that schools need access to a wider range of standards-based or nationally benchmarked assessment tools, such as already exist for literacy and numeracy, if they are to broaden their achievement focus to incorporate other learning areas and other types of learning outcomes. Increased student engagement in learning might be one such example. In particular, there are implications for the intention to replace the “essential skills” of the previous curriculum, with “key competencies” that integrate skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values (Hipkins, Boyd, & Joyce, 2006).

Taking and monitoring evidence-based action

Schools are expected to develop plans to determine the actions that need to be taken to ensure that targets are met (see Table 12). Both principals and teachers were asked to identify what their schools were doing in this respect. As for other questions in the survey, multiple responses were common.

Table 12 **Primary school-wide actions taken to meet planning targets**

Action	Principals (n=186) %	Teachers (n=279) %
Professional development was planned	83	71
Action plan was developed	75	63
Decided what evidence to collect	68	53
Processes set up for whole-school discussion to develop shared understanding	62	66
Professional reading sourced	46	55
Planned resourcing	46	37
Processes set up for syndicate discussion to develop shared understanding	42	41
Processes set up for discussions with parents	24	23
Other	4	-
No response	3	7

The responses show general agreement between principals and teachers concerning the nature of school actions taken. As might be expected, principals were more aware than teachers of school-wide actions. The area that stands out is planning for professional development, suggesting that schools are being strategic about efforts to improve teaching in order to make a difference to students' learning. Professional reading was identified by more teachers than principals, which could suggest that some teachers are taking a lead in identifying helpful background material.

As Section 2 outlined, the MOE has invested in a range of professional development initiatives to support the high trust approach to accountability. Providers of teacher education and relevant support materials have expended considerable effort to help teachers translate the intention into practice. As Table 13 shows, two-thirds of the responding schools had targeted literacy and numeracy as areas where such professional development would be undertaken to support raising achievement in target areas in 2005–06. It is possible that school-wide professional development undertaken within the school also built on similar professional development initiatives undertaken by key staff members at an earlier time. The overall planning and reporting focus on formative use of assessment data is reflected in the 40–48 percent of schools that had undertaken professional development in areas such as the MOE-funded Assess to Learn (AtoL) programme.

Table 13 **Primary professional development related to school targets**

Area	Principals (n=186) %	Teachers (n=279) %
Numeracy professional development	69	66
Literacy professional development	68	72
Professional reading	58	65
School-wide professional development on assessment led by principal or other staff member within the school	52	53
School-wide professional development on assessment led by an external facilitator(s) (e.g., AtoL)	40	48
Professional development in other curriculum areas	31	38
Professional development about different assessment tools available	30	31
Other	10	4
Non-response	5	3

It appears that all responding schools had undertaken some form of professional development in relation to their targets. As might be predicted from the pattern of targets actually set, numeracy and literacy again dominate as focuses for professional development. The question remains, though, what is actually driving the actions taken? Is it the planning and reporting framework *per se*, the professional development, the evidence collected at the goal-setting stage, or the need to be seen to be doing something? Is it a combination of all four? In the light of this question, it is interesting to recall that 65 percent of principals identified professional development already being undertaken in the school as a factor in deciding the target areas (refer to Table 6).

Another way to investigate action decisions is to compare the types of evidence that principals reported using for setting targets, and evidence they said they analysed when devising methods for measuring the impact of the actions taken. Table 14 makes this comparison. As for Table 7, only those factors mentioned by at least 25 percent of principals have been included here.

Table 14 **Primary principals' uses of data sources**

Data source	Used for setting targets (duplicates information in Table 7) (n=186) %	Used for gathering evidence in target areas (n=186) %
Running records	56	72
Numeracy diagnostic interview	51	61
Teacher observation	50	58
Teacher-designed tasks	46	59
Supplementary Tests of Achievement in Reading (STAR)	43	51
Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT): Tests of Reading	36	45
National exemplars	34	51
6-year net	34	57
Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning (asTTle)	32	41
Prose Reading Observation, Behaviour and Observation of Comprehension (PROBE)	29	38
Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT): Mathematics	29	45
Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT): Listening Comprehension	29	42
Portfolios	27	45
Standardised spelling lists (e.g., Proof-Reading Tests of Spelling (PRETOS), Schonell)	25	32
BURT Word Reading Test	18	32
School Entry Assessment (SEA)/Aro Matawai Urunga-a-Kura (AKA)	16	34
Student self-assessment	8	37

Three factors that did not rate at the 25 percent level for goal setting join the list for gathering evidence of impacts. Congruent with this change, every other item was mentioned by more principals at the gathering-evidence stage than at the goal-setting stage. Responses reported in Table 14 above suggest this pattern could be predicted. Sixty-eight percent of principals and 53 percent of teachers said the staff decided what data to collect at the *action* stage—that is, after goals had already been determined. As discussed earlier in this section, a wide range of other considerations are in play at the stage of determining targets, including the professional experience of teachers and senior staff. The use of suitable assessment tools makes it more straightforward to *report* progress, including undertaking a yearly analysis of variance.

Analysis of the teacher data confirms and extends this pattern. An additional question was included in the teacher questionnaire. We were interested in seeking indications that planning and reporting processes were impacting on actual teaching. Thus, as well as identifying the data they used to gather evidence of success in meeting action plans, teachers were asked about formative uses of their assessment data—that is, whether they used the results to provide feedback to students about their progress and to make teaching decisions as learning unfolded. Table 15 compares the three sets of responses.

Table 15 **Primary teachers' uses of data sources**

Data source	Used for setting targets (duplicates information in Table 7) (n=279) %	Used for gathering evidence in target areas (n=279) %	Used for formative feedback and checking progress (n=279) %
Running records	62	74	75
Numeracy diagnostic interview	53	60	*
Teacher observation	46	62	89
Teacher-designed tasks	38	54	82
Supplementary Tests of Achievement in Reading (STAR)	45	51	*
Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT): Tests of Reading	38	42	*
National exemplars	32	44	59
6-year-net	35	50	*
Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning (asTTle)	38	42	31
Prose Reading Observation, Behaviour and Observation of Comprehension (PROBE)	36	41	36
Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT): Mathematics	31	42	*
Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT): Listening Comprehension	36	44	*
Portfolios	31	46	70
Standardised spelling lists (e.g., Proof-Reading Tests of Spelling (PRETOS), Schonell)	20	31	*
BURT Word Reading Test	23	34	*
School Entry Assessment (SEA)/Aro Matawai Urunga-a-Kura (AKA)	21	29	*
Student self-assessment	15	39	70
Student peer assessment	9	27	44
Assessment Resource Banks (ARBs)	12	20	30

* These items were not included for this question so that the focus would be directed towards day-to-day classroom activities.

As might be expected, day-to-day tasks and observations feature strongly in formative assessment and students are more fully involved in assessing their learning at this level. The relative absence of evidence from routine classroom work for higher stakes summative reporting has been noted internationally (see, for example, Matters, 2006). While it is encouraging to see that teacher-designed tasks and portfolios are being widely used for formative purposes, it might be helpful to find ways to support more teachers to use these for summative reporting. National exemplars have a focus on the features of actual student work that show progress in specific areas, while providing qualitative indications of national standards. Thus they have features of both national tools and classroom-based evidence. It is encouraging to see that they are being shared with students by more than half of the responding teachers but, again, they are less often used for summative purposes. The more formative purposes for which the Assessment Resource Banks are being revised and reworked do seem to have been recognised by around a third of responding teachers. One challenge would appear to be to widen the use of more qualitative evidence at the earlier stages of the planning and reporting process.

There is high use of the numeracy diagnostic interview, which reflects the considerable investment by the MOE in the development of the numeracy professional development and tools to support it, and high takeup of the professional development by schools.

The indication that asTTle assessment data are being used to make teaching decisions by nearly a third of the teachers is encouraging, given that these tools are relatively new, and change takes time. In this case, the assess-to-learn challenge is effectively the reverse of that described in the paragraph above. Rather than converting classroom-generated and highly specific data into a more general pattern, the challenge here is to convert more general norm-referenced indicators of achievement shortfalls into specific classroom actions. Another way of putting this is to ask what tool-generated achievement scores have to say about actual “next learning steps”. If a weakness is demonstrated, what clues do the data provide about what it is that students don’t yet “get”? Internationally, this data-to-teaching-change translation has been identified as the “Achilles heel” of formative assessment (Olson, 2005) and it is important that the acknowledged difficulties are not swept aside or discounted.

In her summary of a 2005 ACER-sponsored assessment conference, Matters noted that issues of validity and reliability in making judgements are just as important at the classroom level as for more formal reporting. “As with poor data, poor judgments do not support learning” (Matters, 2006, p. 20). This suggests a need to continue encouraging wider use of data from the quantitative tools such as asTTle for formative purposes, but also to continue to provide advice about likely areas of learning difficulty revealed by patterns in the data, so teachers are better informed about exactly what to do next. Data from the second edition mathematics PATs (2006) can be used in this way. Like the international PISA instruments (see, for example, OECD, 2004) students’ quantitative scores are aligned with a scale that describes qualitatively different levels of learning development. With hindsight, it is a pity that PATs and other quantitative, standardised data sources were not listed in the items for the question about the use of tools for formative feedback in teachers’ classes.

Nineteen percent of principals and 12 percent of teachers said there was an area in which they had been unable to locate a suitable assessment tool. Teachers in small or very small schools were more likely to say this. Those who responded this way were asked to say in what area(s) this had happened. Most principals identified one area of need, with generic skills/competencies most often mentioned (7 percent). Three percent wanted assessment tools in the area of PE/fitness/health and 2 percent in Māori. No other specific curriculum area was mentioned by more than two or three teachers.

A focus on data analysis

Principals and teachers were asked several questions about interpretation of the assessment data they had gathered. The first of these, shown in Table 16, concerned those involved in interpreting data for reporting school-wide progress towards the targets they had set.

Table 16 **Groups involved in primary schools' data interpretation**

Personnel	Principals (n=186) %	Teachers (n=279) %
Principal	82	71
Senior management	54	54
Individual classroom teachers	33	32
All staff working together	30	29
Syndicate leaders	25	20
Curriculum leaders	25	28
Syndicate teams	12	10
Consultant/professional development provider	12	10
Other	4	-

Principals' and teachers' perceptions were similar. Most principals were personally involved, and in just over half the responding schools, senior management staff took part in the interpretation of school-wide achievement data. In the view of both groups, only about one-third of classroom teachers were involved in data analysis as individuals. Half the principals and teachers who said individuals were involved also said teachers worked together as a whole staff. This leaves a group of around 15 percent who chose "whole staff analysis" but not "individual teachers". Adding this 15 percent to "individual teachers" we can conclude that close to half the teachers were involved in data analysis activities.

A question about moderation (see Table 17) supports this by showing that teachers were in fact more involved with analysis of student assessment data than they had reported. Whether via

informal discussions or more formal moderation meetings, almost all teachers were involved in processes for considering their own assessment decisions in relation to those of other members of the school staff. This is a marked shift in primary school culture.

Teachers' active use of many methods of formative assessment shows they were involved in analysing assessment tasks relevant to their class. Their responses reported in Table 17 may signal that they were less likely to be involved in analyses of what data is saying about the whole school picture.

Table 17 **Ways evidence was moderated for consistency between primary school classes**

Method	Principals (n=186) %	Teachers (n=279) %
Nationally benchmarked assessment tasks (e.g., asTTle, PAT) were used	61	62
Criteria for decisions about levels were developed and/or used by teachers	52	48
Formal moderation over whole school occurred	50	48
Informal discussions/sharing between similar class levels/syndicates occurred	50	47
Formal moderation between similar class levels/syndicates occurred (e.g., compared examples of student work for consistency of decisions)	34	43
Informal discussions/some sharing with one or two other teachers occurred	26	35
Not sure	2	5
There was no moderation	2	3

There is another possible way to explain this different story. It could be that the phrase “analysing data” was read as being about analysis of formal data sets from standardised tests. If that is the case, all types of evidence such as teacher professional experience, student peer and self-assessment, portfolios of work, and so on, as encompassed in the definition quoted in Section 2 and suggested by the data source tables above, may not be seen as data at all. If data are interpreted in the narrower sense as meaning only results from standardised tests, the message could be reinforced that literacy and numeracy are the appropriate targets for reporting, because tools to measure these in a standardised way are easily available.

Confidence with analysis of assessment data

Both principals and teachers were asked how confident they felt about interpreting assessment data. Principals were also asked how confident they were of the ability of their school's teachers

to interpret data. In the interests of brevity, Table 18 summarises selected responses to these questions. The focus is on those who said they were “not very confident” or “not at all confident”, since these are the groups who know they need additional support.

Table 18 **Primary principals’ and teachers’ confidence in interpreting assessment data**

Area of assessment	Principals lacking personal confidence	Principals lacking confidence in teachers	Teachers lacking personal confidence
	(n=186) %	(n=186) %	(n=279) %
Literacy	1	2	3
Numeracy	2	7	4
Generic skills/competencies (e.g., thinking skills, social skills, self-management)	10	13	15

The table shows that very few principals and teachers lack confidence, but where they do, this is more likely to be the case in areas other than literacy or numeracy. This again accords with the overall pattern of findings concerning the support available for implementing the policy in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

There seems to be a trend to increasing confidence in working with assessment data over the last decade. While the format of the questions varied somewhat it is interesting that:

- in the 1999 NZCER National Survey of Primary Schools, *16 percent* of primary teachers said they were missing out on assessment advice they needed (Wylie, 1999, p. 53);
- in the 2003 NZCER National Survey of Primary Schools, *10 percent* of teachers said they needed help with the analysis of assessment data⁶
- at least for literacy and numeracy, just *4 percent* of teachers said they needed this help in 2006.

An important caveat to the findings here is that these are self-reported perceptions of ability to analyse and use data in appropriate ways. New Zealand researchers have found that teachers’ confidence does not always match their actual use of assessment data (Timperley et al., 2004). Here, as in other countries where data-informed decision making is a focus, data sets may be used to make claims that would be seen as problematic by those with greater “assessment literacy” (for an international perspective on this challenge, see also Earle & Katz, 2006). The extent to which these issues exist in a range of schools bears further investigation. Nevertheless, those with low confidence in their data-handling abilities are arguably less likely to even attempt to use data in the manner intended. Our finding that teachers are *feeling* confident at least suggests an important base to build on.

⁶ Unpublished NZCER data.

We tested the hypothesis that there is a relationship between confidence to assess data in a specific area and having undertaken professional development in that area. We looked for correlations between principals' personal confidence in a specific area (for example, interpreting literacy data) and various types of professional development that these principals had undertaken. We found no clear correlation between confidence in interpreting data in a specific area and having undertaken professional development in that area. It may be that, since many principals would have undertaken several of these types of professional development, it is impossible to disentangle the separate influence of any one of these in their overall learning and confidence.

Taking action on unmet targets

An important part of the planning and reporting process is the analysis of variance. Schools are asked, as part of their report to the MOE, to compare outcomes achieved to what was planned, and to use this analysis to inform their planning for the next year. Section 2 noted that it is not the achievement of the goals *per se*, but determining what actions to take, that is the most important focus for the process.

Principals were asked whether their school had met their 2005 targets and, if not, how this was being addressed in their 2006 planning. Twenty-seven percent of principals said they had met all of their targets, and 53 percent said they had met most of them. Thirteen percent met some of their targets, and only three of 186 principals said they did not meet any of their targets (less than 2 percent). Five percent did not answer the question. The fact that 80 percent met all or most of their targets suggests that schools are setting realistic targets, although it is also possible that some targets were not sufficiently challenging. None of the three principals who said their school did not meet any of their targets submitted their targets, so we cannot determine the nature of these goals or targets.

The subsequent actions schools took are reported in Table 19. Professional development is again identified as an important component in helping schools to raise achievement when the analysis of variance suggests targets have not been met.⁷ The overall pattern of responses suggests few schools are taking evasive action (such as switching attention to another area, or lowering targets to match children's current achievement) when the evidence shows they have not succeeded in raising achievement in the target area. Rather, as intended, they are determining what they might do differently. Some actions are a useful reminder that schools are learning from experience, and making changes accordingly (e.g., adjusting targets without lessening the challenge, making targets clearer).

⁷ Responses in the other category included making the target clearer and lowering it to a level that the children could achieve (both 2 percent).

Table 19 **Principals' actions taken in 2006 to address unmet 2005 targets**

Action	Principals (n=186) %
We identified areas for professional development	40
We rolled the target over for 2006	37
We made the target more realistic, but still a challenge	32
We revisited our action plan	31
No action selected	30
The BOT will monitor progress on a regular basis	17
We set a target in a different area	13
Other	4

NB: Percentages add to more than 100 because multiple responses were possible.

Some principals nominated multiple actions: two actions (16 percent); three actions or more than three actions (both 17 percent). Thirty percent of principals did not answer this question, but 27 percent reported they had met all their targets, and just one of these nominated any further action (setting a target in a different area).

Assistance for taking action

Principals were also asked what assistance they had received for implementing planning and reporting. Table 20 shows that MOE contracts and management advisers were the most frequently utilised sources of assistance, but staff within schools and other principals were also of help. It may be that working with other principals was an informal arrangement, since the category "professional groups" was ticked by just 4 percent of principals and just 6 percent said they accessed help from MOE staff. It is interesting that 34 percent of principals stated that they had received no assistance at all. The survey did not ask for information about what attempts they had made to get help, or whether they felt they needed it. There was also no specific reference in the survey to the material circulated to schools by the MOE, or the online assistance available, and principals did not mention this form of support.

Table 20 **Assistance received by primary principals**

Assistance	Principals (n=186) %
MOE Professional Development contracts (e.g., literacy professional development)	36
Schools' management advisers (e.g., School Support Services)	32
Other principals/school staff	21
Consultants	10
MOE staff	6
Professional groups (e.g., New Zealand Principals' Federation, New Zealand School Trustees Association)	4
ERO staff	2
No assistance	34
Other	8

In the open response section a few principals said they were disappointed with a lack of feedback from the MOE when they submitted their plans before it was a requirement to do so. They had expected to get some formative evaluation of their first attempts so they were ready when planning and reporting was an official requirement.

Table 13 reported professional development schools had undertaken. Both principals and teachers were also asked to indicate if they still needed professional development in any of these areas. Fewer teachers than principals saw a need for further professional development related to planning and reporting targets. Sixty-two percent of teachers did not signal a need for any sort of professional development, compared to 39 percent of principals. Teachers, in particular, may feel the need to consolidate what they have learnt before they start on another round of new learning. No specific area stood out as more important than others for further professional development.

Impacts of the planning and reporting process

Principals and teachers were asked to rate their perceptions of ways the planning and reporting requirements had impacted on their school. They were asked to comment on three areas: school-wide impacts; the impact on reporting information to various groups; and the impact on individual classes. Figures 3–6 compare principals' and teachers' perceptions in these three areas. In these figures, each line shows the distribution of opinion for the item identified. The longer a line, the greater is the spread of opinion for that item. If there is no line the data were insufficiently spread to show in this format; that is, there was very strong agreement between respondents. The triangle or dot is the median response while the ends of each line represent the quartile responses (25 percent of all views and 75 percent of all views respectively). The quartiles are shown so that any

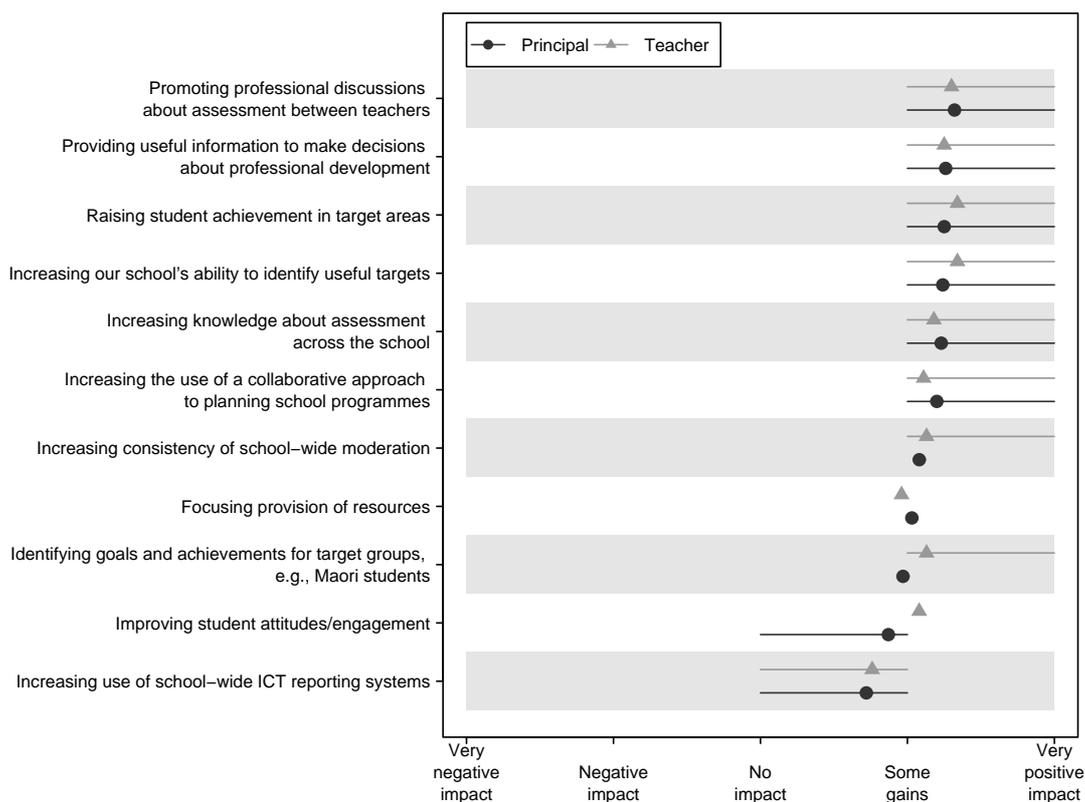
“outlier” opinions do not unfairly skew the pattern of responses. Lines are paired, with grey teacher-response lines first followed by black principal-response lines.

School-wide impacts

Figure 3 shows perceptions of impacts at the school-wide level. The overall pattern is one of positive progress, especially considering that planning and reporting processes have only been in place for three years, and implementation has required considerable professional learning, which as we have seen, is likely to be ongoing.

Clearly the planning and reporting process has resulted in some school-wide gains in most areas. Both principals and teachers were likely to see at least “some gains” for all items except student engagement and use of school-wide ICT reporting systems, and a number reported a “very positive impact”. Even in the two areas where responses were more equivocal, few schools reported a negative impact. A few principals and teachers commented that they felt that “good” schools already had systems in place, and so the MOE requirements had had little impact on what was happening in their school.

Figure 3 Principals’ and teachers’ views of school-wide impacts



Interestingly, teachers had somewhat more positive views about the effect of the planning and reporting framework on student attitudes and engagement than did principals. Frequency data show that 81 percent of teachers who responded to this question indicated that the impact on

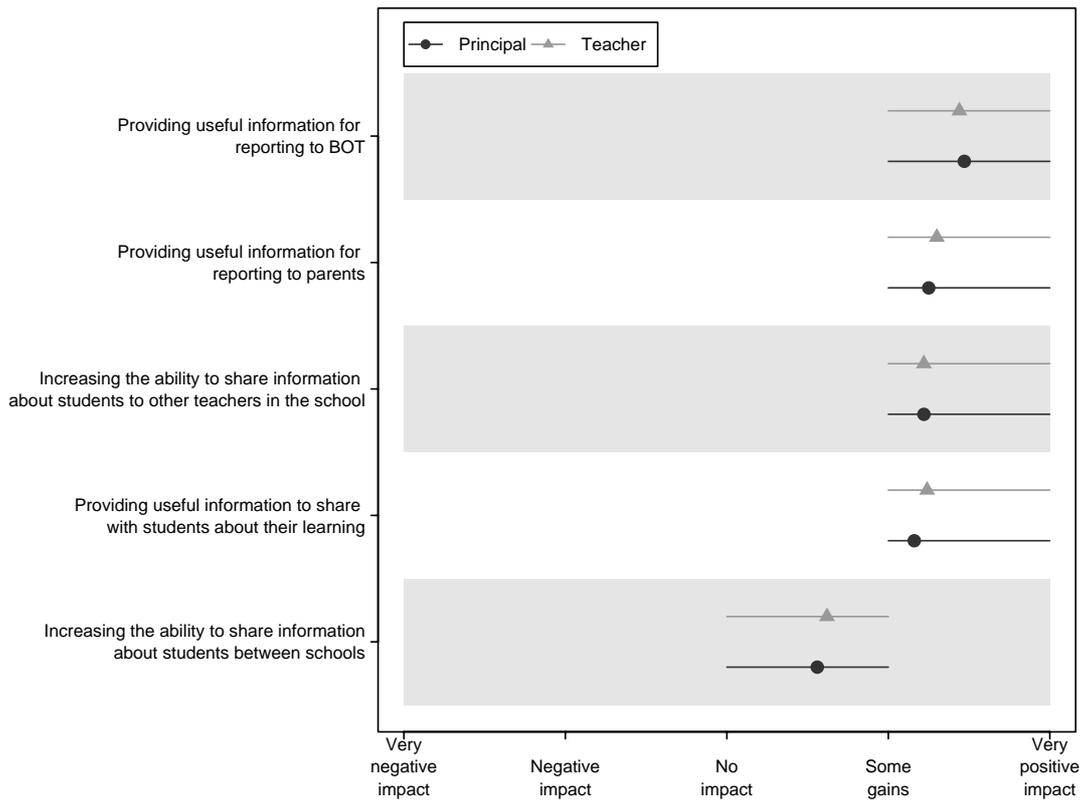
attitudes and engagement had been positive. This is an interesting outcome of the planning and reporting process, and supports widely cited findings that students are more engaged when they receive specific feedback about their own learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

Impacts on reporting information to various groups

Figures 4 and 5 provide further evidence that planning and reporting processes are enhancing teachers’ ability to provide feedback and support student goal setting.

First, Figure 4 shows that the planning and reporting process is perceived to have impacted positively on schools’ ability to share information with different groups within the school community. Gains in the area of sharing achievement information with the BOT and with other parents are particularly important in view of the strategic planning focus of the overall planning and reporting initiative. Gains in sharing information between the school’s teachers, and with students, are important for the focus on formative assessment and making adjustments to teaching in order to raise achievement.

Figure 4 **Principals’ and teachers’ views of reporting impacts**



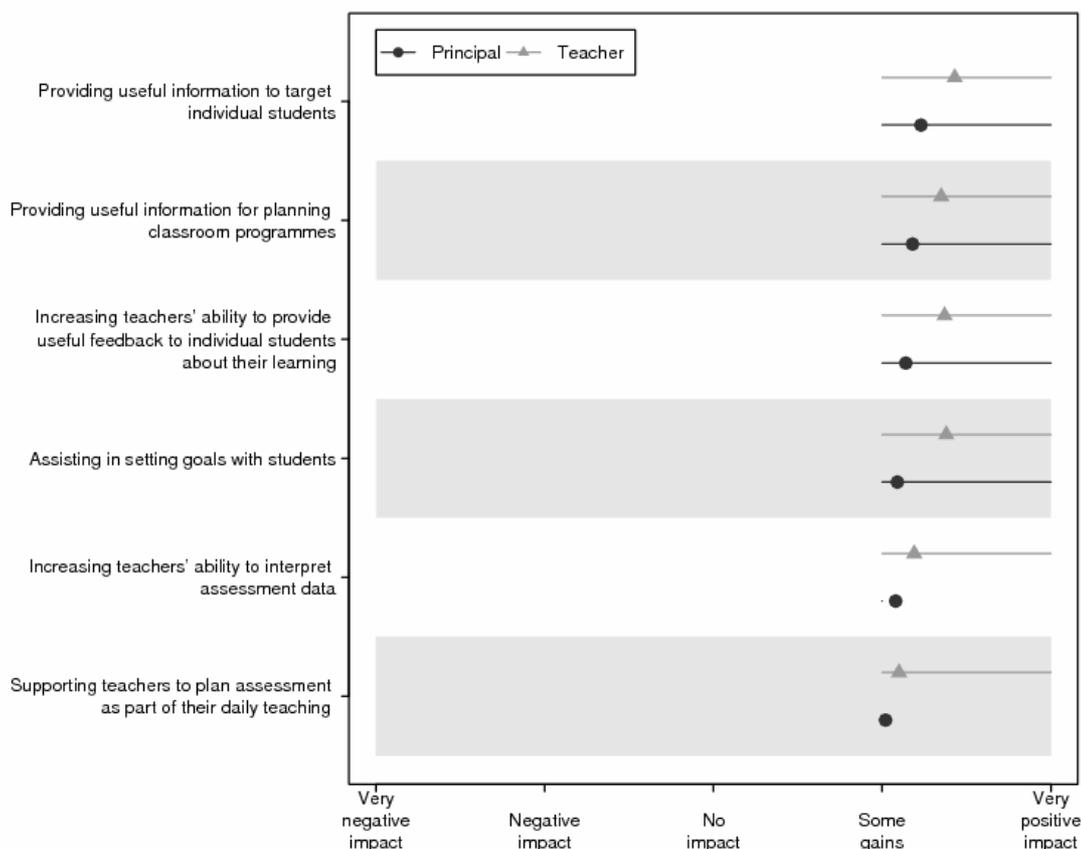
It is particularly encouraging that positive impacts are perceived in the area of sharing assessment information with students, as well as with groups who have traditionally been recipients of this information. The area of least impact, reported by both principals and teachers, concerns the sharing of information about students between schools. If schools have systematically collected

information about students, it follows that they should be able to share it when professionally appropriate. This is an area that could be further investigated. It may be that processes used to collapse data into a school-wide frame cannot be easily reversed to focus on students as individuals. Or it may be that sharing specific achievement data between schools has not happened very often in the past, and processes for doing so expeditiously will take time to evolve.

Impacts on individual classes

Figure 5 compares principals' and teachers' perceptions of the impacts of planning and reporting at the classroom level.

Figure 5 **Principals' and teachers' views of impacts on individual classes**



Again, there is agreement between both groups that planning and reporting has had positive impacts. Teachers were more inclined than principals to say that the impacts in individual classrooms had been very positive, probably reflecting their more intimate knowledge of what is happening in their classes.

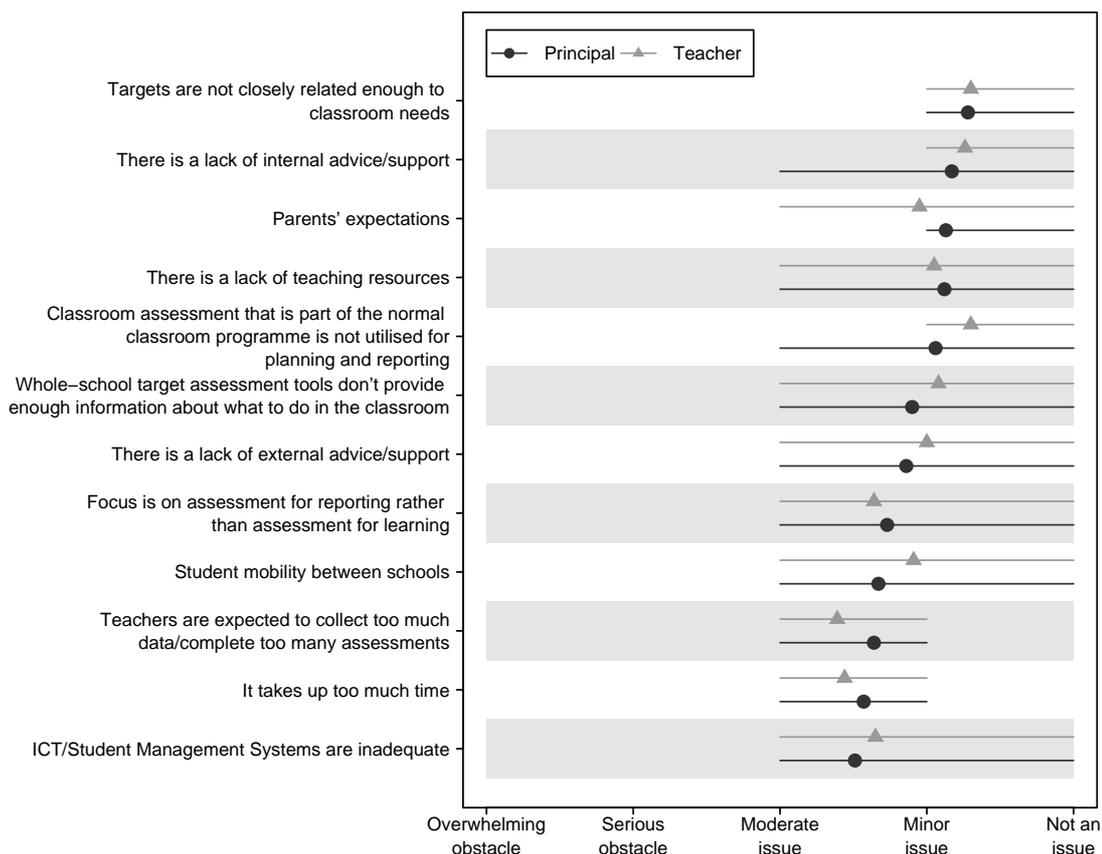
While both principals and teachers believed the process was helpful for planning and providing information about which students to target, frequency data showed that around 20 percent of teachers indicated that the process had no impact on planning assessment as part of their daily

teaching. It seems there is still some work to be done on raising teachers' ability to plan for formative assessment. Barriers to doing so have already been noted, and this is an area where teachers are likely to need ongoing support and professional development.

What are the challenges?

If the MOE's goal is to raise students' achievement, then it is imperative that the planning and reporting process has an impact on what is happening at the classroom level. In both surveys, respondents were given a list of possible obstacles to achieving this, and most of these were not seen as an issue in many schools. Figure 6 shows that the additional workload for teachers, the time taken by the processes, and inadequate ICT/SMS were the aspects likely to be seen as problematic.

Figure 6 **Principals' and teachers' perceptions of obstacles to using planning and reporting data to inform classroom teaching**



For a number of principals, lack of internal advice/support was an issue, perhaps signalling some frustration with getting all staff motivated and on board. Parental expectations appeared to be more of a concern for teachers than principals. A number of principals felt that not using normal classroom assessment for planning and reporting was an obstacle, but, interestingly, this did not seem to be an issue for many teachers.

The amount of time spent assessing students has long been the subject of complaint from teachers. The perception that the focus on assessment for reporting comes at the expense of assessment for learning highlights a predicament for schools, but it is one where the resolution potentially lies in their own hands. Schools determine their own target areas and report first and foremost to their own parent community. Earlier we reported that most teachers are using a range of tools to gather data for reporting purposes, and even more for formative assessment purposes. It may be that some tempering and refocusing of assessment activity is needed, so that their efforts are not stretched over more areas than are manageable.

Notwithstanding the power schools may have to take action on time pressures by targeting fewer areas, there is work to do in assisting teachers to focus on the purposes of assessment tasks, to be more strategic about the use of classroom data, and to recognise that assessment data need not only be generated by “tests” and summative tasks in those areas they do target. Matters (2006) identifies the formative/summative differentiation as an unhelpful false dichotomy. As already suggested, the ongoing challenge seems to be to find ways to support teachers and principals generate and use a range of types of robust data for both purposes, rather than differentiating between these.

It is interesting that student mobility is seen as an issue in some schools, while the planning and reporting process was reported as having less impact on sharing information between schools than on sharing with other stakeholders. Lack of information about new students is likely to be just one aspect of this issue, but this is another area where schools could reflect on how the data collected on individual students could be of further use.

Differences between schools

We found some decile-related differences, and a small number of size-related differences, that suggest planning and reporting challenges and experiences may be somewhat different for schools in different communities.⁸ These differences have implications for ongoing support, and also provide interesting hints that the support already being provided to low-decile schools, in particular, is having a positive impact on their planning and reporting practices.

⁸ We also looked for differences between school types (main urban, secondary urban, minor urban (town), and rural schools). That few were found does not necessarily indicate that such differences do not exist. A relatively small sample divides up into small cells when divided four ways, making statistical significance much harder to determine. Size differences became more apparent when schools were regrouped into just two categories (large/medium and small/very small).

The nature of the goals set

Principals from high-decile schools were the least likely to say they set goals in areas where school data showed a need. This is a useful reminder that in schools where the majority of students are already achieving well in relation to national benchmarks, the focus of planning and reporting is likely to be somewhat different from those schools where achievement “gaps” are more evident. Teachers from high-decile schools were more likely to agree that the process had led to gains or a positive impact on focusing planning and teaching.

Principals from small or very small schools were more likely to say the professional development already happening in the school had helped them to determine their targets.

We checked to see if there were decile-related differences in the overall numbers of principals who did not provide their specific goals but found no overall differences for this.

Use of assessment tools

PAT tools were more likely to be used in high-decile schools and in medium-sized and larger schools. When gathering evidence for *setting achievement targets* teachers from these schools were more likely to say they used PAT reading and principals somewhat more often mentioned PAT listening tools. When *reporting against targets* teachers from high-decile schools were more likely to say they used both PAT reading and mathematics tools, while principals nominated reading and listening tools.

PROBE, which provides rich insights into students’ reading progress and is often used to compile running records, was more likely to be mentioned by teachers from high-decile schools as something they used for reporting, and for making formative changes in the classroom. When setting targets, teachers in low-decile schools were more likely to use their running records *per se*. This has been a focus of professional development in literacy. Principals from low-decile schools were more likely to say student self-assessment had been used to report school-wide progress.

Schools pay for tools such as PATs and PROBE whereas others, such as asTTle, are provided by the MOE at no charge. One-to-one teacher–student interactions needed to use PROBE have a time cost rather than a straight monetary cost. Some low-decile schools have regarded the yet to be updated PAT reading, comprehension, and listening tools as inappropriate for their students’ life experiences,⁹ so cost is not likely to be the only factor in their choices. Additionally, there is a history of lower use of the traditional PAT tools (now being redesigned) in low-decile schools, where they have been seen as not sufficiently representative of students’ life experiences.

⁹ The PAT comprehension tools are currently being redeveloped, and the PAT mathematics (2nd edition) tools have been available since 2006.

Making evidence-based decisions

Low-decile teachers appear to be more confident in their ability to work with numeracy data. They were least likely to be only “sometimes confident” they could interpret such data, while teachers in high-decile schools were least likely to be “very confident” they could do so. In another question, teachers in mid- and high-decile schools were somewhat more likely to perceive that planning and reporting processes had made a positive impact on their ability to interpret data. Those in low-decile schools were more likely to say there had been no impact, which suggests, given their overall high confidence, that this was because they already knew how to do so. Low-decile schools have been strongly encouraged to take part in the numeracy project and this appears to have given them skills for making data-driven decisions. Of course, what they actually do as a result of such data interpretation is another question.

Actions taken

Teachers in low-decile schools were more likely to say the school had developed an action plan once goals were determined.

Principals in these schools were somewhat more likely to say they had set up processes for discussing planning and reporting results with parents. They were also more likely to say that, where goals were not met, more realistic but still challenging targets had been set.

Both teachers and principals in small or very small schools were more likely to say syndicate teams had discussed data. Principals in low-decile schools were also more likely to say the school had used moderation processes within syndicates, or between teachers at a similar level, and that the whole staff had worked together to interpret assessment data. They were also somewhat more likely to say that planning and reporting processes had led to informal assessment discussions within the school. The teachers in low-decile schools were more likely to say these processes had increased knowledge of assessment across the school. The overall picture suggests an increased focus in low-decile schools on the meaning of their assessment results for their teaching programmes.

It may be that initiatives in low-decile schools, such as SEMO¹⁰ or Picking Up the Pace, with focus on raising achievement of students in the “tail” lie behind these patterns. Teachers involved in these projects have been supported to interpret and use achievement data so it is encouraging to see that many do seem to have embraced the challenges they faced. However a caution to this “good news” is that underachievers can be found in every school, so there is no room for complacency.

Principals in small or very small schools were more likely to perceive a positive or very positive impact of planning and reporting on their ability to use the information gained for planning

¹⁰ Strengthening Education in Otara and Mangere. Analysis and Use of Student Achievement Data (AUSAD) was the second phase of this project.

classroom programmes, whereas principals in larger schools were more likely to see “some gains” in this area. This may be because teachers in smaller schools often have a diverse age range of students to teach, and planning and reporting helps them focus on the learning needs of these different groups.

Obstacles to planning and reporting

Asked about obstacles to using planning and reporting to inform their teaching, teachers in high-decile schools were more likely to say that the time taken for the process was a moderate obstacle. Responses from teachers in the low-decile schools were polarised between those who said it was not an issue, or was a minor issue, and those who said it was a serious or overwhelming obstacle.

Principals from low-decile schools were less likely to see mobility as an obstacle to the implementation of planning and reporting while those in high-decile schools were more likely to see it as a serious obstacle. New findings from a project on student mobility suggest that principals from low-decile schools are more likely to be sanguine about the issue, with many seeing it as “the way it is” and putting plans in place accordingly (NZCER report pending). The extent to which planning and reporting practices may have assisted them with this is an interesting question.

Teachers from small or very small schools were more likely to see student mobility as a serious obstacle. The arrival of new students in their classes after achievement targets have been set, and baseline data collected, must present considerable statistical challenges in generating meaningful data on achievement gains. Larger cohorts of students are less likely to be impacted by member changes. Obviously there is little that teachers can do about this, but they are fortunate that the “low stakes” accountability regime in New Zealand does not escalate this into the fairness issue it would be in a national testing regime.

Teachers from small and very small schools were also more likely to say they had been unable to access suitable assessment tools for measuring planning and reporting targets, but no specific tools stood out as being unavailable to them.

5. Findings from the 2006 National Survey of Secondary Schools

Perceptions about the planning and reporting framework

The purpose of the planning and reporting framework

The 2003 NZCER Secondary National Survey included one common question that investigated principals', teachers', and trustees' perceptions of the then new planning and reporting framework. An expanded set of possible purposes for the framework was used to ask a similar question in 2006. The results that follow show similar patterns to those reported for primary school respondents to the planning and reporting survey, albeit with somewhat lower response frequencies for most views.

Table 21 reports the overall frequency data for the 2006 survey of all three groups. With several interesting exceptions, there is a high degree of agreement. For example, setting goals for student achievement was the purpose selected by the greatest number of principals and trustees, and was rated overall by the teachers just behind raising achievement for all students and identifying what the school is doing well. The most frequently selected item for teachers was identifying what they could do better. These differences are not statistically significant.

As might be anticipated, more teachers than principals or trustees were aware of the potential to use planning and reporting practices to help raise achievement for the underachieving students in their classes. Trustees were the least likely to select this purpose. Teachers were more likely to see planning and reporting processes feeding into both national policy development and the provision of assistance to schools. Given that the majority of secondary schools use NCEA data for planning and reporting (see below) it may be that teachers saw the reporting of patterns/achievement issues as one way of anticipating greater support for the implementation of this new qualifications-awarding system, but we cannot tell for sure without further research.

Of the 8 percent (16 principals) who responded they were “not sure”, six gave no other response—that is, they really did appear to be not sure. The remaining 10 gave between 1–3 other responses. In these cases, selecting “not sure” could be read as making a sceptical statement about ultimate purposes, since they clearly were aware of possible purposes.

Table 21 **Purposes seen for the new planning and reporting framework (secondary schools)¹¹**

Purpose	Principals (n=194) %	Teachers (n=818) %	Trustees (n=278) %
Help schools set goals for student achievement	68	70	69
Help schools raise achievement for all students	65	71	59
Help schools identify what they could do better	61	81	54
Help schools identify what they are doing well	53	71	45
Help schools raise achievement for under-achieving groups, e.g., Māori and Pasifika students	48	58	34
Ensure schools are accountable to their community	41	48	40
Ensure schools are accountable to government	39	31	32
Allow government to gather national data on student achievement for policy development	25	38	20
Help schools develop classroom teaching programmes	24	41	16
Allow government to tell each school what to do	10	10	3
Allow government to gather data about each school to assist schools	9	23	10
Not sure	8	3	2
Other	3	1	3

It is interesting that more teachers than principals or trustees perceived that the framework could help acknowledge what they are doing well, not just what they need to improve. This suggests that using the framework to review their teaching is being experienced in positive ways by the majority of the responding teachers.

As Tables 22–24 show, in the secondary schools, as in the primary schools, there has been a shift in awareness of purposes from 2003 to 2006. These tables show each of the three groups' responses to items common to both surveys.

¹¹ As for the planning and reporting survey reported in Section 4, 2006 respondents could choose more than one purpose whereas 2003 respondents were asked to choose one only.

Table 22 **Secondary principals' perceptions of planning and reporting: 2003 and 2006**

Purpose (items common to both surveys)	2003 (n=95)	2006 (n=194)
Help schools set goals for student achievement	33	68
Not sure	14	8
Allow government to gather national data on student achievement for policy development	14	25
Help schools identify what they could do better	12	61
Allow government to tell each school what to do	12	10
Help schools identify what they are doing well	2	53
Allow government to gather data about each school to assist schools	1	10
No response to question	14	1

Whereas 28 percent of principals did not respond or said they were not sure of purposes in 2003, just 9 percent gave this type of response in 2006. Individual respondents did tend to select multiple reasons in 2006, pushing percentage responses to individual items higher than was possible in 2003 when a choice needed to be made about which was the main purpose. Despite this difference in approach to the question, the top rating item overall did not change between surveys. Many secondary principals, like their primary colleagues, acknowledge the focus on student achievement as the purpose of planning and reporting practices. Note that the cynical response “allow government to tell each school what to do” went down, despite the opportunity to make multiple responses.

The next two tables show similar patterns of shifts in the perceptions of both trustees and teachers.

Table 23 **Secondary trustees' perceptions of planning and reporting: 2003 and 2006**

Purpose (items common to both surveys)	2003 (n=180)	2006 (n=278)
Help schools set goals for student achievement	36	69
Not sure	16	2
Allow government to gather national data on student achievement for policy development	9	20
Help schools identify what they could do better	27	54
Allow government to tell each school what to do	3	3
Help identify what the school is doing well	3	45
Allow government to gather data about each school to assist schools	3	10
No response to question	4	1

Table 24 **Secondary teachers' perceptions of planning and reporting: 2003 and 2006**

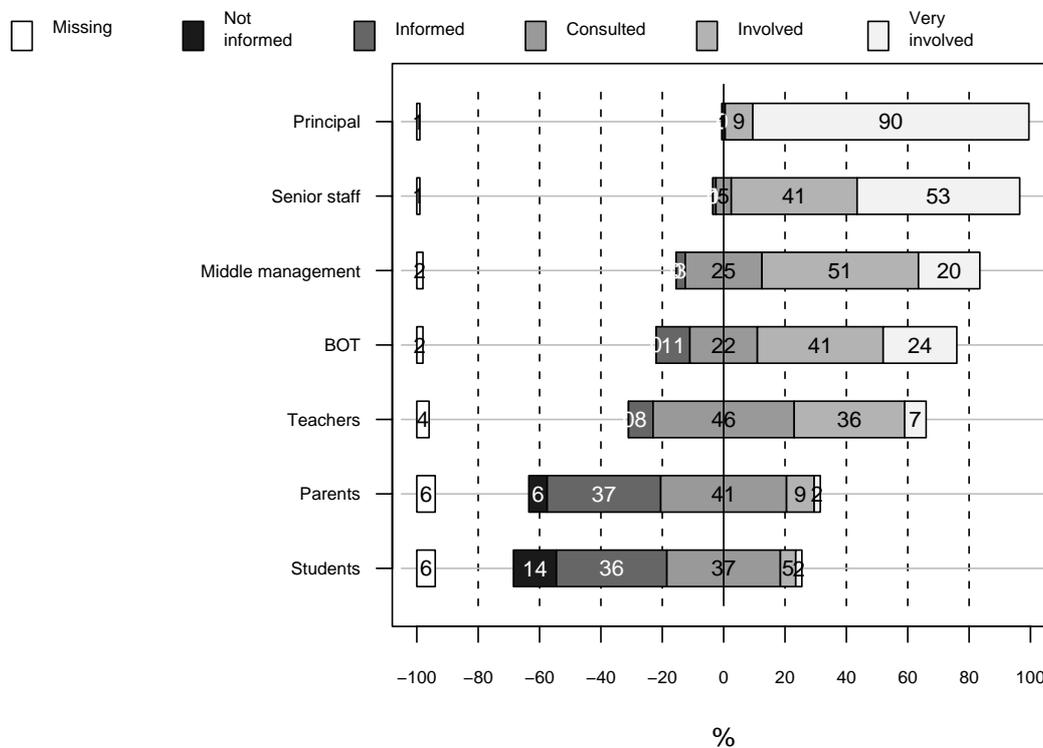
Purpose (items common to both surveys)	2003 (n=744) %	2006 (n=818) %
Help schools set goals for student achievement	14	69
Not sure	44	2
Allow government to gather national data on student achievement for policy development	7	38
Help schools identify what they could do better	19	81
Allow government to tell each school what to do	3	10
Help identify what the school is doing well	4	71
Allow government to gather data about each school to assist schools	2	23
No response to question	7	2

Greater numbers of teachers than either principals or trustees were unsure in 2003, doubtless reflecting the newness of the framework and their later overall involvement in planning and reporting processes. By 2006 very few teachers or trustees were still unsure.

Perceptions of involvement

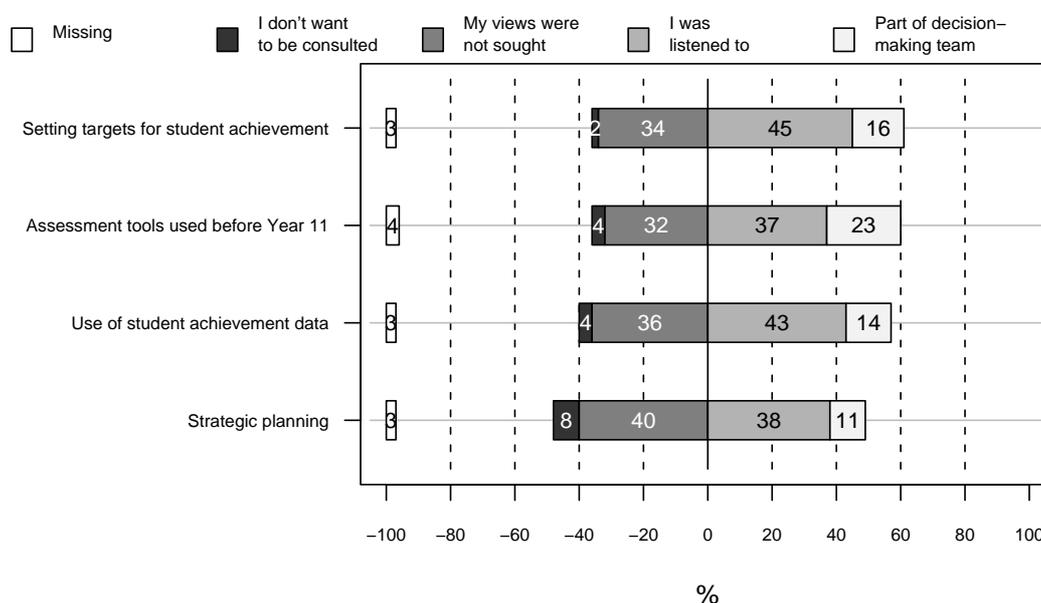
We asked principals about the extent to which each of the groups listed in Figure 7 had been involved in setting the school's 2005 targets/goals. The picture painted is one of full involvement of almost all principals and senior staff. Whereas middle management, BOT members, and classroom teachers are fully involved in some schools, in others they are simply informed, or in a few cases not involved. If they are involved at all, parents and students are likely to be informed. They are seen to take an active role in very few schools. Whether or not this concerns parents will be discussed shortly.

Figure 7 **Secondary principals' perceptions of involvement in setting school targets/goals**



The planning and reporting section of the teacher survey did not include a direct question about their involvement. However, four items in a subsequent section are directly relevant to this context. Figure 8 shows the teachers' collective perceptions of their involvement in decision making in each of the four areas listed. The overall pattern suggests teachers were more likely to feel they were "listened to" than that they were "part of the team".

Figure 8 **Secondary teachers' perceptions of their involvement in planning and reporting decision making**



This overall pattern must be partially qualified in terms of some responding teachers' roles. On the whole, senior managers responded in ways that matched the 53 percent of principals who thought that they were fully involved. They were more likely than teachers in all other roles to feel part of the team when strategic planning (78 percent of them), and when setting targets for student achievement or using student achievement data (68 percent of them for both activities). The sharp distinction between senior staff and all other teachers' perceptions of participation did not hold as strongly for the choice of assessment tools to use before Year 11, where 41 percent of senior managers and 31 percent of middle managers felt they were "part of the team".

This pattern may relate to the way *reporting* is experienced as a discrete activity. Senior managers are more likely to be involved in compiling the school's annual report whereas middle managers are more likely to participate *indirectly*, by compiling achievement data for board reports and the like. When they do this for Year 11 and above they are likely to use NCEA data (see below), with limited choice of instruments used (achievement or unit standards, and which standards in particular). These are much more likely to be seen as *curriculum* choices than planning and reporting choices. Only for Years 9–10 are middle managers likely to be involved in making choices between a range of instruments, as reported for primary school teachers.

The survey attracted a good sample of teachers in the newly created "specialist classroom teacher" role. The 120 respondents in this role represent more than a third of all such teachers, since there is only one in each secondary school. These teachers felt no more involved in planning and reporting processes than did most of the other classroom teachers. It does not seem that their expertise has been selectively used for this work. This may be a function of the newness of their role in the school, and is likely to relate to the limited extra time available for their extra duties.

Again, if they answered in a way that bounded planning and reporting activities in terms of formal reporting, they would be no more likely to say they were involved than any other teacher. The interesting question of whether they are using planning and reporting-generated data to involve other teachers in discussions about students' achievement, and any changes that could be made to improve overall learning, awaits further research.

While the principal is most likely to work with senior managers to produce the school's annual report, deciding what actions to take next was always intended to be an important aspect of wider involvement. Table 33 (p. 67) outlines trustees' perceptions of the impacts of planning and reporting. At least half the trustees were actively involved at the stage of deciding what actions to take concerning patterns of student achievement documented in the school's annual report.

Do planning and reporting processes meet parents' needs for involvement?

We asked parents if they were satisfied with the way their school developed its charter and annual plan. Table 25 shows mixed responses. Almost half the parents were satisfied but a similar number were not involved or were unsure what such involvement could actually entail. It is important to note that just 4 percent were actively dissatisfied and wanted more input. No parents responded that they wanted less input.

Table 25 **Secondary parents' satisfaction with planning and reporting-related strategic planning**

Are you satisfied with the way the school develops its charters and annual plans?	Parents' responses (n=708) %
Yes	45
Don't know what is happening	26
Not sure	16
Not really interested	7
No—would like more input	4
No response	2

Nineteen percent of parents said they had read the school's annual report but less than 1 percent said they had discussed this with a member of the board of trustees. Six percent said they had participated in school planning processes. In another question 7 percent of parents said they wanted more information about school planning, while 15 percent wanted to know more about "overall student achievement" at the school. The data give little indication of dissatisfaction with involvement in planning and reporting processes at the *school-wide* level, notwithstanding relatively low levels of involvement. Does the picture shift when parents consider their own child in particular?

Most parents (79 percent) said they were generally happy with the quality of their child's schooling. Just 7 percent said that their child's lack of adequate learning progress was a specific concern. Fifty-nine percent of parents said the information they received about their child's overall learning programme was good or very good and 64 percent said the same about the reports of progress they received. However just over a quarter of the parents (26 percent) said they wanted more information about their child's progress. The type of information they sought is shown in Table 26. Most of these types are specific to the child and the activities they had or could undertake, but 22 percent wanted information that made benchmarking types of comparisons of their child's progress in relation to that of other students.

Table 26 **Additional student performance information secondary parents would like**

Type of information	Parents' responses (n=708) %
Information about the assessments/tests my child has taken	31
More detailed information about my child's progress	28
Ideas for how I can support my child's learning	27
Information about their attitudes/behaviour	23
A comparison with national standards	22
More regular reports	12
Information that is easier to understand	10

The overall picture is of low parental involvement, matched by little desire for involvement, in the more formal aspects of planning and reporting. As would be expected, many parents are actively interested in their own child's progress, but the majority are happy that they get provided with adequate information about their learning and achievements. Where schools are looking for greater parental engagement in conversations about students' learning achievements and needs, the areas mentioned in Table 26 suggest potential focuses for such discussions.

Gathering evidence of school-wide improvement

We next report on responses to questions that focused on the "evidence-based" aspect of the planning and reporting policy. What types of targets are schools setting and what do they see as suitable evidence of their success (or not) in meeting those targets?

Planning and reporting targets

Principals and teachers were asked to identify the school's 2005 planning and reporting target areas from a list. Table 27 compares responses to the items common to both questionnaires and

shows broad agreement between the two groups for most targets. As in the primary schools, literacy and numeracy targets are the most frequently mentioned. Differences to the primary responses are discussed in Section 7.

Table 27 **Secondary principals' and teachers' reports of their school targets**

Target area	Principals (n=194) %	Teachers (n=818) %
Literacy	83	77
Numeracy	52	49
ICT use	40	32
Attendance (e.g. reducing truancy)	31	35
Achievement in specific curriculum area(s)	29	7
School climate/culture	28	29
Problem behaviour (e.g. reducing detentions, suspensions, stand-downs)	22	26
Generic skills/competencies (e.g., social skills, thinking skills, self-management, etc.)	16	27
Te reo Māori	9	12

The two items where perceptions differed most between the two groups are highlighted in bold type. The greater frequency of mention of specific curriculum areas by principals doubtless reflects their role in providing leadership across the whole school curriculum. English (4 percent) and mathematics (3 percent) were their most frequently mentioned curriculum areas, which is likely to reflect a close connection between these subjects and the development of literacy and numeracy. This raises the question of whether the challenge of meeting targets in these areas is being directed to English and mathematics teachers, at least in these schools. This question could bear further investigation. It is interesting that greater numbers of teachers saw skills or competencies as targets for improvement than did the principals.

Principals could respond to two items that were not included in the teachers' questionnaire. "Greater use of diagnostic/formative assessment tools" was reported as a school target by 37 percent of principals, and "links with communities" was a target for 21 percent of them. Five percent of teachers selected "the arts" as a target area provided on their list but not on the principals' list. No principals identified the arts as a target area in their open responses to curriculum targets, but some might have done so had the item been provided.

In the "other" category 9 percent of principals and 3 percent of teachers mentioned that achievement of Māori/Pasifika students was a specific target, while 14 percent of principals and 2 percent of teachers made reference to raising achievement levels generally. Principals also variously mentioned differentiated curriculum/teaching; NCEA results; achievement of boys;

gifted and talented; student leadership/engagement; restorative justice; staff student relationships; and extracurricular involvement (all between 8 and 2 percent response rates).

Comparisons with 2003 National Survey of Secondary Schools

The 2006 questionnaires provided a wider range of potential target areas than did the 2003 survey. In comparison to 2003, many of the 2006 items reflect targets that impact on learning, but are not directly related to curriculum delivery (for example, attendance and behaviour) and these items cannot be compared. However, the top-ranking priorities have remained the same. Literacy and numeracy are by far the most frequently reported targets in both surveys. Again, there are strong similarities to the findings of the planning and reporting survey, reported in Section 4.

Using data when making planning and reporting decisions

Determining priorities

Principals were asked what information they used to determine priority targets for 2005. Table 28 shows the pattern of responses, with NCEA the most frequently mentioned data source. As in the planning and reporting survey of primary schools, the professional judgement of secondary school teachers played a role in the identification of target areas in just over half the schools. The influence of senior and middle managers was seen to be greater in secondary schools (75 percent compared with 47 percent primary schools) which doubtless reflects differences in the roles at the different levels. (For example “middle managers” in primary schools are likely to be syndicate leaders who involve their teams in discussions about learning in all curriculum areas whereas middle managers in secondary schools are likely to be curriculum specialists who hold narrower areas of expertise.) Standardised national tools such as asTTle and PATs were used in around a third of schools, which again is very similar to the situation in primary schools. One interesting difference concerns the seemingly greater influence of the Education Review Office (ERO) on secondary schools’ target setting (31 percent compared to 11 percent in the planning and reporting survey). Why is this? We cannot be sure but it seems likely that greater competition for students encourages secondary schools to pay close attention to ERO recommendations because prospective parents may do.

Table 28 **Information used to determine secondary schools' 2005 targets**

Source of information	Principals' responses (n=194) %
NCEA results indicated a need	77
Senior management/middle managers' perception of a need	75
National priorities (e.g. literacy, numeracy, physical activity, improving achievement of Māori students)	60
Class teachers' perception of a need	54
Analysis of variance from previous year	49
PAT data indicated a need	37
asTTle data indicated a need	37
Other assessment data indicated a need	31
Points identified in ERO report	31
Feedback from MOE	6
Other	8

Information mentioned in open responses to the “other” category included parent perceptions and feedback and the current focus on students (both 2 percent), and the BOT plan/direction (1 percent). Again, these open responses are very similar to those made by the primary principals.

As for other questions in the survey, most principals chose more than one item and some chose most of the provided items. The average number of responses to this question was five sources. This suggests many schools are using a range of data sources for their planning and reporting decision making. Decision making is based on a mix of quantitative data sources (NCEA, PATs, asTTle, previous year's results) and qualitative judgements made by school leaders and teachers. Most principals indicated they used a mixture of both types of data, with two to three sources of each type typically being selected. Just 3 percent of principals nominated only qualitative sources and 9 percent nominated only quantitative sources.

Decision making often takes account of contextual factors beyond actual achievement information or perceptions. To what extent did principals perceive that more contextual considerations had influenced their decision making? Table 29 provides indications of coherence in the planning and reporting process, with a strategic focus on areas of importance. Target areas are influenced by professional development being undertaken in the school, and to a lesser extent by available tools. These aspects are both likely to be related to the national priority focus on literacy and numeracy, with NCEA literacy and numeracy requirements providing an added secondary school impetus for a focus in these two areas. Ninety-three percent of principals reported that their school had a literacy professional development programme in place and 78 percent said they had already implemented a numeracy initiative. This link has already been discussed more extensively in

Section 4. As is appropriate for sustaining a focus on a learning need once this has been determined, targets tend to be carried over from one year to the next.

Ease of measurement is also likely to be related to available tools, but there are differences between primary and secondary school responses to ease of showing progress (23 percent primary—similar to ease of measuring, compared to 13 percent secondary). The difference may be a question of interpretation. Is “easy to show progress” interpreted as meaning that the data are relatively easy to interpret once gathered, or that there is an expectation that students can more easily make gains in the area? We are not sure why this difference exists.

Table 29 **Other considerations when determining secondary schools’ 2005 targets**

Type of consideration	Principals’ responses (n=194) %
2005 targets related to previous year’s school targets	64
Professional development in the target area already happening in the school	53
Relevant assessment tools were readily available	29
Easy to measure	26
Easy to show progress	13
No other considerations	14
Other	5

Items mentioned in the “other” category included the school’s strategic plan (2 percent) and BOT discussions (1 percent).

How is awareness impacting on actions?

Setting targets is one thing. Taking deliberate action to improve learning in target areas is, of course, the intended next step. What are schools actually doing to help students make learning gains by making improvements in the areas identified? Table 30 compares principals’ and teachers’ perceptions of the actions taken in their school to determine how to proceed from identification of an issue to actually doing something about it. Again, most respondents selected a range of actions, making multiple responses to this question.

Congruent with the above response, planned professional development is seen by both groups as the most common type of initial response. There are interesting indications that many schools are using planning and reporting to focus professional conversations about learning and achievement. Whole-school discussion, sharing of professional readings, and discussions in curriculum and cross-curriculum learning teams all point to the building of learning communities within schools. A substantial majority of principals (82 percent) and teachers (76 percent) said at least one of

these activities had taken place in their school. Some principals (13 percent) and teachers (9 percent) indicated that all four activities had taken place.

Table 30 **Secondary school-wide actions taken to meet planning targets**

Action	Principals (n=194) %	Teachers (n=818) %
Planned professional development	83	71
Action plan was developed	74	50
Discussion with board to develop shared understanding	62	17
Whole-school discussion to develop shared understanding	56	48
Professional readings distributed	49	46
Curriculum teams discussed assessment data and sought shared understandings	48	52
More resources budgeted for target areas	42	19
Cross-curriculum learning teams discussed assessment data and sought shared understandings	26	20
Changed way we monitored progress	18	14
Not sure		5
None	-	1

Where there are large discrepancies in perceptions of principals and teachers, it seems likely that this aspect of the actions taken by principals, together with their BOT and often senior managers, can be less visible to teachers. Supporting this suggestion, teachers who were senior managers were more likely than all other teachers to identify the various actions on the above table, with the one exception of promoting discussion in cross-curriculum learning teams. Congruent with this, classroom teachers were more likely than either senior or middle managers or deans to say they were not sure what school-wide actions had been taken.

Impacts of the planning and reporting process

Ten percent of principals and 16 percent of trustees said the school had met all its 2005 targets. Trustees who said this were more likely to be representatives of state-integrated schools. Another 73 percent of principals and 64 percent of trustees said they had met most of them. Fifteen percent of principals and 12 percent of trustees said the school had met some targets, leaving just 1 percent of principals and less than 1 percent of trustees who said their school had met none of its targets.¹²

¹² Note that numbers do not add to 100 because of rounding.

Where targets had not been met, we asked principals and trustees what they were doing about this. Their actions are reported in Table 31. Many, but not all, items were included in both surveys. Note that although just 10 percent of principals said they had met all their targets, the nonresponse rate to this question was 17 percent. Clearly some trustees did not feel they could respond: their nonresponse rate was 28 percent. One notable feature of these responses is the very low level of cynical manipulation by lowering targets to easily achievable levels.

Table 31 **Actions taken to address unmet 2005 secondary school targets**

Strategy	Principals (n=194)	Trustees (n=278)
We revisited our action plan	46	NA
We identified areas for professional development	46	NA
We rolled the targets over for 2006	44	19
We made the targets more realistic, but still a challenge	35	18
The board monitors progress on a regular basis	24	35
We set targets in a different area	17	3
We lowered the targets to a level we know we can achieve	2	1
Nothing	1	1
Discussed as a board	NA	42
Asked principal for a plan to improve performance	NA	25
Asked principal for reasons	NA	24
We did not have numerical/measurable targets	NA	3

NA = item not included for this group

Secondary principals were more likely to say they revisited their action plan than were primary principals (31 percent in primary—see Table 19). Like their primary colleagues, they saw professional development as an important step towards addressing identified learning needs, and a similar percentage rolled the targets over to the next year.

Trustees were somewhat more likely to see an active role for themselves in monitoring progress than were principals and almost half of them said their board at least discussed progress. What they actually did as a result of those discussions is reported below. When most or only some targets had been met, trustees were more likely than not to have discussed results as a board, or asked the principal for reasons or a plan to improve performance. There are indications that results were *not* likely to have been discussed when all targets were met, perhaps because the board saw more pressing priorities for their time.

Principals' perceptions of their achievements related to self-review and planning and reporting implementation

School self-review is closely related to the planning and reporting framework because it also helps inform strategic planning. Most principals (90 percent) said their school already had a process for self-review and a further 8 percent said they were developing a process. Seventy-five percent of the schools carried out an annual review of student achievement across all curriculum areas, and a further 13 percent did so on a 2–3-year cycle. Nine percent of principals did not respond to this question and 2 percent gave another response, including carrying out a review “as issues arise”.

In another part of the 2006 survey principals were asked to comment on their achievements over the past three years, and to indicate areas in which they had yet to realise planned achievements. Responses for those aspects relevant to planning and reporting are shown in Table 32. The picture is one of active changes across this time. More than half the principals perceived they had improved their planning and reporting processes in the last three years. Similar numbers perceived improvements in assessment for learning, in meeting the needs of particular groups of students in the school, and in staff professional development. Just under half said they had made improvements in achievement levels overall, NCEA implementation, and with implementation of their student management system (SMS). However, 27 percent of principals said they had yet to manage the improvement in achievement levels they wanted. This is slightly *more* than the 21 percent of principals who made this response in 2003 (Hipkins & Hodgen, 2004, p. 120. Note that the format of this question was yes/no in 2003). It may be that the focus on achievement patterns is sharper three years later, but further research would be needed before it could be determined why around a quarter of principals are currently dissatisfied with their lack of progress. It may be that at least some of this dissatisfaction stems from principals now having higher expectations, perhaps aligned with the increased awareness of purposes for planning and reporting, and with the increased focus on conversations about students' learning needs.

Table 32 **Secondary principals' perceptions of achievements in areas related to planning and reporting (last three years)**

Area	Sustained high level	Made improvements	Yet to achieve what hoped	No response
Implementation of planning and reporting process	22	57	12	9
Improved achievement levels overall	18	48	27	7
Meeting needs of a particular group of students	8	56	27	10
Student assessment for learning	7	56	28	8
NCEA implementation	41	46	7	8
SMS implementation	25	47	21	8
Professional development for staff	27	52	15	7

It is to be expected that principals would be as likely to say previous improvements in NCEA had been sustained as to say they had made improvements, given the intense focus in this area over the previous five or six years.¹³ Looked at this way, assessment for learning, and learning needs of specific subgroups of students, seem to be a more recent focus in most schools. If this is so, we might expect to see a similar consolidation of achievement in these areas at the time of the next NZCER National Survey. Both of these are also areas where around a quarter of the principals have yet to achieve what they want, as is also the case for improving achievement levels overall and SMS implementation. Ongoing support will doubtless be a factor in helping these principals meet their personal leadership goals in these areas.

The impact of principal experience

This was one of the few questions discussed in this report where we found a range of differences related to principals' years of experience. Those who had been principals for 16 or more years were more likely to say they had *sustained* high levels of student achievement, of assessment for learning, and of meeting the needs of specific groups of students. As might be expected new principals (less than two years) were more likely to say they had *yet to achieve* what they wanted in these same three areas, or in NCEA implementation. It takes time to implement sustainable changes in professional practice, in part because a new school culture must be forged. The different patterns of responses from longer term and newer principals are a timely reminder that planning and reporting-related changes need time, and learning from experience is a valuable aspect of the process.

Those who had been principals for between three and five years were more likely to say they had *made improvements* in assessment for learning, and in the implementation of the NCEA. Interestingly, those who had been principals for 6–10 years were more likely to say they had sustained high levels of achievement in the implementation of NCEA. This suggests that this group of mid-career principals addressed the new assessment challenges earlier (or perhaps more comfortably) than did other principals. These principals were also more likely to say they had made improvements in meeting the learning needs of specific groups of students.

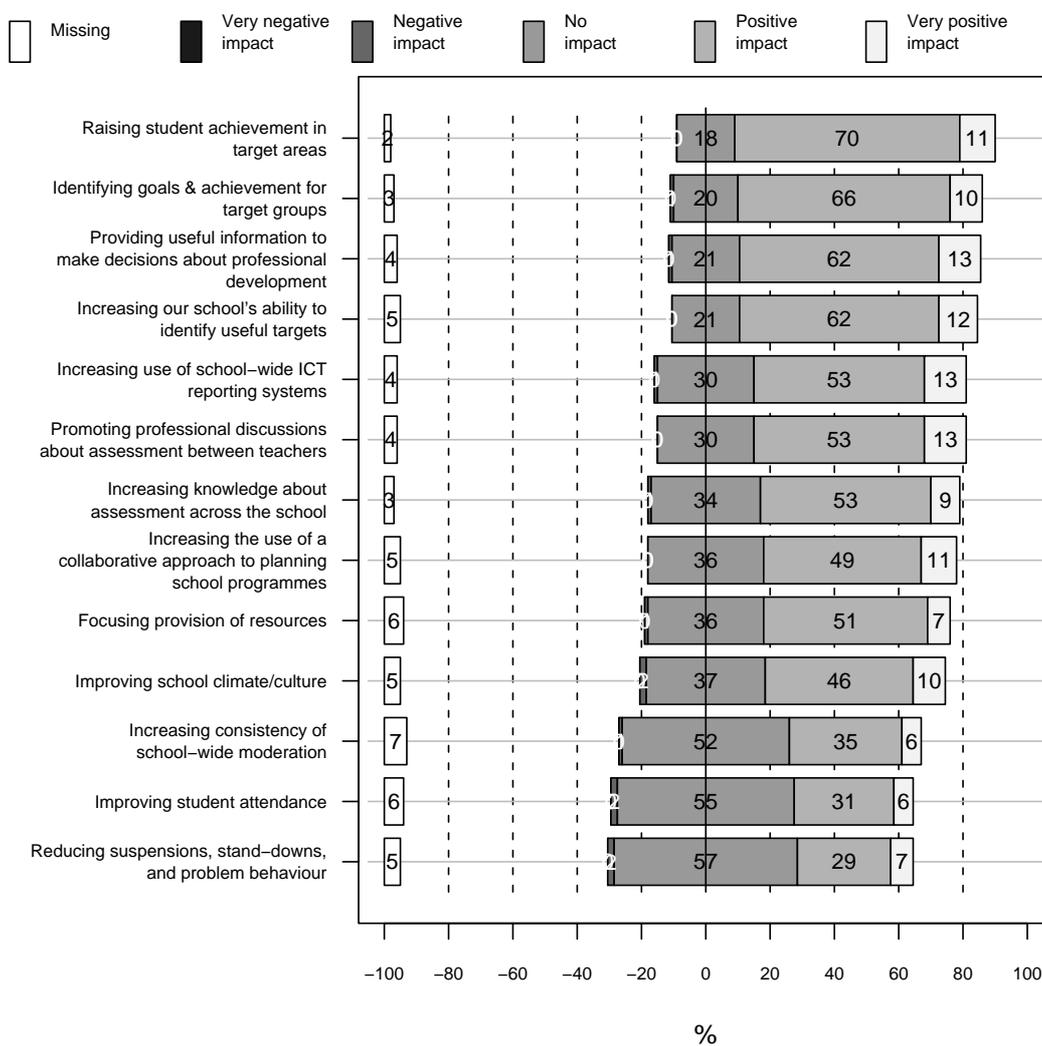
With the exception of the NCEA, the trend is clearly to address more complex planning and reporting issues as leadership experience builds. Ongoing support for newer principals as they learn to be successful leaders of planning and reporting-related activities in their schools seems advisable. Other research with first-time principals that found differing levels of ability to identify learning needs and write appropriate goals to address these, would also support this suggestion (Cameron, Lovett, Baker, & Waiti, 2004). Of course, the expertise of new principals may change as more of them come into the role having experienced planning and reporting activities as senior managers beforehand.

¹³ To set this in context, just 3 percent of principals who responded to the 2003 NZCER National Survey said they had yet to achieve what they wanted for NCEA implementation.

Secondary principals' perceptions of the impacts of planning and reporting

Figure 9 shows that the majority of secondary principals hold positive or very positive perceptions of the impact of the planning and reporting framework for their sector, and very few perceive any negative impacts. Eighty-one percent say that the process has helped raise achievement in the target areas across the board, and 76 percent say this has happened for targeted groups of students. This is a very encouraging response, given that these are the stated intentions of the planning and reporting process.

Figure 9 **Secondary principals' views of the impact of the planning and reporting framework in their schools**



Perceptions of positive or very positive impacts outweigh perceptions of no impact for all but the final three items in the figure. Moderation is discussed below and the other areas of little impact—attendance and problematic behaviour—are targets in relatively few schools. Only a very few principals saw any negative impacts for any of the aspects asked about, and none saw very negative impacts.

The extent of positive perceptions of the impetus provided for professional conversations about learning is broadly congruent with actions reported above. For example, 83 percent of principals said they planned professional development to help meet their targets and 75 percent perceived a positive or very positive impact of planning and reporting when making decisions about professional development. Whereas 48 percent of principals said curriculum teams shared conversations about assessment data, 66 percent perceived a positive or very positive impact on promoting professional conversations about assessment between teachers, and 62 percent on increasing knowledge about assessment across the school. Discussion of data patterns is an important aspect of setting and monitoring targets, but it is not the only area in which assessment conversations could be focused, especially in secondary schools where standards-based assessment has been such a focus since the introduction of the NCEA qualification. It seems that planning and reporting processes may have added an additional dimension to ongoing assessment conversations.

Discussions about what might be learnt from data related to student achievement, if held school-wide, could conceivably lead to greater coherence in teachers' views of "standards" or "levels" for assessment tasks. In view of this, it is food for thought that just 41 percent of principals perceived that planning and reporting processes had made any impact on the consistency of moderation across the school. Given the importance of moderation for internally assessed NCEA tasks, there seems to be an opportunity here that could be further explored.

It is to be expected that many principals would report no impact on attendance or behavioural targets because less than a third of them reported that these were targets in the first place (see Table 27, p. 57). Seventy percent of those who said attendance/truancy was a target reported positive or very positive impacts of planning and reporting. However this pattern did not hold when reducing suspensions, stand-downs and problem behaviour was a target. Just 28 percent of principals said planning and reporting processes had resulted in positive or very positive impacts in this difficult area. Principals in low-decile schools were more likely to report a very positive impact on reducing suspensions, and there was also a trend for reducing suspensions to be a target in low-decile schools.

New principals—those who had been in the role for less than two years—were more likely to identify very positive impacts on improving school climate and culture. It may be that they had selectively targeted this area as one where their new leadership could demonstrably make a difference to the school.

Secondary boards of trustees perceptions of impacts of planning and reporting

Trustees were asked what difference the planning and reporting process had made for their board. The frequencies of their responses to a list of items are shown in Table 33. Again, we see a pattern of increased focus on student achievement, but little indication that this has been linked to any formal reallocation of the school's resources. Nevertheless, some reallocation of resources, at

least in terms of teacher time, is implied by the introduction of new programmes and ways of doing things in half of the schools.

Very few trustees said they left “what next” planning and reporting decisions to the principal. Seventy percent of responding trustees selected at least one of the five *action* items (discussing, planning, acting—see italicised verbs on the table) and a quarter of them said they did three or more of these things. Just 2 percent of trustees did not respond to this question at all. So the overall picture is one of active BOT engagement with achievement information generated during the planning and reporting process.

Table 33 **Secondary boards of trustees perceptions of planning and reporting impacts**

Type of impact	Trustees' responses (n=278)
The board gets more information on student achievement	49
The school has <i>introduced</i> new programmes/ways of doing things as a result of looking at patterns of achievement or engagement	49
The board spends more time <i>discussing</i> plans and actions to improve student achievement	46
The board spends more time <i>discussing</i> student achievement	35
None. We were already using student achievement data to guide planning and spending	27
The board spends more time <i>monitoring</i> patterns of student attendance and engagement in school	20
We have <i>changed</i> our spending priorities	4
None. We leave this to the principal	4
Not sure	4
Other	4

There was a trend for trustees at rural schools to be more likely to say they got more information on student achievement, and to say that they now spent more time on plans and action to improve student achievement.

Secondary teachers' perceptions of their achievements related to planning and reporting implementation

Teachers were asked to identify items that reflected their achievements over the last three years. Those likely to be of either direct or indirect relevance to planning and reporting are shown in Table 34.

Half the teachers noted improvements in student achievement, and a third of them saw improvements in assessment for learning, and in meeting the learning needs of particular groups—all items of direct relevance to planning and reporting processes and intentions. Knowledge and

skills can of course apply to many aspects of a teacher's work, but given the strong likelihood that they will have experienced professional development in relation to planning and reporting targets, this provides indications of positive impacts on many teachers' professional learning. Similar comments could be made about the nearly two-thirds of teachers who said they had achieved an improved learning environment, since this is known to be both an outcome and an enabler of assessment for learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

Table 34 **Secondary teachers' perceptions of their achievements in last three years**

Achievement	Teachers' responses (n=818) %
Increase in my own knowledge/skills	73
Positive/improved learning environment	63
Improved teaching programme	57
Refining/introducing new NCEA assessments	52
Improvements in student achievement	52
Improved student assessment for learning	38
Implementation of an innovative programme	38
Better meeting needs of a particular group	37
Involvement of parents with students' learning	11

Another potential way to document planning and reporting-related changes to teaching is to consider what teachers said were the sources of ideas for changes to their teaching programmes. As in the 2003 NZCER National Survey, teachers most often said their ideas for change had come from other teachers in the school (67 percent, compared to 56 percent in 2003). Ongoing whole-school professional development was seen as influential in making teaching changes by 31 percent (35 percent in 2003) and professional reading and research by 40 percent (39 percent in 2003). Professional development and readings are not necessarily directly related to evidence-based decision making of course, but as we have seen, they are likely to be a first response when a need is perceived. If there has indeed been more school-wide professional development, its influence on teaching changes is seen by the teachers to be about the same as it was three years ago. Of course, those teachers who are the first to adopt ideas they gain from their professional learning may then lead the way for other teachers in the school, so the impact could be indirect and not evident to some teachers. A finer grained study would be needed to tease out these impacts and influences.

Another possibility is to look at the impact of assessment tools on teaching changes. If decisions are being data driven, it could be argued that the tools themselves are influential in changing practice. In the event relatively few teachers perceived such a link. Twelve percent said NCEA had changed their teaching, 11 percent said asTTle tools had done so, 4 percent named a range of

other tools, and 2 percent said PAT tools had influenced changes. Again, finer grained research may be needed in order to understand just how teachers interpreted this question. Did they think only of the shape of NCEA instruments (i.e. achievement and unit standards) and accompanying exemplar tasks when they responded? Other research has suggested the different possibility that closer involvement with internal assessment for NCEA gives teachers more immediate feedback about how well their teaching has translated into students' summative achievement:

Teachers reported that internal assessment had sharpened their awareness of the effectiveness of their teaching and focused their teaching on those issues that were seen as most important and/or relating to the various achievement standards (Meyer, McClure, Walkey, McKenzie, & Weir, 2006, p. 69).

Such increased awareness arguably comes too late for the students who have just been assessed, unless the school has a policy of resubmission, but should benefit subsequent students.

A third possibility is to look for changes in teachers' practices that could indicate greater student involvement in formative assessment of learning progress. Here there are some indicators of modest gains across the three years, particularly in relation to setting individual learning goals, and self and peer assessment. But these are not particularly radical innovations and the responses give no indication of increased setting of standards-based outcomes (such as might be derived from national tools like asTTle or PATs) for learning conversations with students. This is congruent with the low reported use of these tools as sources of ideas for teaching changes. The small increase in the use of learning logs could be an encouraging step in the direction of increased formative assessment.

Table 35 **How teachers encourage students to take responsibility for their learning**

Strategy	Teachers' responses %	
	2006 (n=818)	2003 (n=744)
Students involved in individual goal setting	63	52
Student self-assessments of learning are used	50	42
Students peer review each other's work	47	42
Students identify their own learning needs, e.g. learning logs	31	25
Students involved with setting of topics/context to be taught	21	18
Students involved with setting of expected outcomes/standards	19	18
Students involved with setting of assessment tasks	8	5

Teachers' perceptions of benefits and challenges

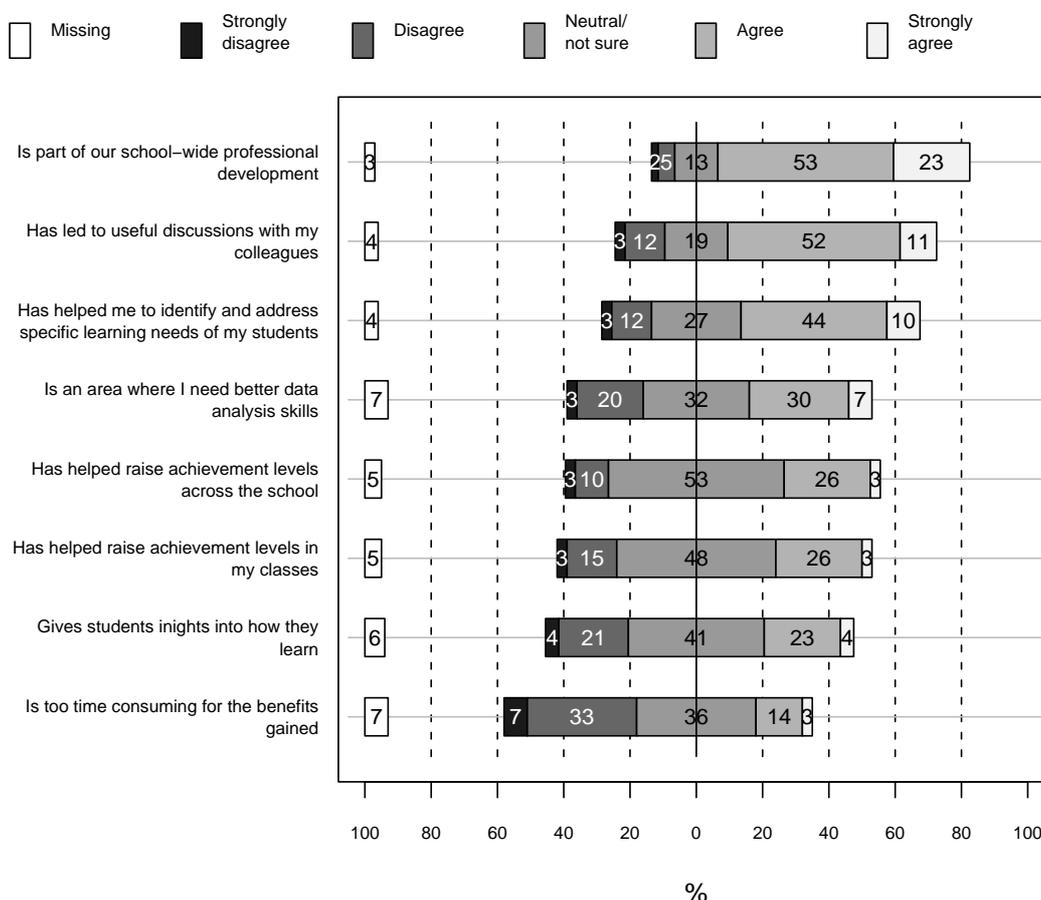
Figure 10 reports teachers' responses to a range of statements about the specific intersection of the planning and reporting process and their classroom practice. A clear majority see planning and reporting as part of the school culture, say it has led to useful discussions with colleagues, and has

helped with identification of specific student learning needs. Equally encouragingly, just 17 percent of teachers agree or strongly agree that the process is too time consuming for the benefits gained.

But what happens after the professional conversations have taken place? Just 29 percent of the teachers agreed that achievement levels had been raised across the school, or in their own classes. There was a very strong correlation between increased awareness of learning needs and a perception that achievement levels had been raised. Teachers who agreed or strongly agreed that the planning and reporting process had helped them identify specific learning needs were more likely to also agree or strongly agree that achievement levels had been raised.

The 27 percent who saw benefits in giving students insights into how they learn broadly matches the pattern of involvement in formative assessment activities beyond self and peer assessment, which may or may not focus on *learning per se*. All three of these items attracted “not sure” responses from about half of the teachers. This suggests that there is still work to be done if teachers are to step beyond setting and monitoring goals, and apply the insights gained to actual teaching and learning changes. A focus on learning to learn might be one fruitful avenue for future professional development, especially given the policy imperative to help students become “lifelong learners” and the translation of this into key competencies for the new curriculum (Hipkins, 2006) although great care would be needed in addressing assessment challenges before such a focus could be directly linked to planning and reporting processes (Black, McCormick, James, & Pedder, 2006).

Figure 10 **Secondary teachers' perceptions of planning and reporting benefits and challenges**



It is concerning that 37 percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they needed better data analysis skills and a further 32 percent were not sure. Interestingly, just 14 percent of teachers who responded to the 2003 NZCER National Survey said they needed help with “analysis of assessment results” (Hipkins & Hodgen, 2004). It may be that the numbers who knew they needed such help more than doubled across the three years because of much greater awareness of the need to use student data to modify teaching. By comparison, primary teachers’ confidence in working with assessment data has *increased* across the last decade (see Section 4). Does the difference reside in the far greater likelihood that primary teachers will by now have experienced either literacy or numeracy professional development, and possibly both, whereas secondary teachers may not have taken part in either?

Other research (for example, Matters, 2006) asserts that teachers’ ability to analyse data, and to subsequently act on the findings, must be supported by quality professional development. This seems likely to be another area of ongoing need for support and we will return to this question in the final section of the report.

Around half the teachers in each identified role¹⁴ agreed that the planning and reporting process had led to useful discussion with colleagues. However, senior managers were more likely than any other teacher group to strongly agree with this statement and teachers were more likely to disagree. Similarly, while around a third of each group agreed that they needed better data analysis skills, senior managers were more likely to strongly agree and specialist classroom teachers and teachers to say they were neutral or unsure. Deans and senior managers were more likely to disagree (deans) or strongly disagree (senior managers) that the process took too much time for the benefits gained.

Ongoing planning and reporting-related issues

Near the end of each questionnaire, all four participating groups were asked “What do you think are the major issues confronting your school, if any?” Table 36 shows the frequency with which each group selected items of relevance to planning and reporting processes. Funding was the most frequently selected issue for all four groups, and is included as a comparison of relative levels of concern.

While student achievement is an issue of concern for considerable numbers of each group, in many cases this does not seem to translate to a concern for achieving school targets *per se*. Similarly, activity related to the development and maintenance of the school charter, which is the foundation on which annual plans are built, appears to be of concern for only a few members of each group. It could be that the planning and reporting process *per se* has now been accepted, and so is not much of an “issue” as such. However, actually doing something about raising student achievement, when the need to do so has been identified, is a different order of challenge. Throughout the findings from the secondary survey there have been indications that the crucial next step of making actual changes in teaching is more problematic.

The item “assessment workloads” is more likely to be of indirect relevance to planning and reporting. Other research suggests that NCEA will be the source of this concern (Alison, 2005; Hipkins, Vaughan, with Beals, Ferral, & Gardiner, 2005), but as we have seen the NCEA is currently the most frequently accessed source of planning and reporting data. That fewer parents are concerned about each issue doubtless reflects their lower overall involvement in the planning and reporting processes.

¹⁴ Senior managers, middle managers, deans, specialist classroom teachers, teachers.

Table 36 **The extent to which aspects of planning and reporting are seen as “major issues” facing the school**

Aspect	Principals (n=194) %	Teachers (n=818) %	Trustees	Parents
Funding	81	53	74	41
Student achievement	60	44	45	37
Assessment workload	55	44	28	15
Achieving school targets	18	12	16	7
Planning/policy/charter	11	7	10	7

Differences between schools

A greater number of differences were found between the secondary than the primary schools. This is partly likely to be a statistical effect. The sample sizes in the secondary survey were larger, and so any differences that did exist were more likely to reach statistically significant levels. There can also be very marked differences in the overall character of secondary schools—perhaps more so than in primary schools because of wider options for varying the curriculum and creating areas of both curricular and extracurricular specialisation. So-called “academy” schools¹⁵ are an example of the latter.

Perceptions about planning and reporting

Principals from very large schools (1500+ students) were more likely to say the planning and reporting framework would help schools identify what they were doing well, as were teachers in state-integrated schools, which are mostly higher decile schools. Principals in schools with 750–1499 and 1500+ students were more likely to say planning and reporting could help raise achievement for all students. Principals of high-decile schools were more likely to say their teaching staff were “very involved” in the planning and reporting process, and there was a trend for them to say their senior staff were very involved. Principals of main urban schools were more likely to say middle managers were very involved. Since main urban schools tend to be high-decile schools, these findings are doubtless interrelated. It seems the overall focus of planning and reporting activities in these schools is likely to relate to fine-tuning ways they are already working.

In effects also likely to be related to school size, principals from low-decile schools, and from rural schools, were *less* likely than other principals to identify raising achievement for all students

¹⁵ For example, a school might have a “sports academy” for students who might otherwise be early leavers but who excel in this area.

as a purpose of the planning and reporting framework. Trustees from low-decile schools were more likely to identify raising achievement for under-achieving students as a purpose of planning and reporting. Teachers in low-decile schools were more likely to think that the planning and reporting process would assist the Government to gather data about each school to assist schools. Again, as in the primary schools, there are interesting hints that the focus in the low-decile schools seems to be more on learning challenges for certain groups of students, echoing the “closing gaps” intention of the policy.

The nature of the goals set

Both principals and teachers in low-decile schools, and teachers in state schools, were more likely to identify attendance/truancy as a target area for improvement. Teachers in state schools, low-decile schools, in schools with rolls between 250–399 students, and in minor urban or rural areas,¹⁶ were more likely to identify problem behaviour as a target. There was a trend for principals in low-decile schools to also do so. The 2003 survey reported that behaviour and discipline were more often seen as issues in low-decile schools (Hipkins & Hodgen, 2004) so this pattern makes sense.

By contrast, principals of the largest schools (1500+ students) were more likely to identify school culture and climate as a target. This doubtless reflects the challenges of achieving a shared understanding of the ethos of the school across the much larger student and teacher populations. Interestingly, teachers in *low*-decile schools, in schools with rolls between 250–399 students, and in minor urban or rural areas, were more likely than teachers in bigger, high-decile urban schools to identify school climate and culture as a target. It is possible that they interpreted this phrase differently from principals, perhaps again reading “student behaviour and engagement” as its meaning. Teachers in high-decile schools were less likely than those in mid or low-decile schools to identify literacy as a target.

Principals of schools with 750 students or more were more likely to identify national priorities as a reason for the targets they selected. It may be that the smaller schools, which do tend to be the lower decile schools, were more likely to see themselves as primarily focused on the needs of their own students rather than on national priorities.

Use of assessment tools

Principals in low-decile schools were more likely to say they used asTTle data. Again these findings are similar to those reported for primary schools. As already discussed in Section 4, asTTle tools are free to all schools but they have to pay for PAT tools.

¹⁶ The variables of decile/size/location are interrelated and it is hard to say which is the predominant factor here.

Principals of main and minor urban schools tended to be more likely to have used NCEA data for planning and reporting purposes than principals of secondary urban (town) or rural schools.

Making evidence-based decisions

Principals of urban schools with 1500+ students were more likely to say that curriculum and cross-curriculum teams had discussed assessment data and shared their understandings, and teachers in rural schools were less likely to say they had done this. No doubt this is related to the much larger numbers of staff employed in large urban schools, and hence bigger curriculum teams. Professional readings were more likely to have been distributed to staff in main urban schools, and both main and minor urban schools were more likely to have developed an action plan.

In contrast to the principals' stated actions, teachers from low-decile schools were more likely to say they had used action plans, or professional readings, or had carried out whole-school discussions for shared understanding of the learning issues revealed by the data gathered. As with perceptions of *purposes*, it seems the focus of teacher *actions* in the low-decile schools is more likely to closely match the intentions of the planning and reporting policy.

Teachers in low-decile schools, and in schools with rolls of less than 400 students, were more likely to say that meeting planning and reporting targets had raised achievement at the school. However there was also a trend for teachers in low- and mid-decile schools to more often say they needed help with data analysis.

The overall differences between schools reported here suggest that they are exercising their autonomy to make planning and reporting decisions relevant to their students' needs. Higher decile schools, likely to have fewer underachievers, are using the process to fine-tune their work and to raise achievement across the board. While low-decile schools may also have this overall focus, they are more likely to have taken up the additional challenge of selectively targeting students who need help to close achievement gaps.

6. Use of student management systems

Managing evidence-based decision making demands good systems for organising, manipulating, and storing data. The MOE has worked with providers and schools in an attempt to ensure all schools can access IT software that is suitable to be used for this purpose now and in the future. The MOE has audited commercially available systems against a list of criteria to produce a list of “accredited” SMS. However, making the investment and then determining how these systems are used is each school’s responsibility. One strategy for lessening the financial burden has been to offer cheaper systems that store data on the Internet, with centralised technical management of the system. Such systems are identified with an “e” in the title—e.g. eTAP and eMinerva.

Primary schools

Primary principals were provided with a list of all accredited providers and asked to identify the SMS used in their school for managing data records for planning and reporting purposes. Table 37 shows the results. MUSAC, which has traditionally been widely used for routine administration, is still the most commonly used SMS. Note that nearly a third of the responding principals said they had no SMS as yet.

Table 37 **SMS used for planning and reporting administration in primary schools**

Type of system	Principals (n=186) %
No system	29
MUSAC (Classroom manager)	38
Schoolmaster	11
eTAP	7
Integris	7
eMinerva	3
Other SMS	4

The most commonly mentioned “other” SMS was Kidbase (3 percent), which is not MOE accredited. Two principals were not sure what SMS the school used. More principals from low-decile schools said they did not have a SMS as yet, which fits with other data about resources that have to be paid for by the school.

Primary principals were reasonably evenly split between the view that an inadequate SMS was a moderate, serious, or overwhelming obstacle to planning and reporting processes and the view that this was not an issue at all (see Figure 6). We checked to see if there was a relationship between expressed concerns and the availability of a SMS in each school, or the type of SMS the school had. No clear relationships were found. For example, in those schools without a SMS, 43 percent of principals did not respond to the question of the extent to which this was an issue, 34 percent said it was, and 22 percent said it wasn't. Interestingly, lack of a SMS was more likely to be seen as not an issue, or a minor issue, in small or very small schools. In medium-size and large schools it was more likely to be seen as a moderate issue.

We asked teachers about the level of support they had experienced for using SMS. Encouragingly 47 percent said they had either total or moderate support for using the school's SMS. At the other end of the spectrum, 10 percent said there was no support or inadequate support for effective use of SMS in their school. Thirty-five percent of the teachers said either the school did not have an SMS, or they did not have access to or use of the SMS the school had.

In an open-response question, teachers identified further professional development or training as the main solution to the dilemma of needing support to use SMS, with other suggestions being increased teacher access, technical help in assisting with problems with the SMS, funding for data entry, and release time.

Secondary schools

The secondary school principals were asked somewhat different questions about SMS. We felt it was fair to assume that most if not all secondary schools would have such a system, since they need to send examination enrolments and the like to New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) electronically. The length of the survey meant that a question about which system they used was edited out because this was seen as less of a priority than other questions.

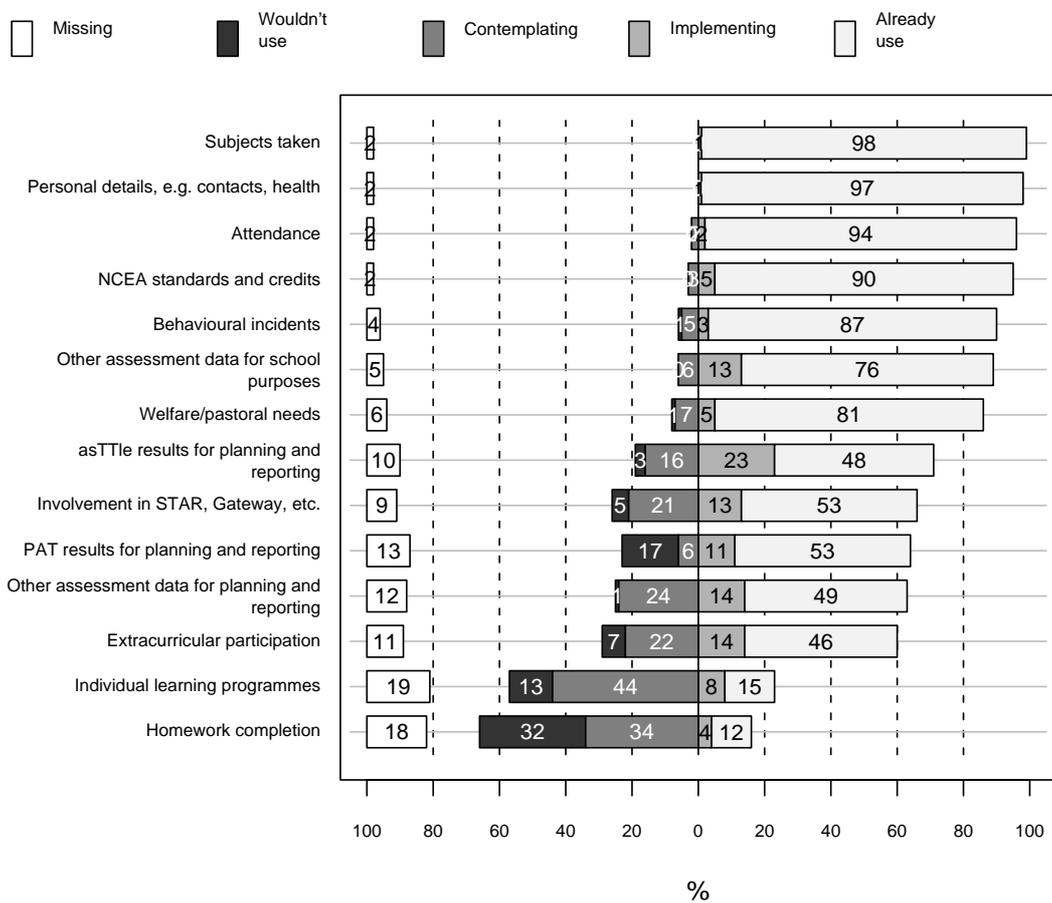
Figure 11 shows the secondary principals' perceptions of the extent to which schools use their SMS for different purposes. At the time of the survey, almost all schools were indeed already using their SMS for recording aspects of school administration that have traditionally been collected, and for data that NZQA requires in an electronic format. The pattern was more mixed, however, with respect to types of achievement data that could be used for planning and reporting purposes.

Assessment tools that generate data easily stored in an electronic format were included in this item (e.g. asTTle, PATs). The pattern we found is one of considerable flux, with some data records in the process of being implemented, and others under active consideration. For example, just half the responding schools were already electronically collating asTTle data at the time of the survey, but nearly another quarter were in the process of implementing a system for doing this

and another 16 percent were considering doing so. This dynamic situation suggests the data reported here could already be out of date.

To probe the extent to which schools developed the means of capturing other types of data, we also included some items such as welfare/pastoral needs. That SMS are apparently being used to record more qualitative data is suggested by the widespread practice of recording behavioural incidents and pastoral needs, and in around half the schools aspects such as participation in Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR), Gateway, and extracurricular activities. It would be interesting to review the form these records take in different schools. Such details were beyond the scope of this survey.

Figure 11 **Current and proposed uses of SMS in secondary schools**



Relatively small schools (roll size 250–399) were less likely to be already using SMS to record attendance. Since this is such a common use, the difference needs to be kept in perspective—three-quarters of the schools in this size band were already doing so and most of the others were in the process of implementing a system. Clearly, those schools that have formulated attendance targets for planning and reporting should now be well placed to generate the data they need. Mid- and low-decile schools were more likely to be using SMS to record data related to student welfare and pastoral needs, and the same pattern held for behavioural incidents. State schools were more

likely to record behavioural incidents and welfare/pastoral needs than were state-integrated schools.

Schools in the mid-size range (400–1499), and low-decile schools, were more likely to say they would not use SMS for recording PAT results. This fits with the finding that low-decile schools are more likely to be using asTTle tools to gather data. On the other hand, low-decile schools were more likely to be already using their SMS to record STAR data, with mid- and high-decile schools more likely to be contemplating doing so. Schools already using SMS to record individual learning programmes (ILPs) were more likely to be high decile. This also needs to be kept in perspective—44 percent of principals were still contemplating this use and 19 percent did not respond to the question.

7. Progress with the planning and reporting framework in its first three years

This section brings together findings from the two surveys to discuss overall progress in the implementation of planning and reporting processes across the school sectors. We review and discuss evidence of positive progress in relation to the following:

- progress with implementation of the planning and reporting framework
- evidence of impacts in schools
- support for implementation.

The good news is that planning and reporting processes are now widely understood and are being implemented broadly as intended across both primary and secondary sectors. This good news does come with some caveats. Collectively, it suggests a need for ongoing support for schools if this initial progress is to be sustained and deepened.

Progress with implementation of the planning and reporting framework

Shortly after the planning and reporting framework was initiated in 2003, Cathy Wylie noted that, after a decade of school self-management, it was to be expected that some school leaders would initially be “more sensitive” about a new legal requirement to share school-generated information with the MOE (Wylie, 2003). Acceptance of the framework could be seen as hinging on perceptions of the intended benefits: are we doing this to help our students or because we have to?

Both the primary and secondary national surveys conducted in 2003 found some uncertainty about the intent of the planning and reporting framework (Hipkins & Hodgen, 2004; Wylie, 2003). This is no longer the case, with only small proportions of secondary principals, teachers and trustees still expressing some doubt or lack of knowledge. Table 38 compares not sure/no response answers to questions about the purpose of the planning and reporting framework in 2003 and 2006 to demonstrate this shift.¹⁷

¹⁷ Section 5 noted that half the 2006 secondary principals who said they were not sure did actually identify purposes—we took this response to mean that they were not sure which of those purposes was the main priority.

Table 38 **Uncertainty about planning and reporting framework purposes, 2003¹⁸ and 2006**

Responding group	2003 %	2006 %
Primary principals	18	>1
Secondary principals	28	5
Primary teachers	35	-
Secondary teachers	51	4
Secondary trustees ¹⁹	20	3

At both primary and secondary levels of schooling in 2006 most responding teachers, principals, and secondary school trustees could cite a range of purposes for implementing the planning and reporting process, with “raising achievement for all students” and “setting goals for student achievement” the most commonly cited purposes at both primary and secondary levels. Thus, purposes selected at the school level mostly aligned broadly with the policy intent that the process will support achievement of each school’s own students.

Planning and reporting has become a widely understood process in schools, just three years after the policy was implemented.

What sort of goals are schools setting?

Literacy and numeracy targets remain the most common focus for planning and reporting, as they were in 2003. Tables 39 and 40 show this is the case in both primary and secondary schools.

Table 39 **Literacy as an achievement target**

School has literacy goals	2003 %	2006 %
Primary principals	92	89
Secondary principals	93	83
Primary teachers		86
Secondary teachers	80	77

¹⁸ The primary-level data have not been previously published.

¹⁹ Primary trustees were not included in the planning and reporting survey.

Table 40 **Numeracy as an achievement target**

School has numeracy goals	2003 %	2006 %
Primary principals	83	75
Secondary principals	67	52
Primary teachers		71
Secondary teachers	59	49

There does appear to be some trend downward, particularly for secondary schools. This may reflect their greater use of NCEA results to set targets. For primary, it may indicate that some schools that had initially given numeracy top focus, were now moving on to other areas.

Analysis of primary schools' actual goals showed that the schools that gave these were more likely to set clear, measurable targets in literacy and numeracy—71 percent of targets in these two areas had a clear target and method of measuring. But nearly a third of the provided literacy and numeracy targets needed some attention to either clarifying the target, or measurement. This is an area for ongoing support and development.

Despite this predominant focus on literacy and numeracy, a diverse range of curriculum areas, and some extracurricular areas, were also identified as targets for planning and reporting. For example, around a fifth of the participating primary schools had either physical fitness or broader PE goals. As schools are now required to specifically report on this area, a focus on this learning area may well increase.

Table 41 shows that both ICT skills and other generic skills or competencies were targets for planning and reporting in some schools at both levels. They were, however, more likely to be targets in secondary schools, with more secondary teachers mentioning generic skills/competencies than any other group, and more secondary principals mentioning ICT. An issue to watch here is that quantitative monitoring of uptake of ICT might more easily focus on surface features of learning (time computers are in use etc.) than on the *different* types of learning experiences that ICT use can potentially support. Schools may need access to different types of review tools—perhaps to monitor “opportunities to learn” related to ICT use that extends analytic and thinking skills, for example—if they are to avoid this trap.

Table 41 **Other planning and reporting targets in 2006**

Responding group	ICT skills %	Generic skills %
Primary principals (n=186)	10	12
Secondary principals (n=194)	40	16
Primary teachers (n=279)	13	12
Secondary teachers (n=818)	30	27

Secondary schools were also more likely to set goals that focus on student attitudes and behaviour, including attendance and school climate. These different priorities may reflect increased engagement challenges and issues with tracking attendance and behaviour as students move between different teachers in the secondary school and come closer to the end of their compulsory schooling. Thus we see the value of the flexibility of the planning and reporting framework in allowing schools to set the goals that are most relevant for them.

Evidence of impacts in schools

If the planning and reporting process is working as intended, individual schools will be setting targets of relevance to them, acting on these targets in their teaching, and then adjusting their plans strategically on the basis of the feedback they gather. What evidence do we have that this cycle of events is in fact happening?

Linking goals to learning needs

At both levels of schooling, conversations about the specific learning needs of the school's students do appear to be happening and to be broadly based. Table 42 compares types of information sources used in primary and secondary schools to determine targets, and shows that at both levels of schooling these are likely to take into account both school-specific and national priorities. The relatively greater part played by senior and middle managers in secondary schools is an interesting difference between the two levels. Middle managers in secondary schools tend to be relatively more experienced faculty or curriculum leaders of a teaching team. This is likely to be the expertise being tapped when senior managers co-ordinate information about learning needs across the diverse curriculum areas of the school. How this information becomes condensed to form a manageable set of school-wide goals would be an interesting process to trace, but this would need finer grained research than that reported here.

Table 42 **Sources used to determine targets in primary and secondary schools**

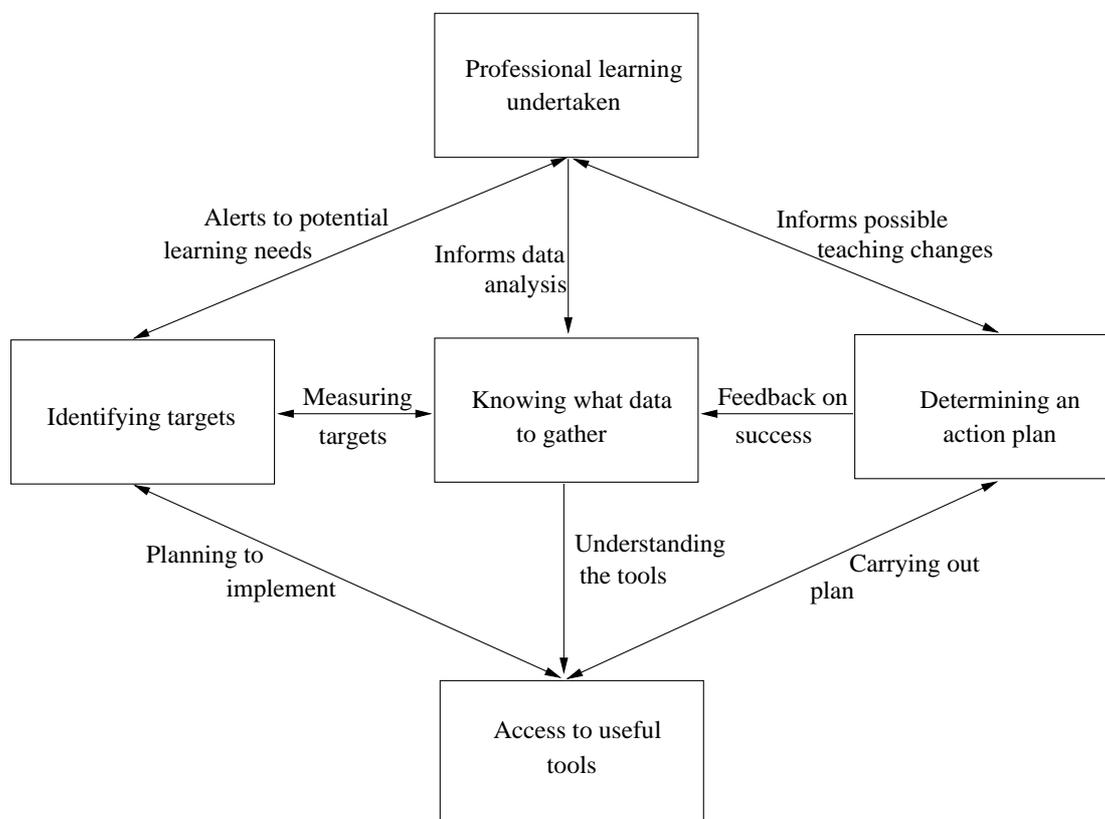
Purpose	Primary principals (n=186) %	Secondary principals (n=194) %
National priorities	62	60
Analysis of variance from previous year	58	49
Classroom teachers' perceptions of a need	54	54
Senior/middle managers' perception of a need	47	75
Points identified in ERO report	11	31
Feedback from MOE	>2	6

Secondary principals were also more likely to say they incorporated points made in an ERO report into their planning and reporting processes. This accords with ways principals said they used the then new ERO “assess and assist” reviews at the time of the 2003 NZCER National Survey of Secondary Schools. In that survey around half the principals and teachers said the ERO report had provided a positive impetus for changes in the school’s programmes. Twenty-two percent of principals said these changes included the analysis of achievement data and 11 percent said they had increased their reporting of student achievement to the school’s trustees (Hipkins & Hodgen, 2004). By 2006, when the next NZCER National Survey was carried out, many more schools would have experienced “assess and assist” reviews and it seems that these have continued to provide a positive impetus for planning and reporting processes in around a third of secondary schools.

What’s happening once goals have been set?

When a need is perceived, and an achievement target has been determined, the most likely first response in both primary and secondary schools is to organise for staff to undertake professional development in the relevant area, and/or make an action plan. Deciding what this action might be doubtless also relates to professional development that has been undertaken. Figure 12 identifies three key roles for professional development that is intended to support planning and reporting processes. This set of relationships suggests focused and timely professional development is critical to planning and reporting, particularly when their professional learning helps teachers get to grips with appropriate tools for data gathering and analysis.

Figure 12 **Potential relationships between professional development and planning and reporting processes**



Given the key role of professional development, it is not surprising that more than half the principals (65 percent primary, 53 percent secondary) said the professional development already happening in the school was a consideration in setting targets. Professional development for both literacy and numeracy has been reasonably well funded by the MOE. The evidence presented here suggests that this investment is paying off, at least in terms of *awareness* and an *intention* to raise students' achievement in these areas.

Tools schools are using for reporting

More than half the responding schools, at both primary and secondary level, are now voluntarily using nationally standardised tools that also provide national benchmarks (e.g. the numeracy diagnostic interview, asTTle, PATs) to formulate and monitor school-wide goals for raising achievement:

- 59 percent of secondary schools were using either asTTle or PATs, with 14 percent of these schools using both
- half the primary principals reported using asTTle and/or PAT Mathematics for target setting (50 percent) and greater numbers used one or both of these for reporting against targets (69 percent). Similar patterns were found for asTTle/PAT reading combinations (56 percent for

target setting; 68 percent for reporting) and PAT listening (52 percent for target setting; 65 percent for reporting).

In addition, three-quarters of secondary principals said the school used NCEA data to determine goals.

The 1999 NZCER National Survey of Primary Schools documented a wide range of tools that were already being used to determine classroom programmes, although there was little evidence that this data was used to describe overall performance levels and progress:

Most teachers in this survey did say they used assessment data for programme planning, at least in terms of curriculum coverage. There was a much lower use of assessment data to compare different groups of children, which suggests there was little analytical use of assessment data to inform programme development in the way recommended by Timperley et. al. (Wylie, 1999, p. 135).

Seven years on, that situation had certainly changed. Although schools continue to use many of the tools that were available in 1999, newer tools have been designed to allow the sort of analysis that Wylie identified as missing at that time. For example, asTTle was new in 2003. Schools have been learning how to use asTTle tools at the same time as they have been learning about the whole planning and reporting process. Similarly, PAT maths tests have recently been extensively revised and many schools will still be learning how they now work, and how they can be used to support planning and reporting. PAT reading comprehension tests are currently undergoing similar revision, and e-asTTle is on the way. In this environment of rapid change and development, it is encouraging that so many primary teachers and principals are confident of their ability to interpret assessment data. Indeed confidence to do so had already trended upwards by 2003, and has done so again by 2006.

The picture at the secondary school level is not quite so clear-cut, or encouraging, with a third of secondary teachers identifying a need to learn the skills of data analysis. The tools used by primary teachers for assessing literacy and numeracy may not be seen as relevant to their work by many secondary teachers, most of whom are subject specialists. They appear to turn instead to the NCEA, by means of which their students are assessed for qualifications, regardless of any planning and reporting imperative. That is, NCEA tools, not specifically designed for comparing progress in ways that might directly inform ongoing teaching, are being used for this purpose. An issue with this otherwise pragmatic use is that NCEA data are less easily interpreted in relation to specific classroom practice, beyond a focus on formative assessment as a version of “practice summative assessment” (Hipkins, Conner, & Neill, 2006 discuss the prevalence of this interpretation) or gaining immediate feedback about students’ successes and areas of difficulty when completing summative assessments of internally assessed standards (Meyer et al., 2006).

Implementation of the NCEA is relatively recent, and learning to use standards-based assessment for high stakes reporting has presented secondary teachers with considerable professional learning challenges (Hipkins, Vaughan, Beals, & Ferral, 2004). Learning about the use of nationally standardised quantitative tools is now, and will continue to be, ongoing. In this fluid situation,

ongoing support and professional development in the use of such tools for planning and reporting purposes would seem desirable, if levels of uptake are to be increased. Alternatively, secondary teachers may need to learn to use a range of different tools (for example, asTTle tools or PATs or ARBs where relevant, or perhaps PISA tools from the OECD's international testing programme) as their primary colleagues are already more likely to do.

The evidence presented here suggests that availability of suitable tools, like available professional development, is another factor that predisposes schools to set literacy and numeracy targets. Notwithstanding the stated *policy* intention to make a wide range of evidence part of the planning and reporting process, the *process* required is most easily accommodated by setting goals that use statistical evidence to show progress. Setting *measurable* targets, in turn, requires access to tools that can be used to measure learning progress and hence generate the requisite statistical data. As we have seen, assessment tools generated for the New Zealand curriculum, appropriately benchmarked to measure the learning progress of New Zealand students, are most readily available in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Should we be concerned about this? Cathy Wylie comments on a balancing act for schools:

Literacy and numeracy are key to learning. But if schools set targets only for literacy and mathematics, it means that schools and the Ministry of Education are unlikely to have a complete picture of student learning, and gains that students may be making. If these are the only school targets for student performance, and the targets are seen as 'high stakes' within the school or by the local Ministry of Education office, then less attention may be paid to other curriculum areas, and the development of skills and dispositions which foster learning in both the short and long-term (Wylie, 2003, p. 6).

Clearly, gains in literacy and numeracy are important, but they should not come at the expense of a rich mix of both curriculum areas and types of learning experiences. Equivalent tools are not currently available for other learning areas, or for different types of curriculum goals such as improving generic skills, or the key competencies in the current draft curriculum, or for aspects such as improving student engagement. One way of addressing this issue, while still keeping planning and reporting gains, might be to focus on the development of new tools. But this might be easier said than done. For example measuring "progress" in the development of key competencies is by no means straightforward (Hipkins et al., 2006). Their assessment would need much critical attention and the development of some innovative approaches or tools if schools are to set meaningful goals in these areas.

Creating a conversation about learning needs in our school/our class

Is the data now being gathered informing *teaching* changes as intended? Raising awareness of the need for such changes is an important first step, and this begins with shared conversations amongst the school staff. If these conversations are effective, we should also begin to see evidence of formative assessment conversations with students during the learning process. Survey methodology is not adequate to addressing these aspects of planning and reporting in the rich

contextual detail needed, but again there are interesting indications that the process is evolving as intended.

Primary principals were more likely to say classroom teachers are involved or very involved in determining planning and reporting targets than were secondary principals. Primary teachers saw themselves as more involved than did their principals (61 percent said they were involved or actively involved). Secondary teachers were not asked exactly the same question, but for four possible areas of planning and reporting activity they were, on average, likely to say they were “part of the decision making team” in just 16 percent of cases. They were more likely to say they were simply “consulted”. These differences doubtless reflect organisational differences. Secondary schools tend to be larger, and any one teacher may interact with a range of very different classes, whereas primary teachers tend to be with the same class all year. These findings suggest more research is needed into how school-wide intentions actually translate into classroom-based impacts in the secondary school, especially if goals are constructed without using information from teachers, or discussing the meaning of the goals in school teams.

Section 4 documented the widespread use of a range of both quantitative and qualitative assessment tools in primary schools when generating summative evidence of learning for reporting to parents, trustees, and nationally for accountability purposes, and for formative use in the classroom. Responses to a question about moderation suggested that primary teachers were more involved with analysis of student assessment data than they had reported elsewhere in the survey. Whether via informal discussions or more formal moderation meetings, almost all teachers were involved in processes for considering their own assessment decisions in relation to those of other members of the school staff. This is a marked shift in primary school culture.

There are interesting hints that low-decile primary schools, in particular, have embraced the challenges of monitoring their students’ progress against the targets they have determined. They are more likely to have used formal moderation to develop a shared understanding of standards, and to perceive a positive impact from sharing information about student learning. Two-thirds of teachers in these schools—more than in higher decile schools—said they had a developed action plan for raising student achievement. It may be that greater needs to do so are perceived in these schools. The more limited scope of the survey questions for secondary schools means that we cannot say with as much certainty if diverse types of evidence are also being used to change actual classroom practice there.

Section 4 reported that most primary teachers and principals perceived either “some gains” or “very positive impacts” in assessment-related classroom interactions—for example, providing feedback to students, setting goals with students, and using assessment as part of their daily teaching. This accords with 70 percent of primary teachers saying they use student self-assessment as a strategy for checking progress and giving formative feedback to students. Similarly, 75 percent said they used running records formatively, just 1 percent more than the number who said they used these for gathering data to report on target areas; and 59 percent used exemplars formatively—more than said they did so for summative purposes. AsTTle, however,

was less likely to be used formatively than summatively, even though potentially it could be. The picture that emerges is one of some gains, with ongoing opportunities to assist teachers to coordinate formative and summative uses of the same data.

The picture in secondary schools is not quite so clear-cut. In part this is because it is not self-evident how NCEA data inform planning and reporting processes and in part because the detail of data sources used was not sought in the secondary survey. Section 5 reported only modest gains in the use of self-assessment and peer review since 2003, but Table 43 suggests that primary schools may have *sustained* higher levels of self-assessment rather than actually increasing these over the last three years. (Note that the 2003 primary data is from the NZCER National Survey in that year, whereas the 2006 primary data is from the planning and reporting survey.)

Table 43 **Student involvement in formative assessment practices 2003 and 2006**

Student involvement	Primary teachers		Secondary teachers	
	(n=431) 2003 %	(n=279) 2006 %	(n=744) 2003 %	(n=818) 2006 %
Self-assessment	70	70	42	50
Peer review	49	44	42	47

Finer grained research could throw more light on the ways schools are using self- and peer feedback for formative assessment purposes. At the moment, these data raise more questions than they answer.

Now that planning and reporting processes are taking root, it may also be time to begin to consider some “what next?” challenges for the early and successful adopters of the framework. It would be a pity to limit professional development opportunities to those who need to catch up, important as that may be. How might leading schools strengthen the formative aspects of change, and involve students more fully in assessment decisions as one means of fostering lifelong learning dispositions? There are possibilities here for synergies with other policy initiatives. For example, the key competencies proposed for the revised curriculum stress student self-management and active participation in learning and, potentially, assessment (Hipkins, 2006). The idea that students are active in ongoing determination and monitoring of their own learning needs is also central to the concept of “personalising learning” (Ministry of Education, 2006a) and other future-focused commentary (Secondary Futures, 2006).

Progress towards involvement of the wider school community

Trustees were more likely to be involved in making planning and reporting decisions, at least when determining targets, in secondary schools than in primary schools. The reasons for this are not readily apparent and could bear further investigation. Wylie (2007) reports data from the 2007 NZCER National Secondary School Survey that shows that most secondary BOTs see strategic

planning as a key element in their role, and that this, along with having a greater focus on student achievement and good financial management, are their main achievements over the years from 2003–2006.

Table 44 **Principals’ views of the involvement of others in determining planning and reporting targets**

Group involved or very involved in making decisions about planning and reporting targets	Primary %	Secondary %
Classroom teachers	55	45
Trustees	24	65
Parents	4	11

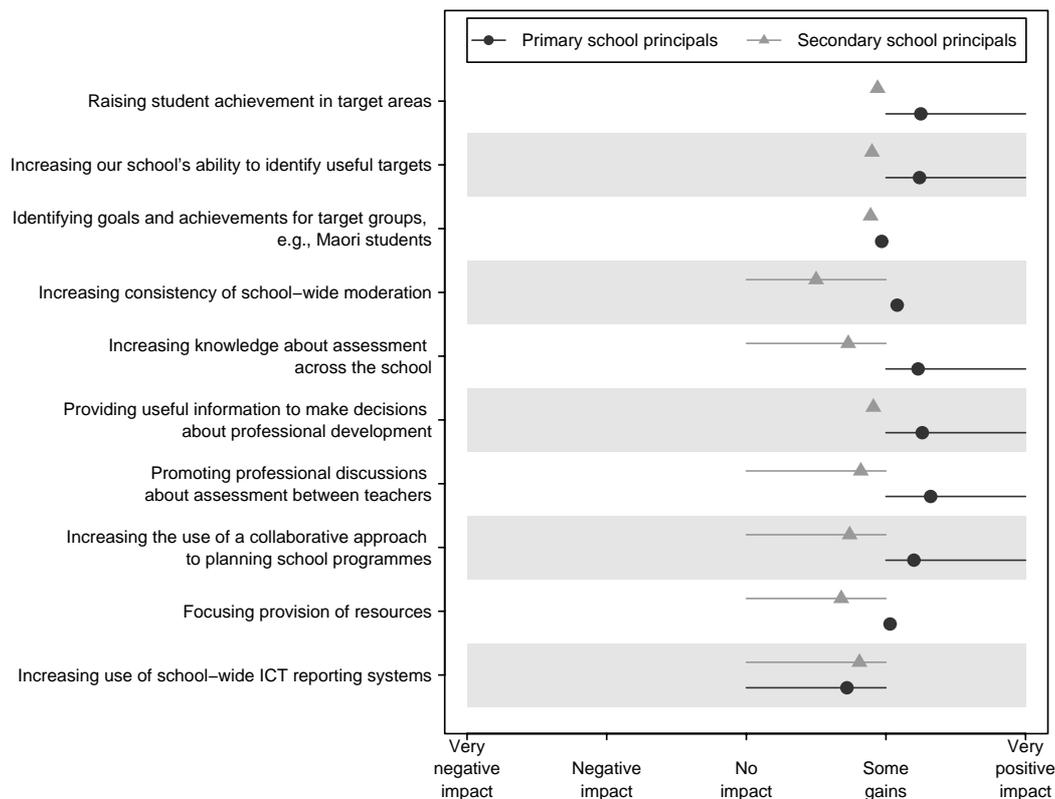
Parents are harder to involve in school decision making around planning and reporting, and rarely take part at the goal-setting stage. However, it is encouraging that consulting parents when planning what to do once targets had been determined was an action step in around a quarter of the primary schools.

Just 7 percent of secondary students were involved or very involved in setting planning and reporting goals. The planning and reporting survey did not include a question about this, so direct comparisons are not possible. Note that involvement of students in formative assessment has already been discussed and is happening in many schools.

Initial gains from the planning and reporting framework

A clear majority of teachers and principals, at both levels of schooling, see some positive impacts from the framework, across a range of aspects of learning. Illustrating this, Figure 13 compares primary and secondary principals’ perceptions of impacts over the initial years of their take up of planning and reporting, focusing on trends around the mean.

Figure 13 Primary and secondary principals' perceptions of impacts



Overall, primary school leaders were likely to hold somewhat more positive views of gains made across all the identified factors except the use of school-wide reporting systems. Secondary principals differed more widely in their views, with more of them perceiving no impact. As we have seen, primary school targets tend to relate closely to what schools often perceive as their “core business”—that is students’ literacy and numeracy learning gains. While secondary schools may also have similar targets, it is less clear how teaching for strengthening these is being addressed across the diverse curriculum areas of the school. Answering this question, like questions about exactly how NCEA data is being used in planning and reporting, would require finer grained research.

The greatest overall difference of opinion is for the impact of planning and reporting on increasing the consistency of school-wide moderation. This is the area where fewer secondary principals perceive any impact. This difference makes sense because the implementation of the NCEA has made moderation a focus of intense scrutiny in secondary schools in recent years. NZCER’s Learning Curves research found that the time needed for moderation of students’ work was a key contributor to the time pressures of NCEA implementation. The second report identified this as one of five substantive challenges to the implementation of the new standards-based qualification. The five challenges were:

- developing an understanding of the principles of standards-focused assessment;

- learning to adapt existing tasks and write new task for a standards-focused regime;
- learning to make new types of judgements of students' achievement—rethinking time-honoured practices for “marking” of students' work;
- developing a shared professional understanding of standards and learning to use the moderation processes designed for this purpose; and
- rethinking course designs to accommodate new possibilities that are opening up (Hipkins et al., 2004, p. 61).

Arguably all but the last of these have the potential to contribute important skills to planning and reporting processes, via new insights they could provide related to monitoring of students' actual learning gains, and the last activity on the list has the potential to do so indirectly. This congruence in the professional learning challenges of the two initiatives may not be particularly visible to those who are busy making NCEA and planning and reporting work in practice, but it does suggest a useful starting point for ongoing professional development.

The time needed for planning and reporting processes is another issue for some teachers. Primary teachers and principals were likely to see this as a minor to moderate issue. Responding to a different scale, 36 percent of secondary teachers said they were “not sure” if planning and reporting “takes too much time for the benefits gained”. Either they have not yet been fully involved in the process, or this work is not easily disentangled from other things they do (the similarities to some aspects of NCEA-related changes have been outlined above), or they are suspending judgement until they see more evidence of positive outcomes for their efforts. Their uncertainty may be grounded in a mix of all three. This state of flux suggests that ongoing support could be prudent right now.

The perception that assessment *necessarily* takes time from teaching and learning needs to be challenged. We found a strong divergence of views about this amongst the secondary teachers. Those who strongly agreed that planning and reporting “takes too much time for the benefits gained” were also likely to strongly agree or agree that “assessment is driving the curriculum now”. For these teachers it seems that learning and assessment are separate activities rather than linked and interacting activities. Conversely, a small number of secondary teachers who strongly disagreed that planning and reporting takes too much time for the benefits gained were also more likely to strongly disagree or disagree that assessment is driving the curriculum now. Moving more teachers to this type of view poses an interesting professional development challenge as planning and reporting beds in.

Other researchers have found that primary and secondary teachers generally hold similar conceptions of assessments in all areas except accountability. Whereas primary teachers see assessment as making *them* accountable for their students' learning (Brown, 2004), secondary teachers tend to see assessment as making their *students* accountable for their learning (Peterson & Irving, 2007). This could be a useful starting point for professional discussions, particularly as a carefully developed survey instrument for this purpose is readily available (Brown, 2002).

Ongoing support for school use of the planning and reporting framework

Our findings suggest that the ongoing support of professional development providers and other advisers is important to the continuing forward impetus of planning and reporting. It is time now to consolidate and build on the early gains we have reported. Section 4 documents indications that setting clear and measurable targets continues to present challenges for some primary principals. The secondary survey did not gather equivalent data but presumably the same need would be found there. Creating a conversation about “learning needs in *our* school” is an important first step and it is encouraging to see how widely this has been embraced. However, planning and reporting processes have an important *accountability* element. For this high trust model of accountability to work as intended, it is important that all school leaders have the necessary skills for reporting to their BOT and parents in the first instance, and then to the MOE, on their school’s achievements. Wylie (2007) has suggested that BOTs also need more support to understand such reporting so that they can make best use of it in school strategic planning.

Some starting points for professional discussions have already been noted above. Another possible discussion starting point is the understanding that good assessment can and should be used for *both* formative and summative purposes, so that accountability needs are addressed at the same time as classroom learning conversations are generated (Matters, 2006; Wilson, 2004). This is precisely what does *not* happen with national testing, where “teaching to the test” is often an unintended and undesirable outcome (Assessment Reform Group, 2006; Laitsch, 2006; Wylie, 2003, 2007) and less easily quantified learning outcomes may be neglected because this type of assessment:

depends on written tests of necessarily limited duration. As already noted, this restricts the range of learning outcomes that can be assessed and excludes many higher-level cognitive and communication skills and the ability to learn both collaboratively and independently (Assessment Reform Group, 2006, p. 7).

Rothstein and Jacobsen (2006) present evidence from large-scale quantitative research that shows the average amount of time being spent on reading and mathematics in primary schools is increasing in the USA at the expense of other curriculum areas and they directly attribute this shift to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) high stakes/low trust national testing policy. They identify the following as curriculum areas that are likely to have been neglected since NCLB regulations impacted on schools: science; social studies, geography, history, and civics; art and music; physical education; and foreign languages. The same danger has been identified during an extended collaborative research programme in the UK (Assessment Reform Group, 2006) and in a systematic review of NCLB policy in the various states of the USA (Laitsch, 2006). Thus the issue has become apparent from a range of perspectives, supported by a range of types of evidence.

The evidence presented in this report suggests more support is needed to broaden the range of tools available if schools are to focus on measurable targets in areas other than literacy and

numeracy. Of course not choosing to report against other curriculum goals does not imply that these areas will not be taught at all (as may happen in national testing models) but it does seem a pity to miss the opportunity to take an aspiration focus on achievement across the full curriculum spectrum, and to provide schools with tools that can be used formatively, to provide the same insight into student strengths and needs as the reading and maths tools have done.

Support provided by the Ministry of Education

The evidence presented in this report suggests MOE support for the implementation of planning and reporting has been helpful in two key areas, and that further support will be important for schools to continue to make real progress.

Professional development

The UK Assessment Reform Group commented on the need to support teachers with appropriate professional development if they are to become more effective in making sound summative judgments (Assessment Reform Group, 2006). We have reported strong indicators of links between professional development undertaken or planned and the process of determining targets, and actions towards meeting them. The caveat is that this coherence has centred on literacy and numeracy, and these have been the areas most often targeted. An implication is that other curriculum areas, along with skills or key competencies targets, may need similar professional development support if more schools are to successfully focus on raising achievement in these areas. Given the new curriculum developments, and the policy focus on personalising learning, this is an area for ongoing priority.

Assessment tools

- Not all assessment tools are MOE funded. But this has been an area of considerable MOE investment (for example, AsTTle, numeracy diagnostic interviews, exemplars, ARBs, NEMP) and it is encouraging to see that these tools are being used in many schools. Given the choice available, and the expectation of self-determination of both goals and means of monitoring them, no one tool is ever likely to be used in all schools, or to satisfy all schools' needs for both formative and summative information. But the goal analysis in Section 4 suggests that some schools are still struggling to write clear targets. Again, the implication seems to be that schools need ongoing support and professional development, to keep progress going. More fine-grained research into why schools choose the tools they do would be helpful in targeting additional resources.
- One question worth considering is whether some schools are using too many tools, with implications for the classroom and administrative time needed. If this is the case then the process may be overwhelming the intended *focus* on a small number of strategically determined targets. Again, finer grained research could inform this question.

- The analysis of primary school targets in Section 4 suggested that some schools are only setting targets that are measured by qualitative means. The dilemma here is how teachers get a sense of where their students sit in relation to national patterns of achievement, if they *only* use assessment methods grounded in their professional judgement. Greater emphasis is placed on national comparisons by proponents of the low trust model of mandatory national testing, which may have put some schools off using the New Zealand assessments that in fact can provide both formative insight and national benchmarks. We think the best solution is a “both/and” mix rather than an “either/or” approach, so that both types of data can help inform teachers’ work. Modelling “best practice” ways to do this could be an ongoing focus of MOE support.

Concluding comment

A common theme of the school change literature is that sustainable change needs time and consistent effort and support (Russell, 2003; Stoll & Fink, 1996). While some gaps and needs have been identified in this report, it is also clear that schools in New Zealand have made considerable progress in their initial implementation of the planning and reporting policy. Many low-decile schools have been involved for some time in programmes that have supported them to focus on data-informed decision making. The SEMO project is a good example, with evident learning gains after three years (Robinson et al., 2004). As we have seen, there are suggestions in our findings that this sustained investment is starting to pay off, in terms of schools’ increasing understanding that the use of data to identify and address learning needs is both possible and useful. Both low-decile schools and others will need continued support in the form of well-focused professional development, examples, and tools, to see the full intent of the planning and reporting framework come to fruition.

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Appendix A: Profiles of primary schools responding to the planning and reporting survey

The following tables show that, despite the low response rate, the sample of schools was broadly representative of all New Zealand state primary and intermediate schools for all four sets of demographic measures.

Table 45 **Profile of responses by school size**

Size	MOE data (n=2058 schools) %	Principals (n=186) %	Teachers (n=279) %
Very small	9	10	10
Small	26	24	25
Middle	38	38	37
Large	27	28	27

NB: Numbers may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Table 46 **Profile of responses by decile**

Decile grouping	MOE data (n=2058 schools) %	Principals (n=186) %	Teachers (n=279) %
1–2 low	30	32	36
3–8 mid	39	41	37
9–10 high	30	27	27

NB: Numbers may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Table 47 **Profile of responses by school area**

School area	MOE data (n=2058 schools) %	Principals (n=186) %	Teachers (n=279) %
Main urban	51	50	52
Secondary urban	6	3	3
Minor urban	10	11	13
Rural	34	37	32

NB: Numbers may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Table 48 **Profile of responses by school type**

School type	MOE data (n=2058 schools) %	Principals (n=186) %	Teachers (n=279) %
Contributing	39	36	37
Full primary	53	55	54
Intermediate	6	4	5
Kura Kaupapa	2	3	3
Special schools	2	2	2

NB: Numbers may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Principals who responded

The overall response rate for principals was 37 percent (186 of 500 schools sent survey forms). The responding principals were evenly spread between male and female. Eighty percent were aged more than 44 years, and 3 percent were younger than 35 years.

Sixty-seven percent of the sample had been a principal for more than six years, and 13 percent for less than two years. Sixty-one percent had been a principal at their present school for more than three years, and 10 percent were new principals to their present schools. The profile is therefore weighted towards both experienced principals and principals who have been at the school for some time.

Teachers who responded

Of 1000 teacher surveys distributed by post, 28 percent were returned completed. Eighty-five percent of the respondents were female, which is representative of the national population of primary teachers. Four percent were under 25 years old, and 46 percent older than 44.

There was only a small number of inexperienced teachers amongst the respondents—fewer than 10 percent were first or second year teachers. Seventy-six percent had been teaching for more than five years. Twenty-four percent were new to the school, having been there for less than two years. Forty percent had been at the school for longer than six years. Over half the respondents (54 percent) held senior or management positions.

Thirty-seven percent of the teachers who responded had school-wide responsibility for literacy, 29 percent for numeracy, and 26 percent for assessment (it was possible to tick more than one area of responsibility).

Appendix B: Profiles of secondary schools responding to the 2006 National Survey

Table 49 **Profile of responses by school size**

Size	MOE data (n=315 schools) %	Principals (n=194) %	Teachers (n=818) %	Trustees (n=278) %
<100	1	1	<1	1
100–249	7	6	3	7
250–399	14	13	6	15
400–749	31	33	24	33
750–1499	37	37	48	35
1500+	10	11	19	10

NB: Numbers may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Whereas the principal and trustee samples closely reflect the overall characteristics of secondary schools, it is evident that the teacher sample is skewed towards larger schools. This reflects the much larger number of teachers employed in bigger schools—it is not possible to simultaneously represent the full teacher population *and* the experiences of teachers in different types of schools in the same sample. Because each school has one principal, and only two trustees per school were sampled, this sampling dilemma does not arise for those populations.

Table 50 **Profile of responses by decile**

Decile grouping	MOE data (n=315 schools) %	Principals (n=194) %	Teachers (n=818) %	Trustees (n=278) %
1–2 low	16	13	11	11
3–8 mid	66	69	67	70
9–10 high	18	18	21	19

NB: Numbers may not add to 100 because of rounding.

The largest secondary schools tend to be high-decile schools and so this pattern of responses again reflects the over-representation of teachers in larger schools. The slight under-representation of low-decile schools, for all three responding groups, is likely to be associated with the smaller size of many of them.

Table 51 **Profile of responses by school type**

School type	MOE data (n=315 schools) %	Principals (n=194) %	Teachers (n=818) %	Trustees (n=278) %
Main urban	63	61	71	58
Secondary urban	11	11	11	14
Minor urban	20	21	14	23
Rural	7	7	3	6

NB: Numbers may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Note that secondary urban schools are in suburbs of cities and minor urban schools are in towns. Again, principal and trustee samples reflect the overall school population but the teacher sample is weighted towards the main urban areas, which tend to be where the largest schools are located.

Table 52 **Profile of responses by school authority**

Authority	MOE data (n=315 schools) %	Principals (n=194) %	Teachers (n=818) %	Trustees (n=278) %
State	78	80	87	78
State integrated	22	20	12	22

NB: Numbers may not add to 100 because of rounding.

As for the other characteristics, the teacher sample is somewhat skewed, with teachers in state-integrated schools under-represented. The largest schools are state schools, so this is to be expected in view of the sampling dilemma outlined above.

Principals who responded

The overall response rate for principals was 62 percent,²⁰ from 194 of a possible 315 secondary schools. As in 2003, more males (72 percent) than females responded, reflecting gender differences in this role. Most of these principals (90 percent) identified as Pākehā/European, and 6 percent were Māori.

Seventeen percent of respondents had become principals in the last two years. A further 23 percent had served between three and five years, 28 percent between six and 10 years, 18 percent between 11 and 15 years, and 12 percent over 15 years. Compared to 2003, the 2006 sample has more experienced principals.

²⁰ This compares favourably with the 48 percent response rate from the smaller overall sample of 200 schools in 2003.

Teachers who responded

Of the 2061 teacher surveys distributed, 40 percent were returned in a sufficiently completed state to be included. Sixty-two percent of the respondents were female, which is almost identical to the response profile in 2003 and is representative of the gender composition of teachers. Eighty-nine percent of the respondents identified as Pākehā/European, 5 percent identified as Māori, 3 percent as Asian, and 2 percent as Pasifika or as “New Zealander” respectively.

Sixty-six percent of the responding teachers had some management responsibility. Five percent were senior managers, 38 percent were middle managers (e.g. curriculum or faculty leaders), 15 percent held the newly established role of specialist classroom teacher, and 8 percent were deans.

Eight percent of respondents had become teachers in the last two years. A further 14 percent had served between three and five years, 13 percent between six and 10 years, 10 percent between 11 and 15 years, and 54 percent over 15 years. Compared to the principals, more of the responding teachers were in younger age groups.

Table 53 **A comparison of responding teacher and principal age groups**

Age of respondents	Principals (n=194) %	Teachers (n=818) %
<30 years		11
30–39	2	19
40–49	22	27
50–59	69	36
60+	7	6

NB: Numbers may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Trustees

Forty-four percent of a potential pool of 630 trustees responded. Just one trustee responded from 76 schools, with two responding, as requested, from a further 101 schools. The intention to have a balance between chairpersons (51 percent) and other trustees was achieved.

Responding trustees tended to be relatively experienced in the role. The mean length of time as a trustee was four years. Just 11 percent had been a trustee for less than one year and 36 percent had served in this role for more than five years. The most common reason for wanting to be a trustee was to “contribute to the community” (84 percent).

The sample was gender balanced (47 percent female, 53 percent male). Just 6 percent of respondents were aged under 40, with nearly half (42 percent) 50 or over.

Parents

Parents from 27 schools were surveyed producing an identical response rate (47 percent) to that of 2003. Ninety-five percent of parents currently had one or two children at the school with 71 percent reporting having had a child at the school for 2–6 years. Twenty-one percent of respondents indicated they were employed in the education sector.

More females (82 percent) than males (18 percent) responded. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents identified as Pākehā/European, 12 percent identified as Māori, 8 percent as “New Zealander”, 5 percent as Pacific, and 2 percent as Asian.