

What do parents and whānau say about learning with digital technology?

Parents and whānau expressed a range of views

[Learning with digital technology is] the way of the future.

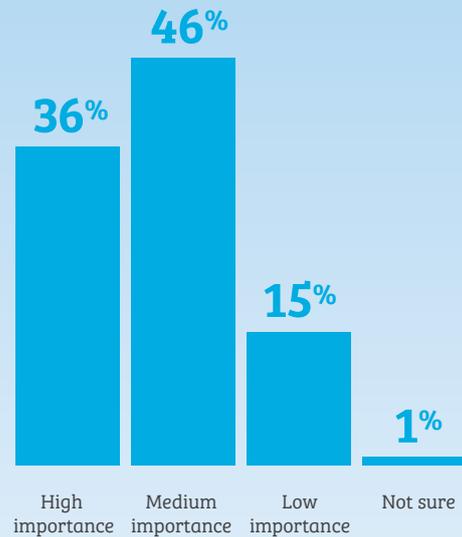


Technology is useful for learning but I'm more interested in developing emotional literacy and relationship skills.



Yes our children need technology, but I also feel that learning basic math i.e. times table should be 'old school'.

Parents' and whānau views on the importance of their child learning with digital technology at school



What online information can parents and whānau access about their child's learning?



60%

say they can access information about school events and trips online



37%

say they can access online information about things the child is doing in the classroom (including videos or blogs)



34%

say they can see work that their child wants to share online



15%

say they can view information about their child's attendance or lateness



13%

say they can view assessment results



7

Parent and whānau views about learning with digital technology

The national survey includes parents and whānau. For pragmatic reasons, we did not ask every school in the sample to send out surveys to a sample of parents and whānau.¹⁷ Instead, a subset of schools was selected from the main sample to approximately reflect the school decile and size characteristics of the sampling frame, and those schools were invited to take part in the parent survey by sending out the survey to the families or whānau of every fourth student on their roll. If a school declined the invitation, another school with the same decile and size characteristics was selected in its place. We contacted a total of 61 schools to achieve a sample of 36 schools taking part. However, only 31 schools returned parent and whānau surveys, with a total of 504 parents and whānau responses received.

The parent and whānau survey included a few questions about digital technologies. We asked parents how important it was to them that their child uses digital technology as part of their learning at school, and to comment on their answers. We also asked whether digital learning opportunities were a factor in choosing their child's school, or whether costs had ever prevented their child from various school activities including using a digital device at school. Finally, we asked whether parents accessed online information about their child's learning and school activities.

How important it is for their child to learn with digital technology at school?

Most parents (81%) said the use of digital technology as part of their child's school learning was of "high" or "medium" importance. Only 15% said using digital technology for learning was of "low importance" for their child's school learning (Table 10).

¹⁷ Asking schools to send out surveys to parents and whānau places some additional burden on the schools as well as NZCER's national survey infrastructure, because additional time and follow-up is required in order to maximise the number of surveys returned. Those schools that are asked to survey parents and whānau are provided with a small koha for this additional request.

TABLE 10 Parents' views on the importance of their child learning with digital technology at school (n = 504)

Importance	Parents and whānau %
High	36
Medium	46
Low	15
Not sure	1

Parents were asked to comment on why they rated digital technology for learning as being of high, medium, or low importance. Eighty-eight percent of parents wrote a comment, a very high response rate to an open question. The most common themes in parent comments are shown in Table 11.

TABLE 11 Parent and whānau comments about digital technology in their child's school learning

Theme	Parents who wrote a comment (n = 442) %
Digital technology is ubiquitous: it's the way of the future; we're in a digital age	46
It's important to balance digital technology learning with other kinds of other learning (particularly with young children)	44
General tech skills are beneficial/important to students: need to be confident users; opens up opportunities; without it, they'll be left behind; need to know how to use it safely	37
Concerned about effects on students	7
The child already uses enough tech at home / outside school	4
Schools can provide equity of opportunity for students who can't afford digital technology at home	1

The most common type of comment (46%) was a variation on "digital technology is the way of the future", followed by comments about the need to balance digital learning with other non-digital learning, particularly in the first few years of schooling (44%).

In the first few years at school I believe reading, writing, and maths need to be the foundation including writing in book. Technology is important as a tool to support learning once the foundations are mastered.

Technology is useful for learning but I'm more interested in developing emotional literacy and relationship skills.

Yes our children need technology, but I also feel that learning basic math, i.e., times table etc. should be 'old school'.

Techno-wise kids love it and can develop tunnel vision as a result. We like a rounded approach.

Parents also talked about the future relevance of digital technology skills.

Digital technology is very important due to its future requirements in subjects within secondary school. It is a fun way to learn and there are many educational online learning programs to complement traditional methods.

To keep up in the 'real world' they need to be competent (at a minimum) with digital technology.

A few parents (7%) expressed specific concerns about potentially negative impacts for children, particularly on their eyes, bodies, and concerns about "addiction" or tunnel vision.

Not good for children's eyes.

I think children need to learn to read and write properly. Devices used by children can make them not very social and this can inhibit their communication skills.

These things are addictive to adults so how come we are encouraging our children that 'they need them for homework and [to play] educational games'—that is surely what the developers want us to believe.

A small number of parents said their child already gets enough exposure to digital technology at home, while a handful noted that schools could provide equity of opportunity for students who were not able to access digital technologies at home.

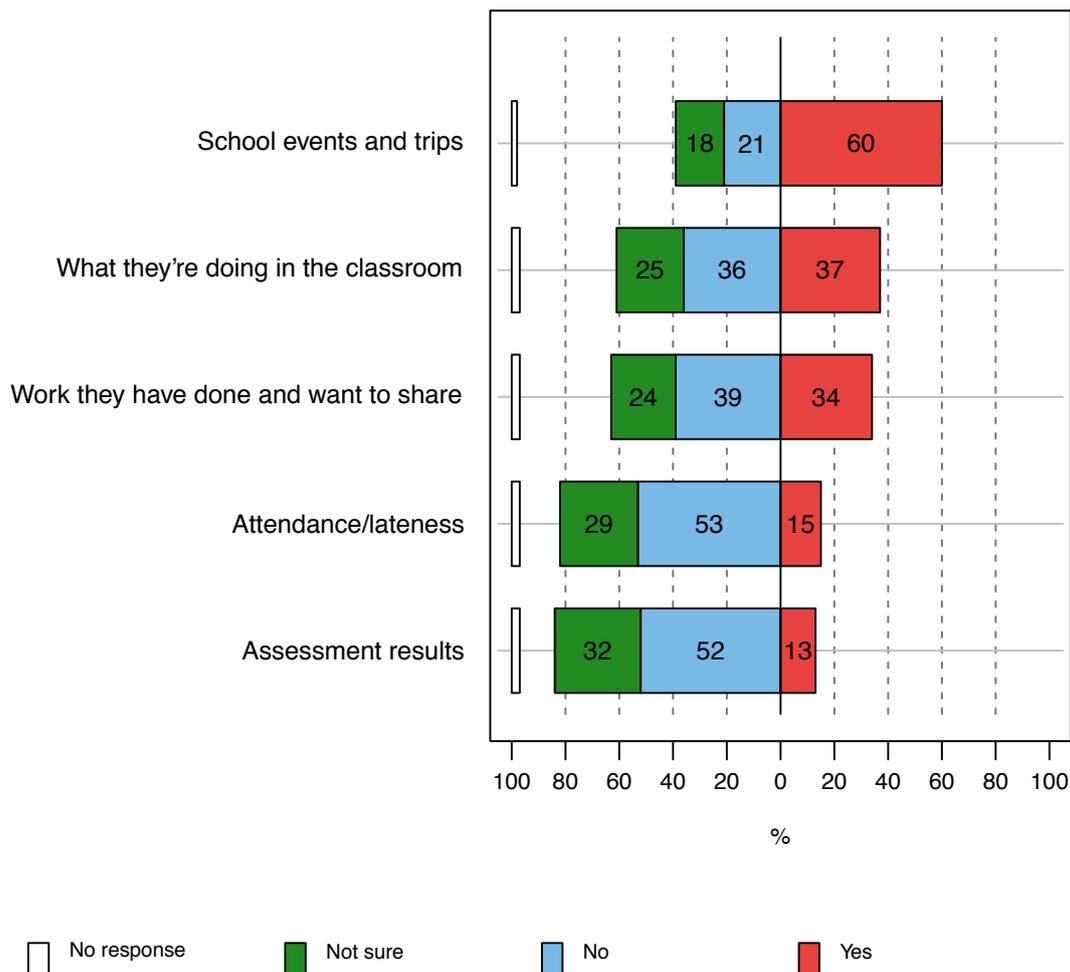
Digital technology as a factor in choosing a school

Only 8% of parents and whānau indicated that digital technology opportunities were one of the specific factors in choosing their child's school. This is perhaps not surprising compared with much more common reasons for choosing a school, such as having an older child or family member at the school (54%), what other families have said about the school (39%), where their child's friends are going (30%), or the child themselves wanting to go there (28%). However, even amongst other specific programmes and offerings in which a school might have strengths, digital technology opportunities were a less common factor than sports and physical activities (19%), environmental projects (13%), cultural inclusiveness and arts programmes (each 12%), and te reo Māori / tikanga Māori (10%).

Do parents access online information about their child's schooling?

We also asked parents and whānau if they have online access to various kinds of information about their child's schooling (Figure 10). More than half (60%) say they can access information about school events and trips online, over a third (37%) say they can access online information about what sorts of things their child is doing in the classroom (including videos or blogs), and 34% can see work that their child wants to share online. Fewer say they can view information about their child's attendance or lateness (15%) or assessment results (13%) online.

FIGURE 10 Online information parents can access about their child’s learning and schooling (n = 504)



A decile-related difference was evident in two items. Seventy-eight percent of parents from decile 9–10 schools said they had access to online information about school events and trips, compared with 46% of parents from decile 1–2 schools. Regarding accessing online information about what students are doing in the classroom, 27% of parents from decile 1–2 schools answered yes compared with 52% of parents from decile 9–10 schools.

Overall, 69% of parents/whānau answered yes to at least one of the items in Figure 10. We asked them to identify how they accessed this information (Table 12). This was most often done via a home computer or laptop, although over half (56%) did so on their mobile phones.

TABLE 12 Devices used to access online information about child's schooling

Device	Parents and whānau who access online information about their child's schooling (n = 350) %
Home computer/laptop	85
Mobile phone	56
Work computer/laptop	19
Other	9

Summary

Most of the parents and whānau who responded to the national survey indicated that it is important for their children to have opportunities for learning with digital technology at school, though this is not the most important factor in choosing a school. Parents and whānau see digital technologies as being ubiquitous and “part of the future”, but also value their children having a balance of other learning activities and opportunities. Some parents and whānau have online access to information about their child's school learning. This is more likely to be information about school events and trips than about what's happening in the child's classroom or work children have done that they want to share. Few parents indicated that they can access online information about their child's achievement or attendance.