
12. Kāhui Ako

Kāhui Ako, or Communities of Learning, were announced in early 2014 as part of the Investing in Educational Success “system change”. Kāhui Ako were to focus on the educational pathway of students, by bringing together primary and secondary schools in an area to ensure the coherence of learning and support through individuals’ schooling pathway. Our 2016 report describes the genesis and development of Kāhui Ako, including the tensions around the model, with most of the funding going into individual salaries for those taking Kāhui Ako roles.³⁹

More support was provided for Kāhui Ako from 2017, with the Ministry of Education funding Expert Partners to work with Kāhui Ako as they developed their (mandatory) achievement challenges and plans, and provided online tools and resources.⁴⁰ Early childhood education services were included in Kāhui Ako where feasible, though no additional funding was available. The scope of achievement challenges was widened to include focuses that schools wanted to work on, such as student wellbeing and student agency. By 2019, the majority of schools were in a Kāhui Ako.

The Tomorrow’s Schools Independent Taskforce recommended in its final report that Kāhui Ako continue with more flexibility, and that other cluster models also be supported.⁴¹

The initial phase of Kāhui Ako was accompanied by evaluation through case studies and surveys. However, there has been little ongoing evaluation of their progress. This makes the survey responses here particularly useful.

Principals see some positive impact from Kāhui Ako participation

Most principals reported that their school belonged to a Kāhui Ako—74%. Of this group, half of the principals met regularly as part of their Kāhui Ako principals/stewardship group, and the other half met as a principals’ group, as needed. Thirteen percent led their Kāhui Ako. Ten percent said they had no formal role.

Gains from Kāhui Ako involvement were clearest in relation to principals’ mutual support, greater shared understanding of student needs in the community, shared professional development improving teaching in schools, and changing some practices. Principals’ positive reports were more at the ‘agree’ level than ‘strongly agree’, suggesting gradual rather than dramatic changes. Figure 57 has the details.

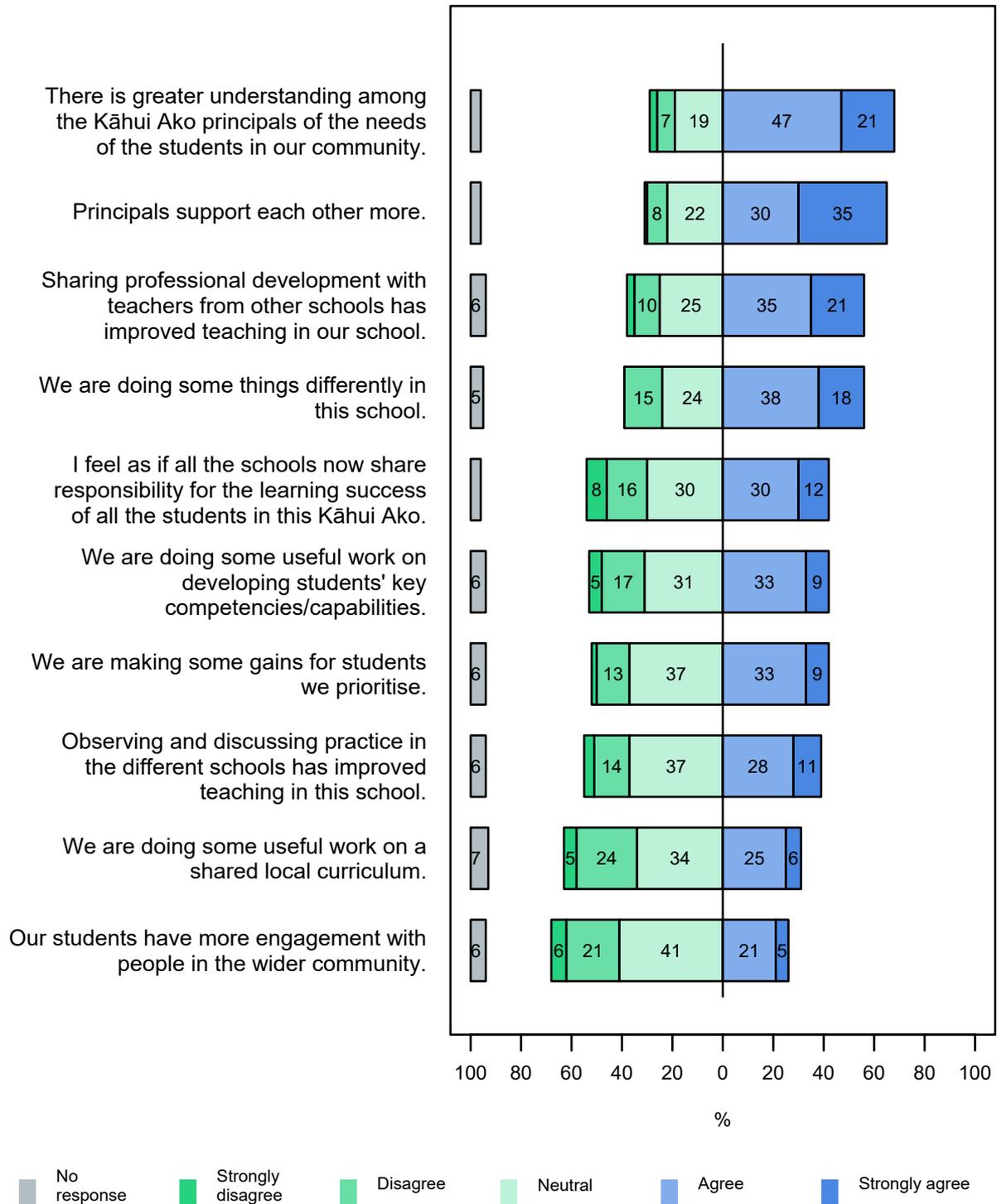
Not all principals see gains, with around 30% not seeing any useful work around a shared local curriculum (which would also suggest work on what a pathway through schooling looks like), and slightly less not seeing any more engagement of their students in the wider community. Other items had between 10% and 20% of the principals not seeing positive impacts.

39 Wylie, C. (2016). Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako: the emergent stage. NZCER. <https://www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/NZCER%20COL%20Report%20final.pdf>

40 See <https://www.education.govt.nz/communities-of-learning/>

41 Tomorrow’s Schools Independent Taskforce (2019). *Our Schooling Futures: stronger together*. Whiria Ngā Kura Tūātinini. Final report. Ministry of Education. See pp. 41, 49.

FIGURE 57 Results of Kāhui Ako involvement (Principals n = 107)



More sharing and discussing of student data across schools belonging to Kāhui Ako

We compared the responses of principals of schools belonging to a Kāhui Ako with those who did not in relation to their interactions with other schools (reported in full in Section 16).

Principals of the schools in Kāhui Ako reported more sharing of

- PLD with other schools (86% compared with 53% of other schools)
- student information if they shift to another school (87% compared with 69% of other schools)

They also reported more sharing and discussing of each school's

- student achievement data (52% compared with 14% of other schools)
- student wellbeing data (39% compared with 6% of other schools)
- learning support data (33% compared with 14% of other schools).

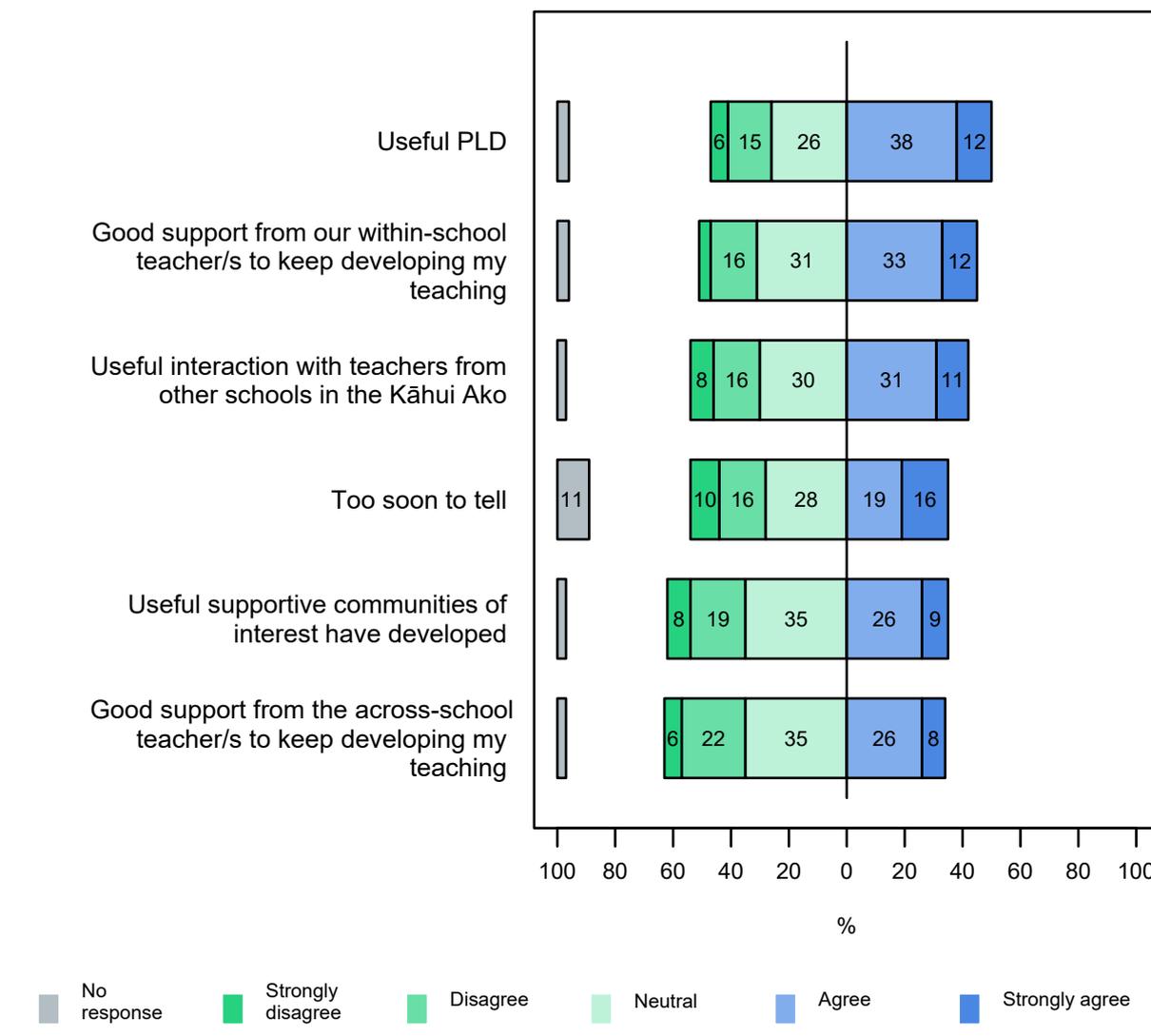
There were also more discussions with iwi about how best to provide for Māori students (41% compared with 22% of other schools).

Teachers' experiences of Kāhui Ako range widely

Just over half (52%) of the teachers who responded to the survey were at schools that are part of Kāhui Ako. Interestingly, another 20% were not sure if their school was part of one, indicating that either their school is not actively participating (it may not have a within-school Kāhui Ako role), or that any Kāhui Ako initiated or linked activity is not clearly flagged as such.

We asked the teachers who said their school belonged to a Kāhui Ako about some of the intended benefits. Figure 58 shows a range of experiences, with positive views more frequent than negative views, and around a third neutral. Positive experiences were most evident in relation to useful PLD, good support from the Kāhui Ako within-school teachers, and useful interaction with teachers from other schools.

FIGURE 58 Experiences of Kāhui Ako (Teachers, n = 320)

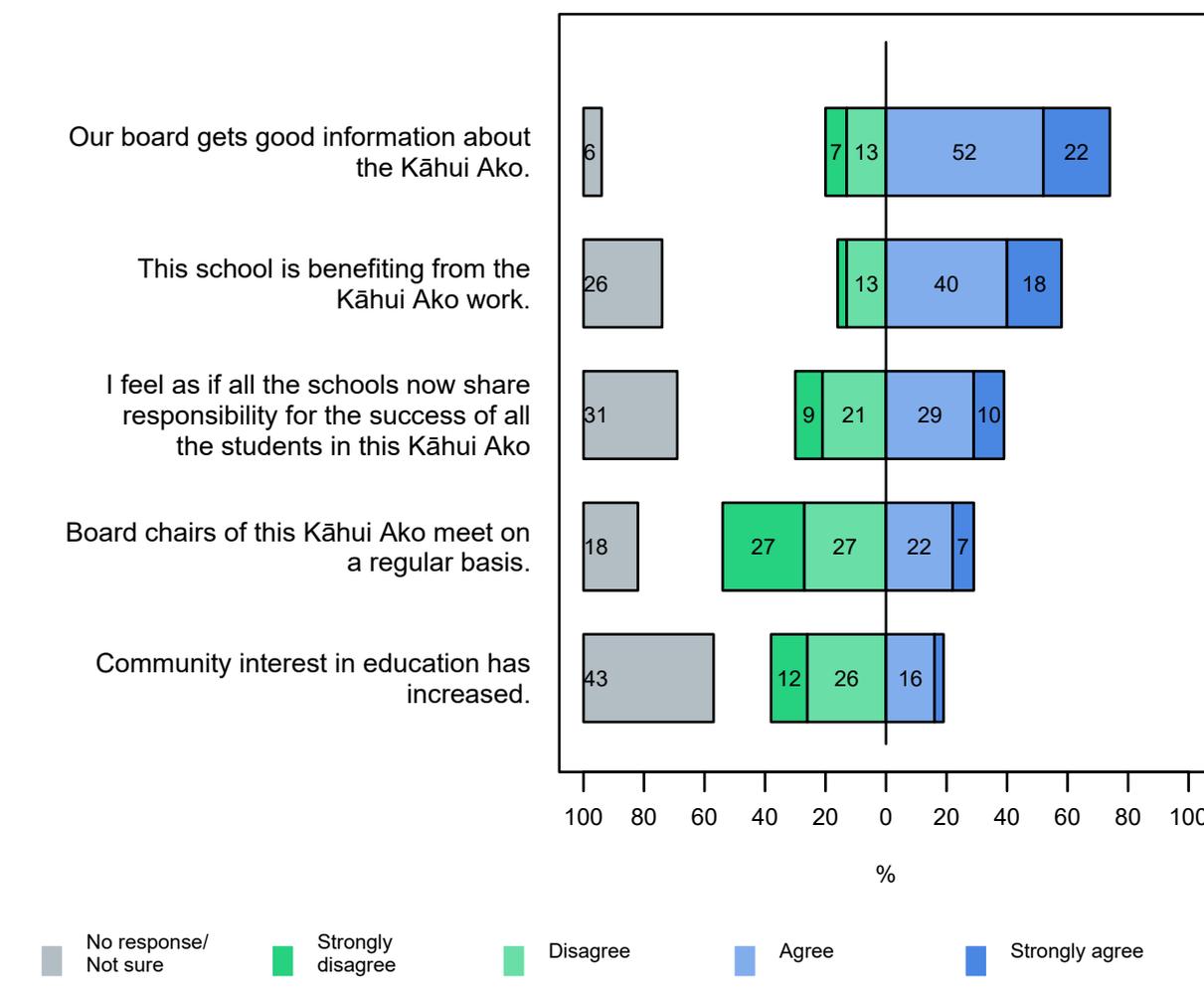


Trustees feel they have good information about their Kāhui Ako and see some benefits

Many trustees responding were in a school that belongs to a Kāhui Ako (71%). Eighteen percent of trustees were not, and 10% were not sure if their school was part of a Kāhui Ako.

Figure 59 shows that most trustees from a school in a Kāhui Ako thought their board got good information about it (22% strongly agreed and 52% agreed), and over half that their school was benefiting from the Kāhui Ako work (18% strongly agreed and 40% agreed). Views were more mixed about whether schools were now sharing responsibility for student success, and community interest in education had increased. Less than a third of the trustees thought that board chairs of schools in their Kāhui Ako met on a regular basis.

FIGURE 59 Trustees' views of their Kāhui Ako (n = 90)



Summary

The Kāhui Ako model has been a significant shift for schools, and not one that could happen quickly. Most Kāhui Ako took several years to gel and identify what they could best do together, with the roles and funding they had.

These late 2019 responses show that principals were largely positive about their own and their school's participation in their Kāhui Ako, seeing gains for their own school rather more than for some of the ambitions of the policy to develop shared local curriculum and new connections with their community. However, Kāhui Ako schools did share much more than do other schools in relation to student learning.

Teachers had more varied responses, but half had had useful PLD through their Kāhui Ako, and slightly less report good support from their across-school teacher, and useful interaction with other schools' teachers. Trustees' views also varied, but tended to the positive, particularly seeing benefits for their school.

Overall, Kāhui Ako participation is showing some positive movement. The 2019 aggregate Teaching, School and Principal Leadership Practices survey also showed somewhat higher ratings for Kāhui Ako participants.⁴² This national survey picture also raises questions about evident differences in Kāhui Ako experiences that call for further work on how we can make the most of the Kāhui Ako model, and build on that to ensure the success of collaborative work between schools.

⁴² Wylie, C. & Hodgen, E. (2020). *Teaching, School, and Principal Leadership Practices Survey 2019*. NZCER. https://www.tspsurveys.org.nz/images/TSP_National_Report_2019.pdf