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## 6.

# Teachers' perspectives on their work

Teachers' perspectives were sought about the following work-related areas: their morale, workload, and job satisfaction; experiences of professional learning; and experiences of mentoring provisionally certified teachers. We asked them to identify the things they would like to change in their work and to indicate what they thought the future might hold for their career. At the end of the survey, teachers were given an opportunity to comment about their work as a teacher, and nearly half ( $n = 333$ ) did so. Their comments are included throughout this section

### Teaching experience and roles

Fifty-seven percent of the 705 teachers who completed the survey<sup>35</sup> were under 50 years old, and 30% were under 40. The proportion of teachers aged more than 50 was 43%. Six percent of the teachers responding were over 65 years old. The ages of the responding teachers varied little from those who responded in 2015.

Overall, the group of teachers who responded in 2018 was slightly more experienced than the group who responded in 2015. Fifty-two percent of teachers had more than 15 years' experience, compared with 47% of respondents in 2015. Thirty-two percent had between 6 and 15 years' teaching experience, and 16% had 5 years or less (much the same as 2015). In 2018, a smaller proportion of teachers had less than 3 years' teaching experience (6%, compared with 9% in 2015). A greater proportion of the teachers at decile 1–4 schools had 5 years' experience or less (22%, compared with 12% of teachers at decile 5–10 schools).

Ninety percent of the sample were class/subject teachers, compared with 75% in the previous survey.<sup>36</sup> Thirteen percent of respondents were teaching Years 7 or 8, and between 64% and 72% were teaching students in each of Years 9 to 13. Similar to 2015, 17%–19% each taught English, Mathematics, Social Science, Science, or Technology.

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35 Information about how the teacher survey was distributed is included in the Appendix, along with more details of the teacher sample. The main points to note about the teachers who responded in 2018 are that those at decile 3–4 schools were somewhat over-represented and, to a lesser extent, teachers at decile 7–8 schools were under-represented. Teachers at Years 7–15 schools were slightly under-represented, and those at Years 9–15 were, to a lesser degree, over-represented. The response rate was 31%, and the margin of error for teachers' responses is around 3.7%.

36 This could be related to the changes in the teacher survey's distribution in 2018, described in the Appendix.

Additional/other roles they held (with the two notable differences to 2015 shown) were:

- form teacher/tutor teacher/academic mentor (58%, compared with 50% in 2015)
- holder of management unit(s) (47%, compared with 38% in 2015)
- head of learning area (HOLA)/head of department (HoD)/faculty leader/teacher in charge (TIC) (43%)
- other (16%)
- dean (13%)
- associate teacher for student teachers on practicum (11%)
- AP/DP (6%)
- specialist classroom teacher (SCT) (5%)
- careers adviser/transition teacher (3%)
- staff rep on the school board (2%)
- guidance counsellor (1%).

Teachers' "Other" responses included 3% of teachers with co-ordination roles, and 3% who have Kāhui Ako roles.

For analysis and reporting purposes, teachers' subject areas were combined into the following prioritised groupings (e.g., a teacher may be a Mathematics and Technology teacher, and we include them only in the Mathematics and Science category):

- Mathematics and Science (30% of teachers responding)
- English and Languages (22%)
- Social Sciences, the Arts, Commerce (20%)
- Technology, Health and PE, Transition, Careers, Special Education (24%)
- Other areas (3%).

The proportion of responding teachers who were in permanent positions was 92% (similar to 2015 and 2012). The remainder were largely on fixed-term contracts of a year or more (7%), with a small number on shorter contracts.

## Morale, workload, and job satisfaction

### Teachers' morale was slightly lower

In 2018, teachers' morale levels were slightly lower than in 2015. A smaller proportion rated their overall morale as a teacher as good or very good (62%, compared with 69% in 2015). A greater proportion rated their morale as poor or very poor (13%, compared with 8% in 2015). Twenty-three percent reported having satisfactory morale.

Teachers at decile 5–6 schools report slightly lower morale, with half saying their morale is good or very good, compared with 63%–70% of teachers at schools of other deciles.

### Workload is a concern for a substantial minority of teachers

Around one-third of the teachers reported fair and manageable workloads, and manageable stress levels (see Figure 30).<sup>37</sup> More than a quarter indicated their high workload meant they felt they were unable to do justice to their students.

<sup>37</sup> The "neutral" option was added to the response scale for this item bank in 2018, meaning that response patterns across the scale cannot be directly compared with previous years' responses. We compare only "strongly agree" responses, to give an indication of change, and this should be cautiously interpreted.

FIGURE 30 Workload and work-related stress, reported by teachers (n = 705)

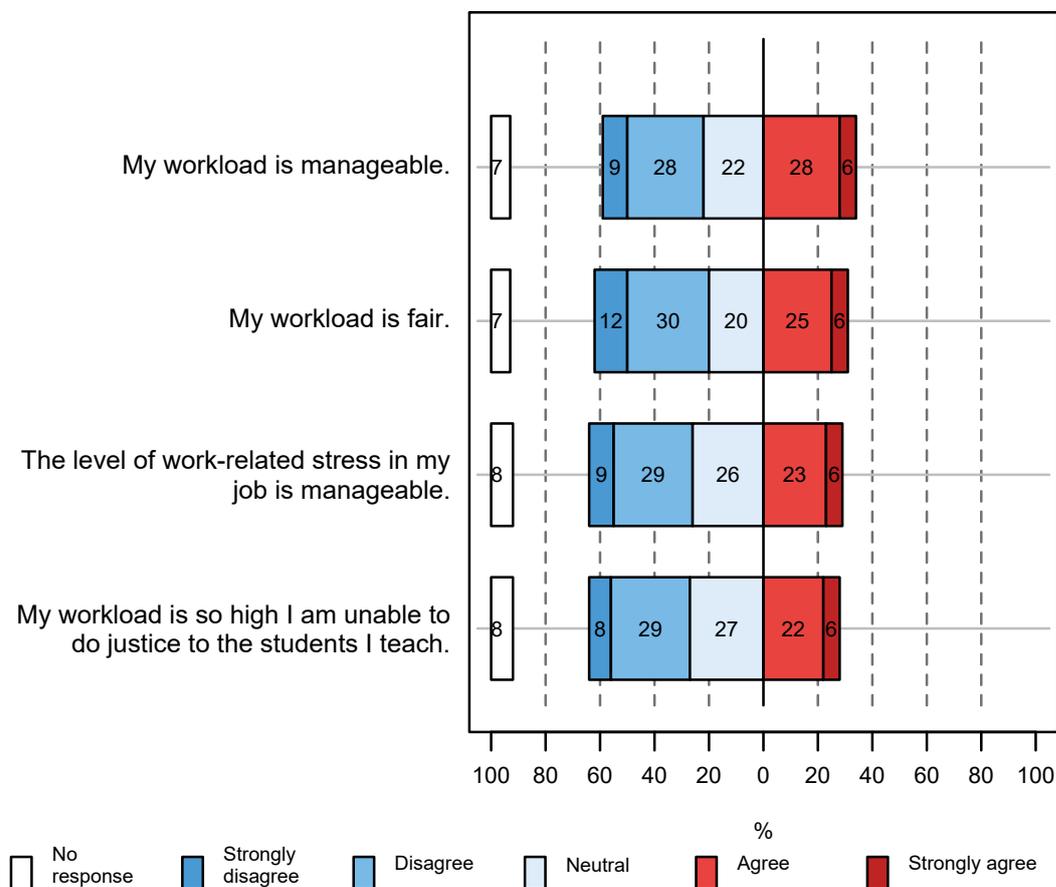


Figure 30 suggests workload is of concern for a substantial minority of secondary teachers. Concerns about the intensification of expectations, workload, and associated stress levels were voiced by 24% of teachers (n = 170) in their response to the open-ended question asking for any overall comments on their work as a teacher. This was the strongest theme in teachers' comments, as it was in 2015 when it was evident in 21% of comments.

The workload is insane, if it was just about teaching it could be manageable. I am a 4th year teacher and see myself leaving. There is just not enough time to prepare properly, to look at research, to network, to do what is expected.

I begin work at 7:15 to set up for the day. I coach sport after school from 4pm x 3 days per week (and in summer, during every lunchtime), and then need to work at least 2 hours every night. Holidays are marking—usually Internals. This year I reduced my hours—dropped a class. Year 13 Statistics takes an incredible number of hours. Looking back, I am not sure how I fitted it in. And before that I was a dean. After 12 years I realised I could not sustain that amount of energy needed.

My work as a teacher this year is onerous. All was going well, until a colleague resigned and although the position was advertised three times, it was not filled. No further advertising is happening this year. So I now have my timetable minus 6 hours, am given 3 hours to plan and prepare for relief lessons to be taken by a reliever for the other now non-existent teacher. Basically, I am doing about 1.6 teachers' jobs—no extra pay other than that for a TIC as I previously received ... I cannot do any more! Near exhaustion and what is it doing to my health?

I don't have a life outside of teaching and I am exhausted every single day. Weekends are for planning for Monday and getting paperwork done (e.g., inquiry cycle or e-portfolio) and for trying to catch up on sleep. There's no time for anything else due to all the extra paperwork and pre + post-school meetings.

As my role is a Deputy Principal, my major issue is not one of classroom management or planning. The real pressing issues for myself and other senior managers are the increasing types of problems students are bringing to the school. We are dealing with major social issues that we are ill equipped to solve, and we also carry a vast amount of disturbing information and have no outlet to offload this burden. We need 'supervision' like the guidance counsellors. The pressures staff face are passed onto us, and we are not only having to juggle student issues, but stressed staff issues and demanding parents. Especially parents who disagree with the schools and now take ridiculous legal action. Senior managers are not given any training for the job; this needs to change. The stress as a senior manager is high, with low support and low remuneration.

Six percent of teachers ( $n = 44$ ) wrote comments about the challenges related to having a reasonable work-life balance, which often also mention stress, and give some insight into teachers' wellbeing.

I think it is unsustainable. It is becoming harder and harder to disconnect from school and the school community. I feel like teaching is my identity.

We need to contain the workload to within reasonable hours. TEACHERS are PEOPLE TOO! We need a home life! We need to model what it is to live a balanced life to the students we teach! We need to ensure we care for our own wellbeing! No doubt if this is done we will retain and recruit teachers in a far more sustainable way!

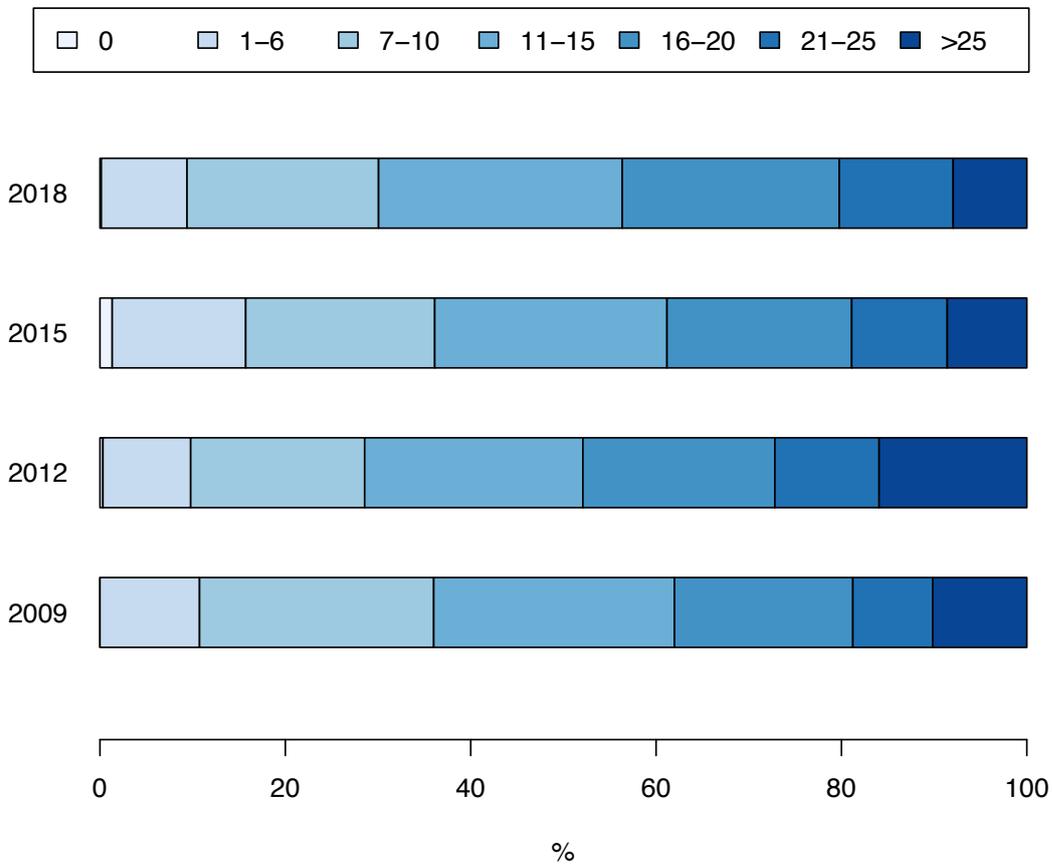
I love my job—I love working with young people and see the light come on. But my work load is unsustainable—it is unfair on my husband and 2 daughters. The work-related stress affects our family. I love teaching. It is who I am but I could not continue for the foreseeable future if my workload was not lessened.

Underpaid, undervalued, underappreciated. I take so much work home at night and at weekends that I have less time with my own children. This is why I am strongly considering leaving teaching and am undertaking postgraduate study.

### **Teachers' work hours have increased slightly**

Twenty percent of teachers were working more than 20 hours per week outside the times when students are required to be on-site. Figure 31 summarises teachers' responses about these hours in 2009, 2012, 2015, and 2018. The overall picture in 2018 was of a slight increase in the total hours teachers were working outside the times when students are required to be on-site. For example, in 2015, 15% of teachers were working less than 6 hours outside these times, compared with 9% doing this in 2018. At the same time, the overall picture in 2018 was of fewer teachers working in excess of 20 hours per week than in 2012.

FIGURE 31 Hours teachers reported working outside times when students were required to be on-site; 2009, 2012, 2015, and 2018



The slight overall increase in hours teachers reported working was accompanied by a slight decrease in teachers' enjoyment of their work, as we see next.

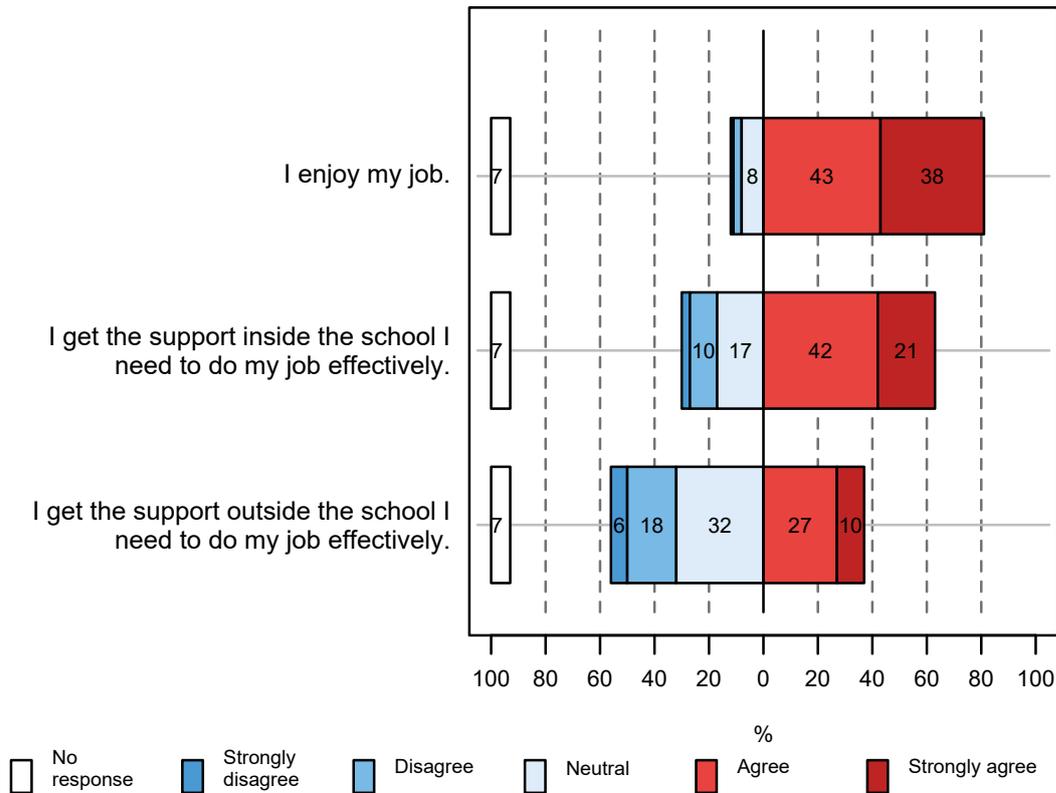
### Most teachers enjoy their job

Eighty-one percent of teachers agree they enjoy their job (see Figure 32). A further 8% responded "neutral" and 4% disagree.<sup>38</sup> Seven percent chose not to respond to this question. The proportion who strongly agree they enjoy their job was smaller in 2018 (38%, compared with 47% in 2015).

Just under two-thirds of teachers agree they get the support *inside* the school, and two-fifths agree they get the support *outside* the school, that they need to do their jobs effectively. The proportion strongly agreeing with the latter was slightly smaller in 2018 (10%, compared with 15% in 2015).

<sup>38</sup> See earlier note about the addition of the "neutral" response option.

FIGURE 32 Job satisfaction and support, reported by teachers (n = 705)



Teachers at decile 9–10 schools were the most likely to strongly agree they enjoy their job (48%, compared with 41% for decile 7–8 schools, 33% for decile 3–6 schools, and 36% for decile 1–2 schools).

Twenty-two percent of teachers wrote a positive comment about their work as a teacher, at the end of the survey.

Teaching is a stressful, full on job. I love my teaching subject, and I am blessed to be teaching in an excellent school with great students, staff and a supportive senior management and pastoral team.

I really love what I do. I am a primary trained teacher working in a secondary school Special Needs Unit. I would not be able to do the job I am doing in a primary school, so I am very privileged. I don't do my job for the money! I am passionate about what I do and enjoy the challenge.

I am very fortunate to work in a supportive college, where students are supported to succeed, firstly by being valued and respected as individuals as part of a diverse learning culture. There is a collaborative and mutually respectful teaching and learning environment, which has led to a massive turn around in success in all areas, including extra-curricular fields and NCEA achievement rates. Thus, there is a pretty high student and teacher morale—students say they feel it is 'their place'. My mostly positive responses to this survey reflect the fact that I am well established and feel supported, appreciated and loved by my students and colleagues at this college.

Teachers' positive comments about enjoying their work tended to be followed by a description of negative experiences of the role.

The classroom is like a haven for me. I love the interaction with the kids, love their questioning, their interest. Their sense of humour, their challenges. The relationship between teacher and class is why I keep going back every day; is why I'll spend weekends marking their work and giving feedback. The rewards are sometimes tangible, but more often not so obvious—but I get enormous pride and pleasure when my students have success. BUT, what sucks the energy from my very core, is the enormous increase in analysing, reporting, compliance, incessant meetings of spurious use, seemingly simply to tick an ERO box! These are the top-down requirements over which we, as individual teachers, have little control. There has been a growing lack of trust in us as teachers—a trust in doing the best every day because we are passionate about what we do. Just let us teach please!!!

I love teaching. I find it to be very satisfying and fulfilling most times. I feel that I am always improving myself, as a result of what I do and the students I teach. However, I do not feel that we value education enough in this country. By value I mean removing ALL restrictions to resourcing schools with everything they need to meet student/teacher needs. This would be a long-term investment that would not only save the country billions of dollars but earn them as well (for those financially minded). Top-notch education, health and social structures are the only way to make a country great but they require heavy social investment. Teachers are constantly ALL overworked and leaving the profession because of what they have to face.

### Teachers' career plans

Table 18 gives the picture of teachers' career plans for 2018 compared with the three previous surveys. The proportion of teachers (40%) who plan to continue as they are now was similar in 2015 and 2009. Of the items included in previous surveys, two have shown a gradual change since 2009: slightly fewer teachers intend to apply for a study award/sabbatical/fellowship, and a slightly greater proportion are planning to retire.

Those planning to retrain or change to a career outside education increased slightly (14%, up from 8% in 2015). This may be related to the teachers' concern about the intensification of expectations and workload.

TABLE 18 Teachers' career plans for the next 5 years; 2009, 2012, 2015, and 2018<sup>39</sup>

What teachers plan to do	2009 (n = 871) %	2012 (n = 1,266) %	2015 (n = 1,777) %	2018 (n = 705) %
Continue as I am now	38	33	37	40
Build my leadership skills	*	*	*	22
Apply for a study award/sabbatical/fellowship	25	23	21	16
Retire	11	13	14	16
Take on senior management role	*	*	*	15
Begin or complete a postgrad qualification	*	16	15	14
Change schools	15	18	14	14
Retrain/change to a career outside education	10	10	8	14
Take on leadership role with management units	*	*	*	12
Take on middle management role	*	*	*	10
Change careers within education	12	10	9	10
Other	3	2	2	9
Leave teaching for personal reasons (e.g., travel, family)	10	5	9	9
Not sure	6	6	7	4

\* Not asked.

Four percent or fewer plan to change their current position, either to one that is permanent, part time, or full time.

In 2018, the proportion of teachers with "Other" plans in mind rose to 9%. These plans included wanting to reduce their hours or level of responsibility, or developing other interests (e.g., starting their own business, or writing a book).

The single decile-related difference was in teachers' plans to apply for a study award/sabbatical/fellowship (24% of teachers at decile 3–4 schools indicate planning this, compared with around 15% of teachers at decile 5–10 schools, and 9% at decile 1–2 schools).

In a separate question, teachers were asked about their interest in becoming a principal in the future. Twelve percent of teachers indicate interest in this possibility, much the same as in 2015, but lower than the 19% who indicated interest in 2012. Seventy-five percent of teachers indicate they are not interested in this role, and 12% are unsure.

Somewhat greater proportions of teachers at decile 5–10 schools say they are not interested in principalship in the future (around 80%, compared with 64% of those at decile 1–4 schools). Teachers at decile 1–4 schools were more likely than those at decile 5–10 schools to say they are unsure (17%) or are interested (16%).

<sup>39</sup> Teachers could give multiple responses here.

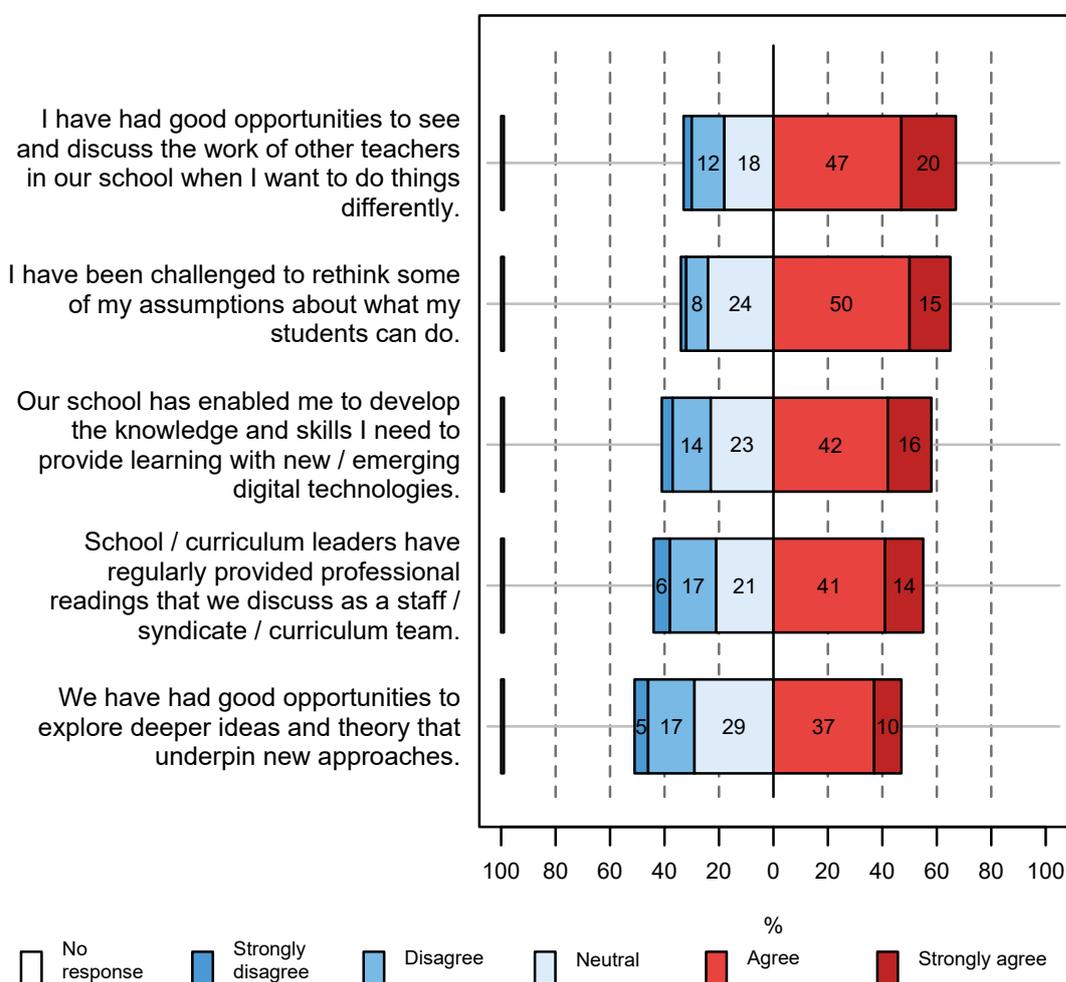
The proportion of teachers already in formal leadership roles who expressed interest in becoming a principal differed little from teachers not in these roles, apart from those in AP/DP roles; 27% of these were interested in becoming a principal, and a further 24% were unsure.

## Teachers' experiences of professional learning

### School-based professional learning

As shown in Figure 33, 67% of teachers have good opportunities to see and discuss the work of other teachers in their school when they want to do things differently. Forty-seven percent have good opportunities to explore deeper ideas and theory that underpin new approaches.

FIGURE 33 School-based opportunities for professional learning, reported by teachers (n = 705)



The two items mentioned above are the only items in Figure 33 that teachers responded to in a noticeably differently way, compared with 2015. Table 19 shows continued growth in opportunities for teachers to see and discuss the work of teachers in their school when they want to do things differently, but at the same time, a decrease in opportunities to explore deeper ideas and theory, compared with 2015.

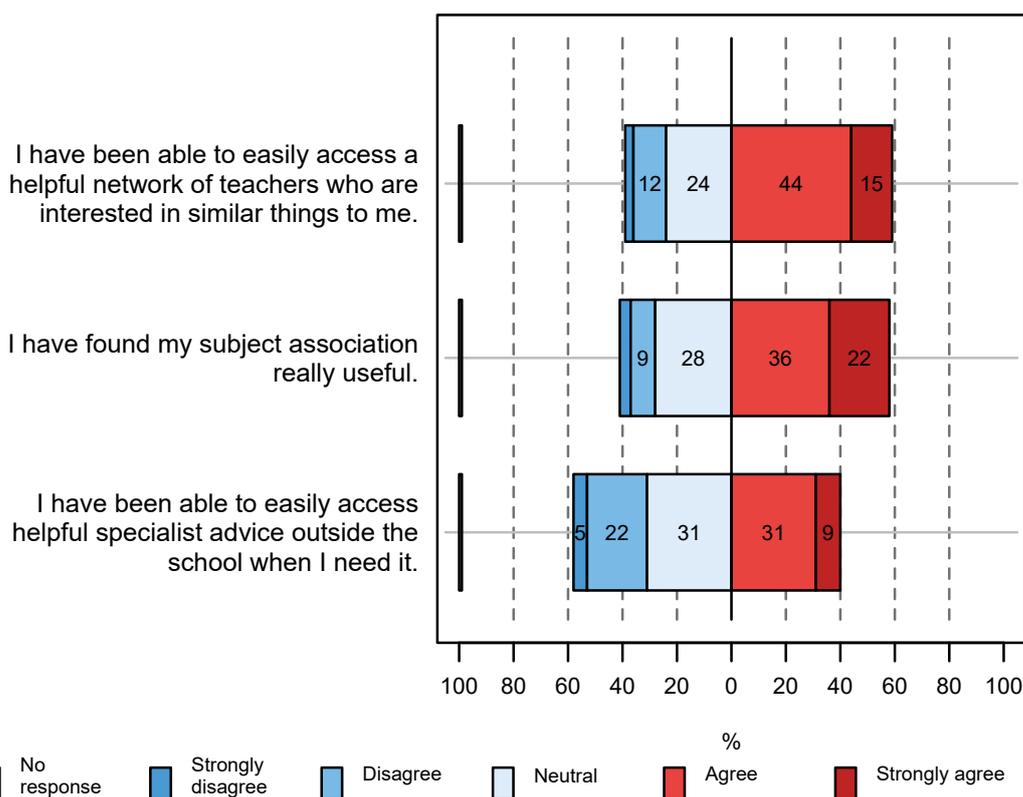
TABLE 19 Opportunities for teachers’ professional learning; teachers’ “agree” and “strongly agree” responses for 2012, 2015, and 2018

School-based opportunities	2012 (n = 1,266) %	2015 (n = 1,777) %	2018 (n = 705) %
I have good opportunities to see and discuss the work of teachers in this school when I want to do things differently	47	56	66
We have good opportunities in this school to explore deeper ideas and theory that underpin new approaches	40	62	48

### Slightly fewer teachers are able to access specialist advice outside the school

Over half the secondary teachers reported that they could easily access a helpful network of teachers and found their subject association really useful (see Figure 34). Forty percent have been able to easily access specialist advice outside the school when they need it, down from 46% in 2015.

FIGURE 34 Access to external support and advice, reported by teachers (n = 705)

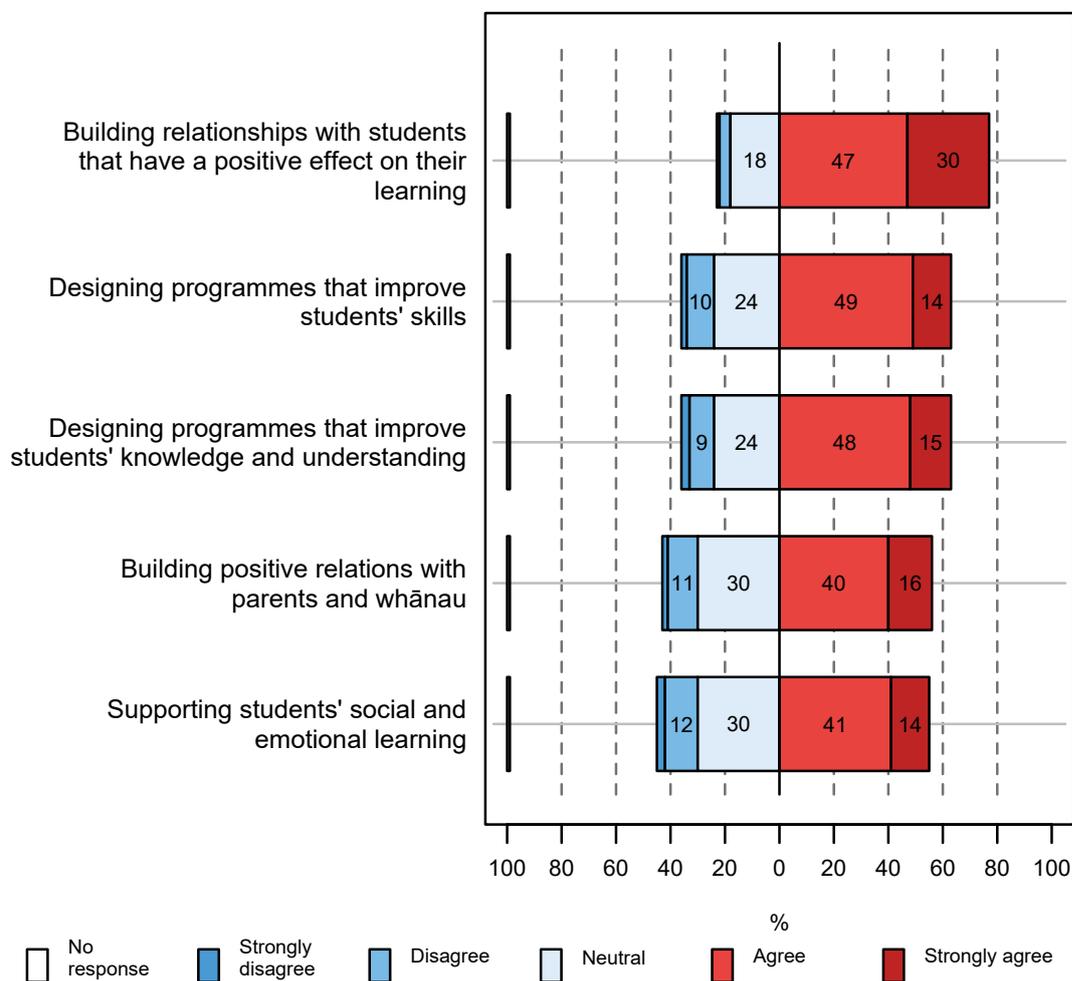


### Practical help from professional learning has helped meet students’ needs

For around half to three-quarters of the teachers, professional learning in the past 3 years had provided practical help for various aspects of working with students and their parents (see Figure 35), including supporting students’ social and emotional learning.<sup>40</sup>

40 These are new questions to the national survey.

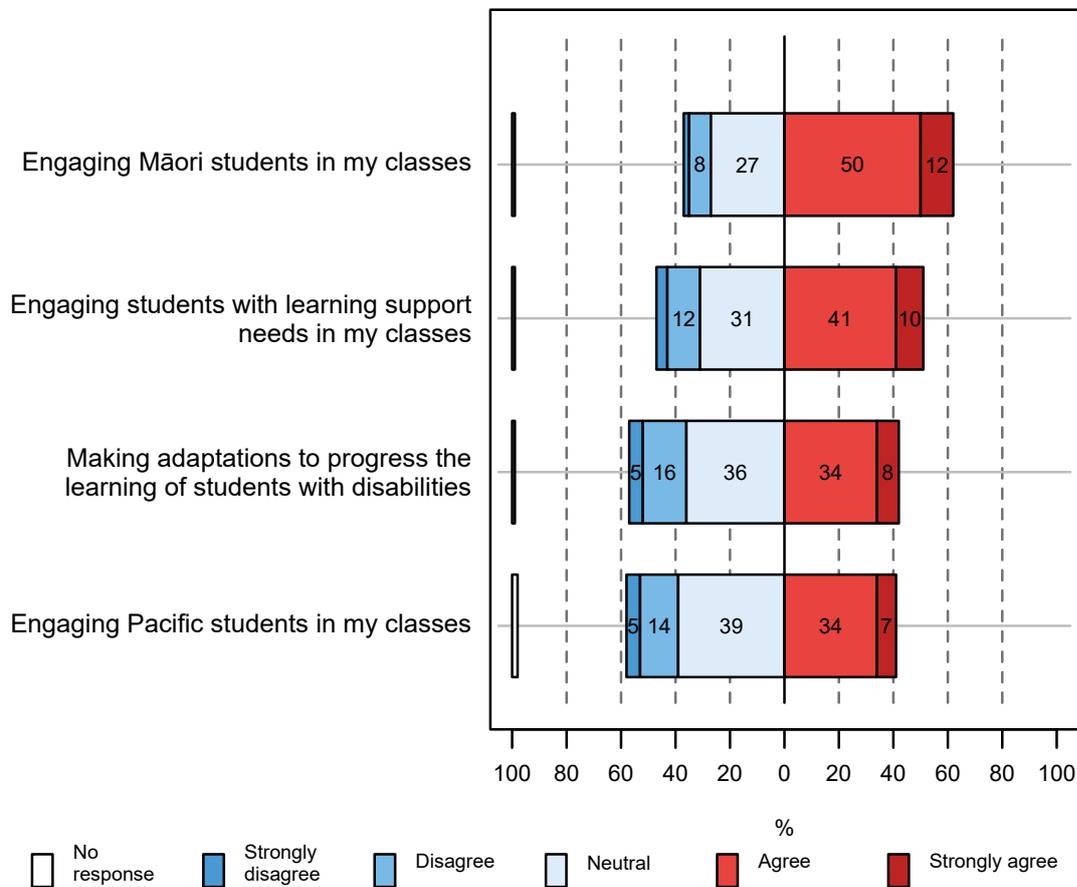
FIGURE 35 Teachers' agreement that their professional learning has provided practical help with these areas (n = 705)



### Increased practical help for engaging Māori students and Pacific students

For at least half of the teachers, professional learning had provided practical help for engaging Māori students and those with learning support needs (see Figure 36). Slightly fewer had professional learning that gave them practical help with making curriculum adaptations for students with disabilities or engaging Pacific students.

FIGURE 36 Teachers' agreement that their professional learning has provided practical help in these areas, relating to specific groups of students (n = 705)



In 2018, greater proportions of teachers had professional learning that provided practical help for engaging Māori students in their classes (62%, up from 50% in 2015) and engaging Pacific students in their classes (41%, up from 32%).

There were no differences related to decile for teachers having professional learning that provided practical help for engaging their Māori students. For Pacific students and those with learning support needs, the following differences related to decile were evident:

- Teachers in decile 1–2 schools were more likely to indicate their professional learning had provided practical help for engaging Pacific students in their classes (55%, compared with around 36% of teachers at decile 3–6 and decile 9–10 schools, and 46% of those at decile 7–8 schools).
- Teachers in decile 1–2 schools were less likely to indicate their professional learning had provided practical help for engaging students with learning support needs in their classes (39%, compared with around 49% of teachers at decile 3–4 schools, 43% at decile 5–6 schools, and 60% of those at decile 7–10 schools)

In response to the open-ended question asking for overall comments on their work as a teacher, 5% of the teachers wrote comments related to wanting more, or better quality, professional learning.

In our school we have no real control over our professional development. It is all about spiral of inquiry which is not real research and does not allow or require robust training in identified areas. It is a financial cop out.

Disappointed about lack of support from NZQA regarding moderation BP workshops—everything seems to be financially driven rather than what works best. Need more opportunities to get together with teachers of subject area outside association to invent and run—more PD should be given by [the Ministry of Education].

I personally feel that given the tools and ongoing support plus PD will help me become a more effective teacher. If I was given more support/acknowledgement from management I would feel more empowered and appreciated. Teaching is becoming more demanding and stress-related incidents are more common. Teaching at high school is so much more than just teaching a subject. The emotional/social wellbeing of a child is just as important. Not to mention those with a disability, special needs, learning difficulties to name a few. I value my job and am very passionate about helping our children. I am just not equipped to be the best teacher I could be due to the circumstances outside my control. I want to have or be given the opportunity for me to personally grow and become the best I can. I need money, resources and time.

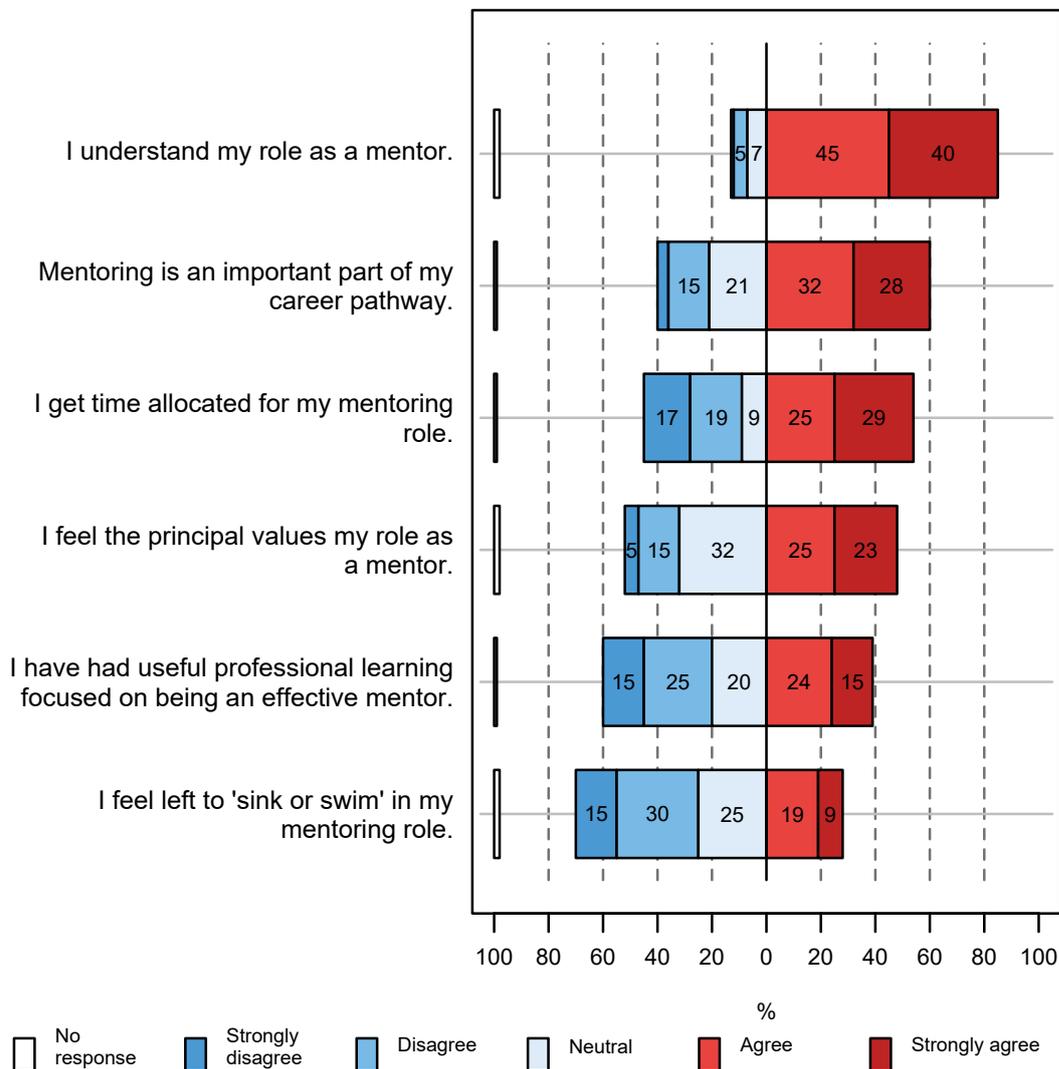
### Teachers in mentor roles

Sixteen percent ( $n = 110$ ) of the teachers responding to the survey are mentor/tutor teachers for a provisionally certificated teacher.<sup>41</sup> Of these teachers, most think they understand their role as a mentor (see Figure 37). Fewer indicated they have had useful professional learning focused on being an effective mentor (38%). Over a quarter (28%) feel left to “sink or swim” in their mentoring role.

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<sup>41</sup> A small number of items about teachers' experiences of mentor roles were included in the secondary survey for the first time in 2018.

FIGURE 37 Teachers' experiences of a mentoring role (n = 110)



There were no differences related to school decile in teachers' experiences of mentoring.

### Changes teachers would make in their work

In 2018, the median number of changes teachers wanted to make to their work was seven, compared with six in 2015, eight in 2012, and nine in 2009.

Looking at what teachers said they would like to change (see Table 20), better pay and reducing administration and paperwork remained the top two items in 2018. The survey was conducted when teachers' contract negotiations were underway, and the proportion of teachers wanting better pay was higher than in 2015. Overall, 2018 saw higher proportions indicating they would change in many of the items in Table 20 (apart from "Nothing"). There were increases of at least nine percentage points in teachers wanting reduced class sizes, more support staff, more support for teaching students with behaviour issues, and more support to adapt NZC for students with special needs. Taken together, this

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suggests that teachers—even this slightly more experienced group than in 2015—are facing increasing challenges working with students.

Not everything saw a marked increase in 2018 though. There was no significant increase in teachers wanting more appreciation of their work from their school's management, or wanting to reduce pace of change.

TABLE 20 Things teachers would change about their work as a teacher; 2009, 2012, 2015, and 2018

Things teachers would change	2009 (n = 871) %	2012 (n = 1,266) %	2015 (n = 1,777) %	2018 (n = 705) %
Better pay	44	40	60	76
Reduce administration/paperwork	62	63	64	75
More time to reflect/plan/share ideas	59	65	57	62
Reduce assessment workload	47	51	46	56
More non-contact time to work with other teachers	46	46	51	55
Reduce number of initiatives at any one time	43	48	45	55
Improve teachers' status in society	*	*	*	55
Reduce class sizes	47	45	41	53
More sharing of knowledge/ideas with teachers from other schools	37	38	38	43
More support staff	35	34	29	39
More appreciation of my work from my school's management	26	33	27	29
More support for me to teach students with behaviour issues	*	29	22	34
Reduce pace of change	30	38	23	27
More support for me to adapt NZC for students with learning support needs	*	10	11	20
Other	2	4	4	10
Nothing	-	1	1	0

\* Not asked.

The "Other" changes teachers would make include resolving issues with colleagues, having more non-academic support for students, and reducing the time they spend on extra-curricular activities or compensating them financially for this, having more non-contact time (for purposes other than working with colleagues), or improving the facilities at school (each around 1%).

Over half wanted teachers' status in society to be improved, and this was also evident in comments made by 11% of teachers, at the end of the survey. Some teachers also linked this to being paid more.

I do think we need to raise the profile of teaching in NZ, but not through industrial action but through shared vision and passion for learning and progress. Teachers need to be both celebrated and at the same time held to account. The key to raising the profile is inspired and passionate teachers leading learning and knowing/owning their impact.

Good and satisfying career, barring public perception, and lack of market-related remuneration, concomitant with qualifications and experience.

Teachers can earn more in the private sector, have more time to themselves without the community judging them. A teacher never has down time in a small community as they are always being judged.

There were some decile-related differences in things that teachers would change about their work. Those in decile 3–6 schools were among those who showed the most interest in having more support for teaching students with behaviour or learning needs. More specifically:

- 42% of teachers at decile 1–6 schools would like more support for them to teach students with behaviour issues, as would 25% of teachers at decile 7–8 schools, and 16% at decile 9–10 schools
- 48% of teachers at decile 3–6 schools would like more support staff, as would 35% of teachers at decile 1–2 schools, and 29% at decile 7–10 schools
- 25% of teachers at decile 3–6 schools would like support for them to adapt NZC for students with learning support needs, as would around 15% of teachers at schools of other deciles.

Eighty-three percent of teachers at decile 5–6 secondary schools would like to reduce administration/paperwork, with fewer (around 73%) at decile 3–4 and 7–10 schools, and 65% of teachers at decile 1–2 schools expressing this view.

However, there were no decile-related differences in teachers' views for most of the items in Table 20, such as saying they would like better pay, improving teachers' status in society, or reduced class sizes.

## Summary and discussion

In 2018, secondary teachers report slightly lower morale, accompanied by slightly higher stress levels than in 2015 and increased work hours for some. Workload is a concern for a large minority of teachers. The intensification of expectations, workload, associated stress levels, and work–life balance was the prevalent theme in teachers' written comments. It should come as no surprise that, in 2018, slightly more teachers are looking at moving to a career outside education.

More teachers wanted to make a number of changes to their work as a teacher, compared with 2015. In particular, more teachers would like better pay, less administration, less assessment, fewer initiatives at a time, and smaller class sizes. Over half would also like to improve teachers' status in society.

The overall picture from all of teachers' responses, including comments they wrote, is of teachers feeling increasingly hard-pressed to do a good job of teaching a student population that has a growing number of needs—such as mental health issues—that require more support to address than it is a teacher's role to provide.

The findings relating to teachers' professional learning are somewhat mixed. Greater proportions of teachers report having had professional learning that gave them practical help for engaging Māori students and Pacific students in their classes than in 2015. At the same time, there are indications that fewer teachers have access to the support from outside the school they need to do their job than they did 3 years ago. Well under half of teachers who are mentoring a provisionally certificated teacher report having useful professional learning focused on being an effective mentor.

As we will see later in the report, recruiting teachers is the major issue most frequently identified by principals. The effects of this issue for teachers who *are* in classrooms are likely to be reflected in some of the responses reported here. Growing stress levels among the existing teacher workforce will not add appeal for those considering joining the profession.