

Pasifika students, Pasifika cultural activities, and engagement with Pasifika families

Findings from the NZCER national survey of primary and intermediate schools 2016

Linda Bonne and Lorraine Spiller

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Key points

- Over two-thirds of teachers indicated they make a point of knowing which Pasifika culture each of their Pasifika students' families identify with.
- Thirty-seven percent of teachers had had professional learning in the previous 2–3 years that provided practical help with engaging Pasifika students, up from 27% in 2013.
- Over a third of principals said their school's strategic plan includes strategies for engaging Pasifika families, or that Pasifika home–school partnerships are working well.
- Over half of the principals were using National Standards data to identify learning needs of their Pasifika students.
- Seven percent of principals worked closely with local Pasifika language nests to ensure a good transition for their children into the school.
- Five percent of principals said children from language nests could continue learning their language at the school.
- Around a fifth of principals indicated they were unable to access the external expertise they needed to develop their implementation of reliable strategies to support Pasifika students' learning.

1.

Introduction

The NZCER national survey of primary and intermediate schools 2016 included a number of questions that asked specifically about matters related to Pasifika students, Pasifika families, or Pasifika cultural activities at school. In the interests of making the collection of relevant survey responses available to other researchers working in Pasifika education, we have brought these together in this document.

Groups of these responses are also incorporated in a series of thematic reports; for example, some are included in *Finding a balance—fostering student wellbeing, positive behaviour, and learning*.¹ All these reports are freely available on the national survey website: www.nzcer.org.nz/research/national-survey. Also available on this site are reports relating to the NZCER national surveys of secondary schools, which include information relating to Pasifika students and their families,.

We report responses as proportions of *all* principals (or teachers, trustees, parents) who completed surveys. We include statistically significant differences associated with school decile with a focus on schools in the decile 1–4 range, where Pasifika students are over-represented.²

In this document, the survey is briefly described before we present the responses of principals, teachers, trustees, and parents, followed by items to which collective views were sought.

About the NZCER national survey of primary and intermediate schools 2016

This survey was conducted from August to early September 2016 and was sent to a representative sample of 349 English-medium state and state-integrated primary and intermediate schools (20% of all these schools in New Zealand). At these schools, surveys were sent to the principal and to a random sample of one in two teachers. Surveys also went to the board of trustees' chair, who was asked to give a second trustee survey to someone likely to have a different viewpoint from their own. Additionally, surveys were sent to a random sample of one in four parents at a cross-section of 36 schools. The response rates were 57% for principals ($n = 200$), 38% for teachers ($n = 771$), 25% for trustees ($n = 176$), and 32% for parents, whānau, and Pasifika families ($n = 504$).

The survey returns for principals, teachers, and trustees were generally representative of schools in the

1 Boyd, S., Bonne, L., & Berg, M. (2017). *Finding a balance—fostering student wellbeing, positive behaviour, and learning*. Wellington: NZCER. Available at: www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/finding-balance-fostering-student-wellbeing

2 In July 2016, 70% of Years 0–15 Pasifika students were enrolled in decile 1–4 schools in New Zealand, according to Education Counts: www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/student-numbers/6028

sample.³ Unfortunately, the proportions of respondents who identified with Pasifika ethnic groups were too small to allow for statistical comparisons with non-Pasifika respondents (for example, 4% [$n = 20$] of parents identified with either Samoan, Cook Island Māori, Tongan, Niuean, or Tuvaluan ethnic groups).

In this document, we report only statistically significant differences associated with school decile band.⁴ These sections are italicised in the text.

A small number of questions included in 2016 were also asked in previous surveys in 2013 and 2010.⁵ In these instances, comparisons of response patterns are made.

3 For further details about the sample, margins of error, and methodology, see Berg, M. (2017). *NZCER national survey of primary and intermediate schools 2016: Methodology and sample information*. Available on the project web page: <http://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/national-survey>

4 We grouped schools into decile bands for analysis purposes: decile 1–2, decile 3–4, decile 5–6, decile 7–8, and decile 9–10.

5 Some questions were drawn from questionnaires used as part of the work of Te Toi Tupu.

2.

Principals' responses

Forty-four percent of the principals said their school's strategic plan included strategies for engaging Pasifika families (13% strongly agreed and 29% agreed). Thirty-four percent indicated that Pasifika home-school partnerships were working well (8% strongly agreed and 26% agreed).

Principals of decile 1–2 schools were most likely to strongly agree these two approaches were in place at their school (28% and 17%, respectively).

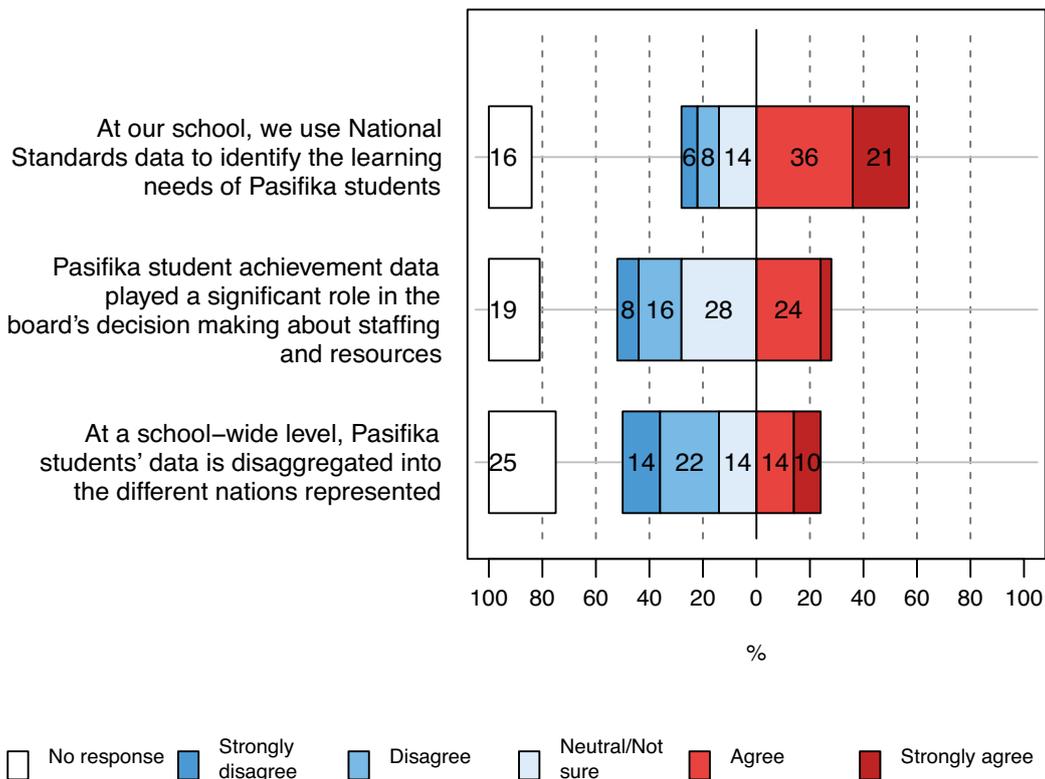
Almost a quarter of principals (24%) indicated that incorporating Pasifika students' cultures in schoolwide practices in ways that promote belonging was well embedded at their school, and a further 24% said this was partially embedded (19% were exploring this, and 20% said this was not done). Responses here did not vary with school decile.

School-level uses of Pasifika students' data

Figure 1 shows that over half the principals reported using National Standards data to identify the learning needs of Pasifika students at their school. Over a quarter agreed that Pasifika students' achievement data had played a significant role in the board's decision making about staffing and resources.⁶ At slightly fewer schools, Pasifika students' data were being disaggregated into the different nations represented. Responses to these three statements were not associated with school decile.

⁶ Principals were asked to respond to this question in relation to the board they had worked with before the 2016 trustee elections.

FIGURE 1 School-level use of Pasifika students' data



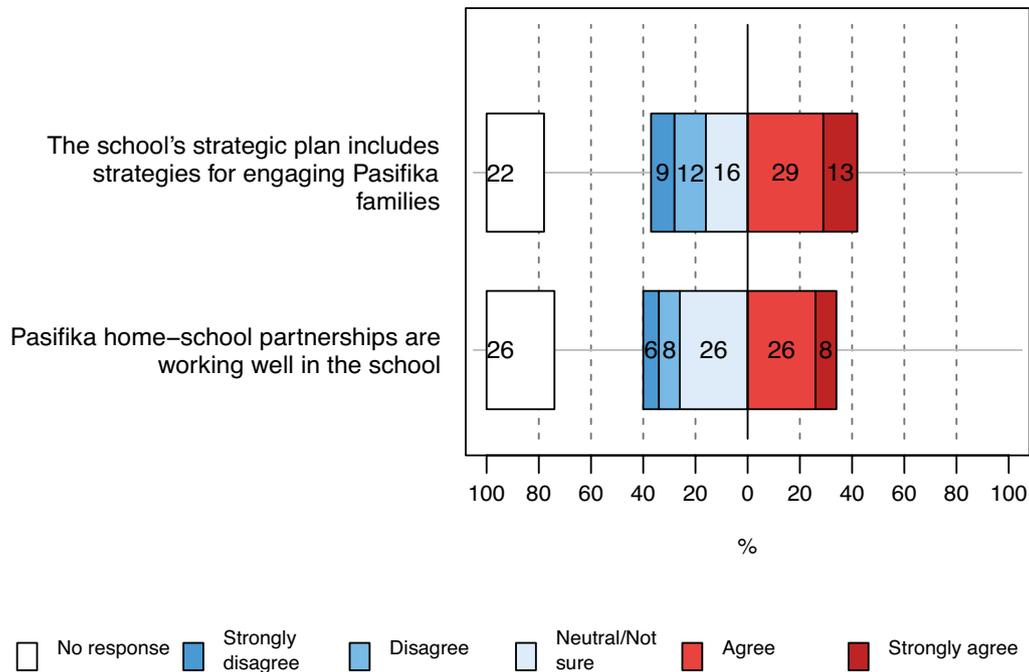
School approaches to supporting relationships with Pasifika families

Over a third of all principals indicated their school's strategic plan includes strategies for engaging Pasifika families, or that Pasifika home-school partnerships are working well in the school (see Figure 2).

For principals of decile 1-4 schools, 61% agreed or strongly agreed their strategic plan includes strategies for engaging Pasifika families, and 46% that Pasifika home-school partnerships are working well in the school.

Around one-quarter of all principals did not respond to these statements. Non-response rates tended to increase with school decile, mirroring the decreasing proportions of Pasifika students enrolled across school deciles.

FIGURE 2 School-level approaches to supporting relationships with Pasifika families, reported by principals (n = 200)



In relation to students' wellbeing and behaviour, we asked principals about the support they received from a Pasifika liaison/community representative. Most principals (88%) did not have this support. Principals' views of the support's usefulness varied: 2% rated this as 'very useful'; 3% 'useful'; 5% 'mixed use'; and 1% 'not useful'.

For principals of decile 1–2 schools, 6% rated the support they received from a Pasifika liaison/community representative as 'very useful' and 11% as 'useful'.

A majority of principals indicated they did not have a Pasifika language nest among their local early childhood education services (see Figure 3). Only 7% of all principals agreed or strongly agreed they work closely with local Pasifika language nests to ensure a good transition for their children into the school.

Sixteen percent of principals of decile 1–4 schools agreed or strongly agreed they work closely with local Pasifika language nests to ensure a good transition for their children into the school.

Even fewer (5% of all principals) indicated children from language nests could continue learning their language at the school (just 1% strongly agreed this was the case).

2. Principals' responses

FIGURE 3 School-level approaches to supporting Pasifika students' transitions from language nests, reported by principals (n = 200)

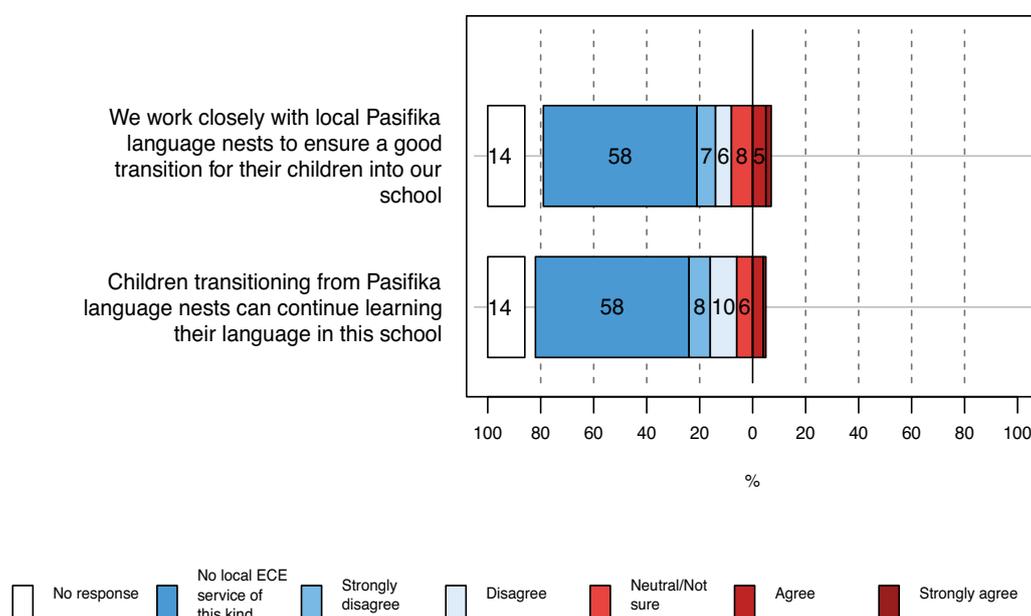


Table 1 shows that a quarter of principals indicated they needed external expertise for engaging parents, whānau, and Pasifika families but were unable to readily access it. Around a fifth were unable to access the external help they needed with implementing reliable strategies to support Pasifika students' learning.

TABLE 1 Principals' responses (n = 200) to: *What external expertise does their school need in order to keep developing, and can you access this?*

	Not needed %*	Needed and can readily access %	Needed but can't readily access %	No response %
Engaging parents, whānau, and Pasifika families	33	38	25	5
Implementing reliable strategies to support Pasifika students' learning	53	17	21	10

*Due to rounding, percentages do not total 100.

A greater proportion of principals at decile 1–4 schools (27%) said they needed and could readily access external expertise to keep developing their implementation of reliable strategies to support Pasifika students' learning. Principals of decile 5–6 schools were the most likely to say they needed but could not readily access this expertise (37%).

3.

Teachers' responses

Knowing their Pasifika learners and providing relevant learning opportunities

Over two-thirds of the teachers indicated they make a point of knowing which Pasifika culture each of their Pasifika students' families identify with (see Figure 4). Just under half said they provide Pasifika students with opportunities to work together and support each other, or incorporate their culture in teaching in ways that promote belonging.

Teachers' responses to these three statements varied according to school decile, with those at decile 1–2 schools the most likely to strongly agree (34%, 22%, and 24% respectively).

Professional learning provided practical help for engaging Pasifika learners

Thirty-seven percent of teachers said the professional learning in which they had been involved over the previous 2–3 years had provided practical help with engaging Pasifika students. This was up from 27% in 2013.

Teachers at decile 1–2 schools were the most likely to agree or strongly agree the professional learning in which they had been involved over the previous 2–3 years had provided practical help with engaging Pasifika students (54%, compared with 24% of teachers at decile 7–8 schools—the least likely).

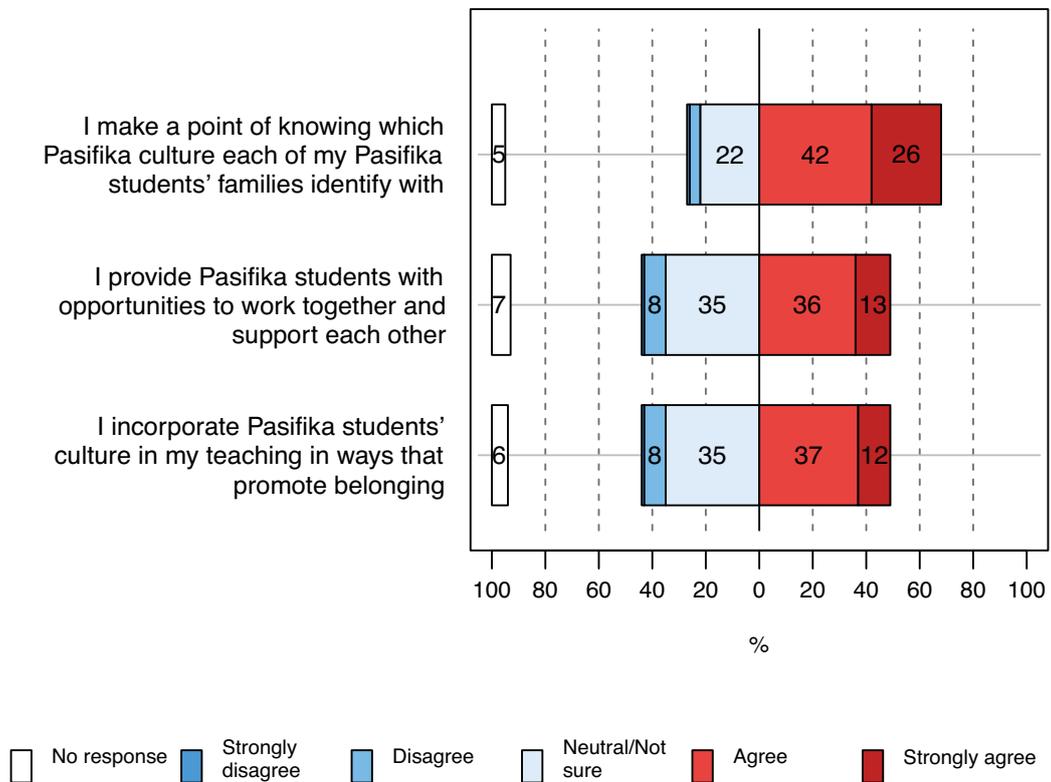
Indications that some teachers thought they were better at meeting the needs of Pasifika students

There was a small but not statistically significant increase in the proportion of teachers who saw that one of their main achievements as a teacher in the past 3 years was being better at meeting the needs of Pasifika students (17%, just slightly more than 12% in 2013).

The proportion of teachers at decile 1–2 schools who identified being better at meeting the needs of Pasifika students as a major achievement was 33%, decreasing to 9% for those at decile 7–10 schools.

3. Teachers' responses

FIGURE 4 **Knowing their Pasifika learners and providing learning opportunities relevant to them, reported by teachers (n = 771)**



4.

Trustees' responses

Five percent of trustees ($n = 8$) said they had decided to become a member of their school's board to represent a Pasifika perspective. This is similar to the proportion who indicated they identified with Pasifika ethnic groups (4%, $n = 7$).

Nine percent of trustees thought their board needed more experience or skills with Pasifika networks. Almost as many (8%) said their board had consulted the community about provision for Pasifika students in the past 12 months. None of the trustees indicated parents had raised the issue of provision for Pasifika students with the board in 2016.

Only a small proportion of trustees (4%⁷) indicated they had used the resource, *Effective governance, supporting Pasifika success*,⁸ over the past year for their trustee role.

7 Note: These were not the same 4% of trustees who identified with Pasifika ethnic groups.

8 Ministry of Education. (2013). *Effective governance, supporting Pasifika success: Information for school boards of trustees 2013*. Wellington: Author.

5.

Parents', whānau, and Pasifika families' responses

Where there was more than one school-aged child in a family, parents were asked to complete the questionnaire with their youngest child in mind.

We asked parents how often their child takes part in school or class activities particular to Pasifika cultures. Seven percent of parents indicated this happened 'most weeks', 28% said 'sometimes', 33% said 'almost never', and 30% were unsure.

Twenty-three percent of parents whose child attended a decile 1–2 school said this happened most weeks, compared with fewer than 6% of those whose child attended a decile 3–10 school.

6. Collective views

In both 2013 and 2016, teachers, principals, trustees, and parents were asked to identify the major issues they saw facing their child's school from a list of possible responses. One of these was 'Pasifika students' achievement' (see Table 2). About a fifth of the teachers and principals identified this as one of the major issues facing their school in 2016. Slightly fewer trustees included Pasifika students' achievement among the major issues they saw facing the school. Very few parents thought this was one of the major issues. Principals' responses here had increased somewhat, compared with 2013, otherwise there was little change.

TABLE 2 **All respondents who identified Pasifika students' achievement as a major issue facing their primary or intermediate school in 2013 and 2016**

Respondents	Identified Pasifika students' achievement was one of the major issues facing their school	
	2013 %	2016 %
Teachers	20	20
Principals	13	19
Trustees	16	14
Parents, whānau, and Pasifika families	4	3

There were differences associated with school decile in those who identified Pasifika students' achievement as a major issue for their school. Forty-four percent of teachers, 39% of principals, and 8% of parents at decile 1–2 schools identified this as an issue, as did 21% of trustees at decile 1–6 schools.

Responding to cultural diversity was identified as another major issue facing the school by 10% of principals, 7% of teachers, 7% of trustees, and 4% of parents.

Principals, teachers, and trustees also identified what they considered to be their main achievements related to Pasifika students' learning.⁹ Nearly a quarter of principals (23%) said one of their main

⁹ For trustees, we asked them to think about their board's achievements over the last year. Principals and teachers were asked about their main achievements over the past 3 years.

achievements was that their Pasifika students' performance levels stayed high or improved. Fourteen percent of trustees identified improvements in Pasifika students' progress and achievement as a main achievement for their board. Principals' and trustees' responses here were much the same as 2013.

Among teachers' main achievements, 17% identified being better at meeting the needs of Pasifika students. This was up slightly from 12% in 2013.

Principals' responses did not vary with school decile. One-quarter of trustees at decile 1–4 schools identified improvements in Pasifika students' progress and achievement as a main achievement for their board. Thirty-three percent of teachers at decile 1–2 schools (decreasing to 9% for those at decile 7–10 schools) identified being better at meeting the needs of Pasifika students as one of their main achievements in the past 3 years.

