

All children and young people are present, safe and included in their learning environments so that they realise their full potential

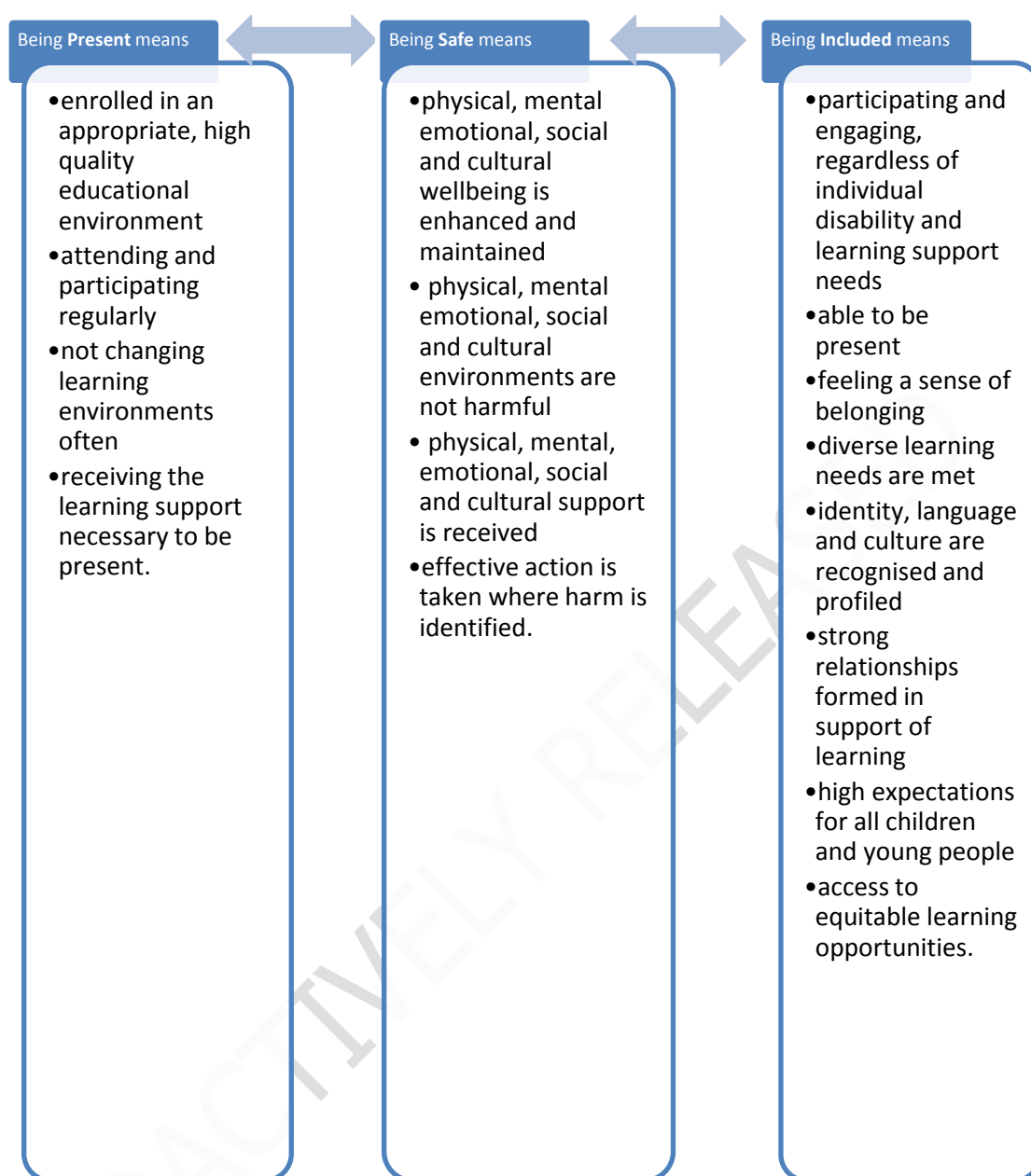
What do we mean by all children and young people?

We mean all children and young people, as captured in Te Whāriki me Te Whāriki a te Kōhanga Reo, the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga. This means children and young people are present, safe and included in learning environments, no matter their:

- Gender
- Gender and sexuality identity
- Ethnicity
- Socioeconomic status
- Ability
- Language
- Additional learning needs
- Background
- Family structure
- Religion
- Culture
- Identity

Why does being present, safe and included matter?

Being present, safe and included sets children and young people up to reach their potential within the education system. If children and young people are not present, safe and included, they cannot learn and thrive in education. These factors are interrelated:



Why is it important for children and young people to be present, safe and included?

Learning is enabled when every child and young person has regular access to high quality learning opportunities in the context of a rich learning community, where everyone is valued and respected, and when all children and young peoples' values are reflected in their learning community.

Learning is compromised if children and young people are not present in, or attending and engaging with, their educational environments.

Learning support is accessed by a significant proportion of children and young people with disabilities and additional learning needs who may need this support to be present, safe and included. 1 in 5 children and young people access some form of extra support for their learning. Disability and learning support includes a broader range of services and supports than what used to be considered special education. For example,

alternative education and attendance services are now part of Learning Support. This recognises that children and young people face barriers to participating, learning and achieving for a variety of reasons.

Evidence from the international studies has shown that participation in ECE is associated with achievement at middle primary levelⁱ and by age 15, even after accounting for children and young peoples' socio-economic backgrounds.ⁱⁱ This relationship between ECE participation and later learning outcomes is the strongest in countries with specific quality requirements, such as low children to staff ratios and qualified staff.ⁱⁱⁱ

Schools and kura are expected to provide opportunities for children and young people to learn within and across key learning areas, to enable them to understand and relate to each other, to learn to think and to communicate, to take pride in their identity, language and culture and the cultures of others, and realise their potential. Children and young people who don't attend school and kura regularly don't achieve as well in NCEA.^{iv} Youth who have negative experiences and are not present in their learning environments are also less likely to re-engage with education during early adulthood, and are more likely to engage in risk-taking and anti-social behaviour with negative outcomes.^v If the adults in children's lives have had negative experiences with and/or disengaged from learning, and if they have low or no qualifications, this also affects children and young people's experiences.

Learning is also compromised if children and young people do not feel safe and included.^{vi}

The qualities of a school and the quality of the teachers and leaders within schools affect how children and young people feel about being at school and about learning.^{vii} We know that children and young people learn better when their needs are understood and their identity, language, culture and personal qualities are recognised, respected and valued by the learning community, including teachers, learning leaders, peers and the wider community.^{viii} We also know that productive partnerships, that enable understanding and acknowledgement of the value of Māori identity, language and culture, and the aspirations of Māori, help support Māori children and young people to achieve as Māori in a bicultural education system.^{ix}

Learning environments affect children and young people's wellbeing. For example, feeling connected to and safe in school is predictive of future mental and emotional wellbeing.^x A sense of belonging at school or kura helps protect young people against emotional distress^{xi}, risky behaviours and suicidal behaviours.^{xii} A strong sense of belonging and lower levels of school-related anxiety are also correlated to higher achievement and the promotion of mental health and resilience.^{xiii}

We also know that threats to wellbeing in learning environments, such as bullying, make children feel less safe in those environments.^{xiv} If children and young people continually don't feel safe, their brain function and their ability to learn is affected. This makes it difficult for children and young people to attend school and kura, to link their learning to earlier experiences, and to effectively remember what they have learnt. We know that embedding a whole-school approach to promoting wellbeing and preventing certain harms, such as bullying, is effective in promoting student wellbeing and improved mental health. Schools with higher levels of student wellbeing have lower levels of aggressive behaviour.^{xv}

Pastoral care and student wellbeing makes a difference to educational outcomes in schools. For example ERO found that in secondary schools with well-placed pastoral

care and student wellbeing systems and processes, there was higher levels of achievement for most students and lower levels of stand downs, suspensions and exclusions.^{xvi} These schools also had the least disparity between Māori and Pacific student achievement and that of others students in their school.

What does the evidence tell us about whether children and young people are present, safe and included in New Zealand?

Māori and Pacific children and young people, LGBTQIA+ children and young people, and children and young people from low socioeconomic status backgrounds are less present than other groups.

Most children and young people are enrolled and attending early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo, schools and kura, but Māori and Pacific children and young people and children and young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds are enrolling and attending at lower rates.^{xvii}

Some early learning services are not fully inclusive of children with disabilities and additional learning needs, because children were not able to attend the service all of the time.^{xviii}

ERO has examined how well children and young people with additional learning needs are welcomed, included and supported. In 2012 93% of sampled early learning services were very or mostly inclusive and in 2014 78% of sampled schools were mostly inclusive.^{xix} However, some parents tell us their child has not been welcomed at an early learning service or local school, or has been excluded from education opportunities.^{xx}

The Youth '12 survey found that 95% of students indicated that it was somewhat important or very important that they attend school every day.^{xxi} However PISA 2015 found that the percentage of children who had skipped a day of school in the two weeks prior to the PISA examination had increased since 2012.^{xxii}

While the number of children and young people leaving early or missing school for periods of time due to disciplinary action is decreasing, Māori and Pacific children and young people and children, female children and young people, and young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds are leaving or missing school at higher rates.^{xxiii}

The Human Rights Commission reports barriers to children and young people who are transgender being included and participating in schools.^{xxiv} Transgender children and young people face difficulties around access including through school uniforms, access to school facilities and recognition of their identity, such as their name.^{xxv}

Truancy rates, where students are unjustifiably absent for three or more days during a survey week, are much higher for Māori and Pacific students (6% and just under 6% compared to 3%).^{xxvi}

Children and young people with disabilities and additional learning needs are prevented from being present in all learning environments.

One in five children and young people access some form of extra support in their learning.^{xxvii} Barriers to learning may be the result of disability, disengagement, disadvantage, wider developmental delay and other difficulties.

While 99.6% of children and young people attend a regular school and 65% of ORS verified students are enrolled in a mainstream school, children and young people with disabilities and additional learning needs are facing unlawful barriers to enrolment, attendance and participation.^{xxviii} There is a strong, vocal feedback from some families about difficulties faced in enrolling their child. There is anecdotal evidence of children with disabilities not being allowed to enrol, being asked to move to other schools, being suspended or excluded based on disability or only being allowed to attend school for part of the day.^{xxix}

305 whānau formally reported barriers to enrolment, attendance and/or participation in March to April 2017 for children and young people with disabilities and additional learning needs. Fulltime attendance was the most commonly identified barriers, by 75.7% of students.^{xxx}

There are a significant number of young people not participating in education.

Schools formally stand-down, suspend and exclude more Māori students than any other ethnic group (stand-downs: 37.7 per 1000 for Māori to 15.7 for Pākehā and 24.8 for Pacific students), (suspensions: 7.6 per 1000 for Māori to 2.3 for Pākehā and 4.3 for Pacific students), (exclusions: 3 per 1000 for Māori compared to 0.9 for Pākehā and 1.9 for Pacific students). There are reports that some schools are also informally suspending students, which is not included in official data.

Pacific students have the highest expulsion rates of any ethnic group (3.6 per 1000 compared to 0.5 for Pākehā and 1.8 for Māori).

Students from decile 1 and 2 schools are 6.7 times more likely to be suspended, 5 times more likely to be stood down and 5.4 times more likely to be excluded than students from decile 9 and 10 schools. Students from decile 1 and 2 schools were 2.9 times more likely to get expelled from schools than students from decile 9 and 10 schools.

Māori students and students from lower decile schools are also more likely to be transient than the total population.^{xxxi} Students who have moved school twice or more across Year 9 to Year 11 are less than half as likely to achieve NCEA Level 2 or above by the time they leave school compared to those who have not moved school.^{xxxii}

Māori students and students from low decile schools have the highest rate of early leaving exemptions, where young people aged 15 who intend to follow a pathway outside the school system are able to leave the school system early.

Māori and Pacific young people are overrepresented in not in employment, education or training statistics (NEET).^{xxxiii}

Learning environments are not always providing physically, mentally, emotionally and culturally safe spaces for children and young people and there are high rates of bullying in learning environments in New Zealand.

An ERO report in 2016 found that 83% of early learning services were up to date with safety and wellbeing responsibilities in 2016, however 17 percent of services were not up to date or were not managing them well.^{xxxiv}

While rates of formal stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions are decreasing, their continued use, and the use of unlawful informal suspensions and

exclusions, suggests that not all learning environments are safe for all children and young people.^{xxxv}

The Trends in Mathematics and Science Study found that New Zealand has the second-highest rate of bullying out of 51 countries. 60 per cent of Year 5 students and 35% of Year 9 students report that they have experienced some form of bullying behaviour monthly or more. More than a quarter of students reported being subject to some type of bullying at least a few times a month.^{xxxvi}

Māori and Pākehā students report higher exposure to bullying than Pacific and Asian students.^{xxxvii} Lower decile schools have higher proportions of students who report bullying behaviour weekly and lower proportions of those who almost never report these behaviours.^{xxxviii}

While New Zealand male students have a greater sense of belonging than female students, PISA and TIMSS found that boys were more likely to experience bullying.^{xxxix}

Online research reveals multiple examples of children being reportedly bullied and needing to move schools as a result.

Gender and sexuality minority children and young people are more likely to experience bullying. A study of 107 New Zealand schools found that 95% of students and 92% of staff did not believe gender and sexuality diverse students would feel safe in their school.^{xl} A New Zealand study reports that the general attitude towards queer students was: 18% report dislike or fear, 10% report queer students were treated differently, and 31% report that queer students experienced harassment of some kind, mainly verbal. 31% of students and 33% of staff report that queer students were not visible and/or they didn't know any queer students.^{xli}

Transgender students and students uncertain about their gender identity are more likely to be bullied, have been physically harmed, and to have significant depressive symptoms.^{xlii} More than half of transgender students are afraid someone at school would hurt or bother them.^{xliii}

The data and research on the experience of gender and sexuality diverse students in primary schools is currently limited. This is also the case for information on how teachers support gender and sexuality diverse children and young people across the education system.

A New Zealand study found that 29% of staff report a general attitude of acceptance and/or protection at their school towards queer students, compared to 12% of students.^{xliv}

Some children with disabilities and additional learning needs experience high rates of bullying. For example there is clear evidence that deaf children and young people are overexposed to bullying.^{xlv}

Not all children and young people feel safe and supported by the actions of adults in response to bullying in their learning environment.

The Youth '12 study found that some children and young people don't feel that schools and kura are responding to bullying. Just over half of frequently bullied students reported that their teacher behaved unfairly, compared to around 25% of all New Zealand students. NZ has a high association between perceptions of teacher

unfairness and student reporting of bullying. In schools with higher perceptions of teacher unfairness, 36% of students are classified as frequently bullied, compared to 12% of schools with lower perception of teacher unfairness. This is higher than rates across the OECD.^{xlvi}

Children and young people's mental health and wellbeing challenges are not supported well in learning environments.

ERO's review of wellbeing in secondary schools found 16% of those in the review were well placed to promote and respond to wellbeing and 57% have elements of good practice around promoting and responding to wellbeing. However 26% have major challenges that affected the way they promoted and responded to wellbeing.

Of the primary schools that ERO included in their wellbeing review, 48% of them have a reasonable promotion of and response to wellbeing issues, while 20% were more focused on behavioural management.^{xlvi}

Children and young people, particularly LGBTQI+ children and young people, are facing high rates of mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression and suicide.^{xlvi}

Schoolwork-related anxiety and worry about poor grades is high among New Zealand students, particularly for girls, students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds and for Māori and Pacific students.^{xlvi} 72% of students felt anxious, even when they had prepared for a test. This was 16% higher than the OECD average. Those who experienced bullying were more likely to experience schoolwork-related anxiety.ⁱ Wylie et al. state that student survey comments and interview accounts also point to friendships being associated with real gains in engagement in learning, seeing school in a more positive light as enabling a desired future, and in having confidence, control over feelings, and more agency at school, with friends, and at home.ⁱⁱ

In New Zealand 76% of low-achieving students and 65% of high-achieving students report that they feel anxious for a test no matter how well prepared they are.ⁱⁱⁱ

Some teachers do not feel that practices around having effective policies and student support are in place to deal with aggressive student behaviour, including around a third of teachers don't feel that there is PLD to support this.^{liii}

Children and young people with disabilities and additional learning needs are not fully included in their learning environments.

In 2012 and 2014, ERO looked at how well children and young people with disabilities and additional learning needs are welcomed, included and supported in learning environments. ERO found that 93% of sampled early learning services were very or mostly inclusive and 78% of sampled schools were mostly inclusive.

In 2015, ERO evaluated 152 schools and found that most schools were successfully providing for children and young people with disabilities and additional learning needs. This has improved since 2009 where ERO found that 30% of schools in a sample had pockets of inclusive practice and 20% had few inclusive practices.^{liv}

Almost all of the schools sampled were positive about including children and young people with disabilities and additional learning needs and felt confident about providing a fully inclusive school.^{lv} However ERO found that not all schools provide quality

teaching and learning to children and young people with disabilities and additional learning needs. Half of the schools were effective in promoting achievement and outcomes for students with special education needs. Many schools did not consider outcomes for students when they reviewed their procedures and practices, and reported to the Board of Trustees.^{lvi}

Despite these findings, children and young people with disabilities and additional learning needs report not consistently receiving the support they need to learn and meet their potential.^{lvii} Ministry of Education Satisfaction Surveys have found that there is increasing dissatisfaction from parents and educators with the services and supports they receive from the Ministry.^{lviii}

Statistics New Zealand's 2013 disability report found that 24% of children with disabilities have an unmet need for help with schoolwork in class.^{lix} It also found that 20% of children with disabilities had had their schooling unlawfully interrupted, while 11% had had to change schools, 3% had to live away from home and 19% were prevented from attending the school for the whole day.

Māori and Pacific children and young people are not fully included in their learning environments.

New Zealand research found that some teachers demonstrate unconscious bias towards Māori and Pacific children and young people and expect them to underachieve.^{lx} There is evidence that teachers in New Zealand display negative bias, particularly towards Māori and Pacific children and young people, in relation to their identity, language and culture. This bias impacts on every aspect of children and young people's learning, and means that they are less likely to have opportunities to learn at early learning services and schools, and are less likely to feel good about themselves as people, and as able learners.^{lxi}

A 2016 ERO report found that only a few ECE services were fully realising the bicultural intent of Te Whāriki, by working in partnership with whānau Māori and providing a curriculum that was responsive to the language, culture and identity of Māori children. Often bicultural practice involved the use of basic te reo, waita and resources that depicted aspects of te ao Māori.^{lxii}

ERO found that curriculum and practices didn't always support Māori and Pacific children by nurturing and maintaining their connections to their identity, language and culture.^{lxiii}

Pacific children and young people also experienced marginalisation and discrimination, as did children and young people with learning support and children and young people who have been excluded from school.^{lxiv}

Some children and young people want teachers to not make assumptions or treat young people from different backgrounds differently.^{lxv}

On average Māori and Pacific students attempt fewer NCEA Level 3 standards than Pakeha and Asian students, including fewer standards from the list of Approved Subjects for University Entrance. Māori and Pacific students have also been found to take fewer subjects. Evidence suggests that Māori and Pacific students choose and/or are guided into less academic subjects and pathways that rely on unit standards, are applied versions of core subjects and have fewer credits. More Pakeha and Asian students achieve UE than Māori and Pacific students.^{lxvi}

Children and young people from different ethnicities are not fully included in learning environments.

Immigrant youth adapt just as well or better in terms of adjusting to school than Māori and Pakeha/European youth. Migrant youth who have poor English language proficiency and a less defined sense of identity are more likely to not adjust to school than other groups of migrant youth.^{lxvii}

Young people in alternative education and residential schools are not fully included in our education system.

Around 3000 young people participate in alternative education, outside of mainstream education. The majority of these children and young people are Māori and have experienced poverty, violence and abuse, and gang connections.^{lxviii} Young people in alternative education don't understand why they are there.^{lxix}

Children and young people attending Youth Justice centres and Care and Protection centres are some of New Zealand's most vulnerable children, due to their negative wellbeing and justice experiences. A 2013 found that the quality of education among these schools was variable, with many needing to improve their learning delivery, programme design and transition support.^{lxx}

Gender and sexuality diverse children and young people are not fully included in our learning environments.

A sample of school's Board Assurance Statements that are provided to the Education Review Office and outline schools' policies on bullying, found that a third of schools provided evidence of homophobic bullying, 18% of schools were proactive in challenging heteronormativity in providing a safe and support environment for all students and 22% of principals were aware of at least one instance of homophobic bullying.^{lxxi}

A 2011 survey of Rainbow community leaders found highly variable experiences of queer people in schooling, with some receiving open, protective support while some received no support. There was reporting of some schools failing to meet the minimal guidelines set out by the Ministry of Education.^{lxxii}

Transgender children and young people report barriers to participation and attendance, including access to facilities and recognition of their identity.^{lxxiii}

A 2011 survey also found that heteronormative and cisnormative culture and language were endemic in schools. Queer identities are not visible in the classroom and the education system. ERO does not currently report on gender and sexuality minority children and young people.^{lxxiv}

It's not clear how children and young people from different religions and different family structures experience education in New Zealand.

Different cultures, social norms, religions and family types are influencing how we understand the term 'family' in New Zealand.^{lxxv} We don't know how this is being reflected in learning environments.

Children and young people from different religious backgrounds report experiences of discrimination in New Zealand, but there is limited evidence around what this experience in learning environments is.^{lxxvi}

What are children, young people, parents and whānau saying?

37% of students who did not feel supported by their family when having difficulties at school reported experiencing bullying behaviour a few times over a month or more, compared to 25% of those who felt supported by their family when having difficulty at school.^{lxxvii}

Ministry focus groups with parents and whānau found that the number of parents who reported that their child was bullied was higher in rural communities and that the number of parents reporting that their child was bullying others was higher in urban areas.^{lxxviii}

Children and young people told the Office of the Children's Commissioner that bullying affects their learning and their feelings, and they wanted to stop negative stereotyping and behaviour, such as bullying, racism and sexist comments.^{lxxix}

Twenty-seven percent of students report that adults (like teachers, coaches and other adults) at their school care about them a lot (26% of males and 29% of females).^{lxxx}

About half of students report that teachers treat students fairly most of the time (50% of males and 53% of females). It was more common for students aged 17 years or older (60%) and students from low deprivation neighbourhoods (56%) to think that teachers are fair most of the time.^{lxxxi}

Over 90% of students (90% of males and 92% of females) report that people at their school expect them to do well. The majority of students (93% of males and 97% of females) indicated that it was somewhat or very important for them to be proud of their school work and that students in their school try to get the best grades they can (57% of males and 56% of females).^{lxxxii}

Children and young people reported to the Office of the Children's Commissioner that mental health is not well supported in schools, particularly secondary schools, and that some teachers don't have enough of an understanding of mental wellbeing issues.^{lxxxiii}

The Office of the Children's Commissioner found that primary school children with disabilities were affected by whether or not their teacher adapted their teaching to match their learning, and had suggestions for how their strengths could be incorporated into their learning.^{lxxxiv}

Youth '12 found that the majority of students reported being proud of being their ethnicity, with 72% of Māori students proud to be Māori, 87% of Samoan students proud to be Samoan, 81% of Cook Islands students, 86% of Tongan students, 81% Niuean students, 74% of European/Pākehā students, 74% of Middle Eastern, Latin American and African, and 75% of students from another Asian ethnicity. However only 57% of Chinese students and 64% of Indian students reported being proud of being their ethnicity.^{lxxxv}

International students can find it difficult to connect with domestic students and form friendships, which can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation. There are also reported incidences of international students experiencing mental health issues.^{lxxxvi}

Young people excluded from mainstream schooling identified some teachers' hardening attitudes toward them, and how they were expected to cause trouble and fail. They talked about this undermining their attempts to reintegrate into school.^{lxxxvii}

A sample of 1,678 children and young people in schooling found that tamariki and rangatahi Māori experienced racism and inequitable expectations in learning environments, from teachers and leaders holding negative stereotypes of Māori tamariki and rangatahi to expecting young Māori to speak on behalf of their culture when they do not feel connected to their cultural identity.^{lxxxviii} *"Racism exists - we feel little and bad".*^{lxxxix}

Children and young people in the sample feel burdened with stereotypes and believe stereotypes influence how teachers treat them. Some rangatahi reported that their teachers did not want them at school and that they did not feel welcome.^{xc}

Children and young people told the Office of the Children's Commissioner that they wanted their gender identity and sexuality to be respected, as it often wasn't. Some young people also said their school was not responsive enough to issues around sexuality and sexism.^{xc}

The Office of the Children's Commissioner report found that some children and young people experience bullying in our education system, including peer-to-peer bullying and teacher harassment and negative expectations from teachers. Children and young people reported that this negatively impacted their emotional wellbeing and ability to achieve in schools and learning environments.^{xcii}

The Office of the Children's Commissioner found that children and young people frequently commented on the state of their schools, facilities and the environmental conditions of the classrooms.^{xciii}

Muslim youth see their religion as being a more frequent source of discrimination than their ethnicity, and report more instances of unfair treatment against their group than instances of personal discrimination.^{xciv}

Ministry surveys found that Māori parents wanted Māori culture more integrated into schools.^{xcv}

Māori parents identified a higher number of issues on average including children being bullied, being a bully and being excluded. They noted that the situation was improved when parents and whānau were engaged openly with, to solve problems.^{xcvi}

Pacific parents reported fewer issues and were less likely to move school based on issues affecting their child or children.^{xcvii}

Half of the parents in a Ministry survey report at least one child had experienced bullying.^{xcviii}

Approximately 40% of parents report that they have a child or children who had not received all the support they needed,^{xcix} and there was an acknowledgement that schools don't need to do everything but they need to be able to access the other services that can help.

Parents provided feedback to the Ministry that: "If you get wellbeing sorted everything else falls into place."^c

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