

Children and young people appreciate the diversity of our society and the importance of their culture

In this brief inclusion and diversity refers to:

- all ethnicities
- all cultures
- all disability and learning support needs
- all LGBTQIA+
- all family structures
- all values
- all socio economic statuses
- all religions.

Why is it important that children and young people appreciateⁱ the diversity of our society and the importance of their culture?

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. Rich learning communities are built and sustained when everyone is valued and respected, and when all children and young peoples' cultures, ethnicities, languages, identities, backgrounds and values are reflected in their learning community.

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.ⁱⁱ 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.ⁱⁱⁱ

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, would help support Māori children and young people to achieve as Māori in a genuinely bicultural education system.^{iv}

An inclusive education system must recognise and value the position of Māori as tangata whenua and value the contribution of the knowledge of tangata whenua, as well as recognising and valuing the importance of all ethnicities and cultures.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi - principles and obligations

Education is a key, highly valued focus for Māori as Treaty partners. The education system needs to demonstrate partnership, active protection and equity. It also has a significant role in protecting and fostering Māori identity, language and culture. By being culturally responsive for and with Māori, the education system honours the Treaty of Waitangi and enables better outcomes at the individual, whānau, community, iwi and societal level for both Māori and non-Māori. The education system is key to ensuring that all New Zealanders understand, appreciate and honour the Treaty. There have been some gains in Māori enjoying and achieving education success as Māori, but system performance is not where it needs to be to support equitable outcomes for all, a thriving Māori economy and prospering whānau, hapū and iwi.^v

All ethnicities and cultures

New Zealand is becoming an increasingly diverse and multicultural society that requires collaborative and inclusive learning and working cultures, to ensure wellbeing and to benefit the whole of society. In the next two decades it is predicted that New Zealand's Māori population will increase steadily and there will be an increase in migrant populations from the Pacific and Asia especially. The European share of the population of New Zealand is expected to decrease.^{vi}

Migration from non-English speaking countries is also expected to increase.^{vii} As a result of this, there will also be more demand for English language learning for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).^{viii}

Learning support and disability needs

Learning support is the 'additional support' some children and young people require to fulfil their learning potential when barriers they face exceed the support normally obtained in an ordinary learning environment and through related resources. Additional support includes building capability in adults around those children and young people, and the embedding of universal approaches to strengthen inclusion and inclusive practices.

One in five children and young people access some form of learning support each year and demand for learning support is increasing because:

- the population is increasing
- some conditions are becoming more prevalent
- needs are being identified earlier
- we have limited information about needs and demand
- parental choice reflects negative experiences with early learning services or regular schools
- societal expectations about the success and inclusion of children and young people with additional learning needs are changing.

This is resulting in increases in:

- early intervention waiting cases from 1,637 (2013/14) to 2,849 (2016/17)
- ORS verified students from 7,966 (2013) to 9,279 (2017)
- enrolments in special schools from 2,952 (2013) to 3,401 (2017).^{ix}

It is not clear the extent to which understanding and valuing of the experiences of children and young people with disabilities and learning support needs are part of the practices and cultures of learning environments in New Zealand.

There is some evidence about the extent to which children and young people with disabilities and learning support needs feel safe, present and included. For more information please see the 'present, safe and included' evidence brief.

LGBTQIA+

There is limited data and research on the experiences of gender and sexually diverse students in New Zealand. While there is more data and research on the experiences of secondary school students compared to primary school students, there is limited information on the extent to which early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo, schools and kura instil in children and young people an appreciation and valuing of LGBTQIA+ identities and communities.

According to the University of Auckland's Youth'12 Survey in relation to gender identity:

- about 1% of students reported that they were transgender
- approximately 3% were not sure
- 96% were not transgender.^x

In relation to sexual attraction the report states that:

- 92% of students were exclusively attracted to the opposite sex
- 4% of students were exclusively attracted to the same same-sex or both sexes
- 4% were either not sure of their sexual attractions or were attracted to neither sex.^{xi}

Religion

According to the 2013 Census, of all the people who stated their religious affiliation:

- 1,906,398 affiliated with a Christian religion
- 19,191 affiliated with the Sikh religion
- 89,919 affiliated with Hinduism
- 46,149 affiliated with the Muslim religion
- 1,635,345 indicated they have no religion.^{xii}

Children and young people from different religious backgrounds report experiences of discrimination in New Zealand.^{xiii} However, there is limited evidence about the extent to which the practices and cultures of learning environments seek to instil an appreciation of diversity in children and young people that includes knowledge of, understanding of, and valuing of the experience of children and young people identifying with a particular religion.

Family structures, values and socio-economic backgrounds

It is not clear how children and young people from different family structures, different socio-economic backgrounds and who have certain sets of values (their own or those of their family) experience education in New Zealand.

In relation to different family structures, the texts and resources available for use as teaching resources have become increasingly representative of the diversity of families and communities. The ways in which these resources are used to ensure that every child and young person feels safe, valued and reflected is not clear.

The term 'family' is changing in New Zealand, with different cultures, social norms, religions and family types influencing how we understand 'family'.^{xiv} We don't know how this is being reflected in learning environments.

What does the evidence tell us?

It is not clear to what extent the education system instils an appreciation of society's diversity and the importance of one's culture in children and young people. The 2014 General Social Survey^{xv} measured New Zealanders' acceptance of diversity by surveying respondents' attitudes towards minority groups. 72.6% of respondents in the 15-25 age bracket claimed that they would be comfortable or very comfortable having a neighbour from a minority group.

There is also limited information around how diversity and different cultures are appreciated in New Zealand's education system, with more evidence being available for some groups than others. This evidence brief examines the available evidence for the early learning and schooling sectors. [For more information on how diverse learners are included in the education system, please see the 'present, safe and included' evidence brief.]

There is limited evidence about the extent to which the early childhood sector is instilling in children and young people an appreciation of society's diversity and one's own culture. [For more information on the importance that children receive a good start in education, please see the 'Learners get a good start in education' evidence brief.] While the evidence section of this brief does not discuss how the early learning sector is performing in this respect, an ERO report found that only 14% of services were very effective in their focus on achieving success for Māori. In 28% of the services in the sample, understanding of how to provide a curriculum that was effective for Māori was limited. A further 26% of services were not providing a curriculum that supported Māori children to achieve success as Māori.^{xvi} An earlier ERO report found that only 14% of ECE services deliver a very effective curriculum for their Māori learners, while only 6% deliver effective curriculum for Pacific learners.^{xvii}

The following section outlines what children, parents, teachers and principals tell us about how the education system is performing in terms of instilling in children and young people an appreciating of society's diversity and one's own culture. The National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement shows that there can be a discrepancy between what children and young people say and what teachers report. For example, when teachers were asked about whether the topics they taught related and connected to students' lives and had meaning to them, 89% of Year 4 teachers and 82% of Year 8 teachers said they did but only 57% of Year 4 students and 45% of Year 8 students answered that they learned things that connected with their own life.

What do the parents of primary and intermediate-aged children and young people tell us?

Do teachers make an effort to understand things about children and young people's families and cultures?

A NZCER report carried out in 2016 concluded that 72% of parents of primary and intermediate-aged children thought that teachers made an effort to understand things about their family and culture. 22% answered that they were not sure if teachers made an effort while 6% did not think that teachers made any effort.^{xviii}

To what extent is the cultural identity of children and young people recognised and respected by their school?

79% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the cultural identity of their children is respected and recognised by their school. However, approximately 17% were not sure if this was the case and around 4% disagreed or strongly disagreed.^{xix}

To what extent do children and young people have access to activities that foster belonging and social wellbeing in their school?

Activities particular to tikanga Māori

29% of parents believed that their children participated in activities particular to tikanga Māori most weeks. 40% of parents believed this was the case only sometimes. 12% answered that

that this almost never or never happened and 15% of parents were not sure if their children participated in activities particular to tikanga Māori. 4% of parents did not answer this question.^{xx}

Activities particular to Pacific cultures

Pacific families reported wanting schools to be open and inclusive places and wanted teachers who understand and respond appropriately to their cultural perspectives.^{xxi} Only 7% of parents believed that their children participated in activities particular to Pacific cultures most weeks. 28% believed that this sometimes happened and 33% answered that this never or almost never happened. 30% of parents were not sure if their children participated in activities particular to Pacific cultures and 2% of parents did not respond.^{xxii}

Activities related to children and young people's own culture

26% of parents were of the view that their children participated in activities relating to their own culture most weeks. 38% of parents believed that this was the case sometimes and 14% answered that this never or almost never happened. 20% of parents were not sure if this was the case and 2% did not provide a response.^{xxiii}

Activities particular to other cultures

14% of parents believed that their children participated in activities particular to other cultures most weeks. 44% of parents believed that their children sometimes participate in such activities. 15% of parents were of the view that this never or almost never happened and 24% were not sure. 3% of parents did not provide an answer to this question.^{xxiv}

*What do the **parents of secondary-aged children and young people** tell us?*

Parents and whānau of secondary school children and young people were asked to express their views regarding the importance they place on their children learning to speak te reo Māori at school.

The results indicated that Māori and Pacific parents are more likely to place moderate or high importance on their children learning te reo Māori at school (72% and 50% respectively), compared to Asian (38%), Pākehā (30%) and Other (23%) parents.^{xxv}

*What do the **teachers of primary and intermediate-aged children and young people** telling us?*

According to a 2016 NZCER report 64% of teachers strongly agreed with the statement that part of their teaching practice includes a promotion of school values that encourage inclusion and respect. 33% agreed with this statement. The rest of the respondents were either neutral/not sure, disagreed, strongly disagreed or did not provide an answer.^{xxvi}

Teachers were also asked to express their views on the extent to which they engaged in practices that supported Māori children and young people's wellbeing.^{xxvii}

35% of teachers strongly agreed that they promoted Māori cultural values in their classroom. 53% agreed with this statement, 8% were neutral/not sure and around 1% did not believe they promoted Māori cultural values in their classroom. It is not clear in what way the remaining 4% of participants responded.^{xxviii}

When asked whether they incorporated te reo Māori and tikanga Māori in their teaching in ways that promoted Māori students' belonging, 27% of teachers strongly agreed that they did so. 54% agreed with this statement, 12% were neutral/not sure, and 5% disagreed with this statement. 2% of teachers did not provide an answer to this question.^{xxix}

Teachers' responses regarding the promotion of Pacific children and young people's cultural identity indicated that such practices were less common than for Māori children and young people.^{xxx}

26% of teachers reported that they made a point of knowing which Pacific culture each of their Pacific students' families identify with. 42% agreed with the statement that they do this, 22% were neutral/not sure, around 3% reported that they do not do this and 5% did not offer a response to this question. 2% of teachers reported that they strongly disagreed with the statement that they make a point of knowing which Pacific culture each of their Pacific students' families identify with.^{xxxi}

13% of teachers reported that they strongly agreed with the statement that they provide Pacific students with opportunities to work together and support each other. 36% agreed with this statement, 35% were neutral/not sure, 8% disagreed, 1% strongly disagreed and 7% did not provide a response.^{xxxii}

Teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with the statement "I incorporate Pacific students' culture in my teaching in ways that promote belonging". 12% strongly agreed, 37% agreed, 35% were neutral/not sure, 8% disagreed, 6% did not provide an answer and 2% strongly disagreed with the statement.^{xxxiii}

What do the teachers of secondary-aged children and young people tell us?

The NZCER survey of secondary schools examined how teachers were meeting the needs of Māori and Pacific children and young people. While the questions do not directly match with questions asked in the survey of primary and intermediate schools, the results still provide valuable insight into how well teachers think they are able to engage with Māori and Pacific children and young people. The NZCER report concluded that:

"No more than half the teachers agreed their professional learning had provided practical help for engaging with Māori students and their parents and whānau. Even fewer had experienced professional learning that helped them engage with Pacific students. Given that around 90% of the teachers were neither Māori nor Pacific themselves, and improving Māori and Pacific students' outcomes continues to be a government priority, these figures seem fairly low."^{xxxiv}

What do the principals of primary and intermediate-aged children and young people tell us?

The 2016 NZCER report asked principals for their views on the extent which school staff promote inclusion and respect for diversity.^{xxxv}

82% of principals were of the view that practices and programmes that promote inclusion and respect for diversity were well embedded in their schools. 16% of principals answered that such practices and programmes were partially embedded. Approximately 1% said that they

were exploring ways to embed such programmes and practices and another 1% did not provide an answer.

How is wellbeing of Māori and Pacific children and young people being fostered?

Principals were asked to identify the extent to which the cultural identity and values of Māori children and young people are promoted at school.

46% of principals believed that te reo Māori and tikanga Māori are well embedded in schoolwide practices in ways that promote Māori students' belonging. 26% of principals believed that such approaches were partially embedded, 6% of principals were exploring such approaches, and 2% of principals did not provide a response.^{xxxvi}

When asked about the extent to which tikanga Māori is incorporated in daily practices that promote the value and use of te reo māori and tikanga Māori, 34% of principals believed this is well embedded, 49% believed this is partially embedded and 13% of principals answered that they are still exploring how to do this. Approximately 1% of principals answered that this is not done in their school and around 3% of principals did not provide an answer.^{xxxvii}

20% of principals believed that tuakana-teina approaches used by Māori students to support each other are well embedded. 37% of principals believed these to be partially embedded and 16% of principals answered that they were exploring ways to support these approaches. 25% of principals were of the view that this was not done in their schools and 2% had not provided an answer.^{xxxviii}

When asked about the extent to which whānau classes were embedded approaches, 12% of principals said these were well embedded, another 12% said such approaches were partially embedded, 13% of principals are exploring having whānau classes and 59% of principals said that such classes do not occur in their schools. Around 4% of principals did not provide an answer to this question.^{xxxix}

According to the report, approaches promoting Pacific children and young people's cultural identity were less common. 48% of principals reported their school had partially or well-embedded approaches incorporating Pacific children and young people's cultures in schoolwide practices. 18% of principals were exploring ways in which to promote such approaches, 20% said this was not done in their schools and 14% did not respond.^{xl}

What do the principals of secondary-aged children and young people tell us?

NZCER asked secondary school principals to what extent co-curricular opportunities for children and young people connected to their culture are embedded in their school.

When it comes to opportunities offered to Māori children and young people:

- 57% of principals believe that these opportunities are well embedded,
- 37% of principals believe that these opportunities are partially embedded
- Approximately 5% of principals are exploring such opportunities
- Approximately 1% of principals believe that such opportunities are not offered.^{xli}

When it comes to opportunities offered to Pacific children and young people:

- 39% of principals believe that these opportunities are well embedded
- 25% of principals believe that these opportunities are partially embedded

- 10% of principals are exploring such opportunities
- 16% of principals believe that such opportunities are not offered
- 9% either did not answer or were not sure.^{xlii}

The evidence indicates that principals in primary, intermediate and secondary schools believe that more is being done to increase appreciation of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori compared to Pacific cultures. These studies also highlight that, while some schools are very good at supporting students to understand the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles, Māori culture and helping Māori students to appreciate their own identity, there is still room for significant improvement to embed these practices in a systematic way that makes them part of everyday life in children and young people's learning communities. Far more work is required to get most schools to respond to the cultures and values of Pacific children and young people.

Difference between deciles and their culturally responsive practices

Findings from the NZCER national survey of primary and intermediate schools highlight that there is still much room for improvement, but that decile 1 and 2 schools have greater emphasis on culturally responsive practices compared to schools from deciles 3 to 10. The report highlights that:

"This variation raises questions about whether students in some decile 3-10 schools are missing out on practices that might foster their cultural identities and strengthen their wellbeing. For schools with small numbers of Māori students, this raises a concern about whether they are on track to achieve the vision of Ka Hikitia for students to enjoy and achieve education success "as Māori". Similarly, these data suggest that schools with fewer Pacific students may be finding it harder to achieve the vision of the Pacific Education Plan for students to be "secure in their identities, languages and cultures." ^{xliii}

What are children and young people telling us?

The Office of the Children's Commissioner and the New Zealand School Trustees Association have recently published the report Education matters to me: Key Insights in which the voices of children and young people have been collected on a variety of issues that would serve as a starting point for the development of a Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities.

Many children and young people reported experiencing racism, discrimination and marginalisation in their schools.^{xliv}

These experiences were reported at alarming rates by Māori and Pacific children and young people as well as those identifying with some ethnic minorities^{xlv}. Those with disabilities, learning support needs and/or those that have been excluded from schools have reported similar experiences.^{xlvi}

The report noted that:

"Developing a sense of belonging is important for children and young people and a key principle of the New Zealand Curriculum. When young people feel undervalued and underrated because of their culture, this has an impact on their sense of belonging and their experiences of education. Many rangatahi and tamariki told us they experience

racism at school. We also heard from many who described feelings of being treated unequally because of their culture.^{xlvii}

Children and young people reported that they feel burdened by negative stereotypes and that these stereotypes impact on the way teachers treat them and this affected their relationships from the beginning.^{xlviii}

Fair treatment, being included and being respected were some of the key concepts that came through when children and young people were asked about what they would change about their school. Some children and young people noted some teachers are racist, they feel judged and like they are expected to fail or that they are set up to fail by their teachers^{xlix}. The following quote from a Samoan secondary school student embodies a lot of the shared experiences of many who feel marginalised and discriminated against:

"I sense stereotypes in my teachers' eyes and gestures and how they act towards me makes me feel like leaving."

Some children and young people reported experiencing discrimination from their peers because of their culture. Some students said they felt like outsiders for speaking te reo Māori. Rangatahi from kura kaupapa Māori expressed a sense of wanting to be understood and supported rather than being made to feel like they are outsiders.

According to the report, for Māori and Pacific children and young people and those from other ethnic minorities, the importance of being understood in the context of their own culture was pronounced. These experiences are barriers to children and young people's feeling like they belong, engage and achieve in education.ⁱ

"For young people who come from different cultural backgrounds, they are constantly searching to see themselves reflected in the culture of their educational environment. Children and young people value being welcomed and having time for whakawhanaungatanga (relationship building) when they are new to an environment...Rangatahi shared how it feels good when their teacher welcomes them and calls them by their name (and pronounces it correctly) in the mornings."

Many children and young people also raised issues around the inadequacy of uniforms, many suggesting that they be unisex, and the need for gender neutral bathrooms.ⁱⁱ

The Youth'12 survey concluded that transgender children and young people were more likely to be bullied, have been physically harmed, and to have significant depressive symptoms.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Human Rights Commission reports barriers for transgender children and young people to being included and participating in schools. Difficulties have been reported around school uniforms, access to school facilities and recognition of their identity, such as their name.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ

A separate report has indicated that, from the school sample used in the report, only:

- around 18% of schools proactively challenge heteronormativity in providing a safe and supportive environments for all students
- 33.3% of schools provided evidence of preventing homophobic bullying in their policies
- 23% of principals were aware of at least one instance of homophobic bullying
- 31% of schools had diversity education included in their anti-bullying education
- 8.3% of schools mentioned gender diverse students in their documents.

This data and research indicates that there is significant work to be done to ensure that practices and cultures of learning environments instil in children and young people knowledge, understanding, and valuing of diversity of sexual and gender identities in their school and wider communities.

Conclusion

This brief examined the extent to which New Zealand's education system instils an appreciation of society's diversity and the importance of one's culture in children and young people. The information available on these topics is limited and variable, with more evidence being available for some groups than others. Even so, the evidence that is available, together with the research carried out by the Office of the Children's Commissioner, paints a picture which shows that the education system has a long way to go to ensure that it enables all children and young people to appreciate the diversity of society and the importance of their own culture.

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ⁱ In this brief 'appreciate' means to understand fully, recognise the full worth of and to actively value.

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^v Section from: Draft Briefing to Incoming Minister 2017.

^{vi} www.stats.govt.nz Ethnic population projections 2013-2018.

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^{xv} New Zealand General Social Survey (2014), Statistics NZ.

^{xvi} Education Review Office (2013) Priorities for Children's Learning in Early Childhood Services.

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^{xviii} *Finding a balance – fostering student wellbeing, positive behaviour, and learning*, NZCER national survey of primary and intermediate schools 2016.

^{xix} Ibid.

^{xx} Ibid.

^{xxi} Flavell, Maggie. (2017). Listening to and learning from Pacific families: the art of building home-school relationships at secondary level to support achievement. *SET: research information for teachers* 2: 42-48

^{xxii} Ibid.

^{xxiii} Ibid.

^{xxiv} Ibid.

^{xxv} Cathy Wylie and Linda Bonne, *Secondary schools in 2015: Findings from the NZCER national survey*, NZCER – Rangahau Mātauranga o Aotearoa.

^{xxvi} *Finding a balance – fostering student wellbeing, positive behaviour, and learning*, NZCER national survey of primary and intermediate schools 2016.

^{xxvii} Ibid.

^{xxviii} Ibid.

^{xxix} Ibid.

^{xxx} Ibid.

^{xxxi} Ibid.

^{xxxii} Ibid.

^{xxxiii} Ibid.

^{xxxiv} Cathy Wylie and Linda Bonne, *Secondary schools in 2015: Findings from the NZCER national survey*, NZCER – Rangahau Mātauranga o Aotearoa.

^{xxxv} Ibid.

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