Tomorrow's Schools Review Quick Survey Detailed Analysis

Question Three: What would you change, and how?

Introduction

This report provides analysis of the 1814 responses to question three of the Tomorrow's Schools Review Quick survey, which asked respondents what they would change about the education system and how. The survey is one of two that were available on the Tomorrow's Schools Review website[1], designed by the Independent Taskforce that conducted the review. The quick survey contained three questions, and the detailed survey contained twelve questions. The quick survey opened on 12 June 2018 and closed on 31 August 2018.

Methodology

The survey questions were designed by the Independent Taskforce (the Taskforce) that conducted the Tomorrow's Schools Review. The Ministry of Education designed the demographic questions and the Taskforce secretariat support were responsible for analysing and reporting the survey output.

All data has been captured in an Excel spreadsheet that details all respondents' answers to the survey questions, as well as their demographic data. The data was then imported into the software programme, NVivo, where it has been coded into various themes for analysis.

The majority of responses were provided in English. There were five responses in Māori and one in Tongan, which were translated into English and incorporated into the analysis.

Critical Grounded Theory was used to create a coding framework that was used on another Ministry owned survey, the *Education Conversation | Korero Mātauranga*. The *Education Conversation | Korero Mātauranga* coding framework formed the basis of the framework used for the Tomorrow's Schools Review Quick and Detailed surveys. A sample selection of the data was coded to the Tomorrow's Schools Review Detailed survey framework. This framework was then refined for additional themes that emerged from the responses.

Responses ranged from words to whole paragraphs. Within each person's response, there may be multiple ideas and comments that do not necessarily relate to the same theme in a single topic. These comments are also known as "references", and these terms are used interchangeably within the report. Responses have been coded to their corresponding themes. Where there are multiple ideas or comments that relate to different themes within the same response, these have been separated and coded independently. Therefore, the number of comments does not necessarily reflect the

[1] https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/tomorrows-schools-review/

actual number of respondents, however these numbers are generally not significantly different.

Where it was possible to predict a greater degree of granularity within themes, i.e. boards of trustees; roles and responsibilities, and capability, we have further modified the framework to provide greater specificity of analysis. For other themes, analysts did not pre-empt any additional sub-themes. Analysts created new sub-themes for larger topics, i.e., more than 200 responses, based on emergent, recurring ideas.

A sample of data was coded by multiple analysts and the coding framework was subsequently edited to ensure that the themes accurately captured the data. The analysts peer reviewed the coded data to ensure the robustness of the framework and to provide quality assurance. Comments are coded to all relevant themes, however analysts have restricted coding a comment to four themes or less to provide the greatest specificity within a theme.

NVivo was used to analyse the data. Responses in each sub-theme were aggregated to the “parent” theme to indicate the largest emergent themes. Matrix coding was used to analyse the largest themes by number of references for each question. While the report prioritises the largest themes (i.e. the topics which attracted the most commentary from respondents), several examples of less frequently cited topics are acknowledged through the report, especially when they added additional insights or perspectives to the narrative.

Limitations and caveats

There were a number of limitations that have been acknowledged by the analysts, and these will be taken into consideration for future surveys that may be undertaken.

Generally regarding survey and question design, it may be useful to include brief definitions of terms, or rewrite questions, such that they are not misinterpreted by respondents.

The demographic question, “What is your connection to education?” appeared to cause some misinterpretation. Categories such as primary student or secondary student were intended to identify current primary and secondary students. Respondents who have identified as having a primary student connection have also identified as being in an age demographic that sits outside of primary student age range. This suggests that respondents have differing comprehension of the question. Respondents’ age will be used as a proxy for identifying whether respondents are students. There is only one respondent that identified being within schooling age in the current study.

The question, “Do you consider yourself to have a disability or need extra support to learn?” was not included when the survey was launched due to an oversight by the Ministry. It was added to the survey during the week ending 3 August 2018.

Due to resources and time constraints, this report has the key themes and findings for the survey sample as a whole and we were unable to delve too deeply into differences by cohorts.

Demographics

Approximately 1 – 2 percent of respondents did not answer all of the demographic questions.

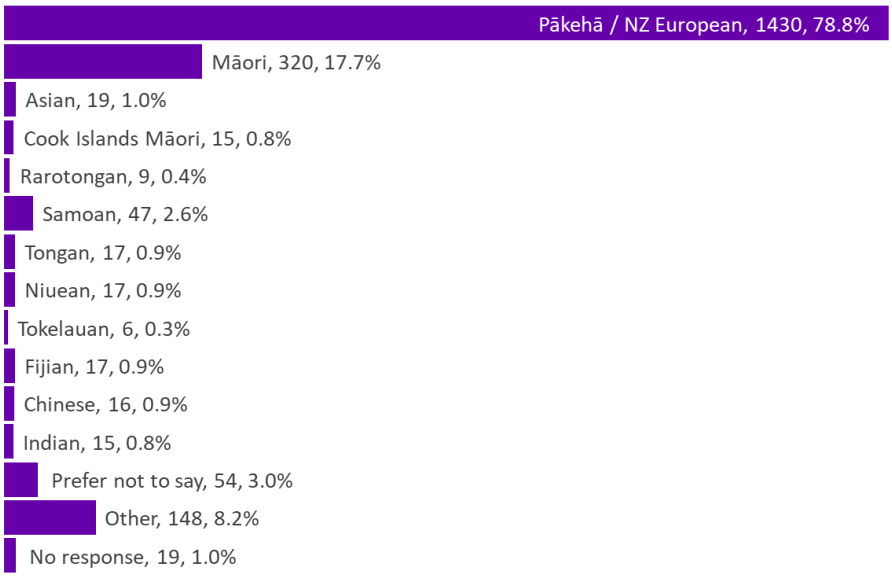


Figure 1. Respondents by ethnicity.

Respondents were able to self-identify with multiple ethnicities. As figure 1 shows, the Pākehā/New Zealand European cohort was the largest with 78.8% of total respondents. Those identifying as Tokelauan represented the smallest ethnic groups with 0.3% of respondents. Within the Other category, there were a range of responses; the most frequent being Kiwi or New Zealander, Australian, and British.

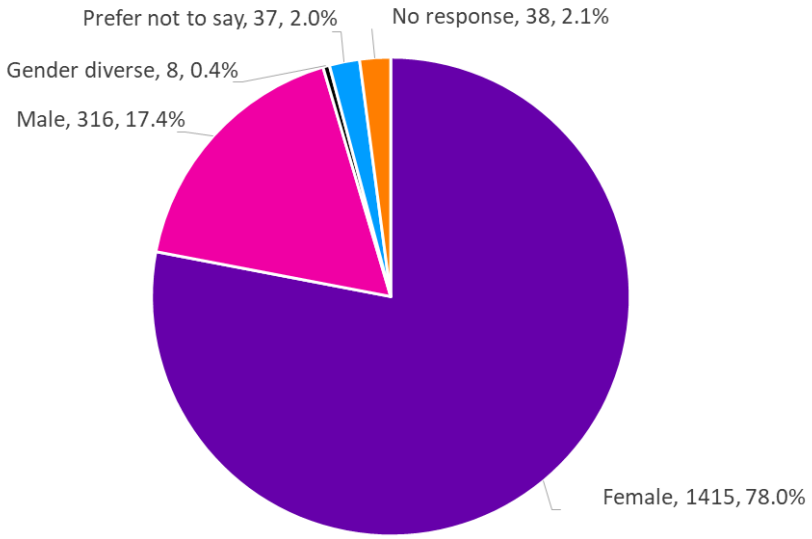


Figure 2. Respondents by gender.

As figure 2 shows, majority of the respondents are female. The gender diverse population was the smallest, with only eight respondents. There were 75 respondents who chose not to disclose their gender identity, and 316 respondents identified as male.

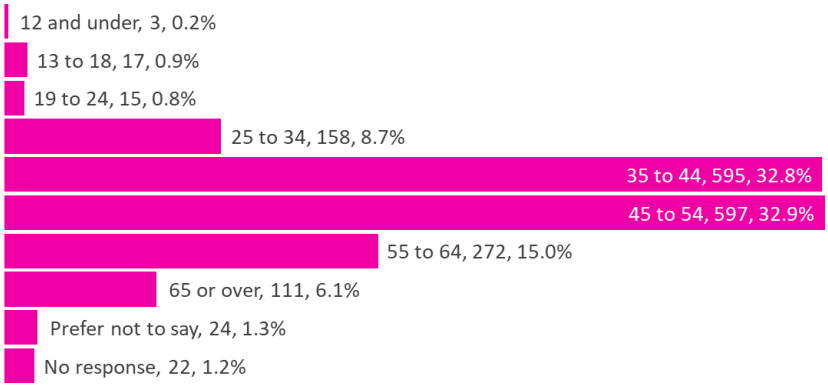


Figure 3. Respondents by Age.

Figure 3 shows the respondents' age. There were three respondents that identified as being 12 years or younger, and 17 respondents who identified as being 13 to 18. The largest cohort were aged 45 to 54, followed by respondents aged 35 to 44.

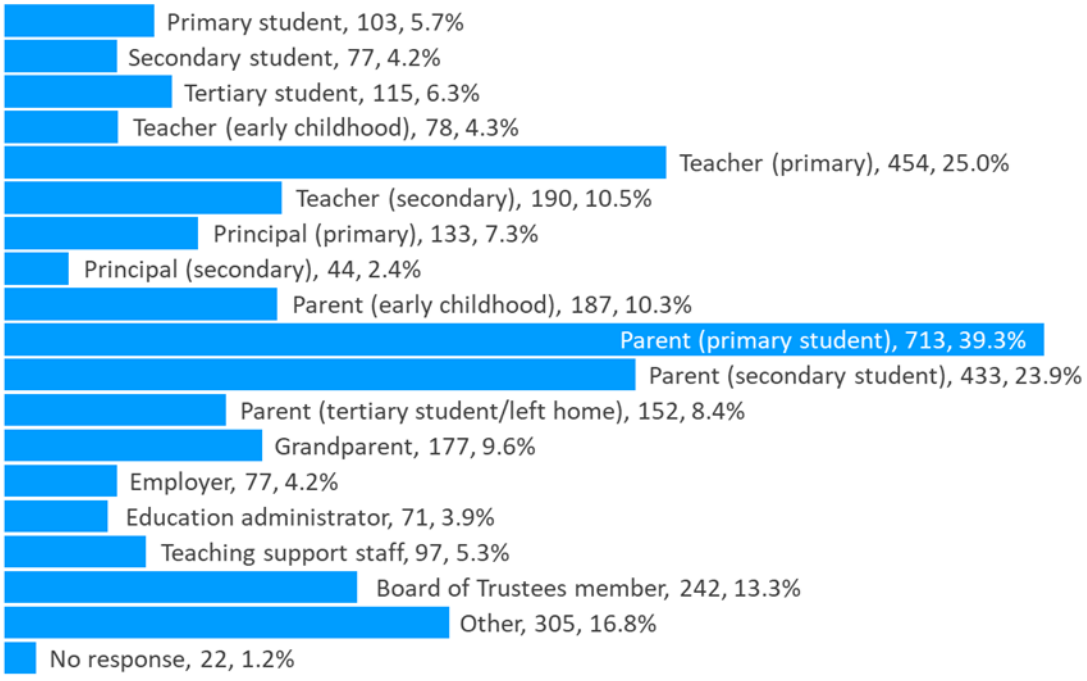


Figure 4. Respondents by Connection to Education.

The question "What is your connection to education?" contained multiple options for respondents to self-select the options that best fit. Parents, teachers, and board of trustee members formed the largest cohort groups. As noted in the "limitations and caveats", the number of primary and secondary students reflected in figure 4 may not be a true reflection of the number of students that completed the survey. Within the

Other category, there were a range of responses, including (but not limited to) education consultants and advisors, school guidance counsellors, university academics, and community members and volunteers.

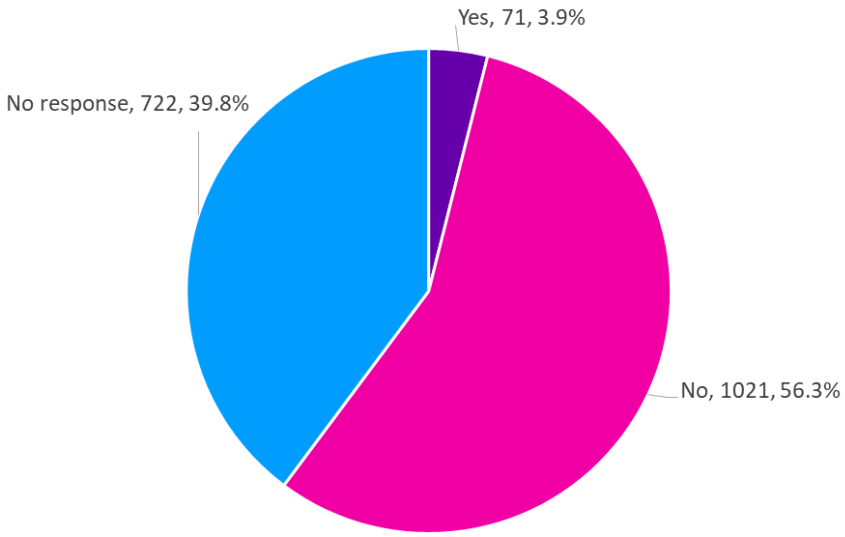
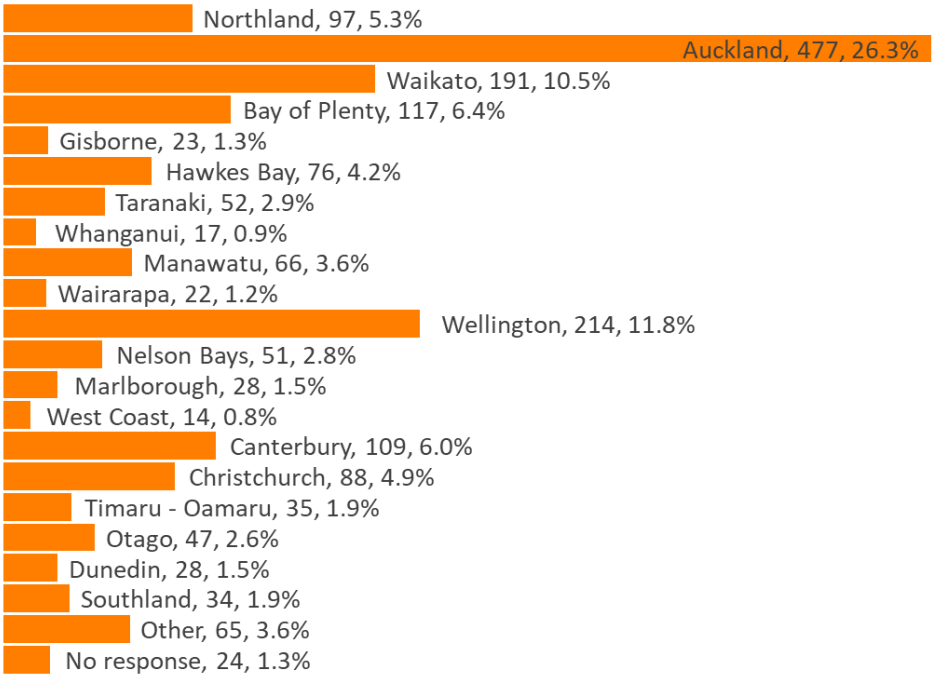


Figure 5. Respondents who have a disability or require extra support to learn.

As noted in the “limitations and caveats”, this question was included during the week ending 3 August 2018. As figure 5 shows, nearly 40% of the respondents did not answer the question, which can be attributed to the late inclusion of the question. There were 71 respondents that stated “yes” in response to having a disability or



requiring additional support to learn, and 1021 respondents that stated “no”.

Figure 6. Regional breakdown of respondents

In most cases, the regional breakdown of respondents was broadly consistent with the actual share of the general population. There were, however, some exceptions. Auckland was notably under-represented relative to its actual share of the general population (26.3% vs. 35%) and some other regions were marginally under-represented, such as Otago. In contrast, some regions were somewhat over-represented, such as the Hawkes Bay (4.2% vs. 3.4%) and Northland (5.3% vs. 3.7%).

Summary

This report synthesises the findings of 4,938 references (drawn from the 1,808 responses received on the Quick Survey). The following summary captures the key messages within each theme, with further detail included in the discussion below.

Student Centred

A leading message within this theme was that students are individuals with different needs, aspirations and learning styles. They come from different cultural and social backgrounds, have different aptitudes, values and interests, and have their own individual goals for the future. Recognising these differences, respondents rejected the 'one size fits all' approach and expressed a strong desire to see the schooling system be more accommodating of the uniqueness of each student.

Consistent with the desire to create a more individualised schooling experience, most respondents advocated for students to have a voice in their schooling experience, both in the context of their own learning journey and the wider school context. Respondents were divided on how far this should go. While some respondents were advocates of the student-led pedagogical approach (and felt students should be leaders of their own learning), others were sceptical about the capability of students (especially younger students) to engage with this effectively.

Respondents also told us about the skills and capabilities that they wanted students to have, with a focus on getting learners ready for the future. Respondents stressed the importance of 'getting the basics right' (i.e. ensuring that students have a solid foundation in reading, writing and mathematics), instilling them with 'life skills' to prepare them for demands of adulthood and promoting the skills needed to support wellbeing (including social skills).

Finally, respondents identified that transitions within the schooling pathway can be a 'pain point' for students and educators, and that there is an opportunity to make transitions 'smoother' for learners and those that support them on their learning journey (such as their family, whānau and teachers).

Progress and Achievement

The curricula used to shape teaching and learning in New Zealand schools was a salient issue for many respondents, many of whom had strong opinions on specific subjects. Respondents expressed divided views about whether Māori language and Religious Education should be taught in schools. Overall, the majority indicated support for Māori language but felt that Religious Education was no longer appropriate in state schools.

Respondents expressed concern about the quality of teaching and learning of mathematics and literacy (especially for students engaged in remedial reading programmes) and advocated for improvements in these areas.

NCEA was also a key theme. Respondents indicated that the NCEA system created an excessive workload for teachers and learners to the detriment of their wellbeing, over-emphasised assessment at the expense of genuine learning and engagement, and that was unduly rigid and compliance focussed. Many advocated for the system to be improved, or removed.

Wellbeing and Hauora

Respondents acknowledged that increasing numbers of students are facing wellbeing issues which impact on their learning and inhibit their capacity to engage constructively at school. The commentary on wellbeing issues recognised both clinical/pathological conditions (such as depression and anxiety) as well as social circumstances (such as hunger, poverty and dysfunctional home environments) that adversely impact on students' wellbeing.

Broadly speaking, respondents were supportive schools having a role to play in supporting students who face challenges due to their mental health concerns and/or social circumstances. Access to professional support in schools (particularly social workers and counsellors) was encouraged, as was in-school services to provide food for children who need it.

Not all student wellbeing issues stem from circumstances beyond the school gate. Respondents expressed significant concern about bullying in schools, and the failure of schools to adequately address it. Respondents also expressed concern about the excessive workload students face during their senior secondary school years, suggesting that these workload pressures heighten the risk of mental health conditions, such as depression and eating disorders.

Respondents recognised the critical role that the home/family environment plays in shaping student outcomes and suggested ways to boost parental engagement in their children's learning. Most respondents encouraged initiatives to assist and support parents (such as offering parenting programmes). A smaller number of respondents, however, emphasised parental accountability and responsibility instead.

Learning Support and Disability

The dominant message within this theme was that the system was falling short in terms of supporting students with additional learning support needs (and those who support them, such as their parents, whānau and teachers). Respondents also indicated an increasing prevalence of students requiring additional support, (particularly due to severe behavioural issues), which puts pressure on teachers and support services.

Respondents told us of the barriers that schools and families face to accessing support for these students, such as long waiting times and insufficient teacher aide time. Named consequences of leaving students without sufficient support included

the loss of potential (including academic potential), and adverse impact on wellbeing and self-esteem. Respondents also told us of the impact that this has on others within the system, recognising that students with particular challenges can put pressure on the teaching staff and be disruptive to other students.

To remedy these issues, respondents advocated for improved accessibility to support services (including in-school support and specialist services), improved teacher capability to support neurodiverse students, increased funding, and better working conditions and pay for teacher aides.

Community Partnerships and Whanaungatanga

Respondents were generally encouraging of a strong partnership and good communication between school and home, and recognised the importance of family/whānau involvement to support the learning and development of students.

While a positive home-school relationship was generally seen as desirable, it was not always the case in practice. Some respondents identified a range of challenges in this area, including lack of parental engagement, communication issues between schools and parents, and issues (when they arise) not always being managed in the most constructive manner.

A similar sentiment was expressed in respect to the relationship between schools and the wider community. Respondents were typically supportive of schools being responsive to the voice of the community, but indicated that there were challenges in this area. For example, some felt that schools were merely giving 'lip service' to the views of the communities they serve.

Early Childhood Education

As the scope of this review is focussed on the compulsory schooling sector, there were relatively fewer comments on early childhood education (ECE).

Respondents that did comment on this issue, however, were predominately focussed on the funding and business model of ECE. Respondents advocated for early investment in children's lives, better remuneration for ECE staff and public ECE provision.

Pathways to work or tertiary

Respondents within this theme recognised that the aspirations and future direction of students is influenced by their home, school and community environment and commented on the bias towards encouraging students to attend university. Respondents typically indicated that there was an overemphasis on encouraging students to attend university and advocated for more opportunities for trades training.

Teaching

The overarching theme of 'teaching' presented leading issues, particularly in respect to pedagogy, capability and remuneration.

Respondents highlighted the issue of teacher supply constraints (particularly in terms of reliving teachers) and also indicated that teacher capability/quality could be variable. Particular areas of weakness in teacher performance were identified, such as limited mathematical ability and a lack of understanding of students with additional learning support needs. Respondents also identified the skills and attributes of teachers that they considered to be desirable, such as being culturally competent and being able to manage difficult behaviour.

To improve overall teacher capability, respondents called for more access to specialist teachers, more professional development/training opportunities and improvements to Initial Teacher Education (ITE). Suggestions to improve ITE included adding specific topics (e.g. information technology) and integrating more practical experience.

Pedagogy was another dominant topic within this theme. Respondents were favourable towards outdoor education, group learning and culturally responsive pedagogy, while the sentiment towards homework was mixed.

Teachers' working conditions was also an area of concern, with a particular emphasis on workload and remuneration.

Respondents stressed the high expectations and large volume of work experienced by teachers, and indicated that administrative and compliance requirements were a key contributing factor. Respondents called for relief for teachers from these workload pressures by reducing their responsibilities and increasing their release time.

Respondents expressed the view that teachers are not paid adequately, with many advocating for higher remuneration.

Leadership

Respondents highlighted the challenges of the school principal role with a particular emphasis on heavy workload pressures and difficulties in navigating relationships with Boards of Trustees. Respondents offered recommendations on how principals could be better supported, such as by providing more professional development (including at a time prior to undertaking the role) and higher remuneration.

While this theme was dominated by commentary about the school principal, a minority of respondents also recognised other school leadership roles (such as middle management) and system leadership (i.e. direction 'from the top'). Respondents told us that, like principals, personnel in other school leadership roles also face heavy workload demands and welcomed greater involvement from central government.

Education Workforce

This section of the report contains content relating to the education workforce more generally, rather than focusing on particular roles. Even so, the sentiment of this theme was much the same as what was expressed about teachers and principals, especially in respect to capability, pay and workload.

Schools

Commentary on inter-school dynamics highlighted zoning, school choice and competition as issues. Zoning and school choice were divisive issues, with some respondents being opposed to efforts to constrain school choice (particularly zoning) and others encouraging it. Overall, competition between schools tended to be viewed negatively.

At the school level, Boards of Trustees was the leading topic, although respondents also spoke of autonomy, school improvement and school culture. The key message within this theme was that BOT capability across schools is variable. While some schools thrive under the BOT governance model, many encounter issues such as capability constraints and challenging interpersonal dynamics. While some respondents suggested that BOTs should be removed entirely, most were in favour of improving existing practice (for example, by providing more support, training and access to external expertise).

At the classroom level, Modern Learning Environments (MLEs) and class size/student-teacher-ratio were the leading issues.

Views on MLEs were overwhelmingly negative. Respondents described MLEs as noisy and chaotic, and expressed scepticism about their effectiveness. Respondents told us that not all learners were well-suited to MLEs, particularly those who are easily distracted, such as those with attention deficit disorder.

The overwhelming majority of comments on class size and student-teacher-ratio advocated for smaller class sizes and fewer students per teacher.

Collaboration

Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako (COLs) dominated the rhetoric on collaboration. With few exceptions, respondents were less-than-positive about COLs and cited issues relating to funding, difficult interpersonal dynamics and lack of evidence that COLs have improved student outcomes. Some respondents implied that COLs could be improved and made recommendations to support this, while others felt they should be discontinued entirely.

Respondents recognised, however, that COLs are just one form of collaborative activity and that collaboration can (and does) exist in other contexts across the schooling sector. Respondents were encouraging of more collaborative practice in a variety of contexts, including within schools, between schools (although not necessarily within the COL structure) and between the education and health sectors.

Systems and Agencies

The role of the Ministry of Education was the leading topic in this section. The prevailing sentiment was that the Ministry should have more functions and levers in education delivery, and greater involvement in school governance. The commentary also identified weaknesses and opportunities in relation to other agencies within the education sector, particularly the Education Review Office. Respondents also indicated that government agencies could work better together, both in respect to

how education agencies interact with each other and how they interact with other government agencies.

The potential for a 'middle layer' (between schools and the Ministry/other agencies) was also a dominant theme within this section. Respondents reflected on whether having a middle layer to support schools with particular functions (such as governance and property), to allow schools more time to focus on educational leadership and pedagogy, could improve education delivery.

Finally, accountability was paramount to many respondents. These respondents expressed the view that the current accountability settings were inadequate and required change.

Funding

The leading message in this theme was the desire for increasing funding and resourcing in schools. Respondents identified particular areas of need, including teachers, teacher aides, classroom supplies and learning support.

The model used to allocate funding to schools was also of interest, with respondents presenting divergent views on this issue. Some respondents emphasised equity, and the view that schools of lesser means should receive more funding, while others emphasised equality, and the view that funding should be the same across the board.

Diversity

The integration of Māori culture and language into New Zealand schools was a leading theme in this section, with respondents expressing divergent views. While some respondents were supportive of including Māori culture and language in schools (including those who felt it should be compulsory), others took the opposing view, and felt that there was already too much of it.

Respondents also spoke of the experience of Māori and Pacific students in New Zealand schools and raised concerns about racism and underachievement.

Inclusion was another theme in this section. Respondents were supportive of making the education system more inclusive and offered suggestions to achieve this, such as inclusiveness training for staff.

Discussion

Question Three: *What would you change, and how?*

This section provides an analysis of the responses to question three of the Tomorrow's Schools Review quick survey, which asked respondents what they would change and how. While the report prioritises the largest themes (i.e. the topics which attracted the most commentary from respondents), several examples of less frequently cited topics are acknowledged through the report, especially when they added additional insights or perspectives to the narrative.

1. Student Centred

The overarching 'student centred' node captures 159 references (drawn from 145 respondents), including 63 references which did not fit within the pre-defined sub-themes under this node (i.e. student voice, capabilities and transitions, as explored below). While some of these comments were quite broad in nature, e.g. *"Learning dispositions are still a priority,"* and *"the rights of students to natural justice,"* most of the comments reflected common themes around a desire for a more individualised school experience, divergent perspectives on the student-led pedagogical approach and references to behavioural management.

The desire to see greater recognition and accommodation of the uniqueness of each individual student was a common theme, and this sentiment was reflected in 28 of the comments in this node. There was a general sense that the school system was not individualised enough and some respondents directed criticism at the "one size fits all" approach of schools. Many comments reflected a general desire to see school be more tailored to the individual learners, both in respect to accommodating diversity in learning styles and also in terms of being more responsive to different levels of aptitude/ability, including gifted learners who – in one comment – were said to be *"…ignored and not meeting their full potential."*

Building on the general interest towards a more individualised schooling experience, there were several (12) references focussing on the student-led learning approach. Divergent views were presented on the merits (or otherwise) of the student-led approach. Some respondents expressed criticism of the student-led approach, many of which were sceptical about the capability of students to take control of their own learning, while others expressed a more positive sentiment towards needing learners to have greater choice and independence in shaping their learning experiences. A minority of comments took a more nuanced view of the student-led learning approach, reflecting the sentiment that it can be beneficial to learners, but only under the right conditions.

Behavioural management and student discipline was the third common theme that emerged from these comments, with five references to such issues. While most comments on this theme were focussed on the management of *"rebellious students"* or those who *"just feel that high school is 'party central'…"*, one respondent articulated a desire to see *"as much praise and encouragement for kids that are good all the time not just the 'difficult kids' that get overly praised when they do one good thing.'* Another respondent spoke to the behavioural culture within schools more generally, stating *"Give the students a firm guiding hand. More conservative behaviour standards."*

1.1 Student Voice

A dozen comments were classified under the sub-theme of 'student voice,' which encompasses comments about hearing the students and listening to their voices. The majority of comments advocated for students to have a voice in their own schooling experience across a wide range of contexts.

Some comments under this node spoke to the theme of 'student voice' in sense of the role of individual student in influencing their own learning journey. At the individual student level, some respondents put forward empowerment-focussed

suggestions, such as advocating for students to have a choice in what they study, while others expressed a more responsibility-focussed sentiment, focussing on the expectation that students need to be active participants in their own learning.

The majority of comments classified under the student voice node, however, advocated for greater recognition of the student voice in the wider school context, particularly in terms of better engagement between students and the Board of Trustees. Some respondents cited specific circumstances where they wished to see greater input from students, such as giving students the opportunity to provide input into their teachers' performance reviews.

1.2 Capabilities

This sub-theme focusses on feedback on the things we want our students to be, have and/or do. A total of 98 respondents were classified under the theme of 'capabilities.' Just over half (50 references) of the references were classified down to the grandchild node level, which captures the distinction between hard skills (20 references), soft skills (14 references) and general skills (16 references), while the remaining 48 references weren't sufficiently nuanced to make sure a distinction, so were classified at the parent node level.

A significant proportion of the 48 references classified under 'capabilities' related to recognising and accepting differences across students, either explicitly (for example, *"more acceptance that differences are okay")* or implicitly (for example, references about using different pedagogical approaches to accommodate differences in learning styles). Collectively, respondents identified a range of ways in which students can display differences, such as learning styles (*"everyone learns differently"*), speed of learning (*"every child learns different things at a different pace"),* and variation in abilities between different fields (*"not every child excels across everything").*

Thirteen references related to the theme of tailoring teaching and learning to more closely reflect the abilities of the learner. Collectively, respondents recognised both ends of the academic ability spectrum, commenting both on the need for greater extension for gifted and under-challenged students (e.g. *"identify and fostering gifted education"*) as well as calls for more support for students who are struggling (e.g. *"not having enough help for children that are struggling with the basic curriculum"*). Five references advocated for streaming or ability grouping in some form (such as Advanced Placement classes) to better accommodate the different abilities of students.

Twelve references were focussed on preparing students for the future. While one respondent communicated the perceived inadequacies of the system in this regard (*"syllabi do not prepare students for the world they live in"*), most references were more solutions-focussed, offering a range of ideas for how the schooling system better support students to prepare for the future, such as *"practical skills and real world tools," "intercultural competency skills…to better prepare New Zealanders for a more interconnected future"* and digital learning *"to generate a population who are future ready."*

Respondents presented differing perspectives on student expectations. Two references explicitly advocated for less emphasis on expectations (e.g. *"we need to put less stress on expectations in the 5-6 age bracket"* and "*stop pushing literacy and numeracy expectations"*) and an appetite for softer expectations was implicitly embedded in a number of others (e.g. *"trying to force them to learn something before they are ready for it so they get to the target that has been set is not good"*). One respondent, however, presented the counterview in a direct manner (*"greater expectations on all"*) and, again, there were comments which implicitly embedded this sentiment without use of the word 'expectations' (e.g. *"not enough homework and accountability for progress placed on children."*).

The remaining references (not captured within the themes above) traversed a range of topics such as behavioural management and discipline (three references), values (such as democracy and good citizenship) (three references) and emotional development (such as developing empathy, grit, resilience and coping skills) (two references).

1.2.1 Hard Skills

"Getting the basics right" was the dominant message of this section and most of the 20 references were relevant to this theme.

Collectively, respondents emphasised the importance of reading, writing and mathematics as core foundational skills. Two respondents also included oral/communication skills within their narrative on 'basic skills,' but the majority of the feedback was focussed on the 'the three r's.'

A number of respondents stressed the importance of these skills to prepare students for their future, particularly in terms of learners' ability to contribute to the workforce and society in future - *"What is the point of sending students out into the workforce that do not have functional numeracy and literacy?"* and *"We need contributing members of society when they leave school, which means being able to read and write."*

Four respondents cited concerns about student capability in respect to one or more of these basic skills. Much of this rhetoric is concentrated on concerns about the poor mathematical ability of New Zealand students (and how it has declined over the past two decades).

Just two of the 20 references were not related to 'the basics' (i.e. reading, writing and mathematics'). Both of these references recommended other topics/competencies that they thought should be taught to students – critical thinking skills and CPR.

1.2.2 Soft Skills

Two dominant themes emerged from the 14 references coded to 'soft skills' for this question: social skills and the development of skills to support wellbeing.

Given the role that positive social connection has in supporting wellbeing, it was unsurprising to observe that a number of references touched on both of these two themes. The two references on bullying, for example, straddle the two themes. While bullying is inherently an expression of anti-social behaviour (and, therefore, is a reflection of poor social skills in students who bully), both references mentioning

bullying speak to the emotional component of this behaviour. One respondent saw emotional development as a preventative measure, stating *"emotional intelligence must be taught in school to prevent bullying,"* while the other respondent focussed more on supporting students in developing the emotional resilience to cope with such behaviour – *"Life is just a large bullying field and we are setting children up for future depression if they do not learn some defensive skills. Not physical skills, mental."* There were also three additional references to social skills that were not related to bullying.

In addition to the two aforementioned comments on bullying, a further seven references spoke to the development of skills to support wellbeing. With the exception of the one comment advocating for more activities to promote fine motor skills in young children, the wellbeing-related references were overwhelmingly focussed on emotional health (*"a strategy to embrace positive mindset initiatives"*) or the development of particular character/personality attributes, such as confidence and resilience.

The remaining references (i.e. those that were not related to the two dominant themes explored above) traversed a range of themes such as punctuality, personal responsibility, manners, respect and fostering a love of learning.

1.2.3 General Skills

Two common themes dominated most of the 16 references classified under 'general skills' for this question: life skills and study skills.

Over half (nine references) of the comments referred to teaching students 'life skills,' such as self-care, first aid, budgeting, growing food and , "*making good choices in the wider world*." A number of these comments spoke to the theme of practicality (*"practical skills for life")* and one respondent pointed to a perceived inadequacy of the current practice in relation to such skills, stating *"they're not leaving school with the skills to live or make decisions for themselves."*

Five references related to study skills, in the sense of building competencies that support further learning. Some of these comments offered suggestions for what this might look like (for example, "*incorporate fundamentals that support learning – schedules, due dates, accountability, consequences, small wins, how to ask questions, how to break assignments into chunks of work.")* while other references were more focussed on observations about current practice (*"children are not taught how to do self-directed learning before being given it").*

The remaining two references both related to learning outside a traditional classroom setting. One was about promoting a wider range of opportunities for physical activity at the primary school level, and the other advocated for greater use of outdoor learning opportunities to *"learn about bush-craft, biology, ecology, co-operation, teamwork, resilience, persistence in the real world of the outdoors."*

1.3 Transitions

This sub-theme considers 36 references about transitions for students as they move through the schooling system. It encompasses references to both within school and

between school transitions, including the transition from early childhood education into the school system and preparedness for post-secondary school pathways.

Sixteen references commented on the transition between early childhood education and primary school. Collectively, these references reflect an overarching sentiment that there is an opportunity to make this a smoother transition for our young learners.

While the age that children start school was cited in six references, only two advocated for an increase in the school entry age. One respondent stated *"children need to start school at age 6 at least in line with brain development"* while the other respondent stated that the starting age should be 6-7 and justified this position on the basis that *"research shows most boys and some girls not ready for the type of formal education we offer until then."*

A number of other respondents echoed the sentiment that children may not be ready/well-suited for a formal schooling environment at age five, but proposed a smoother transition between ECE and primary school (rather than an older school entry age) as an option. These respondents were more attuned to the significant leap/change between ECE and primary school (*"the difference between early childhood education and new entrance is too different")* and the overnight nature of this change (*"just because a child turns 5, a switch isn't turn on…"*), rather than age per se.

Seven references explored the potential to use an alternative pedagogical approach to bridge the gap and smooth the transition between ECE and primary school. Like those proposing a higher school entry age, a number of these respondents also expressed the sentiment that children may not be prepared for the schooling environment at the age of five (e.g. *"many children are not ready for straight school at 5"*), but recommended that the solution was to change the schooling environment (for the first two years), rather than the age of new entrant students. The general sentiment of these seven references was that the first two years of primary school should be more aligned with the ECE style learning environment, for example using play-based learning and no formal assessments.

Seven references suggested some form of alteration to the arrangement to the intake of new entrant students to smooth the transition into primary school, such as cohort entry or set starting dates (three references), reception/transition classes (two references), fewer intakes (one reference), or a formal handover process between the school and the ECE provider (one reference).

Two references cited concerns/issues with the transition to primary school that were not accompanied by suggestions on how to overcome these challenges. One reference spoke to new entrant capability concerns, stating *"students are entering school without knowing the basics."* The other reference cited concerns about the identification of students with additional learning needs during this transition point, stating *"transitioning into school, far too early to label a child as needing support, when the child just needs to become familiar with the teachers/environment."*

Twenty references related to the transitions within a school (such as year-to-year transitions) and between schools (including the role of secondary schools in preparing students for later tertiary studies and/or vocational pathways).

Four references pertained to academic progress throughout the schooling journey. Two references focussed on student attainment, citing concerns about students progressing within the school system without demonstrating particular levels of academic progress (e.g. *"Kids moving up in school and they are not ready academically or mentally"* and *"Only when the children have mastered the basics of reading, and confidently move through the levels, can they progress successfully through school."*). Another two references focussed on curriculum/subject offerings to support students in their later schooling years, one of which emphasised greater literacy support while the other focussed on greater consistency between the language options offered at the intermediate and high school level.

Three references indicated there was an opportunity to improve the handover of information about a child from one year to the next. One respondent recommended a national database of reports on all students to overcome this issue.

Three references cited issues with support for students with additional learning support needs during school transition points. One reference was problem-focussed, noting that secondary schools were not sufficiently funded to provide a transition programme for the student in learning support units. The other reference was more solution-driven, suggesting that there could be a person outside the school who could attend to all special needs referrals, to access the right help for that child and to support the transition of these students as they move to other schools. The third reference articulated the respondents' personal negative experience with one particular school during the transition point at the intermediate level for their child with additional needs.

Three references referred to the transition between secondary school and tertiary education, with an emphasis on what role of the former is to support the latter. One reference noted the minimal nature of homework and questioned how students would later adjust to the demands of tertiary studies. The other two references focussed on career/vocational pathways. One recommended that students should be split into academic and vocational streams by Year 10. The other recommended a de-emphasis of the academic/university route and encouraged more trades teaching in schools.

The remaining seven references covered a range of themes and ideas including cross-sector and community collaboration to support students' future pathways and transitions (three references), having a middle school (year 7-10) with *"a strong transition to NCEA"* (one reference), awareness/accommodation of those who learn at a slower pace when introducing new ideas in schools (one reference), the role of schools in support the students on their future pathway (one reference) and focussing the investment of funding in the early years (i.e. ECE, rather than tertiary) (one reference)

2. Progress and Achievement

The overarching 'progress and achievement' node captures a total of 439 references. The key themes that emerged from the 437 references were assessment and measurement (105 references), other subjects – content related (65 references) and literacy, numeracy and STEM (57 references), as detailed below.

Of the 437 references, eight did not fit within the pre-defined sub-themes under this node. Most of the eight references were quite general in nature, such as *"overall low quality of gen ed"* [sic], and a number of them touched on themes or issues that have been reflected elsewhere in this report (such as the concerns about the link between overassessment and psychological health issues).

2.1 Curriculum

There were 74 references coded under the parent node of 'curriculum,' capturing comments that were generally related to the curriculum, but were not able to be further defined within the child nodes for this theme.

Thirty-four references related to themes that were more substantively covered elsewhere in this report, such as play-based learning in early primary school, subject or competency specific references (particularly 'life skills'), and encouragement for going 'back to basics.' Several of these references related to matters that were less about the curriculum per se and more about the pedagogical approach of the individual school or teacher, such references to advocating regular homework, group learning and more creativity.

There were eleven references relating to the content of the curriculum, split between two dominant themes: the 'overcrowded' nature of the curriculum and a desire for the curriculum to be adapted to suit the modern environment.

Six references referred to the overcrowded nature of the curriculum, with one respondent stating *"prune the curriculum, and remove much of the 'fluffy' and non-core material."*

The other five references focussed on modernisation of the curriculum. One respondent framed both their perception of the problem (*"capitalist/industrial model of schooling is no longer relevant. It values only one type of intelligence (academic) and produces inequality of outcomes"*) and proposed a solution based on a more diverse offering of schooling options. The other two respondents focussed exclusively on proposals for change, with one taking a subject-based approach (*"introduce a robust modern world science and tech curriculum"*) and the other taking a principles-based approach (*"tweak the Principles in the NZC, adapt with modern educational directives…"*).

Nine references spoke to the theme of how the curriculum supports student learning and achievement. Four references spoke to a student-centred approach, highlighting the individual needs of students and advocating for a curriculum that is *"meaningful, relevant and responsive to each learner."* The remaining five references focussed on the role of the curriculum in supporting students' progress and achievement (e.g. *"focus on the progress of learners across all curriculum areas"* and *"strengthen the importance of student achievement."*

Eight references advocated for greater structure, consistency and/or standardisation of the curriculum (e.g. *"standardise the curriculum and lesson plans across schools"* and *"a more centralised approach to curriculum and core school operating practices"*), with one reference indicating that it was the role of the Ministry to provide more oversight. A core argument in support of greater standardisation was that

schools have to 'reinvent the wheel' in the current system. In contrast, three references took the opposite view, describing it as *"too restrictive"* and seeking *"more flexibility"* and a more *"dynamic curriculum."*

Five references recommended options to support the delivery of the curriculum, reflecting two key themes. Three references advocated for more funding/resourcing support to deliver the curriculum (e.g. *"equity funding for access to the curriculum, including digital platforms."*) and the other two references recommended the reintroduction of curriculum advisors.

The remaining seven references were of a generic, high-level nature, such as *"the curriculum and how we teach."*

2.1.1 Local Design

'Local design' was a relatively small topic, with just four references coded to this node for this question.

Despite the small sample size, there were mixed views on the delivery of local curriculum design. One respondent stated that Tomorrow's Schools *"were never allowed to become what they were originally intended with greater local community involvement and them tailoring education to the needs and aspirations of each local situation,"* while another respondent expressed a more positive sentiment and sought to protect the existing arrangements, stating *"keep the ability of schools to develop a strong local curriculum."* The third reference took a neutral stance (*"find a better middle ground"*), and advocated for expert partners/critical friends to support better local curriculum design.

The remaining reference was more closely related to the theme of pedagogy and responsiveness to the aspirations of individual learners, so has been addressed within the narrative on those themes.

2.1.2 Te Reo

Twenty-two references were classified under the 'Te Reo' node for this question. All 22 references referred to Māori language in some way, although various other topics (such as teaching New Zealand war history) were also mentioned.

Fifteen references directly expressed a view on whether Māori language should be taught in schools. Most (13) of these references actively encouraged teaching Māori in schools, with some respondents going as far as suggesting it should be mandatory. Two references, however, expressed a negative sentiment towards teaching Māori language in schools. One respondent expressed a desire to *"take Māori language out of the school environment,"* while the other respondent stated that it *"should be an option NOT forced on to children."*

The remaining five references did not directly/explicitly articulate a view on whether Māori language should be taught in schools (although in each case, one could reasonably infer from the context that these respondents would support it). Two references made observations about the reflection of Māori identity, language and culture in the curriculum, two made generic comments about the teaching of Māori related topics in schools and one advocated for Mātauranga (knowledge and understanding) and Tikanga (protocol) to be taught in addition to Te Reo.

2.1.3 Literacy, numeracy and STEM

'Literacy, numeracy and STEM' is one of the key themes within Progress and Achievement, with 57 references classified to this node for this question.

Twelve references focussed on "the three R's" and/or 'the basics,' which largely echoed the sentiments expressed on these themes captured in '1.2.1 Hard Skills.' Many of the references were variations on the common theme of *"get the basics right – reading, writing, arithmetic"* and *"focus on the three R's."* While many respondents simply emphasised these skills in their own right, other respondents indicated a relative preference in favour of the prioritisation of 'the basics' over other competencies. For example, one respondent commented *"We all want our children to feel – and be – competent and confident learners, to be critical thinkers, and to be able to pursue their interests and passions and all schools should foster these things. But this must not be at the expense of systematic teaching of basic skills – deliberate teaching of reading, writing and spelling as well as fundamental in maths."*

Seven other references also spoke to the theme of balance and relative prioritisation of teaching particular subjects and skills. Respondents appeared to have divergent views on the balance between the core skills/subjects and the teaching and learning of other competencies. While some comments leaned towards favouring/prioritising the core subjects (such as the quoted example at the end of the prior paragraph), others advocated for a more even balance, such as the respondent who stated *"Most schools still focus on the old 'English, maths, science' as compulsory subjects. There are 8 learning areas. They need to be treated equally."* One respondent emphasised the trade-offs that take place when allocating time and resources to particular subjects, serving as a reminder that schools have finite resources and that time/money spent on teaching and learning in one area comes at the expense of another. Specifically, this respondent stated "*There is a considerable opportunity cost for the teaching/learning time/capacity given to teaching Māori language and culture"* and advocated that more time and emphasis should be given to teaching/learning maths and science in junior primary school.

Four references related to the prioritisation of learning particular skills and competencies. Two of these references gave subject-specific detail reflecting their perspective on the correct ordering of student learning (e.g. *"Teach children the four basic operations (+ - x ÷) using the algorithm in Primary school. Teach them how to do that first, then understand how/why it works after."),* while the other two references were of a more general nature (e.g. *"children are pressured to learn advance concepts before they've learnt the basics. This needs to change."*).

Nine references commented on support for students who were struggling or required a remedial learning programme to support their attainment in one or more of the core subjects. Six of the eight references referred to Reading Recovery (or remedial reading more generally), many of which expressed criticism towards the current approach (e.g. "*We need to accept as a country that Reading Recovery has failed many children"* and *"Why, oh, why are we still doing Reading Recovery?! When we know there are much better ways"*). Two of these references expressed criticism of pedagogical practice of reading/literacy more generally (i.e. encompassing mainstream teaching), suggesting that concerns about teaching methods and practice in this area are not exclusive to remedial programmes (e.g. *"The methods*

used to teach reading are apparently not effective for many students" and *"literacy instruction is not state of the art"*). While these references were largely dominated by criticism/observation of existing practice, there were two that were solutions-focussed, one advocating for Reading Recovery to be replaced with *"evidence based literacy instruction for all" and* one other reference recommending that the tertiary education 'fees free' initiative should be discontinued in favour of diverting that money towards assisting students who are struggling to learn English and maths.

In addition to the aforementioned comments on literacy pedagogy and the perceived failures of the existing remedial reading programmes, there were five further references which were focussed on literacy and language. Four of these references were focussed on weaknesses in the system, such the poor grammar knowledge of students, lack of inclusion of New Zealand Sign Language and the need for more literacy preparation in the high school years. The other reference was of a more neutral nature. The respondent encouraged students *"to practice speaking English by organising fun activity that everyone could join together"* but did not indicate whether this was in response to any particular perceived challenge or problem.

Thirteen references fell under the general STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) umbrella. Note that this includes subject-specific comments on pedagogy (that relate to the STEM areas), but exclude general commentary on pedagogical matters that have made a passing reference to STEM as these have been addressed separately below.

Two references commented on the suite of STEM subjects together (although one omitted the engineering component – one of which took a gendered perspective (advocating for support and encouragement for females in these subjects), while the other expressed the view that there is *"not enough STEM at primary school."*

There were seven references that predominately focussed on mathematics. There were three references advocating for a change in mathematical pedagogy, including two which expressed a negative sentiment towards relatively recent changes (e.g. *"the new maths" and "Readdress how maths is taught. The method of teaching maths adopted by primary schools years ago after financial incentives if it was used doesn't work, creates confusion for kids, add needless complexity"*). The remaining five references were not concentrated/clustered on common themes. Rather, they traversed a number of discrete topics/issues, including inadequate classroom resources for teaching mathematics, teacher capability/confidence constraints (*"teachers often less comfortable with maths"*), gaps in students' mathematical attainment and the slow pace of progress for students learning maths at the primary school level.

Most of the subject-specific commentary relating to STEM education were concentrated on mathematics, as detailed in the paragraph above. Of the remaining three subject-specific STEM comments, just one focussed exclusively on science (*"not a lot of exposure to science"*). The other two references commented on technology, one of which was relatively general in nature (*"better education for children and parents around technology"*), while the other was somewhat more specific on what that might entail (*"teach digital skills, such as coding through theory, but only bring out the devices to enhance learning").*

The remaining four references classified under this node related to pedagogical matters that have intentionally been excluded from the subject-specific commentary above as they traverse pedagogical practice across a number of topics. Three of these references alluded to the student-led/centred learning approach. One expressed a positive sentiment towards being responsive to the interests of students as a way to engage them in their learning (*"teach them skill through things they are interested in, maths, reading etc. can all be part of real life studies that kids can be interested in. It's not good having children sitting in a classroom for hours not paying attention to anything because they are bored"*), while the other reference on this theme expressed a contrasting sentiment, stating *"Stop letting kids do their own learning.....Go back to maths, English, science etc."* The third reference on general pedagogy was more focussed on the role of the teacher (rather than the student) and recommended *"A review of teaching practice from year one to ensure that children learn to read, write and do mathematics with greater support including more teaching time on these core subjects…"*

2.1.4 Core competencies, overarching skills and capabilities

There were 32 references coded under the 'core competencies, overarching skills and capabilities' node for this question.

Thirteen references largely reiterated/echoed commentary that has already been more substantively covered elsewhere in this report, so they have been intentionally excluded from this section of this report. Specifically, these references traversed themes including teaching 'life skills' at school, 'getting the basics right'/foundational skills, pedagogical approaches (particularly play-based learning) and reliance on technology.

In the case of references that provide new/unique material on an existing theme, the commentary is focussed on the new material, so that the narrative 'furthers the story' rather than creating repetition.

There were nine references relating to the theme of student competencies and skills taught in schools. Seven of these references cited specific examples of the competencies they wanted students to have the opportunity to develop, three of which referred to building financial capability skills, while the other three traversed traits such as leadership skills, self-management, and phonics. The other two references on this theme were of a more general nature, both of which emphasised the 'key competencies.'

Four references spoke to the theme of teaching skills to promote wellbeing. Three references reiterated points that have already been explored elsewhere (bullying, resilience, emotional intelligence and mental health), while the other reference introduced the theme of teaching students health, safety and hygiene.

Four references were focussed on preparing students for the future, asking questions like *"What do we want for 21st century learners?"* and prompting us to *"consider the world our students are moving into."* Secondary to this theme, two further references stressed the importance of the relevance of what students are being taught.

2.1.5 Other subjects, content related

'Other subjects, content related' was one of the two largest themes in the Progress and Achievement category, with 65 references coded to this node.

a) Religious Education

The issue of Religious Education in schools featured heavily, with 18 references on this topic. Most (16) references expressed a clearly negative sentiment against Religious Education being taught in schools. This included one reference expressing a negative sentiment towards concepts of 'spiritual wellbeing' within the Physical Education programme, suggesting that discomfort/distain for spiritual concepts may extend beyond the remit of formal religious instruction in some cases.

One reference presented a more balanced view and advocated for *"religious education on all religions, not just one. At best its favouritism, at worst it's religious segregation and discriminatory."*

The remaining reference under this theme related to virtues and spirituality, but the stance of the respondent was somewhat ambiguous. This respondent observed that *"mainstream schools don't have a curriculum in virtues and spirituality."* While they did not articulate whether they saw this in a positive or negative light, the fact that this comment was made in response to a question about desired changes in the school system, one may infer that that the respondent sought change in the current practice of mainstream schools in respect to virtues and spirituality.

b) Other subject-specific comments

In addition to aforementioned references to Religious Education, there were a further 26 references related to specific subjects[2]. Most references in this section related to common themes that have featured elsewhere in this report, such as health and wellbeing, life skills (including financial literacy) and New Zealand/colonial history. Four references, however, cast the net beyond these common themes and advocated for students to be taught handwriting, music and dance, debating and human rights.

Fourteen references fell under the broad category of health and wellbeing. There were seven references pertaining to physical education traversed both regularity of exercise (e.g. *"daily fitness should be compulsory at all schools"*) and the type of physical activity taught (including two relating to swimming). The remaining seven health-related references were split evenly (two each) between the themes of advocating for emotional health education, better sex education (including content on consent and healthy relationships) and generic/non-specific references to teaching health. Some respondents touched on both physical and mental wellbeing, such as the one who advocated that both sports and mindfulness should be included in a student's day.

Seven references focussed on life skills, including five which related to financial literacy/money management. Respondents advocating for students to be taught 'life

[2] Note that several references referred to more than one subject, hence why the reference count across the individual subjects detailed in the text is greater than 24.

skills' (in both this and other nodes) frequently refer to skills such as cooking, first aid, and growing food.

Language was another common theme, with seven references focussing on this topic. Five references related to the teaching of languages other than English. Three references advocated for more languages to be taught in schools (e.g. *"We need to prepare students as international players so learning Asian and European languages would also be of benefit"* and *"more languages, and not exclusively Māori."*). One reference, however, presented a less favourable sentiment towards learning other languages at schools. This respondent stated that learning other languages should be an option (not 'forced' onto children) and expressed strong distain towards the amount of language and culture taught in ECE and schools currently. The other reference pertaining to non-English languages made an observation about the celebration of language week. The other two language-related references did not fit within the sub-theme above and were discretely different from each other. One reference advocated for equal recognition of New Zealand Sign Language, as the third official language), while the other promoted greater phonic awareness.

Four references advocated for teaching New Zealand history, including specific comments on colonial history and the Land Wars.

c) Balance and relative priorities

Nine references related to the balance/emphasis of what is taught at school. Some respondents focussed on particular subject/s, while others were of a more general nature.

One reference spoke to the familiar theme of the emphasis that schools place on promoting academic pathways at a tertiary level. This respondent advocated for better trades training and stated *"stop pushing academic pathways so much."*

Four references reflected the sentiment that there was not enough focus on creativity and the arts (e.g. *"not enough creative focus," "not enough time for the arts"* and *"more creative subjects alongside the core subjects"*). Mixed views were presented on the balance of sports vs. other activity. One reference expressed that there was *"too much focus on sport to the exclusion of other things,"* while another advocated for *"more focus on art, sport and music."*

Four references spoke to the theme of balance more generally. Collectively, these references highlighted the desire for *"a balanced curriculum"* and some respondents presented the view that all subjects should have equal time spent on them.

d) Other

The remaining nine references (not captured within the categories above), were split between three broad categories: pedagogy, curriculum and high-level, general commentary. Note that there are a number of comments within this node relating to pedagogy and curriculum that were more aptly captured in the themes above, so they have been incorporated within the thematic discussion paragraphs above. Thus, the references pedagogy and curriculum referred to the in paragraph below pertain only to the remaining references that were of a generic/non-specific nature and not suitable for categorisation elsewhere.

Three references related to pedagogical practice which promoted ideas such as *"more transformational activities"* and *"more imaginative and educational play and creation."* Three references made generic commentary on the curriculum (e.g. *"greater integration of subjects across the curriculum"*). The remaining two references were of a general, non-specific nature, such as *"old fashioned subject choices."*

2.2 Qualifications

The 39 references coded to 'qualifications' for this question were almost exclusively focussed on NCEA. The majority of references that related to NCEA made an explicit reference to it (e.g. *"rigid NCEA system"* and *"NCEA desperately needs an overhaul"*). There were, however, a minority of references that did not make an explicit reference to 'NCEA' but that the context could be inferred (e.g. *"not as many credits needed"*).

a) International comparisons

The one reference that did not relate to NCEA advocated for the introduction of the IB (International Baccalaureate) programme from primary to senior schooling in New Zealand, stating that it would *"give NZ students a leading edge internationally."*

Another respondent also spoke to the theme of the international competitiveness of New Zealand's students. This respondent observed that NCEA is *"very low level"* compared to qualifications from other jurisdictions such as Singapore, Hong Kong and the United Kingdom and stating that New Zealand's qualifications need to match those abroad, *"so that our children will be able to compete in tomorrow's workplace."*

b) Systemic changes

This section discusses comments that pertain to significant systemic changes to the qualifications system, such as removing NCEA or a level of it.

In some respects, the foundation qualification (level one) of NCEA was perceived differently than the later levels, and six references commented specifically on NCEA Level One. Four references proposed that the Level One qualification should be removed entirely and one recommended that it should be changed to *"significantly reduce assessment."* The remaining comment expressed a more positive sentiment towards NCEA level one, stating that it should be *"a must have"* but that, after that, students should have the opportunity to pursue vocational pathways and that *"only those wanting to go on to university should be asked to stay on at school."*

Four references proposed a wholesale discontinuation of NCEA. The two references did not provide any specific recommendations for what an improved qualifications system might look like, although one respondent emphasised that the development of a replacement approach would require consultation with principals, teachers and stakeholders.

The other two references, however, did extend to articulating recommendations for what could be changed/improved, and there was some commonality of ideas between the two. Both references spoke to the theme of recognising students' effort and participation (e.g. *"there should be grades awarded for participation/contribution to own learning"*) and both advocated for less assessment, one of which suggests that the nature of the current testing/assessment structure is a distraction from

students' learning (e.g. *"Students should not be focused on points, they should be focused on learning and enjoying their subjects."*). One reference also included a recommendation pertaining to University Entrance, stating *"one UE standard assessment, for consistency."*

c) Criticism of the existing structure

This section examines references which provide criticism of and/or propose changes to the existing system of NCEA. In contrast to the prior section (which focusses on fundamental systemic change to the structure of the qualifications system), the commentary in this section focussed on changes that can be made within the current system.

Several respondents expressed particular issues or concerns with the NCEA system. The dominant themes were issues related to and over-assessment/workload pressures (eight references) and the credits system (seven references). Criticisms of the NCEA system were not limited to these themes, however, and respondents also cited concerns relating to the rigidity of the system (three references), equity (two references), the marking system (one reference), pedagogy (one reference) and support for lower achievers (one reference).

Over-assessment and workload pressures

Over-assessment and workload pressures (for both teachers and students) was the other leading concern for respondents in this area and there were eight references that spoke to this theme (e.g. *"NCEA – an over assessed, pointless qualification…"* and *"need review to lower time spent on assessment and the allocation of more teaching time."*) Most of these references proposed a reduction in the assessment load of students, two of which specifically advocated for a reduction in the amount of *internal* assessment (while no such comments were made in reference to *external* assessments).

NCEA credit system

Seven references focussed on the issues created (or exacerbated) by the credit system.

Three references expressed the view that the system encourages students to be more focussed on achieving credits than actual learning (e.g. *"the focus seems less and less on learning and more and more on achieving credits"*).

Two references highlighted fairness concerns in relation to how performance is rewarded in the credit system. One of these references commented on how higher levels of performance (i.e. Excellence and Merit grades) received the same number of credits as Achieved grades, while the other reference on this theme commented on the issue of between-subject disparity – *"The credits system needs to be re-evaluated for fairness (i.e. 4 credits for a History external vs. 20 credits for going possumming with Gateway)…"*

Two references focussed on credit counting (e.g. *"drop the credit counting in NCEA"*).

Compliance and rigidity

Of the three references that could be broadly described as speaking to the 'compliance driven' nature of NCEA (for example, those relating to 'box-ticking'), one was of an observational nature, describing the NCEA system as rigid, but did not propose any particular solutions, while the other two were more solutions-focussed.

One reference fell short of providing a specific proposal to address the problem, but was able to articulate what a better system may 'look like' at a conceptual level, advocating for *"more variation in the system"* and *"less emphasis on getting everyone to produce the same thing."*

The other reference went beyond the 'what' and moved into the 'how' space, proposing a system that was based on tests in each subject throughout the term to form the basis of their grades (in combination with weighting given to teacher observation of the student's effort in class). While the reference demonstrates that the respondent perceives 'tick box' behaviour as problematic, stating *"the value of a student's education is what they learn, not how many points they ticked off in the system they are stuck in,"* it is not immediately apparent how the proposed structure (of multiple tests throughout the term) would address the issue of 'box ticking.'

Other

Two references commented on the level of challenge provided by NCEA. One reference indicated that the NCEA system was not sufficiently challenging and cited that this has had a flow-on impact on tertiary education standards – *"…universities have been forced to lower their standards…NCEA encourages a culture of mediocrity, rather than excellence."* In contrast, the other reference advocated for qualification to be made easier to attain *"for children who don't always think like everyone else but aren't officially categorised as special needs."*

Two references concentrated on the split between internal and external assessment. One reference expressed the view that external examinations should be encouraged and suggested that they have more integrity. The other reference proposed that the internal/external assessment split should reflect the typical assignment/examination assessment split of university papers.

Two references focussed on equity concerns. One was reasonably non-specific (in the sense that it advocated for change, but did not express ideas on what that change may look like, or the nature of the inequity they were referring to) – *"NCEA desperately needs an overhaul. It's messy, inequitable and overly complex."* In the other equity-related reference, however, the respondent identified the particular group of learners facing inequity in the current system (namely, the *"amazing outside-the-square thinkers, who are unable to pursue professional careers due to assessment being based on how well you can write"*).

The remaining seven references made recommendations to improve the school qualifications system that did not fit within the themes above. Specifically, these references made recommendations in relation to the marking system, the potential for online examinations, promoting a pedagogical approach that supported a smooth transition from the early secondary school years to NCEA, support for the tail of non-achievers, and increasing the focus on preparing students for tertiary education.

The remaining two references coded to this section were of a high-level nature of limited substance, simply stating *"internal assessments vs NCEA"* and *"NCEA."*

2.3 Assessment and Measurement

There were 105 references coded to the 'Assessment and Measurement' node for this question.

Thirteen references were excluded from the commentary above because they are more closely related to other themes and have been more substantively covered elsewhere in the report. Specifically, these references traversed themes such as teaching 'life skills,' National Standards, the workload of teachers and learning support.

a) Volume and level of assessment

Thirty-five references related to broad theme of the volume and/or level of assessment and respondents presented diverged views on this matter.

The majority (26) of references on this theme were consistent with the sentiment that the pressure on students was excessive and should be reduced (predominately in respect to reducing the assessment workload, rather than reducing the academic rigor/standards of what is being assessed). While some references were framed in a problems focussed manner (e.g. *"too much assessment"*) and others were expressed in terms of the change that respondents wished to see in the system (e.g. *"reduce assessments for Year 11 – 13"),* the overarching sentiment was the same.

In contrast, nine references expressed the desire for a more demanding approach and/or articulated the view that the current standards were too easy. References that presented this view were overwhelming framed in a problems-focussed manner (e.g. *"maths and science is way too easy"* and *"many of the science courses ill-equip students for university level science (especially when compared to Cambridge)"*). While there was, comparatively, lesser emphasis on potential solutions to address this issue, respondents were not completely silent on this matter. One respondent, for example, proposed that teachers should be *"freed from all this assessment driven mantra, which means they teach for results and credits…"* as this pressure on teachers encourages teaching practices which are not necessarily conducive to independent student learning and genuine achievement (e.g. *"teachers provide easy spoon-fed credits in order to get kids over a line…"*).

While most respondents advocating for a reduction in students' workload did not articulate a rationale/justification to support their perspective, those that did cited reasons including *"more time for creativity and discovery"* and *"so that teachers can do what they are trained to do – teach students content and knowledge."* Respondents advocating for a more demanding approach were somewhat more likely to provide a reason for their views, such as the respondent who recommended more regular assessment on the grounds that *"it will give good practice to children"* and the respondent who expressed the view that there are *"too many easy credits that mean nothing and don't prepare students for the world after school."*

b) Balance of assessment versus learning

A further ten references explored the impact of assessment on teaching and learning.

Collectively, these references highlighted how formalised assessment metrics can skew the balance of teaching time and attention towards those subjects, stating *"national standards put so much pressure and time on reading, writing and maths."*

Some references made recommendations to shift the balance of emphasis between assessments and learning. For example, one respondent advocated for the New Zealand Curriculum to be strengthened *"in order to ensure than an over-emphasis on schools meeting assessment requirements does not lead to lessening students' ability to gain deeper learning from well-constructed curricula"* while the proposed *"less emphasis on meeting rating scales and goal setting and instead focus on the kids' strengths and let them celebrate what they can do without being forced to think up goals."*

A number of references on this theme were of a generic/non-specific nature, simply stating *"NCEA – focus on learning vs. assessment."*

c) Improvements to assessment system

Twenty-nine references focussed on the general theme of ways in which the assessment system could be improved. The dominant themes in this sub-category related to the administration of assessment procedures (nine references), consistency and standardisation (seven references), recognition of student differences (seven references) and proposals to change NCEA (six references)

Nine references related to opportunities to improve the administration of assessment procedures. These references predominately focussed on matters that schools already exercise at least some degree of control over, such as the management of mock exams (two references), the timing of internal assessments and study materials for exams (six references) and whether students were permitted to take their assessments home after grading (one reference). Note that some references covered multiple sub-themes.

Seven references spoke to the theme of promoting greater standardisation or consistency within the assessment system. Collectively, these respondents provided a range of recommendations on this theme, such as *"national standard benchmarks with consistent assessment tools," "more direction on equal assessment across schools"* and *"standardised testing to assess children's needs."*

Seven references suggested that there was an opportunity to be more responsive to the different needs and learning styles of individual students. Four references built on the themes explored in earlier parts of this report around student-centred pedagogy and explored them in the context of assessment (rather than teaching). These references promoted awareness that student differences (in learning styles etc.) extend beyond the classroom and that they need to be acknowledged in assessment situations too (e.g. *"it is acknowledged that we all learn differently, therefore we may express our knowledge differently too"*).

The remaining three references on this sub-theme focussed on the role of assessment in being responsive to individual student needs. Two respondents indicated that testing students helped to *"objectively ascertain the capability of the individual students"* and help students to identify areas that they particularly need to work on. The other respondent, however, saw assessment metrics/targets as an

impediment to being responsive to student interests and recommended that there should be *"less pressure on teachers to reach targets so children can guide their own learning in ways that interest them."*

Six references recommended changes to the NCEA system, two of which presented the view that NCEA Level One should be discounted (which has already been substantively explored above). The remaining four references offered unique ideas for how NCEA could be improved, such as changing the format of internals, discontinuing *"all these overwhelming rubrics on self-assessment,"* shifting responsibility for administering assessments (*"farm out all assessments to NZQA or someone"*) and limiting the amount of 'hobby' subjects that students are permitted to take.

d) Student performance

Thirteen references were focussed on student performance. These references traversed a number of sub-themes such as comparison of student achievement (six references) and expectations of students (seven references).

Seven references related to the expectations place on students, with reference to how learners perceive their ability. These references traversed themes such as the pressure on children to perform, the deficit model of assessing students against what they cannot do and the results-oriented nature of Year 0 – 2.

Six references focussed on comparison of student achievement, and respondents presented divergent views on this issue. Most (5) of these references were focussed on comparison between individual students, but one reference spoke to the theme of system level comparisons.

Of the five references focussed at the individual student level, two were not in favour of comparison between students (e.g. *"I don't want to compare my kids to other kids, I just want to know they are learning"*).

The other three respondents, however, viewed student comparison in a more favourable light. Of the two in favour, one respondent articulated their position in a relatively mild tone (*"a bit of competition to achieve is needed"*), while the other two references appeared to feel more strongly about the importance of comparison and articulated the reasons why they perceived this to be important. For example, one reference stated:

"Removal of any forms of comparison between your children's achievement and the standard achievement of the group is also a step in the wrong direction. Hiding true ability of children and giving them false indications of their achievement level does not help them in life. Sooner or later in their life they will strike something that they can't do and it will be much worse if they have not been brought up with a reasonable understanding of their ability levels and allowed in an honest and transparent environment to actually identify and seek out their strengths."

One respondent went beyond comparison of individual students (with each other and against a standard benchmark) and, instead, referred to system-level performance, expressing concern about New Zealand's declining results in international assessments – *"We bury our heads in the sand when it comes to our steadily*

declining performance in international assessments – our educational culture in general precludes calling a spade a spade. We find excuses to explain away why our comparative performance is dropping…"

e) Other

The remaining four references coded to this section were of a high-level nature of limited substance, such as *"reports"* and *"assessment system".*

2.3.1 National Standards

There were twelve references coded under 'national standards' node under this question.

Two references were excluded from the commentary below as they were more closely related to themes covered more fulsomely elsewhere in the report.

Six references expressed a negative sentiment towards the National Standards. One reference did not want to see National Standards reintroduced (*"don't bring them back"*) and two references wanted a step further than the current settings, stating *"please remove them fully"* and *"continue to reduce the amount of reporting that we have already seen with the scraping of National Standards."* Two references explicitly expressed a desire to get rid of National Standards. Given that the use of National Standards is no longer mandatory, comments of this nature could either be interpreted as a knowledge gap of these respondents or the suggestion that they did not want National Standards to be allowed even on a voluntary basis. Both of these respondents provided commentary on the change they would like to see in the system (in respect to National Standards). One advocated for *"a focus on the progress of learners across all curriculum areas,"* while the other said *"bring back what used to work. Nobody understands the National Standards, they're just a bunch of rubbish."* The remaining reference did not expressly articulate a position on their support (or otherwise) for the removal of National Standards, but simply criticised them for taking *"the creativity away from the learning and teaching."*

In contrast, two references wanted National Standards to be reintroduced. One respondent implied the that National Standards played a role in ensuring the students develop core cognitive skills that are critical to their future employment prospects, stating *"Bring back a national standard so that children can achieve that standard, what is the point of sending students out into the workforce that do not have functional numeracy and literacy?"* The other respondent spoke to the general theme of reporting on progress, stating *"Get back national standards and reports that show the progress and define the strength and the weakness."*

Two references spoke to the theme of an alternative approach to replace National Standards, but neither provided specific commentary on what they would like an alternative approach to look like. One respondent stated *"no National Standards alternative,"* but it is ambiguous as to whether the respondent perceives this as a positive (i.e. they do not want an alternative to be introduced) or a negative (i.e. they are commenting on the lack of alternative being introduced after the policy was scrapped). The other respondent suggested that there are teachers who are continuing to use National Standards as a stopgap while they're awaiting a new

approach to be introduced – *"We stopped National Standards, but it seems to me like it hasn't really stopped as everyone is waiting for what will replace it."*

2.3.2 Student workload

Although the topic of student workload has been a reasonably common theme throughout other sections of this report, just eight references were coded under this child node.

The majority (7) references within this theme suggested that students' workload was excessive and should be reduced, echoing the message communicated by a group of references detailed in the Qualifications section above. Most references simply articulated a high-level statement on the nature of the problem (e.g. *"unsustainable workloads"*) or the change they were advocating for (e.g. *"less assessment"*). One reference, however, stressed why such a change was important – namely, to preserve the mental wellbeing of students. This respondent cited a publication that *"found schools were over-assessing children, leading to anxiety, depression and eating disorders"* and stated *"I am dreading my second child entering this brutal regime."*

The remaining reference focussed on timing issues, observing that students have a *"very limited amount of time to finish work with some subjects"* and noted that students could be faced with significant work pressures across multiple subjects simultaneously. The respondent did not indicate whether this issue resulted from the aforementioned issue (i.e. the overall assessment load is too high), or if this resulted from timing/scheduling issues (i.e. the overall assessment load per se is not the primary issue but, rather, the problem lies with how schools schedule the concentration of assessments and work).

2.3.3 Measuring the wrong thing

Three references were coded under 'measuring the wrong thing,' both of which related to the broad theme of redefining or broadening the conception of what constitutes success.

One respondent focussed on how success was measured at the system level, advocating for the Education Review Office to *"evaluate the success of the school on more than academic success and keep the focus on how schools are supporting all students with their needs (social and academic)."*

The other two references challenged normative perspectives on what constitutes success, and invited the system to look towards alternative definitions of how success is defined. For example, *"Refocus. Redefine what we see as success and make it about the people, not the numbers."*

2.4 Evidence, data and capability

Ten references were coded to 'evidence, data and capability' for this question and there was relatively limited similarity between them. Three references repeated comments that have already been covered in the previous section (2.3. Assessment and Measurement), so are excluded from the commentary below.

Two references advocated for a national database holding information on each student which would be made available to their class teachers. One respondent noted that New Zealand has a number of itinerant families and suggested that having a national database of student information that teachers could access would help to support student transitions. The other respondent provided commentary on some specific features that this database could have and recommended that it should be a digital platform and that it should provide longitudinal data on the child from age 5 through to Year 13 to *"give teachers an in-depth insight into each child."*

The remaining five references each spoke to different themes/ideas. One reference questioned the performance of an individual school, while the other four touched on issues which may apply across the school system. One respondent described the data entry requirements as *'endless'* and *'completely irrelevant to teaching and children's needs.'* A different respondent observed that comparing the academic results of schools drives them to 'poach' the best students (and get rid of underperforming ones). The remaining two references both related to issues that are within the control of individual schools, rather than being system level challenges. One indicated that reports needed to be easier to understand while the other indicated that there was not enough homework and accountability for progress placed on children.

3. Wellbeing and Hauora

The overarching 'wellbeing and hauora' node captured 154 references, with a concentration of comments on the dominant themes of 'services and pastoral care' (45 references) and 'student wellbeing' (52 references).

Three references were coded to the parent node ('wellbeing and hauora'), rather than the child nodes described below. All three of these references related to behavioural management issues, including bullying and management of student violence at school, which is covered in more detail elsewhere in the report.

3.1 Services and pastoral care

The 'services and pastoral care' node captured 45 references for this question.

Collectively, these respondents were cognisant of the impact of broader social issues on students and there was a general leaning towards the school having a role to play in supporting students who face challenges due to their social circumstances, such as poverty and hunger (e.g. *"Social issues once unusual that are now rife and widespread"*).

While the majority of references were at least broadly related to providing services and care to support students (and, in some cases, their families), respondents differed in their emphasis in respect to how this would be achieved, with some focussing more on the role of professionals (such as social workers) to support students while others placed a greater emphasis on services (such as providing food).

a) Professional support

Twenty-seven references emphasised the role of professionals to support students. The majority (20) of these references recommended more social workers and/or

counsellors in schools, a number of which referred to social issues and psychological health concerns as the impetus for their recommendation (e.g. *"more social workers in schools to help deal with students, whanau and social issues"* and *"social workers in all primary and secondary schools due to current emergent suicide issues and wellbeing issues."*). Two additional references echoed the sentiment that social issues, such as poverty and violence, were prevalent in schools and advocated for more social support in schools to address this, but did not refer to particular professionals (such as social workers) in their comments.

The other references on this sub-theme focused on other professionals to support students such as nurses. While these comments were dominated by the theme of social issues, some respondents also advocated for more support for those with additional learning support or health needs (e.g. *"I would train and place inter-professional teams in each school – i.e. occupational therapists, speech language therapists, nurses, physiotherapists…"*).

While most references under this theme focussed on the role of health and/or social service professionals to support students, two references recognised that teachers also needed more support to equip them to support their students with particular needs. One reference on this theme was relatively broad, simply stating that *"teachers need to be supported better with modern pastoral care issues that parents should be dealing with,"* while the other highlighted a specific context in which teachers could be better supported in their pastoral care role, citing concerns with *"the lack of coordination between the school and other agencies to report concerns regarding children, at a teacher level…of knowing what to do."*

b) Support services and programmes

Fifteen references advocated for the provision of services and facilities to support students (rather than professionals), with a particular emphasis on supporting the nutrition of students. Six (of the ten) references recommended that schools should provide food to students (e.g. *"provide free fruit and other nutritious foods for students at primary schools so that all students (with parental consent) are equally assured of a diet that will support their learning at school…"*).

Five references focussed on services and facilities to support students with additional health and/or learning support needs. Two references stressed the importance of early identification of students with particular needs (e.g. *"get better at identifying at risk children when they're just starting school…give those children a better start"* and *"get groups going where kids get the support they need at 5 years old"*), while another reference recommended that schools should have *"a sensory room for children finding it difficult to cope in the classroom and needing to take a break."* The remaining two references in this section were of a relatively general nature, stating *"better options for mental and physical health care in schools."*

The remaining four references under this theme related to the support and guidance provided to schools to help them provide a physically and emotionally healthy environment for their students. These references focussed on recommendations to support this, such as national guidelines for policies on certain themes such as inclusion and equity in schools, bullying and discipline.

The remaining reference advocated for services to address truancy.

3.2 Student Wellbeing

There were 52 references coded to 'student wellbeing' for this question, with a strong emphasis on bullying, existing practice of schools in relation to student wellbeing and recommendations on how to improve/support student wellbeing.

a) Bullying

Over a third of references (19) under this node related to bullying in schools. The majority of respondents put the onus on the schools to address this issue, many of which indicated that they were currently not doing enough in this space (e.g. *"The school does not take a hard line with bullying").* One respondent presented an alternative view, however, by focussing more on the responsibility of parents and indicated that prevalent parenting practices had contributed to bullying in schools – *"Bullying behaviour is always going to be a problem as helicopter parents insure a generation of self-important children who are too precious."* The remaining respondents presented a more balanced view and indicated a sense of shared/collective responsibility (e.g. *"everyone needs to take responsibility for doing something about it").*

b) Existing school practice

Fifteen references expressed concern about the current practice of schools on matters pertaining to student wellbeing.

Five respondents shared personal anecdotal evidence of experiences where the actions of the school was perceived to have had a negative impact on the wellbeing of their child (e.g. "*kids being bullied by management and principal but nothing has been done"* and *"our child suffered, as did our family, and was significantly traumatised by the actions of that school"*).

The other references were of a less personal/anecdotal nature (although would likely have been informed/influenced by the respondents' lived experience). Many of these references related to issues that have been discussed elsewhere in this report (relating to health and safety, and spiritual teaching in schools), but the remaining references provided commentary on food-related practices in schools which has not already been covered (e.g. *"healthy food policies can be ignored"* and *"the use of lollies and other unhealthy foods as rewards"*).

c) Improving/supporting student wellbeing

Ten references promoted greater support in schools to improve student wellbeing. Half of these references were focussed on how schools could better support student wellbeing. Four of these references related to supporting students mental wellbeing, with reference to techniques such as yoga, mindfulness training and positive coping skills. The other reference on this theme related to physical wellbeing, in the context of providing care for children with type one diabetes.

The other half of the references under this sub-theme related to how schools could be better supported in their role of promoting student wellbeing. Some were of a general nature – *"support for schools to focus on students and their well-being and learning..."* – while the others provided specific recommendations in this space. For

example, one respondent recommended that advisers should be made available within schools to provide teachers with advice in real time on student wellbeing concerns, while another suggested that improving the school environment could have a flow-on effect to happiness of both students and teachers.

While most respondents expressed a generally favourable sentiment towards providing greater support to promote student wellbeing, one reference suggested that some students may be taking advantage of the leniency/accommodations given to students who are suffering from emotional health conditions to avoid activities they do not wish to partake in. This respondent stated that *"children have learnt to play the system and by saying they have anxiety are given in to and don't have to even try to participate."*

d) Other

Six references focussed on the impact of social issues (such as poverty, violence and family dysfunction) on students and their schools. These references reiterated messages about social issues that have already been explored earlier in this report, so were not repeated again in the above commentary.

Two reference was of a generic/non-specific nature that did not fit within the categories above – *"wellbeing issues with students."*

3.2.1 Mental Health

There were 21 references coded under the 'mental health' node for this question. Collectively, these references reflected a general sentiment that 'something' needed to be done to support student mental health (e.g. *"mental health needs to be dealt with – kids and staff"*).

Fourteen references related to the general theme of advocating for greater mental health support/services.

Some references were not context-specific (i.e. they could equally apply to either the health system or the education system, and do not indicate which). These references were divided between those which were of a general nature (e.g. *"better mental health support"* and *"more support for emotionally damaged kids"*), and those which highlighted a specific issue/opportunity - *"not enough experts in psych, mental health and behavioural."*

Many references did, however, make a clear distinction on whether they related to the health system or education system (with two on the former and one on the latter). References relating to the public health system focussed on the theme of access and resourcing issues. Collectively, these references highlighted that long waiting times to access specialist support for mental health and behavioural conditions, acknowledged the consequences of a prolonged waiting time (*"relationships can break down and a child can be excluded"*) and cited solutions/changes they wanted to see in the system (e.g. *"increase resourcing and access to Child Mental Health Services"*).

Seven references emphasised the role of schools and educators in the area of mental health.

Four respondents identified limitations in teacher capability/experience in relation to managing students with psychological disturbances. Three references observed that teachers have a lack of skills and understanding about mental health issues (e.g. *"teachers do not have the confidence to ask a young person if they are okay"*) and the other observed that there was a lack of information around trauma informed teaching and the management of children affected by traumatic experiences.

Two respondents made recommendations about what schools should teach about mental health. One was awareness focussed and recommended that education on mental health conditions should be mandatory, to promote understanding of conditions such as depression, anxiety and eating disorders. The other reference suggested that education could have a preventative/mitigating role and advocated for *"great programmes to support [the] development of resiliency and mental health."*

The remaining reference on this theme (which was already been covered earlier in the report) expressed concern about the mental health risks/implications of over-assessment.

3.3 Home & Community Environment

There were 33 references coded to 'home and community environment' for this question. Eleven references related to the recurring theme of 'social issues' and were excluded from the commentary in this section as they did not offer any additional insight beyond what has already been covered earlier in this report.

Commentary on parenting dominated the rhetoric, with 20 references touching on this topic. Two respondents referred to both dominant themes (i.e. parenting and social issues, such as student violence) within the same reference (such as the respondent who indicated that there should be more accountability on parents for the behaviour of children who exhibit violent tendencies).

Most (14) of parenting-related references were focussed on initiatives to help parents and support better parenting, such as promoting/supporting parental involvement in their child's education, parenting programmes and extending the support of social workers in schools to work with the families/parents of the student. One reference stated *"help parents to parent"* but did not provide specific commentary on what that may involve (i.e. how to help them).

Some (6) of parenting-related references, however, emphasised parental accountability and responsibility. One respondent suggested that political correctness inhibited honest conversation about the impacts of a students' home environment on their behaviour at school – *"being too PC means what everyone knows, nobody can say."* While this respondent was focussed on the barriers to open dialogue on failures of parental responsibility (to the extent that this impacts on the children at school), the other four respondents commented specifically on what parents should be held more accountable for. Recommendations made by these respondents included *"More social interventions in families who are failing their children. Obligation by parents to provide for their children,"* penalties for parents who repeatedly miss appointments for their children, and parental accountability for the child's attendance at school.

One respondent expressed an awareness of the family influences on migrant children, stating that they may be exposed to *"cultural/patriarchal views and customs at home which are still sexist."*

4. Learning Support & Disability

The theme of 'learning support and disability' was an area of particular interest for respondents, with 620 references coded to this overarching category. The dominant themes within this section were in-school staff (192 references), funding (135 references) and services (128 references).

There were 64 references that were not classified into a child node and, instead, were coded within the parent node ('learning support and disability') instead. Many of these references touched on themes which are traversed elsewhere in the report (such as support for students with dyslexia). References that provide new/unique material on an existing theme or provide further substantiation of key messages/issues are explored in the text below. The remaining references in this node have been intentionally excluded because they are included elsewhere in the report.

Twelve references spoke to the theme of the support (or lack thereof) for students with additional learning support needs. Many references were of a broad, observational nature and respondents had a tendency towards making high-level statements reflecting the general sentiment that more support (for students with additional needs) was warranted, but did not articulate what this support would 'look like' or specific courses of action that might be appropriate (e.g. *"have more support for special needs students"* and "*have a hard look at unmet needs and make a plan that will actually address this"*). Two references, however, articulated a particular area with the lack of help available for those who are struggling with the curriculum or falling marginally short of the expected achievement parameters, but who do not necessarily have a disability. One respondent offered a specific solution and recommended *"individual classes dedicated to those struggling."*

Eleven respondents made reference to students with behavioural issues. Seven references highlighted that behavioural issues were increasing, both in respect to the prevalence of such issues (e.g. *"huge numbers of behavioural problems in our schools"*) and severity (e.g. "*severe behaviour children are much more of an issue, more violent children…"*). Two references highlighted the lack of support given to assist these students, while two other references articulated concern about the adverse impact that these children have on others in the class - *"One child can disrupt a whole class, therefore no learning for all students..."* This theme is explored in more detail in the paragraph below.

Four references commented on the integration of students with additional learning and/or behavioural needs in the classroom environment with other students (i.e. mainstreaming), three of which reflected the sentiment that mainstreaming these students was problematic in some respect. Two of these references were problem-focussed and noted the disruption to other students in the class from *"students with issues,"* while the other focussed more on the change they wished to see - *"limit the amount of special needs children in mainstream classes."* One respondent, however, presented a contrasting view to the aforementioned references and suggested that

mainstreaming and inclusion had not gone far enough – *"Too many children with intellectual and physical disabilities are being excluded."*

Four references referred specifically to dyslexia, half of which indicated that these students were made to feel unintelligent and lacking work ethic (or, to quote, *"lazy and stupid"*) at school. One respondent stressed that there was a lack of teacher capability/understanding in respect to dyslexia, despite this being critical to support these students achieve – *"it appears that success for these children is entirely dependent on getting teachers who have upskilled themselves in dyslexia."* Another respondent shared anecdotal evidence of her dyslexic child's experience at school, stating that her 'bright child with dyslexia' could not read at the end of Year 3, but did not receive help because she was not disruptive.

Concerns about teacher capability (to understand and support students with additional learning needs) extended beyond dyslexia, with two other respondents speaking to the same theme in a broader context. These respondents encouraged greater understanding of different learning needs, and one suggested that the initial teaching training programme could put much more emphasis on what learning disabilities are and how to support students who have them.

Four references related to the administration, structure and resourcing of learning support and disability services. Three made recommendations relating to the organisational structure of these services (e.g. *"devolve learning support resourcing to schools in clusters and where possible in Special Schools as local hubs"* and *"reduce admin redundancies between schools and free those resources towards learning support needs."* The other reference related to an overarching monitoring function, which recommended that the Ministry of Education should monitor the progress that schools make within the area of learning support needs and highlighted the need for a standardised approach for measuring the progress of this group.

Two references commented on the classroom environment, both of which indicated that children with particular conditions (such as autism and attention deficit disorder) are better suited to a single cell classroom *"with teachers who understand them,"* on the basis that there was *"far too much stimulation and movement"* in a Modern Learning Environment."

Six references were of a general nature and did not fit within the grouped categories above. These references traversed themes including, but not limited to, non-disclosure of student issues at the time of enrolment, the system underserved learners with different abilities and general, non-specific commentary (e.g. *"exclusions and learning support"*).

4.1 Workforce

There were 17 references coded to 'workforce' for this question.

Seven references have been excluded from the commentary below, as they have been covered more substantively in other sections of this report. Specifically, these references traversed themes such as the transitional arrangements/support for students with additional learning support needs and advocacy for individualised learning rather than a 'one size fits all' approach.

Five respondents encouraged what could be described as a more direct approach for providing support to students with additional learning support or behavioural needs. The leading theme across these references was the sentiment that there should be less consulting/'hands off' specialists and more direct support, such as one-on-one and small group therapy (e.g. *"less specialists doing nothing…more practical ground work"*).

Three references related to learning support staff/teacher aides. Collectively, these references expressed the sentiment that there should be more of them and also that they could be better trained (in respect to special learning difficulties).

The remaining two references could broadly be classified under the theme of 'advocacy.' One specifically recommended that there should be an appointed person overseeing special education advocacy, while the other advocated for students with additional learning needs within their reference stating that they *"need to be at the forefront of the changes."*

4.1.1 Specialist Services

There were 61 references coded under 'specialist services' for this question.

Thirty-one references were excluded from the commentary below as they did not provide any additional insight into themes that have been covered elsewhere, such as the consultative (rather than directly therapeutic) nature of specialists, the management of students with behavioural issues and calls for more health/social service professionals in schools (e.g. social workers).

Accessibility (of specialist services) was a dominant theme under this node. While respondents spoke to this theme from various angles, there was an overarching message that there are students in the system who are struggling to access the support they need to reach their potential and participate fully in their schooling experience.

Some references spoke in a relatively non-specific manner about the lack of access to specialist support (or suggested that it could be improved), but did not offer specific insight into the nature of the barriers that were preventing access to services (e.g. *"difficulty accessing specialist support when needed"* and *"easier access to specialist help"*).

Other references offered specific insight into the nature of the accessibility issues they were aware of (or had experienced), such as *"ridiculous waiting periods."* While long waiting periods to access services was the leading theme across these references, some respondents also highlighted issues in respect to the 'scope' of these services and cited issues with the parameters of eligibility to access help. These references encouraged earlier intervention (e.g. *"the earlier the better"*) and the extension of specialist support provision to those with more 'moderate' needs (rather than limiting support to the most severe cases) – *"more funding so that all struggling kids can get help not just the really bad ones."*

Several references commented on workforce capacity constraints, which appears to be a significant contributor to accessibility issues.

Fifteen respondents highlighted workforce capacity constraints within the sector (particularly in terms of educational psychologists). While some respondents framed this as an inadequacy of the current system (e.g. *"lack of appropriately qualified and skilled educational psychologists available")* and others framed it as an opportunity for improvement in the future (e.g. *"more RTLB staff and teacher aides to support the staff and children would be amazing"*), the overarching sentiment was the same – i.e. that workforce capacity constraints exist in this part of the sector and that this contributes to accessibility limitations.

While most solutions-focussed references advocated for employing more specialists, one reference indicated that there was an opportunity to better utilise the skills of existing personnel – *"Ed. psychs – pay more and use all their skills – don't turn them into database administrators."*

Commentary about RTLB services was not limited to the theme of workforce capability (explored above). Five respondents expressed views about other facets of the RTLB service, such as funding.

Three references expressed a generally negative sentiment towards RTLB services. Two references challenged the current system of RTLB services, one of which called for an overhaul of these services, while the other recommended that it should be dismantled entirely. The other reference questioned the effectiveness of the RTLB services (*"does RTLB work?"*) and queried why the provision of this service stopped after Year 10.

Two references advocated for more funding for RTLB services. The remaining reference relating to the RTLB service related to its interface with other agencies, noting that there was confusion about the delineation of roles and responsibilities of the Ministry of Education vs. RTLBs.

Six references commented on specialist services and resourcing within schools. Three references on this topic made recommendations about the types of specialist services they felt should be available within a school, such as counsellors and speech and language therapists. Two of these references suggested that some of the funding currently hypothecated to external specialist providers (namely, RTLBs and Special Education Advisors) should be given to schools, one of which indicated that this money could be used to increase the remuneration of teacher aides and provide intensive support and training. The remaining reference advocated for consistency of service provision (for learning support) both between and within schools and also indicated that this area should be overseen by experts.

Seven references, each speaking to different themes, did not fit within the categories above. These references traversed a range of themes including, but not limited to, advocating for co-ordinator to support families who have children with additional learning support needs and proposing that extra financial assistance should be provided to the many specialist Specific Learning Difficultly teachers who put in many extra hours that are not remunerated.

4.1.2 In-School Staff

There were 192 references coded to 'in-school staff' for this question, making it the leading theme within the 'Learning Support & Disability' section. This section was

heavily dominated by rhetoric on teacher aides, but other in-school roles – such as SENCOs and teachers – also featured in the commentary.

Forty-six references focussed on themes that have already been explored elsewhere within this report, in the sections that they more closely relate to. These references traversed a range of themes including, but not limited to, reallocating funding from external providers to schools, coordination of special needs support, behavioural management, the capability of students when they enter school, RTLB services and the demands on teachers from students with additional needs impacts on the learning of others in the class.

a) Teacher Aides

As mentioned in the introductory paragraph, the majority of the attention in this section was captured by the role of teacher aides. While much of this commentary was focussed on advocacy for increasing the number of teacher aides, respondents also touched on other issues impacting on these workers, such as capability and training, working conditions (particularly remuneration) and funding. In many cases, respondents commented on two or more of these sub-topics within the same reference.

Over a quarter of references (54) coded to the theme of 'in-school staff' spoke to the theme of increasing the quantity of teacher aides and other support staff. Collectively, the overarching sentiment from these respondents was that existing provision of teacher aides and support staff in schools is *"not enough"* and that there needs to be more of them (e.g. *"more teacher aides."*). Across these references, respondents acknowledged the value of teacher aides to both students and teachers alike (e.g. *"A teaching assistant in every classroom would make a huge difference in the life of a teacher and the lives of students..."*).

Nineteen references explored the theme of the skills, capability and qualifications of teacher aides. These references were divided into those that were 'entitlement focussed' (in the sense that they communicated views on what teacher aides should be offered) and those that were 'expectations focussed' (in the sense that they highlighted what skills/capability that they should come with).

The 'entitlement focussed' references expressed the sentiment that teacher aides should be provided with training, but did not provide specific detail on the content, structure or delivery of this training.

The 'expectations focussed' references tended to be more detailed and articulated what characteristics (in respect to training/qualifications) they expected teacher aides/support staff to have (rather than what they should be given). Seven respondents who took an 'expectations focussed' perspective presented the view that teacher aides should be trained/qualified (e.g. *"scrap unqualified classroom assistant who are the least qualified people with the most complex and needy kids"*), while the other two respectively covered separate issues. One of these respondents spoke to the theme of teacher aide capability in a rather broad manner (simply citing that it would take the pressure off teachers if teacher aides were capable of *"dealing with children with all issues"*), while the other respondent offered a more specific

recommendation, suggesting that teacher aides (and, indeed, teachers too) in mainstream environment should have work experience within a special needs school.

The remaining reference on this theme related to the capability of teacher aides in the context of supporting students with dyslexia. While the reference pointed to the funding system for teacher aides as the issue, the sentiment of what was being expressed was more closely related to capability concerns – *"teacher aide funding does not support dyslexic learners when the person supporting them doesn't understand their challenges and how to explicitly and systematically cater to their needs through a differentiated programme."*

Sixteen references related to the working conditions of teacher aides. While most of these references advocated for higher remuneration – highlighting the salience of these issue – few focussed exclusively on wage issues alone (including the two mentioned in the paragraph above which advocated for training opportunities). Several references spoke to non-monetary aspects of the working conditions of teacher aides, expressing the general sentiment that there was a lack of recognition, respect and appreciation for the work that they do (e.g. *"teacher aides feeling totally undervalued in the workplace"*).

Fifteen references advocated for more funding for teacher aides. Most references provided an indication about how this funding should be spent (either on increasing the number of teacher aides/support staff, or on increasing remuneration), so the sentiment of these references have been captured in the relevant themes above. Just one reference mentioned providing funding for training teacher aides. In five cases the respondent did not articulate a clear preference for how additional funding would be allocated (e.g. quantity, higher remuneration or professional development opportunities), nor was there sufficient context within the reference to confidently make an inference about this matter (e.g. *"teacher aide funding needs to be increased significantly as this is a vastly underfunded area"*).

While most references typically focussed on requests for more resources without explicit consideration of where it might come from, there were three references that did, indeed, express a view on funding sources. Two of these references related to the funding flow between the centre and the school, both of which advocated for central funding for teacher aides. The other reference commented on budgeting and financing decisions, recommending that teacher aide funding should be targeted *"and not left for the school to use in other areas."*

b) Other in-school staff

SENCOs

Eighteen references focussed on SENCOs. Broadly speaking, most references expressed a general sentiment towards advocating for a greater role and/or more support for SENCOs in schools. Collectively, these respondents indicated that each school should have access to a SENCO and stressed that a full-time, dedicated resource is required to adequately perform this function. Note, however, that support for SENCOs was not unanimous across all respondents, such as the one respondent that advocated for a *"return to observers of student behaviour"* instead of relying on SENCOs *"who can be subjective."*

Two respondents expressed views on the attributes that a SENCO should possess – one of which emphasised credentials (and recommended that it should be mandatory for SENCOs to have post-graduate qualifications in special education), while the other emphasised capability (*"being a SENCO should mean he/she knows the children's need"*). Just one respondent commented on the accountability of SENCOs in respect to their job performance, stating *"If a SENCO does their job well or badly, there are no consequences."*

Teachers

Fourteen references focussed on the role of teachers in schooling experience of students with additional learning support needs. Collectively, these references expressed the sentiment that there are opportunities to provide better support for teachers to assist them to manage the demands of teaching these students (e.g. *"There is no way that one teacher can meet the ever-growing needs of today especially with 30 children."*). The recommendations offered around this theme were primarily focussed around having more adults in the classroom (most of which related to more teacher aides, but one reference recommendation 'teaching teams' which involved multiple teachers in a class) and supporting greater education and training (for teachers) (including providing release time, which plays a vital role in enabling teachers to access professional learning opportunities).

c) Other

Some references were predominately focussed on a certain sub-groups of students, including those with dyslexia (four references) and those learning English as a second language (two references).

The two respondents that commented on the in-school support for ESOL students offered different ideas for how these students could be better supported. One made a high-level recommendation that there should be more support staff to assist these students, while the other suggested they should be provided with language classes taught by a specialist teacher.

Four references commented on the role of in-school staff in supporting students with dyslexia (including one pertaining to teacher aide capability integrated into the discussion above). Three of these references expressed the sentiment that dyslexic students were not well served in the current system, citing issues including lack of resourcing to support these learners and (as explored above) capability limitations of the in-school support staff. The other reference did not imply that dyslexic students were underserved per se, but expressed the view that there was an opportunity for SENCOs to play a greater role in supporting dyslexic students.

Four references broadly related to the general theme of how in-school staff can better support the students at their school, but did were discrete from each other and did not fit within any particular sub-theme. The references provided an eclectic mix of proposals, such as inclusion training for staff (including principals) and BOT members and providing a better ratio of teachers to students in new entrant classes.

Three references were of an anecdotal nature, providing a high-level description of their personal experience with particular schools that have reportedly not been appropriately accommodating of students with particular needs.

The remaining five references were high-level comments encouraged more or better in-school support for students with additional learning support and/or behavioural needs, but lacked substantive detail (e.g. *"more in-class support for high needs students and those with behaviour issues"*).

4.2 Services

There were 128 references coded to 'services' within the broader theme of 'Learning Support and Disability.'

Forty-five references reiterated messages that are covered elsewhere within this report, relating to themes such as the indirect/consultative approach of specialists, managing behavioural issues, funding, access to specialist services, inadequate (or delayed) access to assessment of learning conditions and calls to have 'needs based' provision of support services. Anecdotal accounts for parents/caregivers for students with disabilities and/or additional learning support needs also featured.

a) Existing service provision

Twenty references provided high-level commentary about inadequacies within the current system in general. Collectively, they expressed the sentiment that the level of support for those with additional learning support needs (including severe behavioural issues) was insufficient (e.g. *"there is not enough help and support for students with learning difficulties or special needs"*).

Seventeen references were primarily focussed on the support given to particular types of learners (i.e. those with certain conditions or abilities).

Twelve references indicated that students with particular conditions were not adequately supported at present. Many of these references referred to dyslexia, which has been a recurring theme across various sections of this report (one of which also acknowledged autistic students). Other conditions were, however, acknowledged in some references. For example, two respondents referred to students with dyscalculia which, collectively, highlighted the difficulties in accessing special conditions/accommodation (even when a diagnostic report is provided to the school as evidence). One reference on this sub-theme made specific reference to autism spectrum disorder and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, highlighting the disparities between the publicly available treatment for these conditions compared to physical health conditions – *"Why do you care about people with high blood pressure or diabetes if you don't care about ASD and ADHD? Why is there an inequity?"*

Two references indicated that gifted and talented students are also underserved in the current system and there is a lack of support for these learners.

Two references noted that there was a lack of support for students *"whose extra needs are not considered significant,"* which reiterates the aforementioned point about the absence of support for students who face learning impairments that are not deemed to be severe enough to meet the criteria for additional support, but yet still affect the student's ability to engage nonetheless.

One reference criticised the Ministry's local office, stating that they *"have not been transformed to meet the demands of today"* and presented the view that they were not able to adequately provide for the needs of more complex students and their families.

b) Opportunities for improvement

Given the sentiment of the narrative above (which made it clear that some learners with additional learning support needs may not be appropriately supported by the existing provisions), it follows that there were also a number of references that advocated for improvements in this area.

Thirteen references were of a relatively high-level, in the sense that they advocated for more support for students with additional learning needs, but lacked specific detail on the nature of the changes which may be welcomed (e.g. *"give more support to children with learning, development and behavioural issues"*). In some cases, these references would refer to specific groups of learners who could be better supported, such as deaf students.

Thirty references provided specific ideas or recommendations for how the support of students with additional learning support needs could be better provided for. The dominant themes across these recommendations included specialist schools and units (ten references) and improving access to support services (six references).

Ten references related to the provision of specialist schooling environments for students with additional needs. Three references advocated for the more special schools for students with 'extreme' or 'very high' needs. Six respondents encouraged specialist units within 'regular' schools, to strike the balance between providing students with the additional support they need while still providing an inclusive schooling experience (e.g. *"set up school-based special needs centres…where children can have ongoing individual and group support while still being within a school community"*). One of these respondents indicated that this approach (i.e. specialist units in regular schools) would be better for teachers, regular students and those with disabilities. The remaining reference on this sub-theme advocated for a wider variety of special schooling options for those with conditions such as autism or dyslexia, but indicated that this could either be separate schools or classes within schools (and did not indicate a preference for one over the other).

Six references called for easier and timelier access to learning support services and resources, including information for parents on when to seek help for their child and improving access to special school resources for children in mainstream settings. One reference suggested that schools could be *"the gateway into child development support programs"* to reduce the burden on the parents.

The remaining seven recommendations did not fit within the categories above, such as introducing a mandatory reporting regime requiring schools to report on the provision of learning support services for students at their school, intensive wraparound care, arts/dance movement therapy programmes and improvements to working conditions for support staff who work with these students. One respondent was of the view that there was a need for a cultural change (rather than a structural

one) and expressed the view that there was a disproportionate amount of talking (relative to action) in the current system.

c) Consequences of unmet learning support needs

Finally, two respondents highlighted the key consequences for students who have unmet additional learning support needs – exclusion from full participation in their schooling experience. One respondent highlighted how students with additional needs may be excluded from particular activities (citing sporting activities as an example), while the other commented about how these students may be excluded from certain schools completely.

4.3 Funding

There were 135 references coded to 'funding' for this section, making it the second most dominant theme in this section (after 'in school staff').

Despite the relatively large number of references, however, the overarching narrative across this theme is not particularly complex. Most references advocated for more funding for learning support, particularly in light of the increasing demand/need for these services.

Seventeen references reiterated messages that have already been traversed elsewhere in the report, covering themes such as teacher salaries, waiting lists for specialist services, behavioural management facilities and anecdotal accounts of personal experience. As these references did not provide any further substantive insights, they were excluded from the commentary below.

Forty-five references advocated for more funding and resources for students with additional needs (or stated that existing provisions were inadequate) in a general sense (i.e. they did not identify any particular sub-groups of learners, nor did they express specific ideas on how this funding should be spent). These respondents made comments such as *"increase the resource to Learning Support"* and *"increasing funding for special needs students"*).

Twenty-three respondents commented on the provision of funding and resources for particular groups of learners. Some were specific to learners with particular conditions (such as dyslexia), while others were focussed on access to particular types of support such as ORS funding and RTLB services.

Eleven references focussed on the provision of ORS funding, most of which either noted that the existing provision was inadequate and/or recommended that it should be increased. A few respondents, however, noted other areas of concern in relation to ORS funding, such as the two respondents that expressed the view that the ORS eligibility threshold is set too high. Compared with ORS, RTLB services received considerably less attention, with just two references advocating for an increase in RTLB funding in this node.

Eight references related to the provision of funding for other groups of learners, such as priority learners, ESOL students, students with dyslexia or autism, those who are gifted and those who are well behind the academic norms for their developmental age but who are not eligible for support. One reference was relatively unique in that it

acknowledged funding issues for students in higher decile schools (who are often overlooked in commentary relating to funding gaps), stating *"It seems in these schools there is never any funding for extra support so if their parents (who may not be income rich) can't pay privately for a teacher aide etc. these kids just miss out."*

Eighteen references focussed on funding to support the in-school staff who work with these students.

Fourteen references were related to the funding for teacher aides. Note that these references were focussed on increasing the availability (through more funding) of teacher aides to support the student (for example, so that they have more hours with teacher aide support each week). Collectively, these references expressed the sentiment that the number of teacher aide hours that were allocated to students were not always sufficient and that funding for teacher aides should be increased to improve access.

Four references related to funding for teaching staff, which included recommendations to invest in specialist teachers and programmes (including those to support students with learning difficulties) and making funding available to provide teachers with training/education on how to integrate students with special needs into their teaching and learning practice (*"without it, the teacher struggles, the students all suffer, and it causes significant harm to the special needs student..."*).

Eleven references related to the administration and management of funding for students with additional learning support needs. Four references related to the flow of funding between schools and the government: one recommended that the payroll for support staff should be centralised, while the other two advocated for bulk funding for special education. In contrast, however, the fourth reference on this theme suggested that funding for additional support from schools and support services should be removed and expressed a degree of cynicism and scepticism about the current arrangements – *"the current system isn't working and services are required on the basis of the funding they bring."* On a related note, one reference stressed the need for greater accountability for the funding provided to schools for learning support services and cited concern about the lack of follow up and monitoring to ensure effective use of these resources.

Accessibility of funding/support was also a salient issue for some respondents. Three references related to the administrative process of making a funding application. Two of these references pertained to reducing the compliance burden involved in this task (e.g. *"decrease the meetings and paperwork involved in this task"*), while the other respondent expressed a more emotional sentiment and described the ORS application process as an *"unfair, horrible and devaluing experience for the parent and child to go through."* A different respondent proposed a change in how need is determined/assessed and expressed the view that literacy and numeracy scores should not be used as the basis for determining need.

The remaining two references on this sub-theme focussed on the child the funding was there to support. One was of a relatively general nature ("*Change the funding system and give the same chance to every child independently if they have disabilities"*), while the other reference made a specific proposal that funding should follow the child that has been identified as having learning, behavioural and/or

development needs, so that they have access to this support immediately in the event that they change schools. This respondent identified that this was particularly critical for students from lower socioeconomic communities, as these students are the most likely to be transient.

The remaining references did not fit within the themes above. These references traversed topics such as the effect of social dysfunction on the demand for special education funding (for example, to support students who have been affected by maternal methamphetamine usage – aka 'P-babies').

4.4 Needs Identification

There were 23 references coded to the 'needs identification' node for this question.

Nine references related to topics that have been more substantively covered elsewhere (such as student capability and transition into schooling), and so these have been excluded from the commentary below.

Six references focussed on assessment and screening for learning disorders. Three references suggested that accessibility to testing was inadequate, two of which noted that there were families resorting to paying for this to be done privately. The other reference on this theme advocated for *"more help to diagnose issues."* Two references recommended universal screening in some form, one suggested that all students should be screen for learning disability at age seven and the other suggested that all children need to be screened for phonological awareness when they start school. One reference made a high-level reference to screening that could identify and support gifted children.

Seven references focussed on the theme of early identification and intervention. Three of these references stressed the importance of early identification. Two were of a high level nature (e.g. *"early intervention is key"*), while the other one provided an explanation as to why it was important, stating that nurturing a child's holistic wellbeing in the early years prevents escalation of problems later on and noted that leaving these issues unaddressed can have a detrimental psychological impact on the child. The other three references pertaining to early identification related to the barriers that prevent this currently. Two cited long waiting lists/delayed support as an issue in the current system, one of which criticised the current practice of having to prove the learner has an issue before support is provided – *"The focus of proving a child's deficit before any funding or assistance is available to them is counter intuitive to providing the right education for that child."* The other respondent noted that there were students that 'slip through the cracks,' and mentioned that their own child was in the school system for a decade before their disability was picked up (via the health system, not the school). One respondent expressed a view on who should bear the responsibility for identifying the need for learning assistance and providing for it, stating that the 'burden' should be on the education system, not the families.

The remaining reference related to how resources should be allocated to students with additional learning support needs and recommended that *"access to supports and resources should be needs based rather than specification of criteria."*

5. Community Partnerships and Whanaungatanga

A total of 126 references were coded to community partnerships and whanaungatanga' for this question. 'Whanau and family' and 'community' were the dominant themes for this node, with 91 and 30 references respectively.

Just one reference on this theme was coded to the parent node of 'community partnerships and whanaungatanga.' This reference was well-suited to the overarching theme of this node, stating *"Make partnership and potential a reality rather than a concept."*

5.1 Whanau and family

'Whanau and family' was the dominant theme in this section, with 91 references coded to it for this question.

Twelve references focussed on issues that have been examined more substantively in our sections of the report and so are excluded from the commentary below. Specifically, these references traversed themes such as iwi engagement (covered in 5.4) and community engagement.

Ten references expressed a positive sentiment towards encouraging greater engagement and involvement from the students' family/whanau, but did not provide any specific recommendations on how to support this or what barriers are preventing good practice at present. For example, *"encourage more whanau involvement"* and *"parents need to have more of a say."*

Most references, however, tended to be more specific and identified particular issues and challenges in relation to engagement with family and whanau. Five references identified that not all schools have strong parental support and involvement (e.g. *"parental engagement is lacking"*). The remaining references on this theme focussed on challenges in relation to the interpersonal dynamics between schools and parents, including negative parental attitudes, a lack of respect for parents, a perception that the voice of the most privileged parents is dominant, parental harassment of school staff and poor communication between parents and schools. Based on the references concerning communication breakdowns, there appears to be a trend towards parents approaching the media or expressing their frustrations via digital platforms instead of working through the issue directly with the school.

There was also a comment from one respondent which indicated that parents were not included in any policy amendments. The respondent does not indicate whether this is in relation to national policy or school level policy, but if the latter applies, then this theme (i.e. the sense that parental/community voice is not necessarily reflected in school decision-making processes) is explored further in the Community section below (5.2). Another respondent also spoke to this theme and suggested that there needs to be *"some kind of democracy when it comes to schools making decisions that impact children."*

One reference expressed the view that the Tomorrow's Schools reforms had fallen short of delivering on what was intended in respect of giving families a voice and several references provided recommendations on how to improve on current practice. Given there were multiple references citing issues with the communication

between schools and parents, it was unsurprising that there were also a number of recommendations to improve practice in this area. There were several references that provided suggestions around this theme, such as encouraging schools to listen to parents and work in partnership with them (five references), changing the practice or increasing the frequency of parent-teacher interviews and other avenues for person-to-person engagement (three references), and better conflict management practices when issues arise (two references).

Respondents also made several recommendations that were not directly related to the theme of communication, including (but not limited to) providing more information (including seminars) and/or online support for parents (six references), offering more support to the parents of pre-schoolers (one reference) and those with 'challenged children' (one reference) and encouraging links between school and home (e.g. via homework) to *"involve parents more in the learning journey"* (two references)

While most recommendations focussed on providing greater support to parents to help them engage with their child's school and learning journey, two references emphasised parental responsibility. These respondents recommended greater parental accountability for their children, particularly in relation to attendance and getting through curriculum requirements.

Two references emphasised the role of the Ministry of Education in supporting schools to engage better with families (e.g. *"have the MOE work on mechanisms to enable more parents to engage in the direction of teaching and learning decisions"*).

The remaining recommendations did not fit within the clustered themes above and traversed ideas such as demonstrating *"more understanding of parents' daily struggles."*

5.2 Community

There were 30 references coded to 'community' for this question.

Six references were excluded from the commentary below as they were more closely related to themes covered elsewhere in the report.

Engagement with the community and being responsive to the voice of the people in the community as the dominant theme of this section. One reference specifically referred to Tomorrow's Schools – *"Tomorrow's Schools were never allowed to become what they were originally intended with greater local community involvement and them tailoring education to the needs and aspirations of each local situation."*

Nine references expressed a positive sentiment in relation to community engagement and were encouraging of community consultation and involvement (e.g. *"try to engage community more in the school"* and *"contributing as a community is also important."*). A further six references shared specific ideas on ways to support greater community involvement/engagement, such as having more communication via social media, inviting the elderly to read to students and having a community board which is representative of the student body.

Two references, however, expressed a degree of cynicism about the extent to which the parent/community voice was actually heard, suggesting that it may have limited

influence on school decision-making in practice. One respondent suggested that community/parental consultation from BOTs was an act of lip service and that nothing of significance would be changed in response to the views expressed by parents, indicating that it was just *"an opportunity for the school and the BOT to appear that they had consulted."* The other respondent stated the extent to which the community voice was acted on depended on the Board and principals.

Three references highlighted other issues and barriers in relation to community engagement. Two references identified challenges in getting community members involved with the school. One stressed that there were not enough parents and community members supporting schools, while the other stating that schools were not getting a cross-section of a school community involved. The third respondent perceived that schools that were struggling to attract community support were the exception to the rule and stated that this was a problem for the Ministry of Education to address.

The remaining three references were of a non-specific nature (e.g. *"community"*).

5.3 Employers and business

Just one reference was coded under the 'employers and business' node. This respondent stated *"trying/ experimenting/ thinking BIG/ attracting sponsorship from appropriate businesses?"*

5.4 Iwi

The 'iwi' node was also a relatively smaller sub-theme, with just three references coded under it for this question. While all three references related to governance in some way, they each focussed on a different facet of it. One respondent observed that iwi representation on school Boards is not the norm and implied that current practice was inconsistent with Treaty obligations. On a similar vein, a different respondent stressed that *"iwi needs to have an equal voice in managing and governing schools."* The third reference focussed on what could be done better and encouraged the use of new approaches for engaging with parents and iwi that are not based on governance and that recognise the individual circumstances of different schools – *"don't necessarily come up with one size fits all."*

6. Early Childhood Education

There were 27 references coded under the 'Early Childhood Education' (ECE) node for this question.

Sixteen references reiterated messages that are more substantively explored in other parts of the report. Specifically, these comments spoke to the themes of extending play-based pedagogy (typically used in ECE settings) to the early years of schooling (for five and six year old learners), waiting times for assessing ECE students with additional learning needs, greater support for preschool parents and the transitional arrangements between ECE and primary school.

Six references spoke to the theme of funding. Four of these references advocated for more funding for ECE and promoted the idea of investing early in a child's life (e.g. *"more money spent in the first 1000 days of child's life"*). Two references (noting that one spoke to both points) related to remuneration of the ECE workforce, both of

which related to the issue of equal pay across ECE teachers. One focussed on remuneration equality between ECE teachers and kindergarten teachers, while the other focussed on equality between union members and those who were not in a union – *"You shouldn't have to pay extra to be in the union so you can have a pay rise or higher salary. All teachers should be on the same scale according to qualification and year of service."* The remaining funding-related reference suggested that free quality preschool education should begin at four year old (which, by virtue of the fact the respondent is demanding for this to be provided free, is funding related).

Three references related to the business model of ECE. One relatively high-level, simply noting *"privatisation by big companies in the ECE sector."* By virtue of the fact this reference was a response to the question prompting respondents to comment on what they would change, it can be inferred that that the respondent wants to see different market dynamics in the ECE sector, but does not specify the nature of the change they wish to see. It is not made explicit whether the respondent has an issue with privatisation per se, or simply the size of the organisations (i.e. it is conceivable that the respondent has a preference for smaller providers – such as independently contracted nannies – but not larger dominant companies that operate in the ECE space). The other two respondents indicated a clear preference for ECE services to be made public, one of which also suggested that they should be joined up in networks with schools.

The remaining two references highlighted perceived problems in the ECE sector: One reference directed criticism of the low level of Te Reo instruction in ECE contexts and the other spoke to the theme of poor quality ECE providers more generally, stating that *"there are too many poor quality, minimal standards ECE centres."*

7. Pathways to work or tertiary

There were 19 references coded to 'pathways to work or tertiary' for this question.

Thirteen references spoke to themes that are covered elsewhere in the report, such as parental and community engagement, the NCEA system and advocacy for more 'life skills' to be taught in schools.

Three references spoke to the theme of the extent to which students are encouraged towards university (or provided opportunities to entertain the trades' route as a viable vocational pathway instead). Two references indicated that there was an overemphasis on encouraging students to attend university and called for more opportunities for trades training. The other reference on this theme presented the opposite perspective and observed that *"students are often not encouraged to complete Year 13 despite the fact that most of the jobs from the next decade onwards will require a university education."*

The remaining three references each spoke to different themes. Two were relatively abstract expressions pertaining to particular attributes they would want to see in the system (e.g. *"more direct pathways"* and *"a commitment from each sector of education to take collective responsibility to prepare students for their next steps"*), while the other reference made a specific recommendation for a structural change in the system. This respondent advocated for new year-level structures in schools and

suggested a three-tiered system for schools (with schools covering Year 1-6, Year 7-10 and Year 11-13), with the view that the senior secondary school would provide a choice between vocational pathways and higher learning.

8. Teaching

The theme of 'teaching' appeared to be a particularly salient issue for many respondents in terms of this question, with a total of 873 references on this theme. The dominant themes within this theme were pedagogy (164 references), workload (155 references) and pay (108 references).

Fifty-eight references were coded to the 'teaching' parent node (i.e. they were not classified further into the child nodes below). All of these references were focussed on issues that are more substantively covered elsewhere in the report. These references traversed topics such as teacher workforce capacity constraints (including retention issues), the provision of relieving teachers, specialist teachers, funding and engaging with the voice/input of teachers.

8.1 Capability

There were 99 references on the theme of teacher capability. The dominant themes that emerged on this topic included teacher quality and performance (11 references), skills and attributes (17 references) and access to specialist teachers (9 references).

Twenty-five references reiterated points that are covered elsewhere in the report, so they have been excluded from the commentary below to avoid repetition. These references spoke to the themes of recognising individual learning styles, going "back to basics," curriculum and pedagogy, teacher remuneration and how teachers respond to student wellbeing concerns.

a) Teacher Quality and Performance

Eleven references focussed on teacher quality and performance, traversing the themes of poor performance (four references), quality and knowledge of teaching graduates (two references) and performance monitoring (four references).

Poorly performing teachers was a salient issue for several respondents. Two references pertaining to poorly performing teachers were of an observational nature (i.e. they acknowledged that there were underperforming teachers in the system, but did not articulate a view on how this should be addressed) – e.g. *"there are some really bad teachers out there."* Two other references did, however, articulate views on how poorly performing teachers should be dealt with, which collectively expressed the sentiment that these teachers would be required to improve their performance or be removed/'managed out' of the system (and not be allowed to move to another school). On a related note, two references cited concerns about the quality of new teacher graduates, one of which emphasised a specific knowledge gap in relation to understanding additional learning needs – *"Teachers are graduating from college and they know absolutely nothing about children with additional needs."*

Four references were focussed on monitoring teachers' performance. Two of these references expressed a supportive/favourable sentiment towards monitoring and testing the performance of teachers (e.g. *"quality of teachers [should] be monitored"* and *"testing of teacher's ability to ensure they are meeting standards…"*). The other

two references advocated for greater trust of teachers and giving them the freedom to do their job. One of these respondents accepted that there was a role for monitoring in the education system, but criticised the inherent lack of trust in the current system - *"The Ministry is giving a clear message of lack-of-trust in our teachers, both to them and to everyone else. This is not improving teacher's performance as teachers – it just makes them better at reporting to the Ministry."*

The remaining reference related to a less formal metric of gauging how well teachers are engaging with their students (and their families) – by asking them. This respondent stated *"ask the children and parents who are the best and they will tell you….they know when they are feeling valued, secure and learning."*

b) Skills and attributes

Seventeen references spoke to the overarching theme of the skills and attributes of teachers.

Eight references related to the demeanour, disposition and personality attributes of teachers. Four references identified traits and behaviours that were not consistent with the conduct they expect from teachers, such as an 'old-school' lens/authoritarian approach (two references), shouting at students (one reference) and failing to treat children with respect (one reference). In contrast, the other four references highlighted the traits they deemed to be desirable for teachers to have, such as creative (two references), passionate (two references), willing to admit mistakes, inspirational, friendly and happy (one reference).

Nine references commented on the overarching theme of the skillset of teachers. Five references identified what they perceive to be areas of weakness for teachers, such as spelling and grammar (two references), mathematics, Māori culture and language and knowledge of student needs. There were also three additional references which advocated for the development of certain skills, but were not framed in a way that implies that they are currently an area of weakness. Specifically, these references encouraged greater knowledge of responsibility and mediation skills, children's behaviour and cultural competencies. The remaining skills-related reference was non-specific, simply stating *"teacher's skills."*

c) Specialist teachers and subject-specific expertise

Nine references related to specialist teachers and/or access to subject-specific expertise within schools. Three references cited specific subject areas were specialist expertise would be welcomed, such as art, physical education, science and maths. Two references were problems-focussed, noting the lack of access to expert teachers and observing that lack of coherence and professionalism across subject-specialist teachers, with one reference providing an idea for how access could be improved. This respondent suggested that having appointments made from a central system could help schools secure better access to specifically skilled teachers. One was of a general nature, simply stating *"specialist teachers in schools."* The remaining reference was an outlier in the sense that (in contrast to the others) it placed a lesser emphasis on the person/staff member (e.g. the concept of a 'specialist teacher' or 'expert' as a distinct entity) and was more focussed on how teachers utilise this expertise with their students – *"Teachers are experts in the*

subjects they are interested in, and school is where they facilitate this knowledge transfer. They follow interests of students within their area of expertise."

d) Teacher Training and Professional Development

Seven references focussed on the theme of teacher training and professional development. Four references made recommendations about particular subject areas teachers should undertake training, with a strong emphasis on technology (three references). The other subject-specific recommendation promoted mandatory inclusion and equity training.

The remaining three training-related references touched on different ideas. One respondent made a high-level comment, simply stating *"teachers need to be properly trained,"* without any supporting commentary on what this might entail. The other respondent highlighted the role of training in upskilling primary school teachers which *"do not, at present, have sufficient knowledge/skills,"* advocating for intensive PLD as a remedy to this situation. The remaining reference on this theme also expressed an encouraging sentiment towards opportunities for teacher training opportunities – *"Create a taskforce for removing obstacles and making reforms for high academic performance and teacher capacity building by involving international trainers with a series of trainings and seminars."*

e) Supply of teachers

Eight references focussed on the supply of teachers (including relieving teachers, which were specifically acknowledged in three references). Collectively, these references highlighted the well-known issue of teacher supply constraints.

Three references were problems-focussed, highlighting the difficulties that schools face when trying to fill vacancies for teachers or to get a reliever (e.g. *"Relieving teachers seem to be in short supply. We seem to rely on goodwill and prayers…"* and *"lack of teachers available for vacancies and relief teachers."*). One of these references indicated that recruitment issues may be more acute in schools with particular challenges – *"We find it very hard to find teachers and relievers as teachers don't want to work in tough schools, or failing schools with very hard children with high needs. There is a teacher shortage. This is causing burn out."*

The other five references all advocated for more teachers. None of these references were of a particularly detailed or sophisticated nature, however, and did not contribute any insights beyond *"more teachers"* (which appeared in all five references). Three references were limited to these two words and the other two had some surrounding commentary but it was not relevant to the theme of teacher supply.

f) Other

This section covers the references coded to this node that did not fit within the core themes above.

Three references made high-level comments which promoted greater support for teachers, but did not make specific recommendations on how this could be achieved in practice (i.e. what needs to happen – or stop happening – for teachers to feel better supported in their role?). These respondents made statements such as

"provide more support for teachers in class" and *"making sure teachers had plenty of support."*

Three references related to the pressure that teacher's experience. Two of these references identified particular sources of pressure. One respondent highlighted the pressure that comes from parents – *"Parent pressure [is] unrealistic. Teachers are expected to be perfect for every child, every day"* – while the other respondent highlighted the pressures that come from within the school environment and indicated that the high number of beginning and overseas training teachers was putting pressure on experienced staff. The other reference on this theme highlighted the consequences that can result from the pressures that teachers face – *"teachers not being able to cope."*

The remaining ten references did not fit within the clustered themes above. These references traversed a variety of topics such as listening to the teachers' voice (for example, via surveys), the ability of teachers to collaborate constructively with each other in the context of teaching in a Modern Learning Environment, teacher appointments and the retention of quality teachers in the classroom.

8.2 Pedagogy

There were 164 references coded to 'pedagogy,' making it the largest theme within the Teaching node.

Fifty-seven of these references were focussed on themes that have been substantively addressed in other areas of the report, including play-based learning, focussing on 'the basics,' trauma-informed teaching, weaknesses in the prevailing teaching style for reading/literacy skills and mathematics, advocacy for greater phonological awareness, observation of assessment driven teaching practices (i.e. 'teaching to the test') and responsiveness to individual students' differing learning styles, capabilities and interests.

Homework was a salient issue in this node, featuring in a dozen references. Respondents presented divergent views on this issue and the references were evenly split (six each) between those who advocated for homework and those who expressed a less favourable sentiment towards it.

Of the six references that were broadly supportive of homework, some framed it in a problems-focussed manner (e.g. *"lack of homework"*) and others took more of a solutions-focussed approach (e.g. *"homework for all"*). The overarching sentiment of these references, however, is that these respondents saw a role for homework as an important part of the schooling experience.

The other six homework-related references expressed the opposite view. Collectively, these references expressed a more negative sentiment towards homework and wished to reduce its role in the students' learning experience (e.g. *"reduce homework across the board"*). Many respondents articulated their reasoning for holding this view, which were concentrated on concerns about student workload (and allowing time for extra-curricular activities), wellbeing concerns (e.g. *"homework stresses the child, the parents and the teachers"*), and the impact of homework on family life (e.g. *"Homework. It's too much of a battle for us working parents. We have*

very little time to spend with our kids each day and we have to spend it trumping at the kids to do their homework.").

Seven references focussed on the physical teaching and learning environment. The majority (6) advocated for outdoor learning. One reference advocated for both indoor and outdoor learning opportunities, while the other five references on this topic stressed the importance of outdoor learning (e.g. *"more outdoor free play"* and *"children spending time outside being children"*). The remaining reference pertaining to the physical learning environment encouraged a reversion back to single celled classrooms and more traditional styles of teaching.

Seven references emphasised student achievement and engagement (with reference to the role of pedagogy). These references were relatively varied in nature, traversing topics such as the skills and attributes the school system should embed in students (e.g. *"we want young people to have the skills for learning and also to develop a love of learning"*), the role of students in their own learning (e.g. *"pupils need to actively participate in their learning"*) and emphasising academic achievement via pedagogical approaches (e.g. *"strengthen the importance of student achievement – consult with pedagogy specialists to revise the curriculum to develop good content that supports understanding concepts rather than rote-learning."*)

Five references focussed on teacher capability and training (in relation to pedagogy). Two references spoke to the theme of up-to-date practice; both of which were of observational (rather than solutions-focussed) nature (e.g. *"out of date teaching philosophy"* and *"teacher training not reflecting current pedagogy"*). Two references recommended improvements to teacher training and development, one of which encouraged teacher training on different learning styles and the other advocated for professional development opportunities to support teachers understand the *"child centred curriculum."* The remaining reference on this theme focussed on the interface between pedagogy and student discipline - *"change pedagogy so compliance and obedience are not end goals to make it easier for teachers to teach."*

Five references encouraged more group learning and collaborative teaching practices, actively supporting opportunities for students to work together in a less individualistic manner. For example, *"create work groups based on common learning strategies rather than level of achievement"* and *"learning in multi-ability collaborative teams."*

Five references advocated for more culturally responsive pedagogy, collectively encouraging teaching practices that were more tailored to the cultural backgrounds of their students. For example, *"all schools developing culturally responsive pedagogy"* and *"focus on developing teaching strategies, methods and dispositions that engage Maori and Pasifika students."*

Four references focussed on problems/challenges in respect of pedagogical practice which were general (i.e. they did not fit within the categories above) and were of an observational nature (i.e. they articulated an issue, but did not propose a solution to respond to it). Specifically, these references identified the lack of follow-up on learning, lack of variety in the classroom, lack of academic rigour (*"too much fun, not enough learning, unclear direction of learning, lack of pressure on students, lack of work particularly academic work"*) and lack of flexibility due to certain dynamics (*"the*

politics of how some subjects must be taught means teachers have little flexibility in how a subject is taught").

The remaining references made recommendations on the theme of pedagogy that did not fit within the categories above, such as encouraging more traditional teaching approaches (e.g. *"go back to what is perhaps now considered as more traditional learning"*) (three references), promoting inquiry/project based learning (three references), teaching handwriting and promoting the use of pen and paper (instead of technology) (three references), using a more 'hands on' style of teaching (one reference), providing a more diverse learning experience (one reference), supporting more flexibility in teaching practice (one reference) and disseminating information to promote greater understanding of progressive teaching practices (one reference).

There were also two references of a high-level, relatively non-specific nature, such as *"creation over consumption."*

8.3 Professional Learning and Development

There were 95 references coded to 'Professional Learning and Development' (for teachers) for this question. Improving accessibility to professional learning and development was a salient theme for many respondents.

Most references re-iterated messages that have been covered elsewhere in this report, so they have been excluded from the commentary below. The dominant themes within this category included teachers' capability to identify and support students with additional learning support needs (including gifted pupils and those with high behavioural needs) and topic-specific professional development (such as inclusion, diversity, technology and phonological awareness).

a) Training and education opportunities

Ten references advocated for more training and education for teachers in a general manner (i.e. they expressed the general sentiment in support of more or better opportunities in this area, but did not provide specific detail on how this may be achieved) – for example, *"more training"* and *"better school PD."*

Eight references advocated for greater financial support to encourage engagement with professional development opportunities. Five references focussed on the cost to the school and suggested that professional learning and development should be provided free. Two other references spoke to a similar theme (i.e. reducing the burden on schools via more support from the centre) but did not explicitly state it would be free. One advocated for more resourcing, and the other commented on funding allocation – *"remove the contestable business model for providers and centralise allocation in a system that includes providers."* The remaining reference framed this as a matter of teacher entitlement and advocated for *"paid professional development at least twice a year."*

Despite the volume of references highlighting concerns about the high workload of teachers (explored in more detail below in 8.5), just two references indicated that teachers need more time to engage in professional development.

Four references made specific recommendations on particular areas/topics for professional development opportunities (which have not already been covered in more detail elsewhere, as noted above), such as how to work collaboratively in innovative learning environments, understanding the impact that adoption has on learning, making sound judgements and developing leadership skills (including feedback and coaching sessions).

The remaining eight references relating to this sub-theme traversed a broad range of ideas:

- One reference was of a non-specific nature stating that *"we need to ensure teachers have access to professional development that supports their needs,"* but without any commentary on the nature of those needs or how best to improve access.

- Two references focussed on the demand-side drivers for professional development. One presented the view that the professional development should be driven by more than the agenda within the school, while the other focussed on the appetite/demand for opportunities from the teachers themselves, observing that *"not enough in-service teachers want to improve their practice."*

- Two references spoke to the theme of ensuring that teacher training and professional development is modern, future-focussed and up-to-date (e.g. *"The way we educate our teachers needs to change to match the environment we're in. I'm not convinced that we're up to date or producing high quality teachers for here and now."*).

- Two references made recommendations to support the transfer of knowledge and good practice between teachers via access to academic journals and having classroom practitioners to advise teachers.

- The remaining reference suggested that professional development opportunities may be used as a 'draw card' to support teacher recruitment in lower-decile schools.

b) Appraisal and registration

Four references focussed on the appraisal system for teachers.

One reference was specifically focussed on the appraisal and development of mentor teachers. This respondent supported greater incentives for effective mentor teachers and recommended an accountability/appraisal system *"to maintain the integrity of mentors and mentoring programmes."*

The remaining three references spoke to the theme of appraisal more generally (i.e. they did not appear to be specific to a particular type of teacher). One was framed in a negative light (*"The current appraisal system just adds more workload, more stress. Drop it!"*), while the other two references were focussed on what the system could/should be like instead, advocating for *"compulsory and clear principal and teaching appraisal processes"* and *"appraisal expectations that are manageable and/or given adequate release time to do the process justice."*

A single reference commented on teacher registration, stating *"Do not take full registration away from teachers who have earned the right to be fully registered."*

8.4 Initial Teacher Education

There were 63 references coded to 'Initial Teacher Education' for this question.

Ten references provided high-level support for more and/or better teacher training, but were of a non-specific nature (for example, *"more teacher training"* and *"improve initial teacher education"*).

Eleven references made recommendations about specific topics that respondents felt should be covered during teacher training, such as information technology (one reference), cultural competency (one reference), phonological awareness (one reference) and supporting students with additional learning support needs, including understanding different learning styles (four references). All of these subject-specific areas are recurring themes throughout the report, which speaks to the relative importance/value that respondents place on teacher capability in these areas. The key point of difference between these comments and similar comments detailed elsewhere in the report is that they go beyond 'simply' demanding/encouraging teachers to possess certain skills by also setting expectations as to where these skills should be taught (i.e. during teacher training).

Eight references focussed on the capability of student teachers and new graduates. The overarching sentiment of these references was that initial teacher education (ITE) was not adequately preparing graduates for the realities of the teaching profession. One respondent expressed the view that graduates are *"not trained effectively or prepare[d] for the workload,"* while two other references identified reasons why these graduates struggle in the classroom environment (both of which related to weaknesses in the provision of ITE). One of these references suggested that ITE was too theoretical and the other indicated that if teachers have not received adequate training on dealing with a range of different abilities then *"when it comes to the classroom, they will struggle no matter how much they get paid."*

Given these issues, it was unsurprising that four references made recommendations to help alleviate these capability concerns. Two of these references advocated for improvement in the provision of ITE, advocating for a *"more robust system of training teachers"* so that *"teachers are equipped with the necessary skills."* The other two references suggested that raising the barriers to entry was the way to lift the quality of teachers entering the profession. One recommended that aspiring teachers should be interviewed before proceeding into teacher training, while the other advocated for stricter regulations to qualify as a teacher.

Given the aforementioned concerns about the capability of graduate teachers, it is unsurprising that a number (seven) of references commented on the ITE providers who trained them. Three references were exclusively focussed on criticisms of how ITE is currently provided, one of which also acknowledges the major consequence that has emerged from inadequate ITE provision, stating *"training providers need to be overhauled – the quality of teachers emerging now is shocking."* The other four references made recommendations on how ITE could be improved, three of which suggested a shift back to teacher training colleges (including two that stated a

preference for prospective teachers to be taught by experienced teachers, rather than academics). The other reference suggested that ITE providers should be made aware of the realities of the classroom and also advocated for more regulation to ensure consistency in ITE provision.

Six references suggested that there was an opportunity to integrate more practical experience into the teacher training process. The overarching sentiment of these references was that more practical, in-school experience offered benefits to both the student (as they gain more practical experience) and the school (on the basis that it would assist with staffing shortages and would support the main teacher in the classroom).

Nine references focussed on the incentives to enter teacher training.

Five references included recommendations to help boost the attractiveness of becoming a teacher, such as increasing remuneration (four references) and improving job conditions (one reference), which are covered in more detail in the relevant sections below. What separates these references from the others, however, is that they related to this to ITE (in the sense that students enrolling in ITE are typically doing so because they are aspiring to become teachers and, therefore, the perceived attractiveness of the teaching profession – relative to other options – is key driver of ITE enrolments).

The other four references made recommendations to increase the incentives to enter teacher training that were targeted at training years, rather than just about lifting the attractiveness of the profession in general. One reference was of a general nature, simply stating *"incentivise training to be a teacher"* without articulating how that would be achieved. The other three references were more specific; one recommended scholarships to study in areas of teacher shortage, while the other two spoke of providing teacher training costs for free.

Five references were of a miscellaneous, high-level nature such as *"teachers need to be properly trained"* and *"fully qualified teachers."*

8.5 Workload

There were 155 references coded to 'Workload' (for teachers) for this question.

Forty-two references reiterated points that are covered in more detail elsewhere in the report. Specifically, these references traversed themes including (but not limited to) the additional demands that teachers face as a result of the increasingly complex needs and diversity of the student body, the teacher appraisal system and the workload pressures (on teachers) created by the NCEA assessment system.

a) Current expectations and workload

General identification of workload/expectation pressures

Twenty-two references stressed the high expectations and large volume of work experienced by teachers. While a few of these referred to inadequate financial compensation relative to these workload pressures, teacher remuneration is addressed separately in the section below (8.6). The overarching sentiment of these

references was that teachers are working long hours, have a large workload and are 'overworked, 'overloaded' and 'overwhelmed' (e.g. *"Teachers [are] grossly overworked and overwhelmed"* and *"Huge workloads. It's unmanageable."*).

Specific areas of workload pressure

Thirty-seven references identified the specific types of work that teachers are undertaking that contributes to the aforementioned expectations and workload issue. Most of these references highlighted the workload pressures resulting from administrative and compliance requirements. The overarching sentiment is that the administrative/compliance-related requirements (or 'the paperwork') are time-consuming and contribute significantly to the workload pressures that teachers face. A number of respondents expressed that teachers perceive the administrative demands as distraction from their core role (of teaching). For example, *""I became a teacher to teach students, not to administrate my own work"* and *"Less administrative paperwork to enable more time and energy for creating interesting learning experiences for the children."*

While the issue of administrative and compliance requirements was the leading topic in this space, some references emphasised other competing demands on teachers' time. The overarching message of these references is that teachers are often expected to take on roles that extend far beyond their core teaching responsibilities, such as organising sports activities and other extra-curricular activities (two references), break-time duty (two references), *"teaching things they should leave to the parents"* (one reference) and *"reading government directives"* (one reference).

b) Relief from workload pressures

Unsurprisingly, given the perception that teachers are facing significant workload pressures, several references spoke to the theme of giving teachers some relief from these demands and lightening the load on them.

Nineteen references advocated for providing teachers with more release time, some of which indicated the reasons why this time was of value to teachers (for example, *"more release for teachers to enable them to plan effective programmes and meet admin requirements"* and *"release time that allows teachers to do tasks to a quality standard rather than just managing."*).

Three references made other recommendations to help alleviate teachers' workload pressures. These respondents offered suggestions such as reducing the amount of time spent on testing and assessment requirements (two references) and having more teachers available to relieve pressures (one reference).

Despite the overwhelming support in favour of reducing the demands on teachers (or at least acknowledging the workload pressures they face), three references made recommendations that would increase teachers' workload. One reference was somewhat ambiguous, suggesting *"increase the number of teaching hours in a school year."* The other two references were more direct, with one proposing fewer teacher only days and the other advocating for a longer compulsory working day for teachers.

The remaining references did not fit within the clustered categories above but were still relevant to the overarching theme of teacher workload. These references traversed a range of themes, such as the perception that teachers are relatively more burdened by workload pressures than others within the school (e.g. *"teachers are the ones that bear the brunt of the workload"*), the adverse wellbeing consequences (such as stress and exhaustion) that can result from the sustained workload pressures that teachers face and the desire for teachers to have the time to teach in small groups.

8.6 Pay

There were 108 references coded to 'Pay' (for teachers) for this question. The majority of comments expressed some variation on the theme that teachers are not paid adequately, with many respondents welcoming higher remuneration for teachers.

Twenty-one references related to themes that are detailed elsewhere in the report and so have been intentionally omitted from the commentary below. These references traversed themes such as increasing remuneration to encourage students to study teaching (addressed in Section 8.4 - Initial Teacher Education) and pay parity for different types of ECE teachers (addressed in Section 6 – Early Childhood Education).

a) Problem definition

Nine references were focussed on articulating the nature of the problem (as opposed to explicitly advocating for change). The overarching sentiment of these references was 'simply' that teacher remuneration is inadequate (for example, *"Terrible pay and conditions for teachers"* and *"Low teacher salary!!!"*).

b) More or 'better' pay

Most references, however, expressed the nature of the change they wished to see in this space. Most (59) coded to this node spoke to theme of more or 'better' pay.

Fifteen references articulated their rationale for increasing teacher remuneration, with an emphasis on recruitment and retention (12 references) and reducing the financial burden on teachers (three references).

The respondents who cited recruitment and retention related rationales were split in terms of the benefit that they chose to emphasise. Some (five references) saw increased remuneration as a means to entice more people to the career (including comments about lifting the 'desirability' or 'profile' of the profession), while others (five references) were focussed more on quality over quantity, and suggested that a higher salary would help to attract a higher calibre of candidates. The remaining two references were focussed on increasing remuneration for a certain sub-group of teachers (namely, teachers in low-decile schools), as opposed to an 'across the board' salary increase. These respondents suggest that a salary differential between low-decile schools and others could be used as an incentive to attract teachers to roles in low-decile schools.

Two of the three references that spoke to the theme of the financial burden on teachers suggested that the money-related stress may be detrimental to their

capacity to fully engage in their teaching role – for example, *"pay teachers more so they can focus on teaching instead of worrying about pay."* The other reference on this theme focussed on the financial contribution that teachers make in the context of supporting their own families and recommended that the salary and conditions of the role should enable teachers to *"support a family and be proud of what we do."*

The remaining 26 references that spoke to theme of more or 'better' remuneration were of a relatively simple nature. Generally, they 'simply' advocated for increased remuneration for teachers. For example, *"teachers need to be paid more"* and *"better pay for teachers."* One comment, however, had some degree of ambiguity as it referred to *"more funding for teachers."* While increased funding could, indeed, be used to lift teachers' salaries, it could also be used in other ways, such as providing more training and development opportunities, or hiring more teachers.

c) Other opportunities for improvement

Fourteen references focussed on other opportunities to improve the remuneration approach for teachers. While, in practice, the suggestions made by these respondents may result in a salary increase for teachers, they are framed in such a way where other outcomes – such as pay parity or incentivising excellent performance – are emphasised more than the absolute salary level.

There were eight references that spoke to the general sentiment that remuneration should be commensurate with skills, experience and contribution and that there should be financial incentives to reward good performance, but which do not make explicit reference to an increase in salary. Examples of these comments include *"remunerate teachers at a level that reflect their qualifications and contributions as professionals," "teachers to be paid what they are worth"* and *"[pay] the great teachers even more."* Essentially these references express the sentiment that teachers' salary should be a fair reflection of their actual contribution, that experience is valued and that superior performance should be financially rewarded.

Three references focussed on pay parity (excluding the reference pertaining to pay parity for ECE teachers, which has been addressed in Section 6). One respondent spoke to the theme of how remuneration for educators compares with other fields, stating *"Teachers and principals have to be paid on a par of other leaders in organisations."* The other two references focussed on pay parity within the education sector. One advocated for the *"same pay and conditions as secondary teachers."* While it is not explicitly stated, it is plausible that this respondent is referring to parity between primary and secondary school teachers. The other reference implied that migrant teachers face remuneration disparities and recommended that it should be *"easier for overseas qualified teachers to be paid fairly for equivalent NZ work."*

Three references reflected on the financial incentives of the career pathway of educators (and the implications that this has on the retention of quality talent in classrooms). One of these references described the system of remuneration for management units as 'unfair,' and presented the view that teachers in the classroom were more deserving of financial recognition that those engaged in management roles – *"…the more management units you do the less you 'teach' but the more you get paid. The teachers who should be rewarded are the ones who front the class, most hours of every day."* The other two references encouraged more opportunities

to retain quality teachers in the classroom to avoid losing the talent of the 'best' teachers to management positions.

d) Other

Four references were of a non-specific nature and simply stated *"teacher pay."* As these comments were made in response to Question Three, it is implied that these respondents welcome change in respect to teacher remuneration, but they have not specified the nature of that change. In light of other comments on this topic, it is likely that these respondents would welcome a pay increase for teachers, although this is not made explicit.

8.7 Status

There were 41 references coded to 'Status' (of teachers) for this question.

Twenty-one references reiterated points that are covered elsewhere in the report, so they have been excluded from the commentary below to avoid repetition. These references traversed various themes including managing poorly performing teachers, parental support for schools, increasing the attractiveness of the profession, teaching workforce capacity constraints, the teacher registration process and remuneration.

Five references focussed on respect for teachers. Collectively, these respondents expressed the sentiment that there was a lack of respect for teachers and called for teachers to be treated *"with the respect they deserve."* Respondents presented divergent views on who was to 'blame' for the erosion of respect for teachers. Two references presented the view that the government was to blame (for example, *"we have been maligned by governments for too long").* One respondent, however, pointed to the conduct of teachers themselves and suggested that their demeanour was not necessarily conducive to commanding respect – *"When they dress in casual clothes, are called by their first name and aren't able to address bad behaviour, how can they command respect?"*

Four references called for teachers to be valued, including one which brought the themes of respect and valuing together, stating *"valuing teachers as amongst the most respected professionals in our society."* One reference went further and also offered suggestions for specific actions that may signal 'valuing' – *"Teaching needs to be held in higher esteem to be valued as a profession. Improved wages is ONE way to lift the profile, positive media is another, working conditions and support for learning and behavioural needs is another."*

Three references spoke to the theme of the level of trust afforded to teachers. While all three references expressed the need for greater trust in teachers, only one reference provided specific commentary about what they envisaged in a higher trust system – *"Trust our teachers – annual goal set and target students but appraise/inquiry every 3 years."*

The remaining nine references did not fit within the clustered themes above. These references traversed a variety of topics such as the professional status of teachers (two references), recognition of *"the importance"* and *expertise and effort"* of teachers (two references), working conditions (two references), public perception of teachers

(one reference), classroom authority (one reference), and teacher vetting processes (one reference).

8.8 Career pathways

There were 9 references coded to 'Career Pathways' (of teachers) for this question.

Three references related to themes that are covered in more detail elsewhere in the report. These references related to workload pressures, incentives to support recruitment and retention and support for teachers to retain some classroom responsibilities following a promotion into a management/leadership role.

Three references made recommendations for ways the system could be improved. While they were all relevant to the broad theme of 'career pathways,' they each spoke to a different facet. One reference indicated that the Ministry of Education should be actively supporting teacher recruitment and retention by getting involved in and overseeing training, placement and career development. Another reference saw the potential to tap into the experience and knowledge of retired teaching staff, stating *"Utilise the skills and abilities of older retired teachers to help young teachers learn the trade."* The remaining reference related to the process of teacher registration, and suggested that there should be a separate registration category for relieving teachers with different appraisal requirements.

Two references focussed on the barriers to entry that migrant teachers experience in New Zealand. One respondent provided anecdotal commentary on their personal experiences of seeking employment as a teacher in South Canterbury – *"As a migrant, I am considered an outsider and am not given a fair chance despite being a NZ trained teacher with a Master's degree."* The other respondent spoke about the barriers to entry for migrant teachers more generally and indicated that the current settings around this may be too stringent – *"By making it so hard and expensive, you are pushing away some really good teachers."*

The remaining reference was an observational statement, noting a *"lack of new blood in teaching,"* which speaks to the challenge the sector is facing in attracting talent into the profession.

8.9 Wellbeing

There were 32 references coded to 'Wellbeing' (of teachers) for this question.

Seventeen references related to themes which have been covered in more detail elsewhere in report, so these have been intentionally omitted from the commentary below. These references traversed themes including, but not limited to, trusting teachers, the adverse wellbeing impacts of the financial stress and workload demands of the role and the influence that physical school environments may have on wellbeing.

Eight references cited areas of weakness/vulnerability in respect to teacher wellbeing, such as stress (four references), low morale (one reference) and an aging teacher workforce (one reference). One additional reference pointed to the consequences of poor teacher wellbeing, noting that the prevalence and duration of time off sick (for teachers) has increased.

Six references made recommendations about what could be done to improve wellbeing.

Half (three) of these references spoke to the theme of addressing staff bullying (from school management). Two of these references strongly emphasised the intensity of the emotional and psychological repercussions of this bulling, with one citing *"teachers on the verge of suicide because of cruel principals"* and another indicating that teachers were subject to "*DV [domestic violence] type behaviour."*

An additional reference spoke to the risk of harm that teachers face due to violent students. The respondent shared anecdotal evidence of having been hit by students and called for teachers to be empowered with more authority to manage the behavioural issues of students.

Given the frequent references to stress and exposure to both physically and psychologically damaging experiences, it followed that that one reference recommended that the Ministry of Education should provide funding for EAP counselling/supervision services to support teachers wellbeing.

The final recommendation suggested that daily fitness be compulsory at all schools in New Zealand for both students and teachers, as all would benefit from increased physical activity.

The remaining reference was of non-specific nature, simply stating *"staff wellbeing."*

8.91 Diversity

Ten references were coded to 'Diversity' (of teachers) for this question.

Most references in this node spoke to the theme of gender representation. One reference was of an observational nature, simply noting *"not many male teachers."* Two references articulated views on why this was an issue, citing concerns about the lack of male role modelling (e.g. *"homogenous staffing is not in the pupils' best interests as they will ultimately be required to cope in a broader community"*). The remaining two references call for greater encouragement for men to pursue teaching careers.

The remaining references spoke to the theme of ethnic diversity, and recommended that staff should reflect the ethnic diversity of the school community.

8.92 Teacher Voice

Fourteen references were coded to 'Teacher Voice' for this question.

One reference repeated commentary about sector consultation in respect to NCEA and so has been excluded from the text below to limit repetition.

The majority of references spoke to the theme of listening to teachers. One reference specifically indicated who 'should' be listening to teachers (the Board, in that particular case), while others were silent on this matter (for example, *"listen to the teachers when they make sensible suggestions"* and *"listen to the teachers who have the good of children at heart."*).

One respondent offered a slight variation on the theme above. While most references on this theme focussed on teachers having a voice in wider school issues, one reference stressed the importance of ensuring that teachers have a *"safe environment"* to discuss issues impacting on them individually (such as a personal grievance concern).

8.93 Roles and responsibilities

Twenty-five references were coded to 'roles and responsibilities' (of teachers) for this question.

Ten references reiterated messages that have been covered more substantively elsewhere in the report, and so they have been intentionally excluded from the commentary below. These references touched on issues such as teacher workload (8.5) and giving teachers a 'voice'/more input (8.92).

Nine references spoke to the theme of *"let teachers teach!"* and identified that teachers spend time and effort on tasks beyond their core teaching role in the classroom.

Seven of these references expressed general sentiment in favour of giving teachers more time/opportunity to teach (for example, *"teachers should be teaching"* and *"teachers actually focussed on teaching, not doing jobs that could be taken care of by support workers."*).

Six references (including five of the seven reflected in the previous sentence) cited specific examples of duties that teachers undertake beyond their classroom teaching role, such as administrative and accounting functions, providing medical care and other support for students, monitoring and reporting on student progress and lesson planning.

One reference commented on how these competing demands on teachers can be disruptive for students. This respondent indicated that students were facing constant disruptions in the classroom environment and inconsistencies in teaching personnel (due to their main teacher being absent from the classroom to attend to administrative duties) – *"My children find this disrupting, never knowing who is teaching them."*

Six references identified other opportunities for improvement in this area which did not fit under the broad theme of 'let teachers teach!' examined above. One respondent commented on a perceived shortcoming in existing practice, stating *"Stop sending children home because teachers can't deal or don't want to deal with [a] child."* The other five references, however, were focussed on supporting (rather than criticising) teachers. One was relatively general, 'simply' advocating for *"manageable conditions to teach in."* Two references made recommendations to provide more support to teachers in responding to the diverse needs of today's students (for example, *"having more power for teachers to effect positive change in behaviour"*). The final two references made recommendations to help reduce the workload/demands on teachers. One advocated for standardised lesson plans to be made available to teachers, while the other stated that teachers should not have to learn Māori.

9. Leadership

The overarching ‘leadership’ node captured a total of 172 references. The dominant themes in this section were principals’ responsibilities (49 references), principals’ professional learning and development (23 references) and principals’ workload (18 references).

Ten references were coded to the ‘leadership’ parent node, all of which were related to themes that are covered elsewhere in the report.

9.1 Principals

There were seventeen references coded to the ‘principals’ child node, all of which expressed ideas and perspectives that are covered elsewhere within this report.

9.1.1 Responsibilities

There were 49 references coded to this node, making this the dominant theme under the overarching ‘Leadership’ category.

Thirteen references reiterated points that are more substantively covered elsewhere in the report. These references traversed themes such as principal workload (addressed in 9.1.5) and the desire for less ‘red tape’ inhibiting principals in their role.

The interface between principals and the Board of Trustees was the dominant theme, with reference to both their roles and interpersonal dynamics. The key messages from these references have been captured within the section on Boards of Trustees and so have not been repeated here.

Five references identified opportunities to reduce principals’ responsibilities in one area to give them more capacity to engage elsewhere. Two references recommended that responsibility for school property and finance functions should not fall on principals, although both indicated that principals should continue to have some kind of influence or contribution to these processes.

9.1.2 Capability

There were 16 references coded to ‘capability’ (of principals) for this question.

9.1.3 Pedagogy

There was just one reference coded to ‘pedagogy’ for this question.

9.1.4 Professional learning and development

There were 23 references under the theme of ‘professional learning and development’ (for principals).

Fourteen references reiterated points that are more substantively covered elsewhere in the report, particularly as there was a significant degree of overlap between this node and the equivalent section for teachers (i.e. 8.3 Professional Learning and Development). These references traversed themes including, but not limited to, the funding model for accessing professional development opportunities and ensuring staff have the time to attend professional development sessions.

Three references commented on the performance appraisal system for principals and respondents expressed divergent views on the appraisal system. While one reference criticised the appraisal system for increasing work and stress for educators and recommended that it should be discontinued, the other two references expressed a more favourable sentiment and indicated that there was a role for it in the system. Nonetheless, one of these references did suggest that there was an opportunity to improve the current practice around principal appraisal, suggesting that it could be *"more valid and valuable to the person."*

Two references were encouraging of more support and training for beginning/new principals. One reference was problems-focussed and highlighted that this was an area of weakness at present – *"too many first time principals with not enough support."* The other reference offered a solution to overcome/address this issue and advocated for *"dedicated management support for principals and Tumuaki for the first 3-5 years of their leadership."*

Two references suggested experienced principals should have a role in succession planning and mentoring for other principals to pass on their knowledge and expertise.

The remaining two references expressed general support for more training and professional development opportunities. One simply stated *"more professional development,"* while the other articulated what they expected to achieve as a result of providing more training, which was a boost in leadership and governance capability.

9.1.5 Workload

There were 18 references classified under the theme of 'workload' (for principals).

Seven references reiterated messages that are covered more substantively elsewhere in the report, so they have been intentionally excluded from the commentary below. Specifically, these references traverse themes including (but not limited to) stress, remuneration, the quality of initial teacher education and the interface between Boards of Trustees and principals.

Five references highlighted the demands and expectations on principals, which emphasised both their long work hours and the array of responsibilities and tasks they undertake. One of these references focussed exclusively on long work hours (with a particular emphasis on principals of kura). Three references cited examples of the types of roles and responsibilities that contribute to the need for these long hours, including compliance with relevant legal requirements (especially in relation to health and safety), paperwork, email correspondence and, in the case of principals in Canterbury, involvement in rebuild and renewal programmes. One respondent eloquently captured the breadth of roles and responsibilities that principals undertake in the following quote: *"I love our primary school but I see our principal doing well too much. Teaching, resourcing, managing staff, office work, gardening, property repairs, cleaning, maintenance, mediation, pastoral care, nursing, intensive sessions e.g. one on one, library help, communication with families, assemblies, hosting meetings, fundraising, music, physical sports, liaising with community, road duties, all while being future focussed, innovation and adaptive etc. She's magic but it's too much."*

The remaining reference on this theme highlighted one of the consequences of these demands on principals' time – *"principals [are] too busy doing other things that take them away from the school."*

Six references made recommendations to help assist with or alleviate some of the workload pressures and demands on school principals. Three references related to opportunities to reduce principals' workload, such as limiting the number of days each week they are required to teach, considering whether principals need to be responsible for property management and relieving principals of workload that could be centralised. Two references advocated for more release time for principals, particularly for principals of small schools. The remaining reference offered a recommendation to help principals get through their workload more efficiently – *"let the principal do their job by getting rid of the red tape and the hoops they have to jump through."*

9.1.6 Pay

There were seven references coded to 'pay' (of principals) for this question.

Three references were related to increasing principals' remuneration. One reference simply said *"increase principals pay,"* while the other two references proposed increases based on certain conditions or circumstances, such as principals in small schools or on the basis of merit.

Two references advocated for a decoupling of the relationship between principal salary and school roll, one of which proposed that it should be set based on the *"challenge they have to raise achievement/progress."*

The remaining two references both broadly related to the general theme of financial recognition (for principals), but were framed in different ways. One stated that principals *"need to be recognised for the work that they do"* while the other reference made a comparative statement about the remuneration of those in other fields, stating *"principals have to be paid on a par of other leaders in organisations."*

9.1.7 Status

There were three references coded to 'Status' (of principals) for this question.

Two references proposed that the principal should be removed. The other reference advocated for greater respect for the profession and called for principals (and teachers) to be valued.

9.1.8 Career pathways

There were nine references coded to 'career pathways' (of principals) for this question.

Five references focussed on preparation for the role of principal. Four of these references advocated for better support and training for aspiring and new principals, with two of these advocating for some form of supervision/mentoring support between an experienced principal and a developing/aspiring leader. The remaining reference on this theme expressed that the career pathway leading up to being a school leader (i.e. being a teacher first) does not necessarily prepare them for the business skills required in the principal role.

Three references focussed on the principal appointment process, each of which spoke to subtly different aspects. One reference expressed the view that the principal appointment process needed to *"move with the times"* and be *"modern and future focussed"*, while another reference advocated for approaches to principal appointments that were reminiscent of the pre-Tomorrow's Schools era, proposing that principal appointment should be handled through *"appropriately appointed officials who know more about education."* The remaining reference on this theme stressed that outside applicants should have an equal chance of gaining a senior leadership role and have the ability to progress within the profession.

The remaining reference described the cohort of principals as an *"aging population"* and indicated that the stress of the role reduces the interest of senior school leaders in progressing to the principal role.

9.1.9 Wellbeing

There were four references coded to 'wellbeing' (of principals) for this question.

One reference related to teachers wellbeing, rather than principals' wellbeing, so was not directly relevant to this theme. Another reference 'simply' stated *"staff wellbeing."*

The remaining two references related specifically to the wellbeing of school principals. They indicated that principals are stressed (particularly due to staffing challenges) and that this stress can result in them *"pushing harder on staff."*

9.1.91 Diversity

There was one reference coded to 'diversity' (of principals) for this question.

This reference stated *"staff that reflect the ethnic diverse school community."*

9.2 Leadership across school

There were ten references coded to 'leadership across school' for this question.

Four references were excluded from the commentary below because they have been more substantively covered elsewhere in the report. Specifically, these references related to the themes of encouraging innovation from school leadership, principal appointments and training/support for principals.

Five references related to workload/capacity matters (in the context of school leaders). One reference advocated for having one principal for more than one school, which would increase breadth of their responsibilities. In contrast, the other four references spoke to opportunities to lighten the load of school leaders (or at least steer them towards educational leadership roles), such as providing schools with funding to allow more release time for middle and senior management to give them more opportunities to coach and mentor staff.

The remaining reference related to the responsibility of school leaders for the mental wellbeing of staff. This reference advocated for *"more accountability for staff mental health by the culture that senior management perpetuates."*

9.3 System leadership

There were four references coded to 'system leadership' for this question.

Two references were excluded from the commentary below because they are more closely related to themes which have been covered elsewhere in the report (namely, the Education Review Office and Modern Learning Environments).

One reference advocated for stronger leadership from 'the top,' and articulated the nature of the support and guidance that should come from government. Specifically, this reference stated *"'needs to find out and tell us what kind of 21st century learner we want…and then give a mandate (and support) for this to happen."*

The other reference on this theme also advocated for a greater role for government in the education system. While the aforementioned reference called for direction and guidance from the government, however, this reference went a step further and called for greater central control of the education system. This reference implored *"have the courage to restore an equitable Ministry controlled system."*

9.3.91 Capacity

No comments were coded to 9.3.1 ('Capacity') for this question.

91. Education Workforce

A total of 56 references were coded within the broad theme of 'Education Workforce' for this question. The two dominant themes in this section were capacity (20 references) and pay (16 references).

Sixteen references were coded to the parent node of 'Education Workforce,' and they did not fit within the themes covered by the child nodes below. Five references echoed messages articulated earlier in the report, such as improving access to support staff and specialist teachers, and did not provide any further insights on these themes and so have been excluded from the commentary below.

Four references commented on the appointments process. One reference on this theme was of a general nature (*"appointments to schools"*), while the other three articulated views on how the appointments process could be improved. Two of these references suggested that the appointment of staff to schools should be carried out through a centralised system. The other reference recommended that schools should be required to seek legal advice when hiring staff, with specific reference to checking the legality of fixed-term contracts.

Four references commented on areas of expertise or specific roles within the education sector. One was problems-focussed and expressed the view that there were too many consultants that lacked practical teaching experience. Three references were focussed on what could be done better in this area. Two references cited specific positions that each school 'should' have (one advocated for human resources personnel and the other recommended an operations manager). The remaining reference advocated for *"more specialised staff"* but did not elaborate further.

The remaining two references coded to the 'Education Workforce' parent node did not fit within the clustered categories above. One reference related to the management of staff turnover (*"ensure the staff member changes each year"*), while other simply stated *"workforce strategy."*

91.1 Pay

Sixteen references were coded to 'Pay' under 'Education Workforce' (for this question), making it the second largest theme under this section.

Six references echoed points which are covered elsewhere in the report. These references were specifically related to the remuneration of teachers and teacher aides and funding/support more generally.

Four references advocated for increased remuneration generally, without relating this to any specific role. Two of these references were two-word comments recommending an increase in pay/salary. The other two references articulated specific 'trigger points' for remuneration increases. One recommended that remuneration should be increased to match inflation while the other supported financial recognition of postgraduate-level study.

Four references made recommendations to improve the remuneration system. Three of these references advocated for central/bulk funding to include support staff. The other reference recommended that remuneration should be set according to ability and that this process should be supported by a performance management scheme developed by the Ministry of Education.

The remaining two references coded to this node were non-specific, simply stating *"pay"* and *"fair pay."*

91.2 Workload

There were five references coded to 'Workload' under 'Education Workforce' (for this question).

One reference echoed the message captured in the section above in support of central funding for teacher aides.

Three references spoke to the general theme of workload pressures. One expressed the sentiment that workload demands are too high, stating *"you're asking too much of educators."* The other two references both advocated for less paperwork, with one suggesting that this would allow educators to *"focus on what is important – building relationships, brining creativity back into the classroom."*

The remaining reference coded to this theme was non-specific, simply stating *"workload."*

91.3 Capacity

Twenty references were coded to 'Capacity' under 'Education Workforce' (for this question), making it the dominant theme within this section.

Seven references reiterated points which are covered elsewhere in the report so they have been excluded from the commentary below to avoid repetition. These references traversed the themes of learning support (including teacher aides), teacher remuneration and the recruitment challenges that principals face.

Ten references related to the supply of support staff in schools.

Two references were problems-focussed, in the sense that they highlighted perceived inadequacies in this area (for example, *"not enough support staff"*), but did not comment on specific solutions.

Six references were encouraging of providing more support staff in schools. Half (three) of these references were of a relatively general nature (for example, *"more staffing to support teachers with day-to-day coverage"*). The other three references were of a more specific nature. Two of these references advocated for more support for small and/or rural schools (for example, *"In rural areas, principals and teachers are driving buses, mowing lawns fixing water pumps, cleaning toilets, clearing drains, cooking lunches. This is a ridiculous use of professionally trained educators' time"*) and one reference advocated for more administrative support for teachers.

One reference did not expressly advocate for more support staff but, rather, made a recommendation pertaining to the ratio of support staff to students, stating *"set guidance staffing on a per student basis."*

The remaining reference on the sub-theme of support staff supply highlighted the adverse wellbeing consequences from inadequate staffing – *"The impact of staff issues on the workforce – other staff trying to help and putting their own health at risk."*

Three references focussed on improving the skills and capability of support staff. While all three references were in favour of more skilled support staff (for example, *"better support staff to help prepare materials and state of the art systems"*), only one articulated a vision on how that may be achieved/supported – *"Enable support staff to progress through career pathways. Have a professional growth continuum in place, leading to accreditation."*

91.4 Status

There were 4 references coded to 'status' within 'Education Workforce' for this question.

These references expressed the desire to see the status of the profession boosted, and also advocated for a focus on addressing *"the current staffing crisis."* One reference also provided commentary relating to learning support and the desire for 'cultural change' in the school system, which is covered in within the relevant sections of the report.

92. Schools

There were 26 references coded to the parent node of 'schools' for this question. All of these references relate to themes that have been covered elsewhere in the report.

92.1 Boards of Trustees

A total of 524 references were coded to the overarching theme of 'Boards of Trustees' (i.e. encompassing both the child and grandchild nodes associated with this topic). The dominant themes on this topic are capability (129 references), responsibilities and roles (108 references) and support and training (76 references).

Sixty-nine references were coded to the parent node (i.e. 92.1 Boards of Trustees). The majority (40) of these references have been covered more substantively elsewhere in the report, and cover themes such as calls for the discontinuation of Boards, limitations of the capability and knowledge of Boards, remuneration of Board members and access to professional expertise to support school governance functions.

Nine references were of a high-level nature that did not offer substantial commentary on the topic (e.g. *"boards of trustees"* and *"I don't know what the answer is for boards of trustees"*).

Seven references proposed that there should be one Board governing multiple schools. Three of these references suggested that Kāhui Ako could play a role in supporting this type of governance structure (e.g. *"have one governing body across Kāhui Ako"*). Two references made specific reference to small schools, suggesting that these schools may be particularly welcoming of a shared governance structure. The remaining two references were of a general, high-level nature (e.g. *"one BOT for more than one school"*).

Five references provided narrative around the role for regional-level presence to support school governance. Three of these references suggested that regional-based governance would replace individual Boards (e.g. *"abandon the experiment with individual Boards and return to a regional governance model"*), while the other two references suggested that the regional-level (or 'middle layer') presence would co-exist with individual school Boards and work alongside them to provide advice and support.

Three references expressed a positive sentiment towards the existing structure of Boards and recommended that they be retained in their current form. For example, one respondent stated *"I would not change anything. The board is working well for our school. Going back to government or local authority control would be a backward step."*

The remaining five references traversed a range of topics that did not fit within the clustered categories above. These references traversed themes such as greater centralisation of governance functions and learning from the experience of schools who have had a Statutory Manager appointed.

92.1.1. Responsibilities and roles

There were 108 references coded to the theme of 'responsibilities and roles' of Boards of Trustees (BOTs).

Fourteen references were excluded from the commentary below because they were more closely related to themes covered elsewhere in the report, such as the

interpersonal dynamics of Board members and the interface between BOTs and principals.

a) Existence of Boards of Trustees

Nineteen references suggested that Boards of Trustees should be removed. Nearly a third (6) of these references indicated that the Ministry of Education could have a role in stepping into their place. Two respondents offered other ideas; one suggested that they be replaced with a school community, and the other advocated for an independent group. The remaining eleven references were silent on who would fulfil the governance role in the absence of Boards of Trustees.

An additional three references questioned whether Boards should exist (at least in its current form), but did not go as far as to explicitly state that they should be removed.

b) Scope of powers and functions

A total of 39 references were predominately focussed on the scope of the powers and functions that Boards of Trustees are responsible for. These references were split between those of a general nature (i.e. not specifically related to particular function/s of the Board) (21 references) and those which commented on particular areas of Board responsibility, such as property and finance (18 references).

General

Twenty-one references focussed on the theme of the scope of Board's functions and powers in general/at a high-level.

The majority of these references (15) expressed a preference towards reducing the scope of the Board's powers and responsibilities, many of which reflected the sentiment that Boards have too much power and influence at present (e.g. *"this temporary governance model puts too much power in too little hands for too short a timeframe"*). Some references expressed views on the nature of the role that Boards could have instead (they typically suggested more of an advisory or monitoring role), and a number of respondents indicated that more of the governance functions should be controlled centrally instead (e.g. *"…some of the more complex governance responsibilities could be held centrally by people who really understand these issues…"*).

Four references expressed the opposite perspective, suggesting that BOTs should have more power. This was expressed in both in respect to the power balance between BOTs and principals (e.g. *"Boards of Trustees need to have power, not [the] principal"*) and in relation to greater autonomy from the centre (e.g. *"Give schools the option for full control via their Boards to manage all aspects of their operations. The Ministry of Education have continued to erode the governance model to serve their own agenda to centralise all management and governance…"*).

The remaining two references on this theme spoke to different points. One respondent expressed an issue with BOTs who have a focus for the school which is *"inappropriate or unachievable for the school,"* while the other advocated for clearer guidance on the scope of BOTs decision making powers.

Specific functions

Eighteen references commented on specific functions of BOTs, with a strong emphasis on their roles in respect to property, finance and human resources/employment. A minority of references also touched on other BOT roles, such as administration and compliance with health and safety requirements. Some references cited more than one function.

Thirteen references were predominately focussed on the BOT's human resources/employment responsibilities. Collectively, these references were overwhelmingly focussed on expressing the view that BOTs were not necessarily the most appropriate entity to undertake employment-related functions, such as appraisal and appointment responsibilities. Some respondents provided commentary to support this position, citing concerns about capability/knowledge constraints in respect to education. Other respondents were more focussed on the adverse consequences that can result from sub-optimal decision-making in this area, such as legal consequences for BOT members and the adverse impact on the school when the 'wrong' principal is selected (e.g. *"they can make ill-informed decisions and alter the paths of good schools as they do"*). Echoing the sentiment expressed in the paragraph above (relating to removing BOTs), a number of references indicated that the Ministry of Education would be better placed to carry out these functions.

Six references were predominately focussed on the Board's property and/or finance functions. These references recognised that these functions are demanding/time-consuming for BOTs and were encouraging of reducing their burden in respect to these roles. Respondents expressed differing perspectives on how to achieve this. Some respondents maintained that these functions should be retained by the BOT, but that they should be made *"more straightforward",* while others suggested that BOTs should relinquish their control of these functions and hand them over to the Ministry of Education (or an external consultant).

c) Practice and performance

Nineteen references were broadly related to the practice and performance of Boards, with specific reference to Boards' performance in relation to engagement and communication (eight references), educational knowledge and focus (six references) and performance management practices (five references).

Engagement and communication

Eight references concentrated on the engagement and communication between BOTs and the school communities. Five references spoke to the theme of transparency, all of which implied that this was lacking in some way. Three of these references indicated that there was an opportunity to provide greater visibility (for both parents and teachers) over what the Board is responsible for (e.g. *"it should be made clearer to all parents what the Board does"*), while the other two references indicated that BOTs could be more transparent in their communication with parents so that they are not *"kept in the dark."* The remaining three references on this topic encouraged BOTs to improve their engagement with teachers, principals and the Government.

Educational knowledge

Six references concentrated on Boards' educational knowledge and the extent to which they focussed on education-focussed (e.g. curriculum and pedagogy) matters. Collectively, these references indicated that Boards tended to lack specialist knowledge and understanding of education and that they tended to give relatively greater attention to their other roles (such as property management).

Performance management

Five references focussed on the performance of Boards. Three references focussed on how poor performance or inappropriate behaviour of Boards is addressed, and indicated inadequacies in respect to how this is addressed in practice (e.g. *"they focus on day to day operations and breed contempt in communities through acting inappropriately, with little to no sanctions available"*). One of these references expressed concern about Board performance for a specific subset of schools - *"Kaupapa Māori school Boards need a huge overhaul. Either legislate their ghost boards or require them to function properly."* The other two references recommended closer monitoring/assessment of how BOTs carry out their functions, via performance assessments for Board members and monitoring of Boards by external personnel.

d) Other

The remaining ten references were relevant to the overarching theme of the roles and responsibilities of BOTs, but did not fit within the clustered categories above. Specifically, these references traversed topics such as the significant workload and expectations on Boards (four references), the desire for greater clarity of the boundary between management and governance functions (three references), school rules (one reference), the role of the Board in relation to the issue of religious instruction in school (one reference) and encouragement of greater recognition and remuneration of BOT members (one reference).

92.1.2. Support and training

There were 76 references coded to 'support and training' (in relation to Boards) for this question.

Six references were focussed on themes which are more closely related to matters addressed elsewhere in the report. These references were predominately focussed on the lack of education-specific knowledge and experience of Board members and the interpersonal dynamics between and Boards.

a) Training

The majority of references coded to this section spoke to the broad theme of strengthening the provision of training and professional development opportunities for school governance personnel.

Twenty-six references advocated for more or better training for Board members. These references were split evenly (13 references each) between those that were of a high-level nature (e.g. *"more training for BOT members"*) and those that advocated for more training on particular subject areas, such as governance (three references), neurodiversity and disability (three references) and leadership (two references).

A dozen additional references indicated that training should be mandatory for Board members, particularly when they are new to the position. Most of these references were of a relatively general nature (e.g. *"compulsory training for Boards"*), but a minority cited specific areas/topics which this training should cover, such as understanding their roles and responsibilities as Board members and awareness/knowledge of national education goals.

Six references highlighted opportunities for improvement (in respect to training for Board personnel). Two references were of a high-level nature (e.g. *"improve PD model for BOTs"*). The majority (4) of these references, however, made recommendations pertaining to specific elements of how training is delivered. Two references challenged the role of NZSTA as the primary source of training opportunities for Boards, one of which suggested that the Ministry of Education should lead BOT training provision instead. The remaining two references each spoke to separate themes. One related to the delivery platform for training and advocated for more in-person, 'real-life' training (as opposed to online).The other related to the pedagogical approach to the delivery of course material, encouraging a more 'conversational' style of teaching, rather than a 'teaching from the front' approach.

Five references were related to theme of lifting participation and improving access to training opportunities. Three of these references were of a financial nature. Two advocated for financial compensation (i.e. to be paid) for the time Board members spend attending training, while the other advocated for Boards to be provided with more funding to access quality professional development opportunities. The other two references spoke to the theme of accessibility more generally. One was of an observational nature and noted that training opportunities for Board members appeared to have declined over time. The other was more change-focussed and advocated for *"more easily accessible training in a variety of ways that will connect to all cultures."*

b) Support

A total of 22 references were consistent with the sentiment that there were opportunities for Boards to be better supported in their role, particularly Boards of lower-decile schools.

Three references were of a non-specific nature, articulating that there was room to improve in this area, but not providing any specific commentary on what could be done to remedy the issue (e.g. *"When a BOT needs support, it is not always available and they are left high and dry"*).

Nineteen references of this theme, however, were more forthcoming with specific observations and recommendations.

Four references advocated for more support to be given to Boards of lower-decile schools, one of which cited expertise constraints as the impetus for their recommendation – *"The pool of expertise they have to rely on is often limited, they then rely too heavily on the principal and there becomes a power imbalance [sic]."*

Ten references identified particular ways in which Boards could be better supported in conducting their day-to-day, 'business as usual' roles and responsibilities. These

references cited a number of ways in which Boards could secure greater support, such as having the opportunity to access professional expertise and guidance (particularly to overcome gaps in their in-house knowledge and capability) (five references), reducing workload (particularly in respect to reporting and compliance requirements) (two references), increasing support principals and NZSTA (one reference each) and providing an external facilitator to lead Board meetings and provide guidance (one reference).

A further five references concentrated on particular 'trigger points' or circumstances where Boards could be better supported, such as when conducting principal appointment and appraisal processes (two references), in the face of challenging circumstances or difficulties (two references) and when legal issues arise (one reference).

92.1.3. Capability

A total of 129 references spoke to the theme of 'capability' in respect to Boards of Trustees. The relatively large volume of references that focussed on the theme of Board capability reflects the salience of this issue to respondents who provided input to this question on the survey.

The overarching message across these references was that Board capability was variable between schools and that there were opportunities to lift or better support Board capability in some areas.

Respondents presented differing views on the capability constraints of Board members. Many respondents expressed that even though their skills/capability may not necessarily be commensurate with the demands of the governance role, they were well-intentioned, well-meaning people who wanted to 'give back' to the school. Some respondents, however, were of a more disparaging nature and expressed criticism in relation to areas such as self-interested behaviours and a perceived lack of work ethic of Board members.

Twenty references were excluded from the commentary below because they were more closely related to themes covered elsewhere in the report, such as training and professional development for Board members, proposals to discontinue the Boards of Trustees governance model, accountability and concerns about Boards' capability and knowledge of the needs of particular groups of students (such as Māori and Pacifica pupils and those with additional learning support needs).

a) Problems and challenges

Skills and attributes of Board members

Thirteen references expressed the general sentiment that Boards do not consistently have the skills and capability they need to effectively execute their school governance functions. In contrast to the references examined in the paragraph below, they do not cite specific areas of concern but, rather, they speak to the issue of Board capability constraints more generally.

Thirty-two references cited specific areas where Board capability appeared to be weak or lacking. The dominant theme of these references was concern about the

lack of educational expertise and experience of Board members (echoing the sentiment expressed in an earlier section), with 17 references focussing on this theme. The remaining references in this section identified weaknesses in relation to Board capability in respect to understanding the duties and responsibilities involved in their governance role (including being clear on the boundary between governance and management) (seven references), general school management (four references), property management (two references), human resources/employment (one reference), financial management (one reference) and understanding diversity in the way different students behave (one reference).

Three references spoke to other issues and challenges which are more closely related to the character or conduct of Board members, such as hidden agendas (two references) and self-interested behaviour (for example, steering Board decisions which favour the interest of them or their own child, rather than working for the collective good) (one reference).

Board recruitment challenges

Five references reflected on how the elections and appointments process contributes to capability constraints. Collectively, these references highlighted that the democratic nature of the Board appointments process (i.e. Board members are determined by popular vote, rather than a technocratic/meritocratic process based on skills and experience) means that Board members elected to the role do not necessarily have a suitable skillset to serve in the school governance role.

Eight references concentrated on the variability of Board capability between schools across the socioeconomic spectrum. The key message from these references was that higher decile schools tend to have a wider selection of professional skills and expertise within their communities to draw Board members from, while less affluent schools often struggle to attract suitability skilled candidates. The variability of Board capability that this creates between schools is aptly captured in the following quote from one respondent – *"Community based BOTs are frequently unevenly skilled based on the social capital and socioeconomic status of the surrounding area."*

The challenge of attracting suitable Board members, however, is not exclusive to low-decile schools. Six additional references highlighted the struggle that some schools face in relation to attracting suitably skilled Board members that did not explicitly refer to socioeconomic variables. Indeed, two of these references spoke to other variables that make schools more vulnerable to Board recruitment challenges, observing that small schools and schools in regional areas also face this issues. Respondents varied in respect to whether they focussed on the quantity or quality of Board candidates. While most respondents framed this in terms of a lack of suitably skilled candidates (e.g. some schools *"struggle to get Boards with the expertise they need"*), some respondents highlighted that some schools struggle even to get sufficient numbers of candidates (let alone appropriately skilled ones) (e.g. *"some communities find it challenging to find people to stand for Boards of Trustees"*).

Other

Six references identified problems and challenges pertaining to BOT capability that did not fit within the clustered categories above. These references traversed themes

including the negative impact on principals resulting from Board capability issues (two references), levers to address poorly performing Boards (one reference), unwillingness to engage in training (one reference), liability concerns (one reference) and anecdotal evidence (one reference).

b) Opportunities to improve capability

Expected or desired skills and attributes

Six references cited specific skills and attributes that Board members should possess to be effective in their governance role. Many of these traits/competencies have also been referred in the section above (i.e. the paragraph on the observed weaknesses in existing Board capability). The references traversed in this section of the report have a subtly different emphasis that the ones in the previous section. While the content above focusses on specific weaknesses in existing capability, the material in this section identifies traits and skills that are perceived to be desirable, but have not expressly commented on capability in these areas at present. It should also be noted that these references were of a relatively high-level nature in the sense that they articulated views what was considered to be desirable (in respect to certain skills and attributes), but did not make specific recommendations about how to achieve this.

Each of the six references cited at least two desirable traits/skills and, collectively, touched on a relatively broad range of ideas. Specifically, these references expressed that it is desirable for Boards members to have skills such as expertise in human resources (three references), educational knowledge (three references), management, property and finance skills (two references each) and governance capability (one reference). They also expressed views on character traits and personality attributes they expected Board members to have, such as motivation and drive (one reference), a sense of ethics (one reference) and common sense (one reference).

One additional reference expressed a high-level positive sentiment towards supporting the capability of Board members and advocated for *"more qualified & informed BOTs".*

Proposals to improve capability

Nineteen references concentrated on encouraging access to professional, skills-based expertise to support school governance functions. Collectively, these respondents were generally favourable of schools having greater access to certain skills and expertise.

Respondents differed, however, in respect to their expectations about where this expertise would sit within the governance structure and the scope of their powers, and there was often a degree of ambiguity in respect to these issues. The various perspectives from these respondents is summarised in the bullet points below:

- Seven references which advocated for skills-based, professional appointments were clearly proposing a dual governance model (i.e. comprising of both elected and appointed members). For example, *"Boards to be made up of a mix of both educational experts with recent experience and invested governors."*

- Five references advocated for some variation on the theme of professionalising Boards (e.g. *"professional trustees"* and *"professional boards"*), but did not explicitly articulate whether these professional Board members would replace or complement elected Board members.

- Two references spoke to the general theme of accessing expertise from within the community/area, but did not indicate the nature of engagement with personnel possessing these skills (i.e. whether they would be part of the Board, ad-hoc volunteers, paid contractors etc.). One reference highlighted the opportunities to tap into the skill sets of professionals within the broader community (e.g. *"every area has bank managers that could help with finance…"*), while the other reference was more focussed on ensuring that schools were empowered to engage external expertise when this was lacking within their own school community.

- Two references advocated for professional advice to replace the role of elected community members (e.g. *"I would remove the system of parents running schools from the position of a Board. Governance should be run from a professional, experienced base"*).

- Two references cited weaknesses in the capability and performance of Boards as the impetus to support/encourage more involvement from the Ministry of Education (e.g. *"The current school governance system doesn't work. The MOE needs to have more involvement, input and power in the running of our schools"*). While both references use the perceived failings/weaknesses of Boards as justification for more Ministry support, neither of them are explicit about the nature of the role they expect the Ministry to take (for example, a dual governance model, an advisory function etc.).

- One reference stated that Boards should be allowed to hire the skills they need, but did not explicitly cover the status of those that were hired. It was not clear from the context whether they would be 'hired' in the sense of being appointed as part of the Board, or whether they would be hired in a contractual arrangement to the Board to provide certain services.

Five references identified opportunities to alter the elections and appointments process to support Board capability. Three references placed the responsibility on prospective Board candidates (and those who nominate them). Two of these references expressed the sentiment that careful consideration should be given to the expectations of the role prior to seeking appointment (e.g. "*Require appointee to be knowledgeable about what they are undertaking BEFORE they put their names forward"*), while the other proposed that training should be a pre-requisite to the election process to ensure that aspiring Board members have an understanding of the role and how schools operate.

One reference, on the other hand, put the responsibility on the voters and stated that communities should vet Board members better.

The remaining reference expressed the general sentiment that the Board election process should support those with the *"skills and competencies required to govern as opposed to the most popular"* but did not comment on how that would be achieved.

Other

The remaining six references identified opportunities to improve Board capability that did not fit within the cluster categories above. Three references recommended higher financial compensation to induce more highly skilled Board members to undertake the position. The reaming three references made recommendations relating to greater transparency, periodic review and assessment of Boards' performance and replacing Boards with a single expert in charge of the school.

92.1.4. Community representation

Forty references were coded to 'community representation' (in the context of Boards of Trustees).

Fifteen references were excluded from the commentary below because they were more closely related to themes covered elsewhere in the report, such as Boards' access to external guidance and expertise, the interaction between the principal and the Board, and the capability/knowledge of Boards in relation to understanding students with additional learning support needs.

Ten references focussed on the interface between Boards and the wider community. One reference saw a role for Boards to exert greater control over the school's engagement with the community (and vice versa). In contrast, another reference spoke of empowering communities to have greater influence (in relation to Boards) and indicated that their views should determine whether schools have a Board or not (*"Only have a local board where the community strongly supports it"*). The remaining references, however, typically expressed a more balanced, collegial relationship between Boards, schools and the wider community.

Eight references advocated for wider community representation on Boards, including those which expressed that the composition of Boards should be more representative of the schools they serve. Six were of a general nature, including statements such as "*governance at a wider community scale"* and *"Boards should be from [the] local community"*. The remaining two references advocated for the inclusion of specific types of representatives (from within the community) on Boards, such as regional councils and investors.

Six references concentrated on the level of influence and control that parents have with respondents presenting divergent views on this issue. Three references were welcoming of parents having the opportunity to support schools and have their voices heard, but felt that they should have less governance and decision-making power than they currently have (e.g. *"parents should not be governing schools, although their support is welcome"*). An equal number of references (three) expressed a contrasting view. These respondents presented a more encouraging, favourable sentiment towards parental involvement within schools (e.g. *"parents need to be empowered…connection will bring success"*).

Five references concentrated on the representation of particular groups on Boards.

Three references expressed the sentiment that certain groups within the school community were under-represented in Boards currently (including references that recommended more representation of certain groups, as it can be inferred that these

respondents did not perceive current levels of representation to be optimal). Specifically, two of these references were focussed on the representation of minority groups (particularly Pacific peoples), while the other reference advocated for more representation of students and staff. There was also one additional reference that did not explicitly identify a particular group but focussed on a particular subset of schools, stating *"boards are not representational in low-decile areas."*

Two references were less focussed on the proportionality (or otherwise) of representation but, rather, were more concerned about how effective different representatives actually are in promoting the interests of those they represent. Both of these references related to staff/teacher representation on the Board. One of these references called for staff representatives to act in accordance with the collective good, rather than to serve their own interests, while the other reference focussed on poor communication between a particular teacher representative on a Board and their colleagues.

The remaining three references were relevant to the theme of community representation (in the context of school governance), but did not fit within the clustered categories above. One reference expressed personal dissatisfaction with an individual school Board, while the other two references were of a broader nature. One reference advocated for a different governance model for small, remote schools *"that is not so onerous on the local community [but] which retains community input in educational experiences for their children and values of the school."* The other reference suggested that school Boards *"should exist to enable the school community values to be represented."*

92.1.5. Conditions

Twenty-five references were coded to 'conditions' (for Boards of Trustees) for this question.

Financial compensation for Board members was the dominant theme in this section, with 13 references concentrating on this issue. Most (11) references recommended higher remuneration for Board members and a number of these respondents suggested that this would both attract more people to the role and increase the calibre of those attracted. The remaining two references expressed the sentiment that Board members should be paid (e.g. *"BOT members paid"*). As it is standard practice for trustees to be paid for their attendance at Board meetings, it is not clear what prompted comments of this nature.

Three references focussed on the duration of time that Trustees serve on Boards. Two of these references advocated for a longer term (e.g. *"consider a four year term for Boards"*), one of which suggested that this may promote greater cohesion. The other reference on this theme related exclusively to the Board Chair and proposed that there should be a limit on the length of time that one person can serve in this position.

Two references encouraged Boards to be more transparent with their reporting, both of which noted the lack of opportunity to read the minutes from Board meetings.

Two references were focussed on the effectiveness of Boards, although they each took a different angle. One reference proposed incentives for effective Boards, while

the other reference was of a far broader nature and called into question the effectiveness of BOTs in general, asking *"Is the current board of trustees effective for all schools?"*

The remaining content was comprised of single references on separate topic. One reference was problems-focussed, expressing that demands on Board members constituted *"too much work for volunteers."* The remaining four references made recommendations for improvement, such as recognition of the BOT role as *"a job rather than a volunteer thing,"* treating student trustees with greater respect, having levers to remove *"rogue board members"* and addressing the power imbalance between Boards and the school community.

92.1.6. Interpersonal dynamics

There were 33 references coded to 'interpersonal dynamics' (within Boards of Trustees) for this question.

Nine references were excluded from the commentary below because they were more closely related to themes covered elsewhere in the report, such as the skills and capability of the Board, the extent to which the Board is responsive to the voice of the community and the challenges faced by Boards of Trustees serving schools within lower socioeconomic communities.

The interface between Boards of Trustees and the school principal was a salient issue for respondents, with a third of references (11) in this node speaking to this theme.

Six references expressed the view that principals have too much power and control over Boards (e.g. *"principals should not be voting members of Boards….currently, they have too much control…"* and *"they [Board members] find they are fairly powerless against the principal"*). One reference, however, presented the opposite view and indicated that Boards can interfere with principals conducting their role.

Four references focussed on how Boards and principals work together in practice. While the paragraph above speaks to the themes of power and control at a high level, these four references presented specific detail on what happens in practice (i.e. the tangible behaviours and practices that reflect the underlying power dynamics). Collectively, these references encouraged more effective and collegial interaction between Boards and principals (including more constructive challenge between the two parties during the decision-making process).

Five references focussed on the personal agendas of Board members. One reference questioned people's motives for standing for Boards and suggested that some trustees were driven by self-serving motives. The remaining four references focussed on personal agendas once Board members were actually in the role. Two references 'simply' observed/acknowledged that some Board members have personal agendas, while the other two expressed stronger views on this matter. One of these expressed a strong view about the adverse impact personal agendas can have on students, stating *"it is criminal that based on a personal agenda someone's life can be totally destroyed."* The other reference on this topic called for action to address this issue, suggesting a review of Boards.

Four references commented on power dynamics, both within Boards and between Boards and the wider school community. Two references indicated that teachers can be adversely impacted by the power dynamics of Boards. One reference indicated that being elected to the Board resulted in *"a power play against teachers,"* while the other expressed the view that the power dynamics of Boards was *"strangling quality teachers."* One reference expressed that some individuals who step into Board positions do not necessarily use their authority and influence in an appropriate manner (e.g. *"these positions seem to give individuals a chance to become power trippers"*). The remaining reference expressed the opinion that Boards have too much power.

Three references commented on the relationship between Boards and parents. Two references highlighted the susceptibility of Boards to parental influence. One of these references was of a more general nature (*"Boards of Trustees are easily influenced by parents"*), while the other related to parental influence within the specific context of addressing bullying within schools, stating *"too often a bully is not dealt with because of who their parent is".* The remaining reference on this theme presented anecdotal evidence in relation to a lack of responsiveness to correspondence received by the Board.

The remaining reference expressed concern in relation to close relationships between Board members and the principal.

92.1.7. Elections and appointments

There were 44 references coded to 'elections and appointments' (in relation to Boards of Trustees) for this question.

Twenty-five references were excluded from the commentary below because they have already been substantively covered elsewhere in the report. These references covered themes such as ensuring Boards have access to expertise to support effective governance (including references to having appointed positions and advisory support from the Ministry of Education), training and professional development for Board members, lack of transparency around the roles and responsibilities of the Board, and community representation.

Six references expressed views on whether principals should have a full (voting) role on Boards. Respondents presented divergent views on this issue. Four references were opposed to principals being on the Board and, collectively, expressed the sentiment that principals should be in a more subservient position (e.g. *"They report to the Board, answer questions on reports, and then leave when the Board discusses things and makes decisions"*). Two references expressed the opposite view and advocated for principals to remain on the Board (e.g. *"it's vital that a principal remains on the BOT"*). An additional reference proposed that there should be a trained person to sit on Boards *"to ensure they are not being manipulated by [the] principal."*

Four references focussed on schools that struggle (or fail) to attract suitable Board members. One reference observed that a lack of candidates has adverse consequences for the calibre of those who secure positions on the Board, stating *"due to the lack of nominations some people end up on the BOT because of required*

numbers not due to ability." The other three references recommended more support or alternative options for schools that struggled to establish a suitable Board, such as having a central body (at a regional level) with personnel to support these schools (rather than having to resort to appointing a commissioner).

Five references identified opportunities to improve the Board election process, each of which touched on a different aspect of this topic. One reference proposed that elected Boards should be abolished entirely and that these positions should be applied for instead. The remaining four references made recommendations for improvement within the existing democratic framework, such as staggering Board elections to support continuity and having independently selected Board Chairs.

Three references commented on staff representation on Boards. Two of these references expressed the view that the current level of representation for staff was inadequate and advocated for greater representation. The remaining reference commented on who should fulfil the role of staff representative, and suggested that it should be a class teacher, rather than a deputy or assistant principal, on the grounds that they *"can be as controlling as the principal."*

92.2 Choice and competition

A total of 34 references were coded to 'choice and competition' for this question.

Four references were excluded from the commentary below because they have already been substantively covered elsewhere in the report, such as zoning and the extent to which competition creates a barrier to collaborative activity between schools.

Eight references stressed that competition between schools should be reduced or removed. Three of these references offered ideas on how this could be achieved, such as stopping NCEA league tables, providing resourcing and zoning (to require students to attend their local school). Two references expressed a desire for schools to work more collaboratively (rather than in competition) and this same sentiment was echoed as a secondary themes in other references within this node.

Twelve references related to school choice. Seven references commented on the how school choice in exercised in practice, with reference to the divide that this can create between schools (colloquially described as 'winner and loser' schools). Five references expressed views on whether school choice should be discouraged or promoted.

The seven references which commented on the practice of school choice and the patterns of student dispersion that it creates tended to be framed in a less-than-positive light. Collectively, these references recognised that parents who exercise school choice tend to select higher-decile schools and many articulated the adverse consequences of this for the schools 'left behind' (e.g. *"this creates winner and loser schools"* and*" "[it takes] all the financial and cultural capital to a school that does not need it").* Two references questioned the underlying motives and drivers of parents that exercised school choice (e.g. *"perception and casual racism are given far too much power"* and *"[parents] select schools for a range of aspirational reasons – which may often be ill-informed"*).

Five references expressed views on whether school choice should be encouraged and respondents expressed divergent views on this issue. Two respondents were favourable of parents being able to exercise choice over which school their child goes to. One highlighted disparities (in relation to the opportunity to exercise school choice) at present, stating *"parents still need to have choice – but we need to make choice available to all parents, not just urban and wealthy families."* Two references expressed the opposite sentiment, indicating a preference for less choice for parents to select where their child attends school (e.g. *"compulsory attendance at your local school"* and *"less parent choice"*). One reference presented mixed views, recommending that students should be required to attend their local school during primary school years, but have the opportunity to exercise choice at the secondary school level.

Four references were of a high-level nature and did not offer substantial commentary on this theme (e.g. *"competition"* and *"competition between schools"*).

Three references commented on the behaviour that school competition drives, each of which focussed on different ideas. Specifically, these references indicated that competitive dynamics between schools encourages them to compete for good students and get rid of underperforming ones. It also inhibits them from seeking the support that some students need to help them engage in learning.

The remaining five references traversed a range of topics that did not fit within the clustered categories above. These references made observational statements about the retention of mediocre schools in the system, the lack of competition between students and the opportunities to learn from international evidence/expertise.

92.3 Enrolment and zoning

There were 82 references coded to 'enrolment and zoning' for this question.

Seven references were excluded from the commentary below because they have already been substantively covered elsewhere in the report. These references traversed topics such as Māori medium education, the decile system, and access to education that is suitable for learners with additional learning support needs.

a) Support for zoning

Twenty-four references presented a more favourable sentiment towards zoning. One reference expressly stated *"the existing zoning system works with some success."* In most cases, however, the positive view towards zoning was implied (as opposed to explicitly stated), either by proposing that students should attend their local school (fourteen references) or by advocating for zoning practices to be strengthened and/or better enforced (seven references).

Fourteen references presented the view that students should attend their local school. Collectively, respondents cited a range of reasons to support this proposition, such as alleviating traffic congestion during peak travel periods, promoting greater cohesion and connection within the community and encouraging students to establish friendships with other students from within their own community.

Eight references expressed the desire for zoning practices to be strengthened or more stringently enforced. While some of these references were focussed exclusively on advocating for change (e.g. *"put zoning back in place"*), a number of references articulated reasons to support their position in favour of zoning (e.g. *"Zoning could also be one way to reinstate the school as the heart of the community"*).

The remaining reference on this theme suggested that zoning could be used as a lever to support smaller schools and prevent them from being closed.

b) Opposition to zoning

Twenty-three references expressed a negative sentiment towards the zoning system. Four references directly expressed the view that zoning should be removed and there were a number of additional references that did not explicitly advocate for the discontinuation of zoning but were clearly negative towards zoning (e.g. *"school zoning is also a real pain"*). Several references articulated particular challenges or concerns in relation to the zoning system, such as fairness concerns, discontentment towards the restrictions they create on school choice and confusion over schooling options.

c) Out of zone enrolments

Out-of-zone enrolments

Seven references focussed on out-of-zone enrolments. Three were consistent with the view that out-of-zone enrolments should be restricted, particularly in the case of larger schools, including one which suggested that schools should only receive funding for in-zone students. Another reference did not explicitly advocate for zoning practices to be restricted, but cited concern about the practice of giving the children of former students preferential/priority treatment in the out-of-zone ballot system, on the grounds that *"it reinforces class distinctions and keeps immigrant students of modest means out."* The remaining three references made high-level or observational statements about practices around out-of-zone enrolments (e.g. *"once yearly out of zone enrolment ballot"*).

General (zoning)

Nine references highlighted specific opportunities to improve zoning practice that did not fit within the clustered categories above. These references made recommendations such as having overlapping boundaries (three references), transferring zoning to local education boards, requiring schools to take a certain percentage of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and zoning schools within clusters (rather than individually).

The remaining three references were of a high-level nature, such as *"change up zoning"* and *"ensure zoning is fair and equitable."*

d) Enrolment and admission practices

While zoning is clearly a key theme within this section, respondents were not exclusively focussed on zoning practices. Ten references spoke of enrolment and admission practices more generally.

Eight references welcomed improvements in this area. Six of these references highlighted specific opportunities to improve enrolment practices, such as enrolling on the basis of ability rather than age, taking control over enrolment schemes away from principals and Boards and enabling more flexibility *"for parents to enrol children if a school has a particular focus or interest that suits their child."* The other two references were of a non-specific nature (e.g. *"how schools work and take in enrolments"*).

The remaining two references indicated that school enrolment/admission practices were contributing to social stratification and division within communities (e.g. *"this is sustaining and inflaming community division and inequity"*).

92.4 Infrastructure and property

There were 201 references coded to the overarching theme of 'Infrastructure and Property' (i.e. encompassing both the child and grandchild nodes associated with this topic).

Fifty-four references were coded to the parent node (i.e. 92.4 Infrastructure and Property). The majority (41) of these references were excluded from the commentary below because they have already been substantively covered elsewhere in the report. These cover themes such as centralising school property management, the condition of school buildings, maintenance issues, funding and the concern that the property management functions can be a 'distraction' from the school's core role of teaching and learning.

Seven references focussed on planning and decision-making in relation to school property. Four references criticised current practice in this area, such as the failure to 'future proof' investment in school buildings, poor practice and ineffective communication during the school rebuild process and an overly bureaucratic processes to access property funding. The other three references identified opportunities for improvement in this area, such as using population growth information to inform school building plans, empowering the Auckland region to make their own decisions in respect to school property and being more open/responsive to proposals from schools for property development.

Six references focussed on access to amenities within schools. Four of these references identified particular facilities that schools should have: namely, a school hall, solar and wind power generation, *"a better outdoor playground,"* and *"quiet spaces in school for lunchtime activities."* One reference observed that some schools have been unable to fund *"expensive items such as swimming pools,"* which highlights a consequence of insufficient funding. The remaining reference advocated for having school grounds accessible after school hours *"like the old days."*

92.4.1. Buildings

Forty references were coded to 'buildings' for this question.

Eleven references were excluded from the commentary below because they have already been substantively covered elsewhere in the report, most of which related to Modern Learning Environments (as associated comments relating to 'single cell classrooms').

Eight references commented on the poor condition of some school buildings. Four references identified particular issues with school buildings, such as leaky buildings (two references) and old classrooms (two references). The other four references highlighted the health and safety implications of poorly maintained school buildings (e.g. "*the buildings are dated and need to be modernised to gain warmth from the sun and be safe for natural disasters"*).

Six references commented on the centralisation of school property management functions. One reference expressed a negative sentiment towards the Ministry of Education's involvement with school property, but the remaining five references were encouraging of greater input from the centre (e.g. *"centralise property management to allow principals more time to lead teaching and learning"*).

Five references focussed on funding of school property (excluding those which relate to theme of centralisation of property funding which are addressed separately). Three references called for increased or 'better' funding for school property, particularly for repairs and maintenance. Another reference articulated why the existing funding provision for school property was inadequate, citing two examples of facilities for which there was a lack of funding (heat pumps and school pools). The remaining reference observed that *"resourcing property issues has become a carrot for schools that do as the governing group wants."*

Four references commented on the adequacy of space in school buildings. Two of these references were problems-focussed, indicating that classroom space was inadequate at some schools and that school buildings are not keeping up with growth. The other two references were solutions-focussed, advocating for more classrooms and the provision of enough space in schools to accommodate roll growth through the year.

The remaining seven references traversed the themes of encouraging more support for and higher prioritisation of school maintenance (three references), more resourcing of library facilities (two references), sound-minimising technology (one reference) and anecdotal evidence of good practice (one reference).

92.4.2. ICT Network and hardware

Three references were coded to 'ICT network and hardware' for this question.

Two references were focussed on funding for technology equipment (e.g. *"money to keep updating iPads and computers"* and *"better funding for future proofing and technology updates and replacements"*).

The other reference advocated for a wider variety of ICT tools to be included within schools to support learning.

92.4.3. Modern Learning Environments

There were 104 references coded to 'modern learning environments' for this question, making it one of the dominant themes in this section.

a) Opposition to Modern Learning Environments

The overwhelming majority of references expressed a less-than-favourable sentiment towards Modern Learning Environments (MLEs). While some respondents focussed

on the problems and challenges of MLEs (e.g. *"…huge, chaotic spaces where many children are overlooked or passively wandering about…"*) and others focussed on solutions/recommendations for change (e.g. *"get rid of modern learning areas – have one class per classroom…"*), the overarching sentiment was the same – that MLEs were problematic for these respondents, although to differing degrees.

Problem definition

Fifty-three references articulated the problems and challenges of MLEs. The collective narrative across these references was that teachers, parents and learners alike experienced a range of challenges within MLEs and that this approach did not appear to be optimal for all learners, particularly those with additional learning support needs.

Twenty-three references were focussed on problematic classroom conditions. These respondents identified an extensive range of issues perceived to be created or exacerbated by MLEs and frequently described them as loud and chaotic.

These references were dominated by criticisms relating to noise level, over-stimulation, distractions/disruptions and insufficient individual attention for each student. Other problems included: barriers to active participation in classroom discussion, deteriorating behaviour, stress and difficulties maintaining healthy peer-to-peer relationships between students.

Commentary on the impact of these criticisms on learning was very limited. The most substantive outcomes-focussed reference in this section stated *"…the MLE is not working and kids are finding places to hide in classrooms and are not doing their work. Literacy and numeracy are suffering as a result."*

Twenty references highlighted that the MLE approach was not well suited to all types of learners.

Six of these references indicated that some learners with additional learning needs particularly struggled in MLEs, such as those with autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit disorder, auditory or sensory processing disorder and dyslexia.

Six additional identified particular pathological traits or the prevalence of particular types of disorders that may make MLEs particularly problematic (for students afflicted by these symptoms). For example, one respondent stated *"This style of teaching does not suit all children. Many children with learning needs can get lost in this type of system."*

Echoing the same message which came through in earlier sections of the report (particularly in the content focussed on learning support), a number of these references also noted that adverse impact that these students can have on others in the classroom and suggested that this issue may be magnified within an MLE setting.

Most (8) references on this topic, however, were not specifically focussed on learners with certain conditions (or symptoms) but, rather, were of a more general nature. Collectively, these references expressed the sentiment that MLEs *"do not suit the needs of all learners,"* irrespective of how well implemented they are. On the latter

point, one respondent stated *"No matter how a space is designed, or what strategies are implemented, some students do not do well in those environments. It's ironic how single cell classrooms get bashed for not suiting everyone yet now ILEs are being forced on everyone."* One of these references was notable/unique for its specific reference to teachers (as well as learners) within MLEs – *"the implementation has resulted in many barn like structures that do not suit many learners or many teachers."*

Seven references expressed scepticism about the effectiveness of MLEs. While some were simply not convinced that it was the best model, others strongly felt that it was *"fundamentally flawed."*

The remaining three references expressed a less-than-favourable sentiment towards MLEs but did not fit within the themes in the paragraphs above. Two of these references focussed on the physical building structure of MLEs, including one which flagged the potential for them to problematic in the long-run – *"This is a fashion that will pass and then we will be stuck with these ridiculous spaces."* The remaining reference suggested that there was an opportunity to improve how MLEs are explained to parents.

Proposed solutions/recommendations

Twenty-one references expressed the view that MLEs should be discontinued. Respondents varied in terms of whether they articulated this position explicitly (e.g. *"get rid of MLE"*) or implicitly (e.g. *"go back to single cell classes"*) but were consistent with the key/headline message. It should also be noted that there was some variation in respect to the language that respondents used to refer to MLEs, such as open learning environments, modern learning areas and (more colloquially) 'barns.'

Two-thirds (14) of these references indicated a preferred alternative to MLEs. Most (nine) of these references advocated for single cell classrooms, either directly (e.g. *"back to single cell rooms"*) or by using words to that effect (e.g. *"have one class per classroom"* or *"standard classes"*). Some references, however, emphasised other classroom characteristics such as smaller learning spaces (two references), having a desk and chair for each child (two references) or having a more effectively designed space (e.g. *"stop building barns and design spaces that are flexible, fit for purpose and support good models of pedagogy"*). Some references also advocated for a smaller number of students per class, which is more substantively covered in the section dedicated to class size and ratio (92.6).

The other seven references on this theme expressed that MLEs should be discontinued, but did not articulate a view on what would be more desirable (e.g. *"scrap the open learning environment"* and *"get rid of open plan learning environments, it's a fruity concept that does not work!"*).

Eleven references were of a high-level, non-specific nature (e.g. *"modern learning concept"* and *"modern learning environments"*) but, by virtue of the fact these references were provided in response to Question Three, these respondents have signalled a desire for change in this area.

Four references advocated for more funding and resourcing to support MLEs. Three of these references focussed on providing more funding to support the physical learning environment, with an emphasis on making sure that schools have adequate resourcing to implement the MLE approach (e.g. *"…all the funding is going to new builds and expansions like in Queenstown, the rest of us are struggling to actually provide modern learning environments when we can't even get money to replace old, leaky roofs"*). The other reference focussed on the human resources needed to support MLEs. This reference advocated for more teacher aides/learning assistants in MLEs and stated *"one is not enough for 120 children."*

The remaining four references in this section proposed ideas for change which did not fit within the themes above. Specifically, these references recommended removing the 'pressure'/expectation on schools to use the MLE approach, allowing parents to send their child to an out-of-zone school to access a non-MLE school setting (if MLE is not working for their child), providing more clarity and education on open learning and increasing the breadth of the international research used to inform educational policy.

b) Dual Approach

Seven references considered the potential for a dual approach (i.e. a mixed model incorporating elements of both the MLE model and the more 'traditional' approach). The idea was that schools should incorporate both types of learning spaces (i.e. open plan and traditional 'single-celled' classrooms) to provide flexibility to use either approach. Respondents reflected on both how this approach could be enabled (e.g. *"invest more in open plan learning spaces that can be closed off to individual spaces at times"*) and the type of teaching and learning content which may be better suited to more traditional classroom settings (e.g. *"keep some of the open plan concepts for group learning but for your core subjects, learn in a traditional environment"*).

c) Support for Modern Learning Environments

Just two references expressed a positive view on MLEs. One respondent expressed 'conditional' enthusiasm towards open-place learning environments and stressed that there needs to be enough space for each learner for this approach to be effective – "*open plan is great, but not if it's overcrowded."* The other respondent focussed on promoting positive messages about MLEs (and other modern pedagogical practices). This respondent advocated for *"a wide scale info campaign about the benefits of progressive learning practices and modern learning environments…"*

92.5 Decile

There were 30 references coded to 'decile' for this question.

Seven references have been excluded from the commentary below as they are more substantively covered elsewhere in the report. These references traverse themes such as school choice and competition, socioeconomic differences in school Board capability and class size.

a) Sentiment towards the decile system

Five references indicated that the decile system should be discontinued. Two references promoted equality and recommended that the decile system should be replaced by equal funding for each student/school (e.g. *"each child should have the same funding allocation across the board"* and *"Decile rating – lose completely. Everyone on the same rate"*). Another reference advocated for the removal of the decile system on the basis that it would reduce competition between schools. The remaining two references were clear in their dislike (e.g. *"get rid of the decile rubbish"*).

Four references on this issue were of a high-level, non-specific nature (i.e. stating *"decile ratings"* or similar). By virtue of the fact these references were provided in response to Question Three these respondents signalled a desire for change.

Three references focussed on changing the decile system. One reference encouraged greater equality of funding/resource provision, noting that *"all schools have the same costs – deciles should not be the driver of funding."* This reference also advocated for all schools (regardless of decile) to have access to a public health nurse. In contrast, another reference implied that differentiated funding provision on the basis of socioeconomic circumstances was desirable, stating *"I would change the funding system from decile to something that better reflects socioeconomic realities of the school community."* The remaining reference was silent on distributional and equality issues and emphasised the adequacy of funding instead – *"Change the decile rating system, but still provide decent funding…perhaps even more."*

b) Low and high decile schools

Five references focussed on the level of support for low-decile schools. Most (four) references advocated for greater support for these schools, including two that referred to addressing the gap between achievement rates in schools at opposite ends of the decile spectrum. One of the four references was of a general nature (in the sense that it advocated for 'more help' for low decile schools but did not elaborate on this further).The other three references identified specific areas where greater support (for low decile schools) should be encouraged, such as adequate staffing and professional support in the areas of curriculum, finance and property management. The final reference on this topic observed that low-decile schools were already recipients of more funding than other schools – *"Lower deciles seem to get everything funding wise and mid-range ones seem to be less funded and don't get much from their community."*

Two references focussed on the funding challenges in high-decile schools. Both recognised that individual families of children within these schools may still be financially constrained. One of these references spoke to the issue of inadequate funding to support students with additional learning support needs in high-decile schools (which was covered in the 'Learning Support and Disability' section above at pages [x-x]). The other reference discussed the student body (at high-decile schools) more generally and advocated for *"Fairer distribution of resources and funds. Just because families go to higher decile schools doesn't mean they can afford to pay for all the extras that lower decile schools have funding for because of their decile rate."*

Three references spoke to the theme of decile perception. While the aforementioned references on low-decile schools focussed on the resources needed to support teaching and learning in those schools, these three references were more concerned about the image/perception of low-decile schools. All three references expressed a less-than-positive sentiment towards the perceptions around low-decile schools, making comments such as *"the stigma of low decile schools not being good schools is silly"* and *"the decile system has been overwhelmingly misunderstood and misrepresented as high decile = good school, low decile = bad school, skewing rolls and perceptions of schools in long-lasting harmful ways."*

The remaining reference focussed on student mobility between schools with different decile ratings. This reference suggested that students facing socioeconomic disadvantage should be provided with transportation to attend high-decile schools.

92.6 Class size and ratio

'Class size and ratio' was the single largest node for this question, with 184 references.

Most references were predominately focussed on the core themes – i.e. class sizes and ratios – in general. A subset of the references, however, focussed on a particular element within the overarching theme, such as classroom sizes, Modern Learning Environments and methods/strategies to help reduce class sizes.

One reference was more closely related to the theme of in-class support to help teachers to be more responsive to the individual learning needs of the students in their class, which has been addressed elsewhere in the report.

a) Class size

Most references coded to this node were predominately focussed on class size.

Some references were problems-focussed and expressed criticism or discontent with class sizes which they felt to be too large. Several respondents referred to the consequences of large class sizes, such as *"stressed teachers"* and *"not enough attention or resources for those who need extra help."*

Most references commenting on this issue, however, were solutions-focussed and advocated for reducing class sizes. While six of these were of a high-level, non-specific nature (i.e. stating *"class sizes"*) or similar. A number of respondents provided reasoning to support smaller class sizes and/or what benefits they were anticipating would be the achieved, such as to allow teachers *"more time with each child in their care and focus on learning and teaching."*

b) Student-teacher ratio

Seventeen references coded to this node were predominately focussed on student-teacher ratios.

Six references expressed criticism of or discontent with student-teacher ratios. They conveyed the view that student-teacher ratios are too high, and some respondents commented on why this was problematic, such as *"not enough quality time."*

Eleven references advocated for a better student-teacher ratio (i.e. in the sense of having fewer students per teacher), particularly in the initial years of schooling (for example, *"1:10 ratio for Year 0 and Year 1/2 classes."*

c) Other themes of interest

Thirteen references focussed on classroom sizes. Note that the word 'classroom' literally refers to the physical place (room) of learning (as opposed to the 'class,' which is the cohort or grouping of students).

Two references were unambiguously advocating for more physical classroom space per child to give students more room to learn (for example, *"raise the minimum m2 per child to facilitate better learning spaces in all schools"*), while the rest of the references on this topic leave room for interpretation.

Nine references were somewhat ambiguous as their literal interpretation (if taken at face value) does not capture the sentiment of what the respondent may have been intending. These references typically either advocate for a smaller classrooms (e.g. *"have smaller more manageable classrooms"*, alternatively, they indicate that the existing classroom size is too large (e.g. *"classrooms are too big" and "big noisy classrooms"*), but do not make any reference to changing any other variables, such as the number of students and/or teachers in the class. On the balance of probabilities, the literal translation of these references (i.e. advocating for a smaller surface area of classroom) forms only part of what was actually intended by these reference. In light of the sentiment expressed in the Modern Learning Environment segment below, one can reasonably infer the underlying message of these references is not necessarily a leaning towards smaller classrooms per se but rather, the associated smaller class (cohort) sizes.

The remaining two references are generic, two-word comments pertaining to classroom size, but with no additional commentary.

Ten references were concentrated on Modern Learning Environments (MLEs). Note that this includes references that do not explicitly refer to MLEs but where it can be reasonably inferred from the context (for example, *"Bring back chair and desks in a classroom. Smaller numbers of students in a class. 3 teachers for 95 students is a loud environment where some students are forgotten"*).

The majority (eight) of the references on MLEs expressed a desire to revert to more 'traditional' classroom styles (for example, *"Get rid of open-plan learning. It is very detrimental"* and *"Go back to one teachers, one class, not three classes in one space"*). One respondent highlighted that MLE's can be particularly challenging for students with additional learning support needs or certain learning styles, such as auditory learners.

The remaining two references on this topic expressed a more accepting sentiment towards the concept of MLEs, but indicated that it needed to be better supported/resourced to work effectively. One reference was positive about the concept of open-plan learning environments in general, but not if they are overcrowded. To address this issue, the respondent advocated for more space for each child in the classroom and greater variety in design of each classroom. The other reference on this topic identified that old classrooms required various

modifications (such as sound-proofing, breakout rooms, room dividers and better furniture) for MLEs to be implemented successfully, but noted that schools *"were not given the assistance they needed to be able to do it successfully."*

Three references made recommendations to help support smaller class sizes or lower student-teacher ratios in practice. Two of these references indicated that making teaching a more viable career prospect (for example, through higher remuneration) would attract more people to the role and create the workforce capacity required to support smaller class sizes. The other reference advocated for more funding to support building new classrooms.

92.7 Class resources

There were 28 references coded to 'class resources' for this question.

Eight references have been excluded from the commentary below as they are more substantively covered elsewhere in the report. These references traverse themes such as education workforce capacity constraints, centralisation of purchasing functions and in-class support for teachers to meet the needs of students with high behavioural and emotional needs.

Ten references predominately focussed on improving the provision of class resources. While four references were problems-focussed (i.e. they indicated that existing resourcing was inadequate). Six references were solutions-focussed (i.e. they made recommendations for change to alleviate this issue). All of these references were broadly consistent with the sentiment that was an opportunity to improve in this area.

The four references that highlighted inadequacies in the provision of class resources were split evenly between those providing general commentary (e.g. *"…change the mindset of educators, parents and teachers to provide the appropriate resources to meet the needs of the children of today"*) and those that identified specific areas of weakness (e.g. *"not enough basic resources in school…old art supplies, no science or technology"*).

The six references proposing solutions to overcome these resourcing constraints advocated for more or better resources. These references were split evenly between high-level comments (e.g. *"better learning resources for students and teachers"*) and comments which identified specific areas where more support/resourcing would be welcomed, such as technological devices and ICT support.

Five references indicated that teachers were purchasing classroom resources with their own money. Two references drew attention to the practice of teachers using their own money to provide classroom resources, but did not explicitly articulate a view on how to address this (e.g. *"staff using their own money to resource classrooms and feed children"*). The other three references were forthcoming with ideas on what should be done to respond to this issue. Two of these references stated that schools should provide these resources (either directly or by providing teachers with a class budget), while the other references recommended that teachers should get tax relief for out-of-pocket expenditure on classroom resources.

Five references were student-centred and focussed on what class resources students should have access to at school. Three of these references focussed on the provision of physical equipment for individual students at school which, collectively, expressed the view that students should have their own desk and chair (or *"individual work station"*). Respondents cited both academic and wellbeing imperatives to support this view: individual work stations were proposed so that students *"can focus and learn"* and each student having their own chair was proposed *"so they are not doing writing on the floor or on bean bags and heading for a lifetime of back and neck issues."* The other two references focussed on stationary; one stating that only 'minimal' stationary should be provided by the student and the other recommending that students should have access to their stationary at all times.

92.8 Technology

There were 39 references coded to 'technology' for this question.

Two references reiterated messages around teacher training and capability in relation to technology which have already been covered elsewhere in the report and so are not repeated again in this section.

a) Promotion of technology

Nine references expressed a favourable sentiment towards the use of technology in schools.

Three references provided a high-level description of what the respondents desired in this space. Two references highlighted the opportunity to use technology to support communication between home and school, and make it easier for parents to engage with their child's learning via online platforms. The other reference on this theme was more student-centred, stating *"Schools need to generate a population who are future-ready, and not behind in digital learning."*

Five references advocated for greater support for technology in school, as these respondents consider it to be a worthwhile investment of school resources. Specifically, these references advocated for increased funding for technology (two references) and better/more practical IT training and support for schools (two references). The remaining reference on this theme was of a high-level nature, stating *"improve technology resources"* without elaborating further.

b) Challenges and concerns

Overuse of technology in schools

Nineteen references were consistent with the general sentiment that technology is overused in schools. Respondents varied on whether they articulated this position explicitly (e.g. *"too much technology use"*) or implicitly (e.g. *"less time with technology and more time using books"*) but were consistent with the key/headline message.

Nine references focussed on existing practice and expressed the view that there was too much technology use in schools at present (e.g. *"There is far too much technology in schools. Children are not given the opportunity to focus on developing basic life skills such as writing"*).

Ten references advocated for less reliance on/use of technology at school. Collectively, these respondents wished to reduce the role of technology in the learning experience of students, especially at the primary school level. With the exception of one reference (which stated *"get rid of technology in primary schools…there is time for that in high school"*), references tended to use language (such as 'limit' and 'less') that indicated a desire to reduce technology in schools, but does not go as far as proposing a wholesale removal of it.

Most (7) of the ten references provided reasoning to support the proposition that there should be less technology in schools, such as giving students the opportunity to increase their proficiency and experience with other resources (such as books) (two references) and to embed 'the fundamentals of learning' first (two references), to reduce the risk of crowding out the role of the teacher (two references) and to encourage equality between schools (e.g. *"less reliance on technology, allowing schools without resources to teach the same"*) (one reference).

Other issues

Eight references concentrated on other technology-related problems and issues. Note that two references touched on two of the themes below, hence why the number of references below adds to ten (rather than eight).

Three references related to financial barriers to accessing technology. Two references focussed on how the emphasis on technology-based learning can be detrimental to students from disadvantaged backgrounds (whose families cannot afford to provide technology to support their child's learning) and that this raises equity issues. The other references offered a potential response to this issue – *"BYOD must be optional – schools must provide devices."*

Three references identified ways in which technology can create barriers and/or be detrimental to learning and student engagement. Specifically, these references stressed that technology can be a distraction from learning, can interfere with learning preferences and styles and that online platforms may be less conducive to the process of future revision and reinforcement than textbooks. One of these references also expressed the view that young people today have other learning priorities beyond their engagement with technology – *"The biggest issue facing our kids today is learning collaborative and positive human interaction – not using technology."*

While the references above highlight how technology can be a barrier to student engagement, one reference recognised students who use technology to support their learning. Specifically, this reference noted that students are allowed to use assistive technology (to support their learning) all year, but not in exams.

Two references highlighted the wellbeing risks associated with students' technology use. One reference cited the risk of heightened susceptibility to technology addiction during the childhood and adolescent years, while the other reference expressed concern about primary school children accessing inappropriate material online.

The remaining reference observed that young children are using devices before they have learned to read and write, which underscores the point made earlier in this section that students should have the opportunity to master 'the basics' prior to engaging with technology.

92.9 Day to day business

There were 65 references coded to 'day to day business' for this question. The dominant themes were school hours (including holidays) (16 references) and class dynamics (encompassing class composition and ability grouping) (ten references). References also traversed a range of other matters such as homework, discipline, food and nutrition in schools and communication.

Eleven references have been excluded from the commentary below as they are more substantively covered elsewhere in the report. Specifically, these references traversed issues such as homework, funding, Modern Learning Environments and the role of the Board of Trustees.

a) School hours and holidays

Sixteen references concentrated on school hours (including the holiday period). Thirteen references focussed on schooling hours and scheduling, and three references focussed on the holiday period and duration of the school term. These references were grouped together because, fundamentally, they all contribute to the narrative around the time that students spend at school.

School hours

Across the 13 references relating to school hours, the dominant themes were scheduling flexibility (four references), school start times (four references) and the length of the school day more generally (two references).

Six references focussed on the start and finish times of the school day. Most of these references were focussed exclusively on either starting times (four references) or finishing times (one reference), but one reference traversed both and advocated for a later start and finish time for secondary school students *"to work more in line with their natural bio rhythms."*

Four (of the six) references focussed on the time that school starts. Three references expressed the view that school starts too late, each of which cited reasons relating to fitting school hours around the lives of their parents (as opposed to education-related reasons) (e.g. *"Schools open too late for modern parents"* and *"start time doesn't reflect the real world with working parents' hours"*). On a related note, the remaining reference observed that children often arrived at school prior to 7.45am and suggested that schools *"have become a day care as well as school."*

The one reference which focussed on the time that school finishes simply stated *"school finishes so late."*

Four references encouraged greater flexibility of school hours and timetables, especially at the secondary school level. Collectively, these references expressed the

view that greater flexibility in this area would be beneficial to both teachers and students and enable better responsiveness to/accommodation of individual learning needs.

Two references advocated for a longer school day. One of these references proposed an additional hour should be added to the length of the school day, whereas the other reference went as far as proposing that students should be in school from 8.00am – 6.00pm.

The remaining reference on this theme was of a general nature, stating *"hours at school."*

School holidays and the school term

There were also three references relating to school holidays and the duration of the school term.

Two of these references advocated for shorter terms. One of these references cited practice in other jurisdictions (in respect to shorter school terms), while the other reference articulated a wellbeing imperative to support their position. The latter reference proposed that the summer holidays should be reduced by a week to enable a three week holiday period in July as this would allow students a longer rest period during a time of heightened risk of seasonal illness and winter sports injuries (and also noted that it provides the opportunity for families to go on international holidays during this period).

The other reference on this theme echoed a similar sentiment to some of the references presented in the school hours section above, stating *"school holidays need to be altered to fit the modern world."*

b) Class dynamics

Ten references comment on class dynamics in some respect.

Seven of these references focussed on class composition. Four references identified composite/mixed year groups as an area for change (e.g. *"The combination of years doesn't work with one teacher. The older year naturally gets brought down to the lower level"*). The other three references advocated for ability grouping. One of these references encouraged in-class ability grouping (via the practice of subject-specific streaming), while the other two references indicated that classes themselves should be streamed by ability (e.g. *"…they should be mixed in a way where students are working at their ability, not their age level…"*).

Three references spoke to the theme of class time and structure. Collectively, these references indicated that there was *"too much free time"* and that there needed to be more structure in the classroom.

c) Other

Five references concentrated on school uniforms and touched on the cost of school uniforms, either directly (e.g. *"the rising and high cost of school uniforms"*) or

indirectly (e.g. *"school uniform – free"*). One of these references indicated that there should be no school uniforms and *"less pressure on parents to fork out money."* Two references also expressed discontent with how frequently schools redesign uniforms (e.g. *"too many uniform changes…"*).

Five references commented on communication practices. Two references identified an issue with poor communication generally (e.g. *"lack of communication"*). The other three references identified particular areas of poor communication, such as engaging with the school community on changes within the school, communication between school staff and survey practices.

Nineteen references did not fit within the clustered categories above. These references focussed on school policies and guidelines (four references), proposals for schools to provide food to their students (three references), expressed issues with the lack of discipline in schools, particularly in the context of addressing bullying (three references) and the demands of extra-curricular activities (two references). Single references were also made in relation to support for library resources, the issue of religious practices in state schools, inadequate time, meetings, safety, and school data systems.

92.9.1. Compliance and administration

There were 28 references coded to 'compliance and administration' for this question.

Three references have been excluded from the commentary below as they are more substantively covered elsewhere in the report. Specifically, these references related to the centralisation of certain school functions (such as property management and administration) and the separation of educational leadership from school management functions.

Nine references concentrated on the volume of paperwork that schools have to complete. While some (six) references were problems-focussed (e.g. *"too much paper work for everybody"*) and others (three) were solutions-focussed (e.g. *"take out areas that require unnecessary paperwork"*), they were all consistent with the same overarching sentiment. Collectively, they expressed the sentiment that paperwork creates a significant amount of work for schools and that measures to reduce it would be welcomed by many players within the education system.

Six references focussed on the compliance burden that schools face. Three of these references raised an issue with amount of 'red tape' that schools face (e.g. *"Compliance – over-regulated learning environments – prohibits authentic environmental learning and experiences"*). The other three references advocated for change (e.g. *"Let the principal do their job by getting rid of the red tape and the hoops they have to jump through"* and *"Remove the mass production of proof"*).

Four references focussed on responsibility for the administrative functions of the school. Three of these references articulated views on who 'should' be carrying out administrative activities. One reference indicated that 'head office' should carry out the administrative responsibilities of schools, while the other two references focussed on the conditions of employment for the administrator role (stating they need to be *"suitably qualified"* and *"paid"* administrators). The remaining reference on this theme

made an observational statement about current practice – *"Recognise that the admin work goes on through the holidays and is a horrendous job to come back to because the boss is saving the school money on admin wages."*

The remaining five references related to the theme of compliance and administration, but did not fit within the clustered themes above. Two of these references explored the consequences of the administrative/compliance burden on schools (e.g. *"the admin requirements to run schools has reduced the staffing available for the classroom"*). The other three references made recommendations for change: One advocated for greater consistency across schools in respect to their management processes, while the other two references were of a high-level nature (*"less admin"* and *"less meetings"*).

92.9.2. Finance

There were 16 references coded to 'finance' under this question.

Nine references have been excluded from the commentary below as they are more substantively covered elsewhere in the report. Specifically, these references traversed themes such as the time Boards of Trustees spend on financial management functions, centralisation of school finance functions and the funding source for the remuneration of support staff.

Five references focussed on in-school financial management practices. Most (4) of these references identified challenges and concerns in relation to school finances, such as questionable use of school funds, inadequate funding, budgeting around fluctuating funding levels and the scope that schools have to use their funds to employ additional support. The remaining reference made a recommendation for how schools could improve their practice in this area – *"Involve staff more by them having a knowledge of financial priorities."*

Two references suggested the potential for centralised purchasing of school provisions. One reference focussed on the issues with the existing approach – *"Atomised purchasing of services and equipment leading to expensive and poor quality results,"* while the other reference advocated for change (to a centralised purchasing system to enable bulk buying).

92.91 School Improvement

There were 10 references coded to 'school improvement' for this question.

Five references have been excluded from the commentary below as they are more substantively covered elsewhere in the report. These references traversed issues such as the management of underperforming principals, the role of the Education Review Office and the professional development and training of teachers.

Two references focussed on identifying and supporting poorly performing schools. One reference commented on current practice in this space. This reference highlighted the lack of early support or intervention for 'at risk' schools, observing that *"there is no one to support the principals when a school is on track to fail until the situation is dire".* The other reference focussed on advocating for change in this

area, proposing that there should be a national team of experts to help support poorly performing schools.

Two references focussed on school resources. One reference focussed on ensuring that schools have access to the resources they need. The other reference focussed on opportunities to better utilise school resources by advocating for community education programmes on school grounds after hours.

The remaining reference on this theme touched on the wider economic consequences of school quality, with reference to the property market – *"Under performance of many schools has contributed to house price inflation."*

92.92 School Type

There were 33 references coded to 'school type' for this question.

Six references have been excluded from the commentary below as they are more substantively covered elsewhere in the report. Specifically, these references related to specialist school environments for students with additional learning support needs (including gifted students).

a) Existing school types

Eleven references expressed views on particular types of schools within the current system. Specifically, these references traversed charter schools (five references), intermediate schools (three references) and single-sex schools (two references).

Divergent views were presented across the five references that focussed on charter schools. Two references identified charter schools as an area for change in an implicit manner (i.e. they responded to question three with the response of *"charter schools"*) but did not elaborate further. Two references expressed a strong conviction against charter schools (e.g. *"Charter schools were a failure in USA long before we foolishly introduced them here"* and *"Get rid of charter schools"*). One reference articulated a countervailing perspective, stating *"charter schools seem like a good model."*

All three references on intermediate schools indicated that they should be closed. One reference stated that intermediate schools are *"the antithesis of the concepts of whanau and tuakana/teina, and the way that children grow as responsible citizens."*

Single-sex schools were also not viewed in a favourable light by those who commented on them. Only two references expressed a view on single-sex schools, but both suggested that they should be closed.

One reference expressed the view that access to different school types (such as Steiner and Montessori schools) should be available without having to pay for it privately.

b) Proposals for different schooling arrangements

Six references offered ideas for potential new schooling arrangements and school types.

Three references advocated for a different school structure in terms of how year level groups are clustered. One reference was relatively high level (e.g. *"further blur the division between primary and secondary education"*), while the other two provided detail on the year level groupings they envisaged. One of these two references proposed a 'middle school' for students from Year 6 – 9. The other reference traversed all year levels (with the primary/secondary schooling system), proposing a three tiered system that clusters students in Year 1-6, Year 7-10 and Year 11-13.

One reference advocated for state run boarding schools to *"lift kids out of poverty by feeding/caring/educating them in a boarding school environment."*

One reference proposed alternative genres of secondary schools (such as technical or vocational schools and art institutions), especially at Year 12-13.

The remaining reference echoed the sentiment expressed earlier in this report (in 92.9 Day to Day Business) in favour of providing more flexibility for schools, with specific reference to enabling part-time school hours.

c) Other

The remaining ten references traversed an eclectic range of ideas that did not fit within the categories above.

Five references identified problems and challenges. These references identified issues in relation to large schools (three references), barriers to accessing faith-based education (one reference) and the lack of both school and subject choice, at the secondary school level, in the Marlborough region (one reference).

Five references focussed on opportunities for improvement. These references traversed recommendations including, but not limited to, amalgamation of small schools, visits to rural schools (from city-based personnel) and a location-specific proposal for a new secondary school in the Canterbury region.

92.93 School Autonomy

There were 12 references coded to 'school autonomy' for this question.

Three references were excluded from the commentary below as they have been relate to themes which have been covered more substantively elsewhere in the report (the capability of Boards of Trustees, support for failing schools and access to services to respond to the social problems that impact on schools).

Six references advocated for schools to have greater autonomy.

Most (four) of these references advocated for school autonomy in a general sense, such as *"Increase autonomy. Move back to a high-trust model."* Two of these

references reflected an acceptance that increased autonomy may be conditional on capability (e.g. *"where experience and expertise are present, schools should be allowed greater autonomy"*) or greater accountability measures (e.g. *"increase degree of autonomy even if it means there are tighter reporting systems"*).

The other two references cited specific areas of school management where greater autonomy would be welcomed. One reference called for greater autonomy over school property decisions, while the other focussed on greater control in respect to enrolling students who have been excluded from other schools.

Just one reference expressed the countervailing perspective (i.e. that schools should have less autonomy). This reference stated *"Reduce the level of autonomy of kura and schools to improve the level of accountability for children's education outcomes – especially for those that the system continues to fail."*

Two references expressed a positive sentiment towards the existing level of school autonomy). One reference emphasised that schools are currently in the position to cater to the specific needs of their students and stressed that *"any changes would need to protect the individuality of each school and its students."* The other reference discouraged any changes to the existing approach, stating *"I wouldn't make any changes at this time. Schools' independence has been a mark critical success [sic] for Tomorrow's Schools."*

In contrast, the remaining reference emphasised a problem with existing practice (in relation to school autonomy), stating that *"there is no real autonomy"* in respect to school resourcing and called for *"greater definition"* of how it works.

92.94 School Management

There were 35 references coded to 'school management' for this question.

Twenty-one references have been excluded from the commentary below as they are more substantively covered elsewhere in the report. Specifically, these references traverse themes such as centralisation of certain functions (such as property management), school hours (including holidays), the roles and responsibilities of school principals and the boundary between governance and management functions.

Five references focussed on behavioural management practices. Three of these references reiterated messages that are more substantively covered elsewhere in the report, in relation to the lack of discipline in schools and failure to adequately address bullying. The other two references drew attention to issues with disciplining students, including the failure to provide an adequate process for managing behaviour associated with special education needs and the perception that schools have *"too much power and not enough accountability"* in relation to disciplinary proceedings. These respondents proposed a review (and amendment) of the current process for stand-downs, suspensions and exclusions, and central monitoring of children who get stood-down.

Three references focussed on managerial style and practice in general. One reference highlighted a problem with existing practice (namely, that innovation is being stifled by the time that school leaders spend on issues such as property

management and other administrative functions), while the other two references focussed on what could be done to improve school management practices. One reference encouraged schools to *"reduce over heavy managerialism"* while the other reference stressed the importance of ensuring the school management decisions re informed by best evidence and advice.

The remaining seven references (not captured within the themes above) traversed a range of topics such as greater transparency of school practice (two references), advocacy for greater support for school library resources (two references), the perception that schools are being treated like businesses (two references) and the desire to have professionals running the school (one reference).

92.95 Other Governance

There were 62 references coded to 'other governance' for this question.

Ten references have been excluded from the commentary below as they are more substantively covered elsewhere in the report. Specifically, these references traverse themes such as the boundary between governance and management, addressing underperforming schools and training for Boards of Trustees and school principals.

a) Alternative governance approaches

Role of the centre in school governance

One of the key themes in this section was the concept of the Ministry of Education (or a centralised agency/organisation more generally) playing a greater role in leading or supporting school governance functions. While this idea has been introduced earlier in the report, particularly in the section on Boards of Trustees, this section goes deeper into what this may look like.

Seventeen references spoke to this theme and were evenly split between those which specifically referred to the Ministry of Education (eight references) and those that referred to a centralised agency more generally (nine references).

Of the eight references focussed on the Ministry of Education, most (six) proposed the Ministry should be responsible for governing schools instead of Boards of Trustees (e.g. *"Boards should be disbanded and the MOE should be centralised so it takes over governance of ALL NZ schools"*). The other two references suggested the Ministry would have a more supportive role. These two references expressed the desire for the school community to retain their position in leading the governance of their school, but to have greater support from the Ministry that is targeted to the areas where help/assistance is needed most.

Nine references spoke to the idea of centralisation (of governance functions) more generally (i.e. while they supported the concept of centralisation, they did not explicitly refer to the Ministry of Education per se). Five references indicated that the centralised body would replace the existing Boards of Trustees (e.g. *"Get rid of BOT. Make the running of a school at a central place (like it used to be)"*). Three references proposed some variation of a dual-system whereby professional expertise was provided by a centralised/external body but the school community still had the

opportunity for some involvement (e.g. *"I think a more centralised system of experts who could support the governance with some community members involved would be preferable"*). The remaining reference stressed that schools should" have the option of continuing with the current governance model or shifting to a centralisation system).

Multi-school governance

Fourteen references discussed the potential for multi-school governance. The general sentiment was that the existing governance functions held by schools would continue to be held at the school level (as opposed to the centre, or a middle-layer), but that these functions would be shared across more than one school. For example, *"facilitate greater sharing between schools – Boards of Trustees (or similar governance body) responsible for clusters of schools."*

Several of these references highlighted that the multi-school approach may be particularly useful for certain types of schools such as small schools, those in rural and isolated areas and those which are struggling to recruit sufficient talent for their Board of Trustees. For example, *"combine Boards of small rural schools so they aren't competing, but providing local schooling/curriculum for children, sharing resources."*

Local or regional governance structures

Seven references explored the potential for local or regional bodies to play a role in school governance functions. While the concept of multi-school governance (covered in the section above) is based on groups of schools joining together to collectively engage on governance matters, the concept of local/regional governance (covered in this section) is different in that it is based on some external (non-school) body playing a role in school governance.

Collectively, these references advocated for some type of local or regional board to govern schools, many of which proposed a return to the system of Education Boards which existed in the pre-Tomorrow's Schools era. For example, *"It may seem like a giant leap backwards, however I would re-establish the Education Boards."* A number of references also suggested that there was an opportunity to work with the existing Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako structure as a platform to support a local/regional board model. For example, *"Centralised Boards for schools in communities – potentially aligned with Kāhui Ako."*

Independent structures

Two references centred on the theme of independence/autonomy from another party within the system. One reference was focussed on independence from the Ministry of Education, stating *"develop a true governance model independent of the MOE."* The other reference was more focussed on independence/separation of powers and functions at the school level, stating *"A governing body should be set up (separate from the school)…."*

Single expert governance models

Two references explored the concept of the role of a single expert.

One reference was unambiguously proposing that a one expert would be put *"in charge of a school instead of having [a] Board of Trustees,"* on the basis that there are a number of schools that end up with Commissioners and Limited Statutory Managers put in place *"so why not start with that?"*

The other reference also explored the role of a single expert party, but did not explicitly articulate the nature of this role (i.e. whether it was envisaged as governance position, or whether it was a supportive/advisory role). Specifically, this reference stated *"One person to work with and oversee schools of similar makeup (i.e. one person to overlook dual medium schools of similar size)."*

b) Other

Five references drew attention to the expertise and experience of those performing the school governance function. These references were consistent with the sentiment that school governors should have education-related expertise and knowledge (e.g. *"move to a model where the school is governed by people knowledgeable in education…"*).

The remaining four references were related to the overarching theme of 'other school governance' but did not fit within the categories above. One reference was of an abstract nature – *"Governance, if it takes a village to raise a child what does it take to raise a village?"* while the other three made specific proposals for change, such as improving avenues for communication between school Boards.

92.96 School Culture

There were 16 references coded to 'school culture' for this question.

Nine references concentrated on behavioural management concerns, but these have been intentionally excluded from the commentary in this section as they did not offer additional insight beyond what has already been covered earlier in this report in relation to discipline in school and bullying.

Two references expressed a negative sentiment towards the stringency of school rules. For example, *"schools oppress our children with archaic rules and regulations"* and *"schools do not allow hair colours and piercings for banal reasons."*

Two references encouraged more structure in the school environment. One respondent stated *"Too noisy and not structured enough. Children need structure and accountability. Our education is undisciplined and unruly."*

The remaining two references made relatively high-level statements about school values and the culture of the education system. One stated *"less discrimination, more understanding"* and the other advocated for top-down cultural change, stating *"culture starts from the top and it takes leadership to make it happen."*

93 Collaboration

A total of 99 references were coded to the overarching theme of 'collaboration' for this question. The dominant sub-themes (child nodes) in this section were 'Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako' (61 references) and 'other collaboration' (30 references).

Just one reference was coded to the parent node of 'collaboration,' which stated *'find ways to encourage a balance of collaboration and site-specific things.'*

93.1 Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako

There were 61 references to 'Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako.'

Twelve references were excluded from the commentary below because they were more closely related to themes covered elsewhere in the report, such as multi-school governance structures and school autonomy.

a) Sentiment towards Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako

Opposition to Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako

Fourteen references proposed Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako should be discontinued.

The majority of these references were narrowly focussed on expressing a negative sentiment towards COLs, with little or no substantiating commentary (e.g. *"get rid of this ridiculous COL idea!"* and *"get rid of COLs immediately!"*).

Two references, however, articulated a view to support the proposition to remove Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako. Both argued it was ineffective against the countervailing competitive dynamic across schools (e.g. *"you can't mandate collaboration over an essentially competitive system"*).

Support for Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako

On the other hand, five references took a more positive view of Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako.

Three of these references focussed on how COLs can help to overcome challenges within the education system such as problematic interpersonal dynamics between school leaders, and encourage schools to work together towards shared goals to avoid *"recreating the wheel."*

The other two references presented a balanced view and acknowledged that COLs were not without weaknesses, but that they were still a promising development. For example, *"the concept is great but there needs to be more flexibility in terms of providing the leadership."*

b) Challenges and opportunities

Issues and challenges

Thirteen references highlighted issues and challenges that are prevalent in Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako at present.

Four references were focussed exclusively on funding-related problems and are addressed separately in the section dedicated to funding below.

Five references on this issue were focussed on problematic internal dynamics and capability constraints within Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako, such as weak leadership, dysfunctional dynamics and challenges associated with the differences between secondary and primary schools.

Four references were outcomes focussed and were generally consistent with the sentiment that Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako did not appear to be effective in improving the progress and achievement of learners. For example, *"Kāhui Ako also needs to change as it is not making a positive difference for the kids."* One reference went as far as suggesting that they could be detrimental to student outcomes because involvement in COLs draws resources away from individual schools - *"COLs are taking principals away from their schools and as a result standards are slipping."*

Two references highlighted that the competitive environment that schools operate in is not necessarily conducive to interschool cooperation and recognised that this was a barrier to genuine collaboration in the context of Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako. For example, one respondent stated *"How can you be genuinely collaborative with someone you are in competition with?"*

Opportunities for improvement

Twelve references highlighted opportunities to improve Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako.

Five references focussed on interaction between COLs and the school communities within them. Four references focussed on opportunities for COLs to play a greater role in supporting their school communities, such as supporting *"cross-pollination of skill sets"* between Boards, centralising certain functions (such as administration and human resource management) within the COL group and making participation in COLs mandatory. The remaining reference sought to claw back some autonomy from COLs in respect to managing professional development opportunities and indicated that schools should be able to control/lead their own access to PLD.

Six references concentrated on ways Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako could function better. Half (three) of these references made recommendations in respect to rationalisation/alternative configuration of COLs (three references). The other three references touched on separate themes: greater flexibility, greater accountability and more inclusive practice.

c) Funding for Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako

The use of funding/resourcing on Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako was a salient issue for respondents. While some references focussed on funding/resourcing alone, most references spoke to the theme of funding alongside other ideas. These references are included within the relevant section above, but have also been

included within this section to create a coherent narrative around the issue of funding and resourcing (for COLs).

There were thirteen references which made substantive comments relating to funding.

Seven of these references proposed that the money spent on Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako should be spent elsewhere within the education system, such as on teacher and support staff remuneration, support for priority learners, providing schools with access to educational experts.

Five references expressed the view that the financial investment in COLs may not represent the optimal use of funding (e.g. *"too much money going down the drain"*) and expressed a degree of scepticism on the extent to which this money was demonstrably delivering improved educational outcomes for learners (e.g. *"no good outcomes"*).

The remaining reference commented on the incentives created by COL funding and indicated that although COLs were set up to *"support educational partnerships for growth and development"* they are *"sold on the money instead,"* suggesting that the financial incentives – rather than the desire to boost student outcomes – is being used as the primary motive to attract schools to participate in Communities of Learning.

93.2 Other collaboration

There were 30 references coded to 'other collaboration' for this question.

A third (10) of these references were more closely related to topics which have been explored more substantively elsewhere in the report. Specifically, these references traversed the themes of multi-school governance structures, Early Childhood Education and advocating for collective purchasing power across schools.

Seven references were focussed on collaborative practice within schools, encompassing the role of teachers (three references), class composition/organisation (three references) and interpersonal dynamics within the school environment (one reference).

Of the three references which concentrated on teachers, two focussed on promoting an environment that is conducive to teachers' collaborating (such as ensuring they have time for collaborative activity). The other reference commented on how teachers encourage collaboration and student contribution within their classrooms.

The three references which spoke to the theme of the interface between class composition/organisation and collaboration encompassed a range of views. One reference was supportive of collaboration between classes, while another reference opposed it (*"remove collaboration – have smaller class sizes"*). The other reference on this topic presented a balanced view, advocating for *"learning spaces that support collaboration but also support our most vulnerable students,"* alluding to the challenges that some groups of learners, particularly those with certain conditions, face with Modern Learning Environments (explored earlier in this report).

The remaining reference relating to the theme of in-school collaboration expressed the view that the Ministry of Education overlooks the connection between members of the school community.

Seven references made high-level statements which expressed a supportive sentiment towards collaborative activities, but did not offer substantive detail on what good practice (in relation to collaboration) might look like or how it could be achieved. For example, *"less blaming and more collaboration"* and *"more collaborative activities."*

Six references advocated for greater sharing of expertise and resources across schools. For example, *"encourage more sharing across schools"* and *"share best practice."*

93.3 Sector

There were five references coded to 'sector' for this question.

Three references were more closely related to topics which have been explored elsewhere in the report. Specifically, they touched on the themes of student transition, engagement with the school community, and communication from the Board of Trustees.

The other two references focussed on collaboration between the education and health sectors. One reference spoke to the weakness in existing practice in this space, stating *"education and health not collaborating for the future of student learning."* The other reference was encouraging about improving collaboration between these two sectors and highlighted how the respective sectors can have a positive impact on the other.

93.4 Impact of competition

There were two references coded to 'impact of competition' for this question.

Both of these references advocated for some form of district or regional presence in school governance as a platform for promoting more collaborative activity between schools and dampening the negative influence of competitive dynamics. The concept of local/regional influence in school governance has been covered in greater detail in the section above on 'Other Governance' (92.95).

94 Systems and Agencies

A total of 370 references were coded to the overarching theme of 'systems and agencies' for this question. The dominant themes within this category were Ministry of Education (121 references), Education Review Office (45 references) and Accountability (38 references).

Twenty-two references were coded to the parent theme of systems and agencies, the ideas expressed in these references are covered in the section's sub-themes.

94.1 Ministry of Education

There were 121 references within the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) sub-theme. The dominant topics that emerged in this sub-theme were: the role and processes of the Ministry (90); staffing (11); relationships (nine); general (seven).

a) The role and processes of the Ministry

The most dominant topic was suggested changes to the role and processes of the Ministry. Twenty-six references commented on the need for greater Ministry involvement in school governance. Seventeen of these stating that boards should be disestablishment and the governance of schools return to the Ministry, comments included, *"Not hav[ing] schools governed by volunteers. MOE should be governing them"*, and *"The Ministry of Education should take control (board level) of the schools to raise accountability and delivery of services in schools".* Four references suggested keeping boards but having a Ministry representative or two placed on each board. Three further references suggested that the Ministry should have role in appointing board members or the chair.

Thirty-one references commented on the need for the Ministry to have more functions and levers in education delivery. These references identified the need to re-orientate the way the Ministry works with schools to provide greater practical support for schools. References also suggested the Ministry should have a greater role across a range of core school functions, including property, finance and school operations more generally. The types of support identified in these references were, *"Genuine administrative advice", "Increased Ministry involvement in school operations"*, *and "More guidance and support for BOTs"*. Some of these references suggested the Ministry required stronger levers for schooling improvement, *"MoE should have systems in place to enable identification early when a school is failing and intervene early to prevent the damage that is done to students when neglect occurs."*

Six references identified the need for the Ministry to be involved in principal appointment and management processes or be the employer of the principal.

Ten references generally spoke to the need to improve Ministry processes. Comments included issues with *"slow responses"* from the Ministry, the compliance drive approaches, a lack of innovation, and *"too much bureaucracy and power with the MoE."*

Four references suggested there could be a need for a new type of middle layer in the education system, *"Some form of regional presence might be worth considering… 21st C Education Boards."* The remaining ten references touched on the need for improvement in Ministry accountability structures, stewardship model and other comments that simply stated *"Ministry of Education".*

b) Staffing

Eleven references commented on Ministry staffing. Issues were identified with the capability of staff, and references suggested that staff need to think more innovatively and be capable of providing quality support and advice to schools. Further references thought that there needed to be an increase in the number of specialist learning

support staff employed by the Ministry. In contrast, other references spoke of the need to reduce the number of Ministry staff.

c) Relationships

Nine references commented on the quality of the relationships the Ministry has with either; other agencies, schools, and/or parents, whānau and community. The general theme was that these relationships needed to be strengthened to include a wider range of stakeholders and to improve communication processes, *"Many MoE changes to the sector are delivered in a top-down non-consultative way."*

Seven general references touched on the need for improved access and usage of data and evidence (three) and either increased funding for the Ministry (three) or improvements to the Ministry funding model (one).

94.2 Education Review Office

There were 46 references that commented on change to Education Review Office (ERO) to improve the education system. These references grouped within five topics: improving the quality of school reviews (19), ERO processes (six), staffing (five), disestablishing or reviewing ERO (ten) and other (five).

Nineteen references suggested improvements to the quality of ERO's school reviews/evaluations. Increasing the frequency of school reviews the most cited method for improvement, with four references. Other ideas included taking a greater focus on teaching quality and spending time in classrooms with teachers, improving the consistency between individual ERO staff and in the focus of evaluations, ensuring that reviews reflect the actual practice occurring in schools. Other areas mentioned included making ERO reports more accessible to parents and a greater focus on wellbeing, "*Keep the focus on how schools are supporting all students with their needs (social and academic).*" A further comment included, *"Not enough accurate observation is being made about the things that really go on in schools and they [ERO] don't seem to be in tune with the curriculum or the best way to measure outcomes at each year level."*

Six references commented on ERO processes more generally. Some comments suggested ERO should take a more regulatory or audit/inspectorate-type focused role. One reference suggested ERO should have *"more teeth to guide dysfunctional schools."* Another comment suggested ERO should not be involved in advising schools how to change.

Five comments focused on the need to improve the capability of ERO. One suggesting that senior school staff should be seconded into ERO for two years, as a means to share best practice across the system.

Ten references stated ERO should be disestablished or reviewed. Eight of these commented on disestablishment, one the need for a review and one commented of the need to restructure ERO. The rationale for disestablishing ERO was included in some references. These reasons ranged from the inability of the review process to improve struggling schools, being a *"waste of money",* and that reviews and other information produced were seen as not being useful. One reference suggested that a

regional organisation sitting over schools would be a more useful way of evaluating school performance.

The five remaining references ranged across funding comments, alignment with the Ministry of Education, and responses that simply stated *"ERO."*

94.3 NZQA

There were four references coded to 'NZQA' for this question.

Three of these suggested different types of changes to their role, from general statements about making *"NZQA adaptions",* NZQA doing *"policy checking"* and *"farm[ing] out all assessments to NZQA or someone."* One reference stated that *"schools that opted out of NZQA should not receive government funding."*

94.4 NZSTA

There were 18 references coded to 'NZSTA' (the New Zealand School Trustees Association) for this question. Three topics emerged from these references; changing the role of NZSTA (nine), ensuring NZSTA has independence from the Ministry of Education (three), and overhauling or disestablishing NZSTA (six).

There was a broad range of potential changes to NZSTA's role, including having NZSTA attending board meetings, providing more tailored training to boards, *"giving STA a backbone to support their members"*.

Three references noted the need for NZSTA to have independence from the Ministry.

Six references recommended that NSTA was overhauled or disestablished. These comments generally just stated that it should be *"revamped"* or, *"disbanded"* or, *"overhauled."* One reference noted challenges for NZSTA in three areas; *"1. The NZSTA not doing their contractual duties 2. Conflict of Interest within the NZSTA" 3. Lack of a consistent and standardized health and safety protocols in schools (NZSTA)."*

94.5 Education Council

One reference was coded to 'Education Council' for this question.

This reference stated that did not support the Education Council and was not sure how it supported teachers.

94.6 Government

There were nine references coded to 'Government' for this question.

Four spoke of the need for greater government involvement in school governance.

The remaining references touched on ideas of improving communications between government and schools, and the need for significant reform in education.

94.6.1. Politicisation of education

There were 5 references coded to ‘politicisation of education’ for this question. Collectively, these references expressed the view that education provision needed to be protected from politics, and political change.

Three of these comments identified the need for an enduring Education Plan that was supported by parties across the political spectrum.

94.7 Interaction between agencies

There were nine references coded to ‘interaction between agencies’ for this question. Collectively, these references focussed on the need for greater co-ordination between agencies and how they interact.

Some references focused specifically on the relationships of the education agencies while others also referenced the need for greater co-ordination with health and other social sector agencies. A number of these ideas have been picked up elsewhere in this section.

94.8 Evidence, data and capability

There were 15 references coded to ‘evidence, data and capability’ for this question.

Nine references commented on the need for greater and better quality data and evidence gathering to inform policy decisions and practice in schools. Some comments were quite specific in the types of data quality improvements that could be made, *“Mandatory reporting on Learning Support… Same report can be shared by all and data used by each agency to inform their strategic planning, identification of needs, budgeting, development of supports and resources”* and, *“Be data driven, don’t experiment with children’s education.”*

Three references noted that there was too much research, monitoring and reporting.

94.9 Evaluation and Review

There were 14 references coded to ‘evaluation and review’ for this question. Collectively, these references highlighted the need for improvements in evaluation and review practices.

Six of these references identified the need for independent or external reviewers or review processes. Other references commented on the need to improve the quality of evaluation and review, or stated that it was needed.

94.91 The middle layer

There were 32 references coded to ‘the middle layer’ for this question. Collectively, these references reflected on the need for a middle layer, between schools and the Ministry and other education agencies, to improve education delivery.

Of these, 14 references suggested placing school governance and functions at the regional level. Some responses mentioned the need for a “*21st C Education Board.”* Other suggested that*, “An umbrella organisation over geographical[ly] located schools to ensure that all of the schools have the necessary resources and competence to provide quality education.”*

Fourteen references commented that some school functions, such as property, finances, PLD, principal appointments etc. should be centralised or shifted away from individual schools. A further two references noted that some school functions should be moved from schools, but did not identified where these should be moved to.

Two references stated the middle layer should sit around clusters of schools or through Kāhui Ako, *"Scrap individual boards of trustees and replace with one board, one finance company, one property consultant, and education personnel group for appointments and appraisal in a Kāhui Ako."*

94.92 Accountability

There were 38 references coded to 'accountability' for this question.
Thirty-three references commented on the need for changes in accountability settings. Twenty-two of these suggested there should be more accountability, with 12 references discussing this generally across the system. Other references in this topic identified the need for greater accountability for specific roles or functions (principals, teachers, finances, the Ministry and in Learning Support). Four references stated that parents needed to be held to account for their children's wellbeing and education.

Seven references stated boards were not an effective accountability mechanism or recommended the removal of boards of trustees, *"Individual school boards run by inexperienced and underskilled parent committees is a disaster. There is too much autonomy and not enough accountability for boards."*

Of the remaining references, three suggested that it was a difficult balance between accountability and trust, an example of this was, *"How can schools be accountable, without being controlled by the MOE."* One further reference suggested there was too much accountability, particularly on teachers.

94.92.1. Complaints, disputes, feedback

There were 17 references coded to 'complaints, disputes, feedback' for this question.

Twelve of these commented that current processes were unfair or inadequate, and needed to be improved. Comments included, *"The way the system is for dealing with complaints, the principals and teachers are able to easily sweep things under the carpet and keep issues contained. They need to be transparent and held accountable when they fail to do so."*

Four references thought a third party or independent body was required to fairly manage complaints, ideas included, *"I would have an education equivalent of the Health and Disability Commissioner to bring some accountability."*

94.92.2. Interventions

There were nine references coded to 'interventions' for this question.

Seven references mentioned statutory interventions. Three commented that the Ministry needed to have *"more teeth",* two suggested that the Ministry needed to have a stronger role in closing underperforming or small schools. One reference

suggested interventions needed to be earlier and the final reference stated the current intervention process.

94.93 Ethos and values

There were five references coded to ‘ethos and values’ for this question.

These references talked generally about building a fairer, more democratic education system to *“develop the gifts and talents of all students.”*

95 Funding

A total of 180 references were coded to the overarching ‘Funding’ theme.

This theme refers to comments relating to funding. This was used as a “catch-all” theme and contains overlap with other themes, such as “Learning Support funding,” therefore topics that have already been covered will only be acknowledged. Three sub-themes emerged; general comments (142), funding models (27), and fundraising and donations (19).

a) General

There were 142 comments within this sub-theme that did not fit with the other sub-themes identified. General comments (57), increased funding (61), learning support (24).

There were 57 general comments, the majority of which did not add substantive detail. Twelve references spoke to the lack of funding and resources. These respondents indicated that there is a *“lack of funding”* and *“not enough money to support learners and teachers.”*

Three references commented on central government and the Ministry of Education. Respondents suggested that investment in education needs to be made a priority. One respondent commented, *“Free education by chopping the minister’s budgets or giving them a pay cut.”* This was echoed by the other respondents, *“Removing the dead wood from the Ministry would be a starting point, so that a clearer picture would be created about the quality of service the Ministry could provide schools, and at what cost.”*

Other general comments included; removing first year free fees tuition for university students and distributing it to schools, investing in more wraparound and health services, simplifying the budget and finance reporting at the school level, and removing funding for students that are out of zone, and schools that offer other qualifications than NCEA.

There were 61 references that commented on increasing funding and resourcing to schools. Twenty-three references were general, suggesting that there is *“more funding so schools can resource 21st century learning properly.”* A further 17 comments suggested that there needed to be more staff that are better paid. This included teachers, teacher aides, and other specialists. Three comments suggested

more *"funding for essential supplies that teachers are paying for from their own salaries."*

Eight references mentioned property. Respondents commented on the inability to properly maintain their school property, suggesting there needs to be more funding. One respondent suggested that this responsibility be given to the Ministry, rather than schools. Another respondent commented, *"Look at the Property funding – 5YA funding is adequate but when there is an identified need … then the Ministry needs to come to the party and top up the project funds to enable Boards/schools to properly maintain buildings to a standard … There are band aids on school buildings all over the country, the problem does not go away when it is not corrected properly the first time, it festers until [a] building is no longer viable."*

Other areas that respondents indicated as requiring more funds and resourcing included class resources, and targeting funding for schools and students that are struggling, and communities that need additional help. In particular, respondents cited transient populations, disadvantaged communities and families, rural communities, and high and low achievers.

There were 24 references that commented on learning support funding. This has already been covered under (section 4.3). Similar to those ideas, these references suggested *"the state of special education in NZ is appalling … Our kids are overlooked at every turn."* Respondents cited that *"too many children are not getting the access to the services/support that they need."* A number of areas were highlighted as not being well resourced, such as in-class support through teacher aides and class aids, long waitlists for specialist support, and the numerous forms that needed to be completed for funding. Overall, these comments suggested that *"all students should have access to what they need to access learning – regardless of the cost. There should be no 'quota' or who is the worst gets the support."*

b) Funding models

There were 27 references within this sub-theme. Eleven references commented on the funding model generally, suggesting *"there needs to be equity funding for access to the curriculum."* These respondents suggested that there needs to be a *"more equitable system of funding operations."* Conversely, one respondent stated that *"all schools have the same costs – decile should not be the driver for funding."* Similarly, another respondent commented, *"There shouldn't be a decile rating for [each] school. Each child should have the same funding allocation across the board."*

One respondent commented, *"Equity Funding categories A and B is based on addresses of whānau for new centres. Addresses in these times do not take into account how many people can be living in the same whare to save costs, what the whānau income is, whether whānau has transport."*

Five comments specifically mentioned the decile system, expressing a range of opinions. Two references suggested the decile system needs to be reviewed or removed. One respondent suggested *"deciles don't really address school needs."* Conversely, one respondent commented, *"Lower deciles seem to get everything*

funding wise and mid range ones seem to be less funded and don't get much from their community."

Eleven references commented on the current operating model. Several comments suggested support staff, e.g. for teacher aides and technology specialists, should be centrally funded, such that this does not need to come out of the operational funding that schools are given. One respondent suggested *"schools that are able to operate using fees/donations and assets (e.g. old boy money), have their operational funding reduced and redistributed to lower decile schools."* Another respondent suggested, *"An operational grant based on a fixed costs component with a variable per student component on top."*

c) Fundraising

There were 19 references within this sub-theme that related to fundraising and school donations. Five general comments made suggestions such as *"clearer guidelines on donations and fees,"* and *"no uniforms and less pressure on parents to fork out money."* In addition, two of these respondents felt that school donations should not be expected.

There were six references that comment on fundraising, and a further six commenting on school donations. The overall sentiment of these comments suggested that the purpose of fundraising and school donations was to *"pay for core curriculum activities" and things that "should be funded by government."* Respondents felt that there is pressure on families and communities to participate in fundraising efforts and donations, one respondent commenting, *"I can only imagine the stress for parents which can't afford to financially help the school."*

95 Diversity

A total of 167 references were coded to the theme of 'diversity'. The dominant sub-themes were Māori (30 references), inclusion (28 references) and Māori medium (17 references).

95.1 Māori

There were 30 references coded to the 'Māori' node for this question. Respondents presented divergent views on the role of Māori culture and language in schools and the how well Māori students are served in the school system. While the majority of references coded to this theme suggested that there were opportunities for schools to do more to promote Māori culture and support Māori students, over a third of references (coded to this theme) presented the view that Māori language and culture has become too dominant (for example, *"schools are overdoing it, with Māori dominating all school areas…"*).

Six references echoed points which are covered elsewhere in the report, relating to the themes of Māori representation on the Board of Trustees, engagement with Māori, teaching Māori language and history within schools and promoting culturally responsive pedagogy.

Eight references indicated that there were opportunities to better support Māori students and the promotion of Māori language and culture in schools.

Three references were exclusively focussed on articulating concerns about how Māori students were served in the New Zealand education system, citing concerns such as institutional racism and insufficient provision of Māori based training programmes.

Five references made recommendations to change or improve the schooling experience for Māori students. One respondent expressed high-level, aspirational views about the integration and empowerment of Māori (and Pacific) students within the education system with reference to their broader contribution to society – *"At the core of New Zealand's future should be the education of Māori and Pasifika children, youth and adults…Advancing these groups' institutional capacity (power) and capability (potential) to serve their communities within the prevailing New Zealand society."* The other four references were of a more specific nature and provided recommendations for how Māori students could be better supported at school, both in the context of supporting their educational attainment (*"explore and apply school models that see all taiohi succeed in a rounded way"*) as well as providing for their social support/pastoral care needs.

Seven references expressed a less-than-favourable sentiment towards the amount of Māori language and culture in schools at present.

Four of these references were not necessarily opposed to Māori-focussed teaching and learning opportunities in schools per se, but expressed the sentiment that it could be done in a more balanced manner that was more inclusive of other cultural/ethnic groups. One of these references expressed the view that it was good that schools were focussed on helping Māori students (and students with additional learning support needs), but indicated that schools were often so focussed on helping these pupils that they *"forget to teach the 'normal' students."* The other three references collectively expressed a degree of acceptance/comfort with teaching some Māori culture and language in schools, but indicated there needed to be a more appropriate balance with the cultural interests of other groups, including international cultures. Some respondents expressed the sentiment that New Zealand European students were facing experience of cultural marginalisation at school. For example, *"…now we are seeing Pakeha being denied their culture…"*

The other three references on this theme expressed stronger views and more actively discouraging of Māori-based teaching in schools (for example, *"I would take Māori language out of the school environment"*). One respondent suggested that this matter (i.e. teaching Māori in schools) was similar, in principle, to the issue of religious instruction – *"I would not promote Māori culture in schools, just as Bible in schools has been canned because not everyone liked it, why should we be made to learn about Māori?"*

96.1.1. Te tiriti o Waitangi

Four references were coded to 'Te tiriti o Waitangi' for this question.

Two references expressed a broadly favourable sentiment towards the Treaty of Waitangi (e.g. *"it is a useful framework for equity and excellence"*).

One reference expressed criticism about how it is currently used in the education system at present - *"The Treaty and Kotahitanga is not given the respect or the resources the MoE outlines."*

The remaining reference was of a non-specific nature, simply stating *"TOW foundation document."*

96.1.2. Māori medium

Seventeen references were coded to 'Māori medium' for this question.

Six references were focussed on themes which are covered elsewhere in the report, such as the provision of learning support services and the cultural competency of teachers.

Five references featured commentary on English-medium education. Three references focussed on disparities between Māori-medium and English-medium settings, both in the context of funding/resourcing disparities (two references) and the gap in educational attainment (one reference). One reference encouraged more integration of Māori approaches into mainstream learning environments and recommended that Māori medium concepts, models and practices should be used for all students. The other reference, however, took a step in the other direction, seeking more of a separation – *"Move Kohanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa Maori and Wharekura out of the Pakeha education system."*

Four references identified problems/concerns related to the provision of Māori medium education. One reference stated that Kura were *"…conflicted in that non-Māori structures and thinking continue to determine what is successful for Māori'* and noted that *"While there has been a concerted effort to support change, outcomes seem to be highly geared to compliance."* Another reference observed that students from Māori medium environments are not supported in correspondence school until NCEA level. The other references advocated for more Kura so more students can access Māori medium education.

The remaining two references advocated for more support for teachers in Māori medium environments, through more funding for the schools to hire them and *"better support and understanding"* for the teachers themselves.

96.1.3. Biculturalism

There were four references coded to 'biculturalism' for this question.

One reference was not supportive of biculturalism during a particular period of schooling life, stating *"no bicultural classes in intermediate schools."*

One reference highlighted the challenges/limitations of bicultural practice in schools at present, indicating that mainstream schools were typically not well-equipped to cater for the cultural needs of Māori students and their families.

The remaining two references highlighted the change they wished to see in this space. One was of a high-level nature, encouraging schools to be genuinely bicultural (rather than tokenistic). The other reference made a specific

recommendation for change, proposing a framework that would *"ensure children are being fairly assessed and accommodated for in both languages."*

95.2 Pacific people

There were 12 references coded to 'Pacific people' for this question.

Three references focussed on school governance issues (as it relates to Pacific people). Collectively, these references expressed the sentiment that the Board of Trustees governance model was ineffective for empowering Pacific people, due to the lack of Pacific representation on boards. Another reference spoke to the theme of representation more generally (i.e. beyond the school governance context) and focussed on the need for more Pacific leaders in our country.

Two references expressed a supportive sentiment towards celebrating multi-culturalism in New Zealand, and advocated for more Pacific language instruction in schools. In contrast, two references expressed a more reserved approach, and urged caution not to force culture and language into schools without parental consent.

Two references were general in nature reflecting New Zealand's failing system for Pacific and Māori.

One reference called for funding to follow the student to raise Pacific achievement.

The longest reference in this theme commented about institutionalised racism caused by singling groups out based on ethnicity, effectively designing in underperformance for Māori and Pacific.

95.3 LGBTQIA+

There were 10 references coded to 'LGBTQIA+' for this question.

Most of the references were about gender identity in younger children. Half of the references were focused on the lack of system-wide knowledge and understanding about gender identity, and the need to educate school staff.

The need for sex education to include all identities was mentioned in two references.

Three references pointed out that schools are not inclusive of LGBQTIA identities and are therefore not safe places. Basics need to be changed such as Male and Female check boxes on enrolment forms, gendered toilets and uniforms, and teaching that genders activities or body parts.

95.4 Disadvantaged and at-risk

There were 8 references coded to 'disadvantaged and at-risk' for this question.

Six references said schools need more help and resource if they are going to support all students. Two of these references said that earlier intervention would help.

One reference was about providing free food for students who need it and giving support to students via schools rather than social welfare.

One reference said while support Māori and special needs students is good, not enough focus is going on the ‘normal’ students.

95.5 Migrant and refugee

There were 8 references coded to ‘migrant and refugee’ for this question.

Two references mentioned ESOL students and schools needing more support for them.

Enrolment policies were mentioned in two references as a barrier to inclusion for migrants and refugees.

Two references were about New Zealand’s global aspirations and the need to include more cultures than just Māori in our schooling focus. One of these references commented that learning Māori language and culture should be voluntary and learning other migrant languages should also be an option.

One reference said teachers are cliquey and migrant teachers can feel like outsiders.

One reference cautioned against the acceptance of migrant cultures and customs if they were sexist or patriarchal.

95.6 Access to education

There were four references coded to ‘access to education’ for this question.

References related to the legal right to access school for students with disabilities, support for at-risk students to keep them from dropping out of school, equity for all students including students who don’t fall into gifted or higher needs categories, and using programmes to support children within the school environment instead of suspending them.

96.6.1. Geography

There were 8 references coded to ‘geography’ for this question.

Five of these are about the disadvantages experienced in rural schools, especially unequitable funding and physical isolation from services.

Two references related to the incoherence of the wider Ministry systems.

One was about Learning support access in rural areas and one was about the need to have ‘more access to apply for more schools’.

96.6.2. Other barriers

There were 5 references coded to ‘other barriers’ for this question.

These five references covered learning support, school transport, ESOL needs, the need for easier access to correspondence learning and ORS funding, and the need to ensure schools have support for children who have difficulties.

96.6.3. Financial barriers

There were 15 references coded to ‘financial barriers’ for this question.

These references covered a range of financial barriers to participation and access to education and extra activities. These included sport, laptops, uniforms, tutoring and school trips. Three references were of a general nature about the need to have adequate funding so that free education was truly free.

95.7 Inclusion

There were 28 references coded to ‘inclusion’ for this question, all of which expressed a supportive sentiment towards the idea of an inclusive education system.

Eight references call for more capacity and training for staff about inclusive practices.

Two references suggest having inclusive classrooms available in all schools. Three references suggest that inclusion becomes the model of schooling rather than an add-on.

Nearly all references in this sub-theme were about including students with disabilities or additional learning needs. Two references weren’t about learning support – one was about including culture in school, and the other was about banning technology in primary school because it is a barrier to inclusion.

96 General Education Workforce

There were 26 references coded to ‘General Education Workforce’ for this question.

These references typically echoed points which are covered elsewhere in the report, particularly on the themes of recruitment and retention issues, central funding, and support for access to human resources expertise for schools.

97 General Comments

There were 12 references coded to the ‘General Comments’ parent node for this question.

These references were an eclectic range of issues and themes, traversing contrasting sentiments towards the education system. Two references expressed the view that no changes were needed while, in contrast, another reference described the education system as *“a complete failure.”*

Three references highlighted opportunities to improve the education system, such as increasing resources, goal-setting, and a greater focus on innovation.

Two references were more problems-focussed and criticised the lack of ‘vision’ the education system, as well as an issue with what was described as *“…’I know what’s right for you’ attitudes and behaviours.”*

Two references highlighted issues in relation to how the education system was perceived/treated, noting that there was a *“lack of respect”* for the schooling system and that it was the *“scapegoat”* for social issues.

The remaining two references did not fit within the categories above. One reference highlighted one of the positive impacts of education, stating *"equitable schooling can mitigate effects of societal inequality,"* while the other was of a relatively general and informal nature (*"I would un school"*).

97.1 Good Quotes

Just one reference was coded to 'good quotes' for this question. This reference spoke positively about the content of *Vital Connections* (by Cathy Wylie) and some of the material presented by Kelvin Smythe, and also sought to preserve certain aspects of the current education system – *"I think it's important that any changes made preserve the flexibility and freedoms that schools have now - we don't need cookie cutter schools in New Zealand."*

97.2 Miscellaneous

There were 57 references coded to 'Miscellaneous' for this question.

Thirty references were excluded from the commentary below because they have already been substantively covered elsewhere in the report. These references traversed topics such as religious instruction, compliance and administration, enrolment practices, the conduct of teaching staff and being responsive to students' as individuals.

Seven references were of a frivolous nature and did not offer substance of direct relevance to the discourse on New Zealand's education system, such as *"this questionnaire"* and *"Appoint me as Secretary of Education."* A further three references focussed on matters that are outside the remit of the compulsory schooling sector (such as the remuneration of university lecturers and media messaging).

Seven references provided high-level comments on problems and issues with the education system. The issues raised by these references included *"missing gaps,"* 'special treatment' within the school environment that is not reflective of 'real world' practice, opposition to the market-driven elements of the schooling model, problematic power dynamics and a desire to limit the number of international students admitted to large schools.

Five references expressed views in relation to certain characteristics or values that should be embedded within the education system, such as giving credit where it is due, less bureaucracy, *"equity and excellence,"* accepting responsibility (as opposed to passing it on to others) and creativity.

Four references focussed on the use of international evidence to inform educational policy. Three references encouraged this practice, each of advocated for mimicry of Nordic educational systems. The remaining reference expressed a contrasting view (in respect to modelling New Zealand's educational system on international practice), stating *"make our own policies for us, stop re-hashing OECD policies that may not have any place in Aotearoa…"*

Four references expressed a desire for change in a high-level manner but were limited in terms of specific detail. Two of these references encouraged sweeping,

broad-scale change (e.g. *"I would change everything"*), while the other two were framed in a nostalgic light (e.g. *"returning to old school system"*).

Three references expressed satisfaction with the current system and/or wished to see the current settings retained (e.g. *"I would keep the status quo"*). Another reference did not go as far as expressing an unequivocally positive sentiment, but acknowledged *"I think best efforts are being made now."*

Three references concentrated on the process of stakeholder engagement and consultation to inform the education policy process. Two references indicated inadequacies in consultation processes at present, particularly in relation to school closures. The other references made a recommendation on how practice in this area could be improved, proposing that there should be a criteria for stakeholder consultation, with specified timeframe and guidance material.

Three references focussed on national level direction, guidance and educational policies. Two references cited specific areas of concern (the Education outside the Classroom regulations, and the National Education Guidelines/National Administration Guidelines), while the other reference was of a broader nature and advocated for evidence/research-based educational policies – *"Set education directions from research based information not culturally/popularized…"*).

The remaining three references did not fit within the categories above. One reference expressed a view on what this reform process should concentrate on – *"Focus on fixing the most serious issues rather than going for a structure that often fails to address the real problems but gives the appearance of action and removes accountability."* Another reference related to public attitudes towards education, citing that *"there are a lot of Kiwis who don't actually think education is going to help them in their lives."* The remaining reference made an observational statement about parents investing in private tuition for their children.