



Ready, Set, Teach: How well prepared and supported are new teachers?

SUMMARY



Teachers are the most important influences on student outcomes in schools. To achieve the government's ambition to raise student achievement, it is critical that our teaching workforce is well prepared and supported. ERO looked at how well prepared and supported our new teachers are.

ERO found our new teachers are passionate about teaching and all have completed dedicated qualifications to become teachers. Ninety-three percent of new teachers enjoy teaching, but nearly half of new teachers report being unprepared for teaching when they start. In particular, they report being less capable in the key areas of adapting teaching to different students, managing challenging behaviour, using assessment, and working with parents and whānau. We found that schools are supporting new teachers to quickly learn on the job, but there is more support that could help. We offer a range of recommendations to ensure new teachers are set up to succeed.

ERO looked at the pathways new teachers take into teaching, and the support available for them in their first two years on the job. We heard from new teachers, as well as the principals and mentor teachers who employ and support them. We wanted to find out how well prepared and supported new teachers are.

When we talk about ‘new teachers’, we mean those who did their initial teacher education in Aotearoa New Zealand, hold a provisional practising certificate, and are completing their two-year induction and mentoring programme. For this report, we looked at new teachers in English-medium primary, intermediate, and secondary schools.

What do we mean by readiness to teach?

ERO looked at nine areas of professional practice and knowledge in nine subject areas.

When we talk about new teachers’ readiness to teach, we focus on both professional practice and subject knowledge.

Professional practice areas:	Subject knowledge areas for primary teachers:
1) Professional knowledge of teaching strategies	1) English
2) Planning lessons	2) Te reo Māori
3) Adapting teaching strategies for learners	3) The arts
4) Creating an engaging environment	4) Health and physical education
5) Managing classroom behaviour	5) Teaching languages
6) Working with parents and whānau	6) Mathematics and statistics
7) Working with other teachers and teacher aides	7) Science
8) Giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in teaching	8) Social sciences
9) Using assessments to inform teaching	9) Technology

We asked new teachers and principals to tell us how prepared and capable new teachers were when they started teaching, and now.

Who are our new teachers?

New teachers are more highly qualified and have more prior work experience than the existing population of teachers. They are also more ethnically diverse.

New teachers are four times more likely to have a Master’s degree than the overall existing workforce. New teachers are also more likely to have prior work experience (90 percent of new teachers, compared to 73 percent of existing teachers).

New teachers are more likely to identify as Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American, African, and other ethnicities than the overall teaching population (18 percent compared to 10 percent). This increased diversity is encouraging, as it reflects how Aotearoa New Zealand’s population is changing.

Key findings

Finding 1: Nearly all new teachers enjoy teaching.

Ninety-three percent of new teachers report they enjoy teaching.

“[What do I enjoy about teaching?] Just being rewarded when the kids make progress and you know you’ve been a direct part of that.”

NEW TEACHER



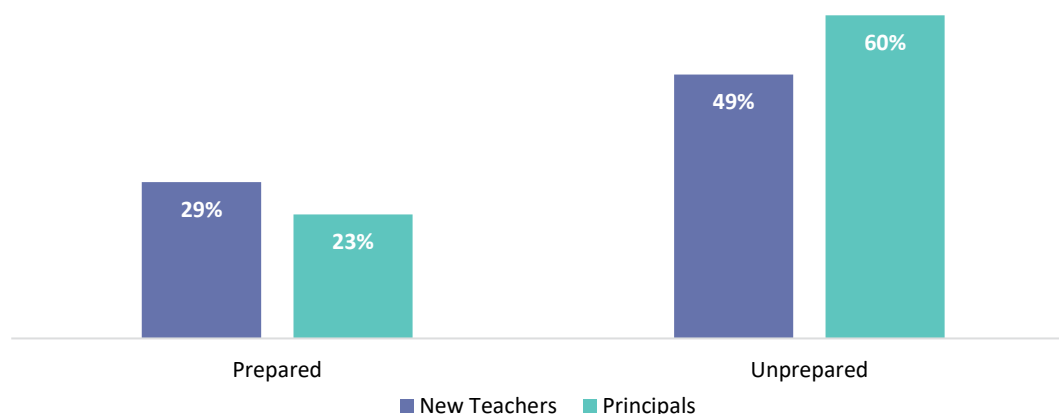
How prepared are new teachers?¹

Finding 2: Nearly two thirds (60 percent) of principals report their new teachers are unprepared.

Despite being passionate about teaching, nearly half (49 percent) of new teachers report being unprepared when they started teaching. Less than a third (29 percent) report being prepared.

Many people start in new roles or professions not feeling totally prepared, but it is concerning that only one in five principals report their new teachers are prepared for the role.

Figure 1: *New teachers’ preparedness in the first term: New teachers and principals*



New teachers are responsible for their classes and need to be able to manage different aspects of the classroom when they start teaching, so how prepared they are matters for student outcomes.

¹ These findings are of how prepared and capable teachers and principals report new teachers to be. While it is not a direct measure of capability, evidence shows this is a good indicator, and it matters for student outcomes.

Finding 3: New teachers and principals agree new teachers are well prepared in some areas, but are least prepared in four key areas of professional practice.

New teachers need to be prepared in a range of teaching practices. While they report being prepared in their professional knowledge of teaching strategies, working with teachers, planning lessons, and creating an engaging environment, they are least prepared for:

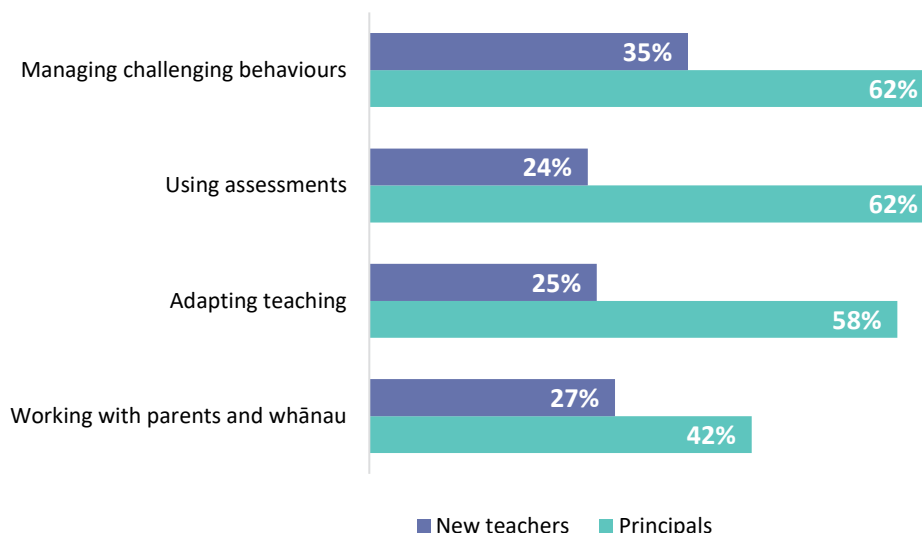
- managing challenging behaviour (35 percent of new teachers report they were not capable in their first term teaching)
- working with parents and whānau (27 percent of new teachers report they were not capable in their first term teaching)
- adapting teaching to different students (25 percent of new teachers report they were not capable in their first term teaching)
- using assessments (particularly in primary where 32 percent of new primary teachers report they were not capable in their first term teaching).

This is very concerning, given the level of behaviour issues in our classrooms, and the need to increase the use of assessment.

“I wasn’t prepared for how hard it will be when you have eight students with high behavioural needs”.

NEW TEACHER

Figure 2: *Percentage of new teachers who are not capable: New teachers and principals*

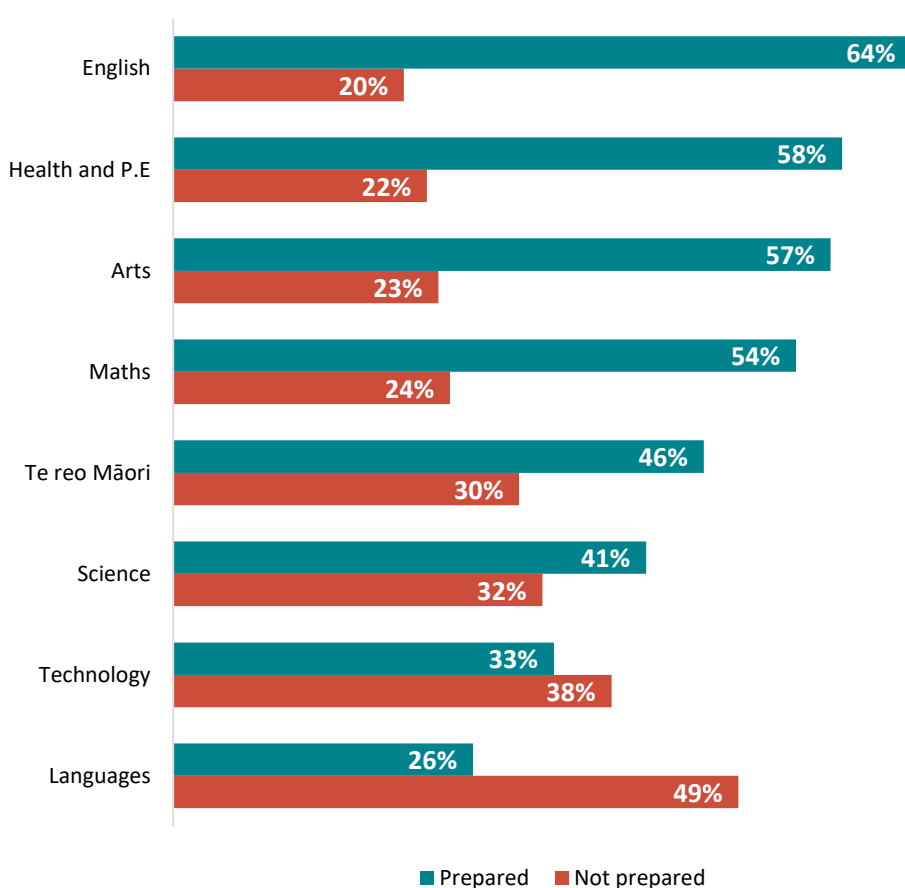


Finding 4: Primary school teachers have to teach many subjects, but new primary school teachers report not being prepared to teach all subjects when they start teaching.

While they report being prepared to teach English, health and physical education, and the arts, they are less prepared to teach in five subject areas. In their first term:

- forty-nine percent of new teachers report being unprepared to teach languages
- thirty-eight percent of new teachers report being unprepared to teach technology
- thirty-two percent report being unprepared to teach science
- thirty percent of new teachers report being unprepared to teach te reo Māori
- twenty-four percent report being unprepared to teach maths.

Figure 3: Primary school new teachers' preparedness in areas of subject knowledge



What are new teachers' pathways into teaching?

There are multiple pathways to becoming a teacher in Aotearoa New Zealand. While most new teachers study at universities, they study at different providers, gain different types of qualification and study for different lengths of time and in different ways.

Finding 5: Over a quarter of new teachers find their initial teacher education ineffective.

Although half of new teachers (50 percent) reported they found their initial teacher education (ITE) effective, over a quarter (28 percent) described it as ineffective. Those who found it ineffective also report being unprepared for teaching.

“There needs to be more focus on the logistics and practicalities of being a teacher – classroom etiquette with students, what to do when something goes wrong, what contact with parents looks like, how to write reports, what good feedback for students looks like, literacy and numeracy tools that can be used in your subject. Increase the amount of in-school time. It really was not enough to prepare us for the life of a teacher.”

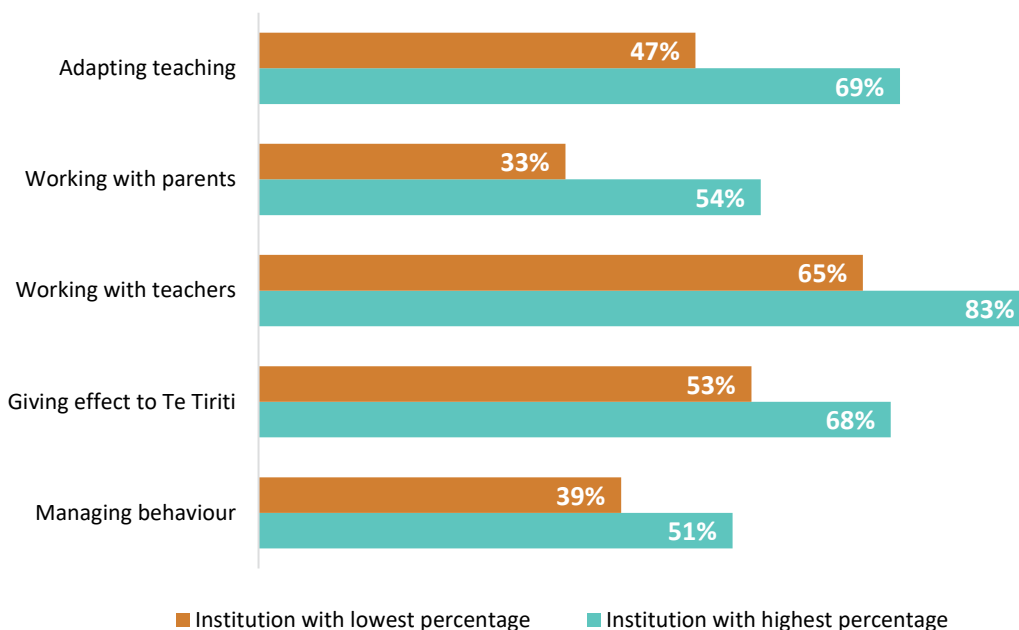
NEW TEACHER

Finding 6: Qualification type does not make a difference to how prepared new teachers are. But there *is* a significant difference in new teachers’ preparedness based on where they studied.

For graduates from universities, there is a range in how prepared they were. University graduates’ overall preparedness ranges from 20 percent to 34 percent prepared.

University graduates’ capability in their first term for different practice areas also varies significantly. For example, 51 percent of graduates from one university report being capable to manage behaviour in their first term, but only 39 percent of graduates from another university reported they were.

Figure 4: *New teachers’ reported capability in practice areas across different universities*



Finding 7: Graduates from non-university providers are twice as likely to report being prepared.

Graduates from non-university providers (including wānanga, Polytechnics/Institutes of Technology and Private Training Establishments) report being more prepared than those from universities. Overall, 26 percent of university graduates report being prepared, compared to 54 percent of non-university graduates.²

² This difference remains when controlling for demographics of the students. We used a binary logistic regression, Odds Ratio of 3.5.

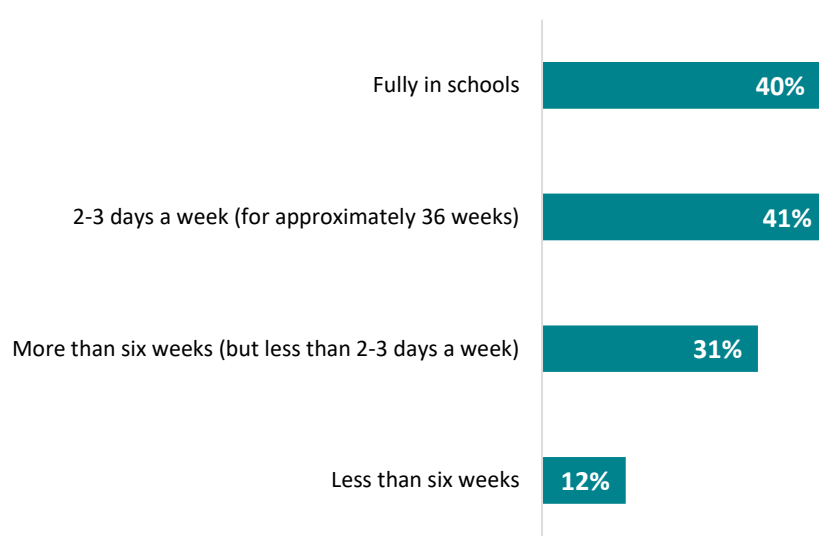
Finding 8: New teachers who receive more time in the classroom during their teacher education report being more prepared.

School placements while studying provide student teachers opportunities to observe real classroom situations, and gradually take charge of teaching with close support and feedback.

We found:

- new teachers who spend two or more days per week in schools report being more prepared in their first term teaching
- many new teachers face logistic or financial challenges completing their school placements, as they often have to move away from where they are studying.

Figure 5: *New teachers preparedness in relation to placement time*



“You can do so much theory and assignments, but nothing’s going to prepare you for the reality of working in a classroom than being in a classroom.”

NEW TEACHER

What characteristics support new teachers?

New teachers are a diverse group, and some characteristics help them be better prepared in their first term of teaching, and more likely to stay in the profession.

Finding 9: Older new teachers report being more prepared to work with parents and whānau, and manage behaviour.

- Just over half (51 percent) of older new teachers report being prepared to manage behaviour in their first term, compared to 42 percent of younger new teachers.
- Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of new teachers who are 36-years-old or older report being prepared to work with parents and whānau in their first term teaching. Only two fifths (40 percent) of younger new teachers report being prepared to do this.

“I was lucky in that I was 44 years old and so had had a lot of life experience and a lot of different jobs. I relied on skills I had picked up.”

NEW TEACHER

Finding 10: Māori new teachers report being more prepared in several key areas. They are also one and a half times as likely to stay in the profession.

- Fifty-nine percent of Māori new teachers report being capable managing behaviour in their first term, compared to 42 percent of non-Māori new teachers.
- Eighty-two percent of Māori new teachers report being capable giving effect to te Tiriti o Waitangi, compared to 56 percent of non-Māori new teachers.
- Māori new teachers are more likely to stay in teaching for five years or longer.³

Finding 11: Teachers who achieved an excellence endorsement in NCEA Level 3 are twice as likely to stay in teaching.

New teachers are high achievers, and this matters.

- Ten percent of new teachers achieve NCEA Level 3 with an Excellence endorsement. This is almost double the proportion of school leavers overall (6 percent).
- Teachers who achieved Excellence in NCEA Level 3 are twice as likely to stay in teaching for five years or longer.⁴

What supports new teachers to learn on the job?

The initial teacher education qualification is just the first step in becoming a teacher. Once they have completed an approved qualification, graduates can register as a teacher and gain a Provisional Practising Certificate. They then complete two years of on-the-job learning, through an induction and mentoring programme. Once they have completed this programme and demonstrated they can independently meet the Teaching Standards, new teachers may apply for a Full Practising Certificate.

Finding 12: New teachers often lack job security. One in three new teachers are employed on fixed term employment agreements. In primary schools this is half of new teachers.

- Thirty-three percent of new teachers are on fixed term employment agreements.
- Forty-nine percent of primary school new teachers are on fixed term employment agreements.
- New teachers on fixed term employment agreements may have limited experiences of support, and lack stability of employment.

“If you don’t feel like you can really settle in and have certainty, it is hard to devote yourself truly to the school and relationship building.”

NEW TEACHER

³ We used a logistic regression, with an Odds Ratio of 1.6.

⁴ We used a logistic regression, with an Odds Ratio of 2.2.

Finding 13: When they start their first job, most new teachers receive an induction.⁵ Not all inductions are good, and new teachers in schools in low-socioeconomic⁶ communities are less likely to receive an induction.

- Ninety-eight percent of new teachers in schools in high socioeconomic areas receive an induction, compared to 90 percent in low socioeconomic areas.
- Fifty-four percent of new teachers find their introduction to school policies as part of their induction effective, but 17 percent of new teachers find their induction ineffective.

Finding 14: New teachers receive a large range of support.

Schools invest in supporting their new teachers. More than 90 percent of new teachers receive mentor meetings, have their teaching observed, and have time to reflect on their teaching.

“We obviously want to invest in these people and we want to make that transition into teaching as positive as possible. So, the programme that we’ve got set up here really aims to help them to belong really, really quickly within the school.”

PRINCIPAL

Finding 15: Support for new teachers matters for their wellbeing, and intentions to stay in the role.

New teachers who receive wellbeing check-ins are two times more likely to see themselves in teaching for the next five years.⁷

“It’s really important for first year teachers to know that it’s normal to feel the difficult emotions. They’re not alone in feeling these things, and it will get better as confidence grows with experience.”

PRINCIPAL

Finding 16: New teachers need to have more time observing other teachers (in their own or other schools).

- Only 37 percent of new teachers observe teachers in other schools.
- This is concerning, given we found observing other teachers (alongside having time to reflect on their own teaching) makes the biggest difference in new teachers’ reported capability.
- New teachers who observe others are two times more likely to say they feel capable overall.⁸

⁵ Induction here means new teachers’ induction into their role as a teacher, in the school they are employed at.

⁶ To measure disadvantage in this report, we use the Equity Index (EQI). Low socioeconomic communities refers to schools in the bottom quartile and high refers to schools in the top quartile.

⁷ We used a binary logistic regression, Odds Ratio of 2.1.

⁸ We used a binary logistic regression, Odds Ratio of 2.1.

Finding 17: New teachers learn quickly on the job, but after two years, not all new teachers are confident in their practice.

Teachers develop their capability through their first two years' teaching.

- Managing behaviour and working with parents and whānau are areas where new teachers reported the biggest improvement in confidence from the first term of teaching. However, after two years, one in 10 new teachers report they are still not capable in these areas.
- In primary schools, after one year in the job, teachers' confidence improves in all subjects, but:
 - nine percent are still not confident in teaching maths
 - thirteen percent are not confident in teaching science
 - fifteen percent are not confident in teaching technology.

Recommendations

Teaching is a rewarding but challenging job. It is critical we set up new teachers to succeed. ERO has identified three areas to improve how well prepared and supported our new teachers are.

Area 1: Attract new teachers who are most likely to have the skills and characteristics to succeed in teaching

- 1) Increase the status and the attractiveness of the profession, including options for career progression within teaching, and promoting both through careers education and to the public (Ministry of Education, Teaching Council).
- 2) Over time, raise the entry requirements into initial teacher education, particularly for maths and science, and ensure we are recruiting for the dispositions to be successful as a teacher (Teaching Council).
- 3) Remove barriers to teaching, including through reducing the cost and accessibility of initial teacher education (Government).
- 4) Further incentivise STEM graduates, those who achieved well in STEM subjects in NCEA, and those proficient in te reo Māori into teaching (Ministry of Education).
- 5) Deliberately attract more high achieving students, Māori students, and career changers into teaching (Ministry of Education).

Area 2: Strengthen initial teacher education programmes, focusing on the areas new teachers are least prepared

- 1) Link initial teacher education more closely to the knowledge, skills and evidence based practices teachers need to succeed in the classroom (Teaching Council, initial teacher education providers, schools).
- 2) Ensure programmes more adequately teach:
 - adapting teaching to different students
 - using assessment
 - working with parents and whānau
 - managing challenging behaviour (Teaching Council).

Area 2: Strengthen initial teacher education programmes, focusing on the areas new teachers are least prepared in

- 3) Reduce the variation in quality between providers.
 - Put in place stronger moderation of programmes (including student assessment) (Teaching Council and initial teacher education providers).
 - Introduce an exit assessment from initial teacher education (Teaching Council and initial teacher education providers).
 - Report on relative effectiveness of initial teacher education providers (Teaching Council).
- 4) Reduce the barriers to in-classroom training through:
 - removing financial barriers for student teachers to participate in placement, for example through a placement allowance
 - increasing the support for schools and associate teachers to host student teachers on their placement (Government).
- 5) Expand programmes which have more in-classroom training, including field-based providers (Teaching Council and Ministry of Education).

Area 3: Provide more structured support for new teachers in their first two years

- 1) Provide new teachers with greater employment certainty and stability for the critical first years, and explore guaranteed employment for the provisional certification period (Ministry of Education).
- 2) Evaluate the extent to which boards provide their new teachers with quality development and support (ERO).
- 3) Embed opportunities for new teachers to observe other teachers as part of their provisional certification period, including making it a requirement of the induction and mentoring programme for full certification (school boards, Teaching Council).
- 4) Promote the role of mentor teacher as a valuable career pathway, ensure mentor teachers are recognised for the critical role they play, and are supported to do this (Teaching Council, Ministry of Education).
- 5) Make specific professional learning a requirement to obtain full certification (Teaching Council).

What next?

To find out more about new teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand, and what makes a difference for how well prepared and supported they are, check out our main evaluation report, and insights for school leaders and school boards. These can be downloaded for free from ERO's Evidence and Insights website, www.evidence.ero.govt.nz.

What ERO did

Data collected for this report includes:

- surveys of 751 new teachers – nearly 10 percent of all provisionally certificated teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand
- surveys of 278 principals at schools that employ new teachers – 12 percent of all schools
- interviews with new teachers and mentor teachers
- data from the Ministry of Education, the Teaching Council, and StatsNZ’s integrated data infrastructure
- a literature review of the local and international evidence around pathways and support that prepare new teachers.

Access to the data used in this study was provided by Stats NZ under conditions designed to give effect to the security and confidentiality provisions of the Data and Statistics Act 2022. The results presented in this study are the work of the author, not Stats NZ or individual data suppliers.

These results are not official statistics. They have been created for research purposes from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) which is carefully managed by Stats NZ. For more information about the IDI please visit <https://www.stats.govt.nz/integrated-data/>.

The results are based in part on tax data supplied by Inland Revenue to Stats NZ under the Tax Administration Act 1994 for statistical purposes. Any discussion of data limitations or weaknesses is in the context of using the IDI for statistical purposes, and is not related to the data’s ability to support Inland Revenue’s core operational requirements.

We appreciate the work of all those who supported this research, particularly the teachers, school leaders, and experts who shared with us. Their experiences and insights are at the heart of what we have learnt.



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