



Learning in a Covid-19 World:

How schools have stepped up to support students and whānau

The ongoing coronavirus pandemic has caused significant disruption for students across New Zealand, both from lockdowns, social distancing and ongoing uncertainty. The Education Review Office interviewed 750 schools and surveyed over 2500 principals and teachers across the country, from May through to September 2020, to understand how they have responded.

It is clear from this research that schools have gone above and beyond to meet students' needs and the needs of their whānau. In particular they have:

- innovated, used digital technology and developed new ways of working that will support students going forward
- quickly transitioned to distance teaching to support students' learning and wellbeing from afar
- supported whānau wellbeing and played a key role in local communities
- helped students to return to the classroom and continue their learning in a Covid-19 world
- taken care of their teachers who also faced stresses during this time.

There have been significant challenges for schools to overcome. This short research excerpt shares the key findings and examples of good practice from how schools across New Zealand have responded to Covid-19.

Schools have innovated and developed new ways of working that will support students going forward

Highlights included:

- There has been a step change in use of technology – two thirds of schools intend to retain some elements of distance learning and increase the use of digital technology in their curriculum.
- There has been a significant increase in whānau involvement – a quarter of leaders have found greater whānau involvement and integration of home and school learning a key success.

"[It was] like having five years of relationship-building in seven weeks."

Principal

Schools quickly transitioned to distance teaching and supported students' learning and wellbeing from afar

Highlights included:

During the lockdown, eight out of 10 students said a teacher had contacted them to check they were okay. Teachers used a combination of phone calls, emails, video calling and other digital platforms to regularly check in with students and whānau.

Schools supported whānau wellbeing and played a key role in local communities

Highlights included:

In a quarter of schools we spoke to just after the first lockdown, leaders reported that they had distributed care packages during lockdown, including food parcels and clothing, to whānau in their community, often in conjunction with KidsCan or the local marae.

"There was a drive-through here for us to come and collect the packs and kai, those without cars got them delivered to their front step."

Parent

Schools helped their students to return to the classroom and continue their learning in a Covid-19 world

Highlights included:

Schools changed what they taught and how they taught it to support student learning after lockdown. Four out of 10 schools interviewed changed their curriculum, a third their teaching practices and how they use support staff, and a quarter their learning relationships with whānau.

"I felt I was falling behind in my work. Regular catch ups with my Learning Advisor helped me to keep track of my progress and know what to do."

Secondary school student

Schools took care of teachers who also faced stresses during this time

Highlights included:

Three-quarters of teachers surveyed felt supported by their colleagues at school both in lockdown and afterwards.

"The overarching philosophy of the school is a learning community, it's relational, very supportive. We all work closely together."

Teacher

This summary is an early release from this research. ERO will release the full findings from its *Learning in a Covid-19 World* research programme early in the new year. This will include the impact Covid-19 has had on students, and the practical actions schools can take in 2021 to support students, whānau, and teachers with the ongoing challenges of Covid-19.



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