



Teaching Histories: Implementation of Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories and the refreshed Social Sciences learning area

SUMMARY



In 2023, teaching Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories (ANZ Histories) became compulsory for students in Years 1-10. ANZ Histories is part of the refreshed Social Sciences learning area. The Education Review Office (ERO), in partnership with the Ministry of Education, wanted to know how the implementation of ANZ Histories is going.

This summary describes what we found about the changes and the impacts for students, teachers, and parents and whānau. It also describes the lessons that can help inform the ongoing implementation of the Refreshed NZ Curriculum.

ERO found that ANZ Histories is being taught in all schools but, so far, not for all year levels. Schools are prioritising local and Māori histories and teaching less about national and global contexts. Schools also have a stronger focus on teaching about culture and identity, and place and environment than about government and organisation and economic activity, and are prioritising ANZ Histories over the wider Social Sciences.

What is Social Sciences and why is it important?

Social Sciences, sometimes referred to as Social Studies in primary schools, is the study of how societies work: now, in the past, and in the future. Social Sciences includes subject areas (like history, geography, economics, psychology, sociology, and media studies) that students can specialise in, typically at senior secondary school. Students learn about:

- how societies work
- the past, present, and future
- people, places, cultures, histories, and the economic world within and beyond Aotearoa New Zealand.

In doing so, the Social Sciences helps students develop knowledge and skills to understand, participate in, and contribute to local, national, and global communities.

What is Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories?

Learning about ANZ Histories builds understanding about how Māori and all people who have, or now call Aotearoa New Zealand home, have shaped Aotearoa New Zealand's past. Understanding the past helps students critically evaluate what is happening now and what may happen in the future.

ANZ Histories content is intended to teach students to 'understand' big ideas about ANZ Histories, to 'know' the contexts, and to be able to 'do' practices such as thinking, evaluating, and communicating historical information.

Understand, Know, Do for Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories

Understand – the big ideas

- 1) Māori history is the foundational and continuous history of Aotearoa New Zealand
- 2) Colonisation and settlement have been central to Aotearoa New Zealand's histories for the past 200 years
- 3) The course of Aotearoa New Zealand's histories has been shaped by the use of power
- 4) Relationships and connections between people and across boundaries have shaped the course of Aotearoa New Zealand's histories

Know – the contexts

- 1) Culture and identity
- 2) Government and organisation
- 3) Place and environment
- 4) Economic activity

Do – inquiry practices

- 1) Identifying and exploring historical relationships
- 2) Identifying sources and perspectives
- 3) Interpreting past experiences, decisions, and actions

What has changed in Social Sciences, including Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories?

The refreshed Social Sciences (Te Ao Tangata) is the first learning area to be made available to schools as part of the Refreshed New Zealand Curriculum (Te Mātaiaho). Teaching ANZ Histories, which is a part of the Social Sciences, became compulsory for students in Years 1-10 from the beginning of 2023. Teaching the wider refreshed Social Sciences is not required until 2027 but some schools are making a start.

As part of the refreshed curriculum, the *Understand, Know, Do* framework has been introduced to be clearer about the 'learning that matters' and the expected progress for students in relation to both subject knowledge as well as competencies and skills.

Key findings

Our findings focus on ANZ Histories because this is required to be taught and is where most of the change is happening. We found limited change for the wider refreshed Social Sciences. We identified key findings across four areas.

Area 1: What is being taught?

It has been compulsory for less than a year and not all year levels are, yet, being taught ANZ Histories, and not all of the content is being taught. Schools are prioritising local and Māori histories and teaching ANZ Histories over Social Sciences.

Finding 1: ANZ Histories became compulsory at the start of 2023. Three-quarters of schools are teaching it at all year levels. Primary schools are more likely to be teaching it. Schools are prioritising implementing ANZ Histories, to avoid overwhelming teachers, and this is crowding out other areas of Social Sciences.

Finding 2: Of the four 'Understands' (big ideas), schools are prioritising teaching Māori history (64 percent teaching this) and colonisation (61 percent) more than relationships across boundaries and people (53 percent), and the use of power (41 percent). In terms of the 'Know' (contexts), schools have also had a much stronger focus on teaching about culture and identity (77 percent), and place and environment (71 percent) than about government and organisation (45 percent) and economic activity (30 percent).

Finding 3: The curriculum statements are being interpreted by schools so that they are focusing on local histories rather than national events, and local is sometimes interpreted as only Māori histories. Schools are also teaching less about global contexts.

Finding 4: Teachers need to weave *Understand, Know, and Do* together but are not yet able to do that and are mainly focusing on the *Know*. Both primary and secondary schools told us that the *Do* inquiry practices are not yet a focus in their teaching of ANZ Histories. This matters because the inquiry practices help students to be critical thinkers.

“I preferred last year's learning in year nine because then we looked at things all around the world, whereas this year we are only looking at NZ history.”

NZ EUROPEAN STUDENT



Figure 1: *Big ideas that teachers have included in their teaching for ANZ Histories (so far)*

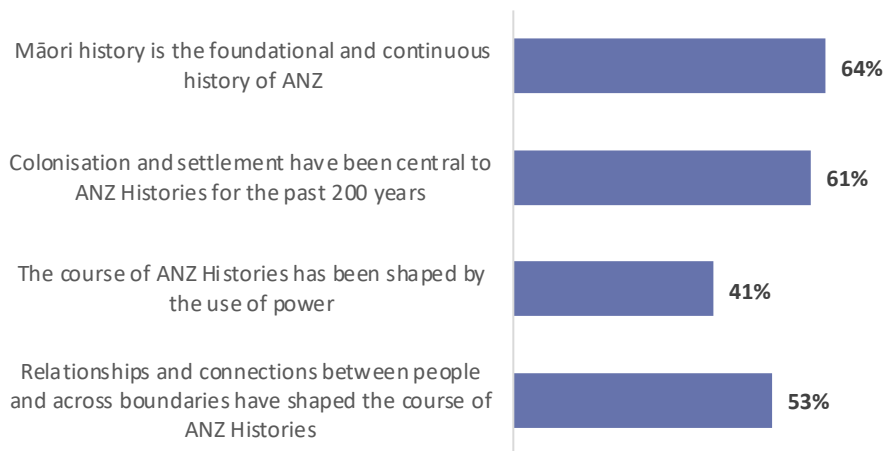
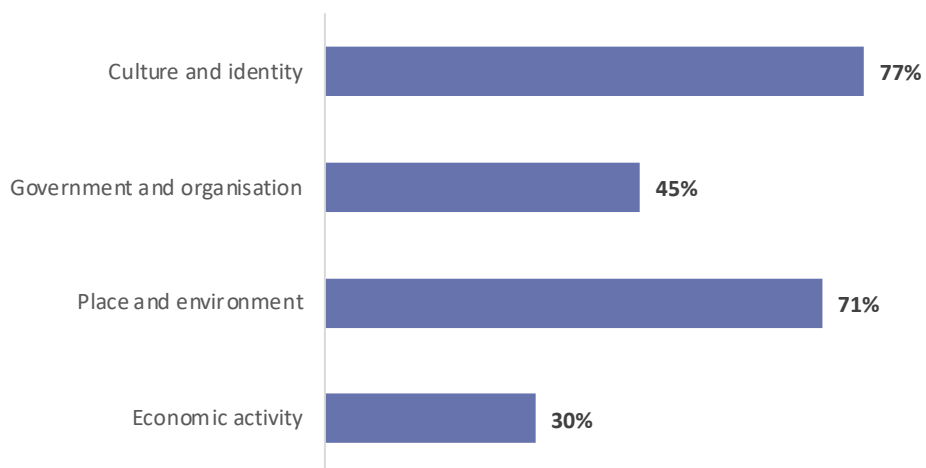


Figure 2: *Contexts that teachers have included in their teaching for ANZ Histories (so far)*



“[We’re] sort of thinking that it’s not such a big shift from what we do anyway, but the *Know* part is. The *Know* part is going to require a bit more strategy. ... That’s where we need to probably do the most work in making sure that we have a good scope and sequence.”

SCHOOL LEADER



Area 2: Impact on students

Half of students enjoy learning about ANZ Histories. Students enjoy ANZ Histories more when it includes global contexts and when they are learning about people similar to them. The focus on Māori and Pacific history means Māori and Pacific students are enjoying ANZ Histories more than NZ European, Asian, and MELAA (Middle Eastern, Latin American, and African) students.

Finding 5: Teaching ANZ Histories has been compulsory for less than a year. At this stage, just over half of students enjoy learning about ANZ Histories. Two-thirds of teachers have seen positive impacts on student participation.

Finding 6: It's important to retain a link to global contexts and events. Students are more than twice as likely to enjoy ANZ Histories when they are learning about New Zealand's place in the world.

Finding 7: Students are twice as likely to enjoy ANZ Histories when their learning is connecting them to their whānau and community, and when they are learning about people similar to them. Half of Māori and Pacific students (51 percent) report learning about people similar to them in ANZ Histories, but only two-fifths of Asian (43 percent) and NZ European (39 percent) students, and only a quarter (23 percent) of MELAA students do.

Finding 8: Enjoyment of learning ANZ Histories is not the same for all ethnicities. While almost two-thirds of Pacific students enjoy ANZ Histories (63 percent) and the majority of Māori students are also enjoying it (61 percent), fewer Asian students (55 percent), only half of NZ European students (50 percent), and less than half of MELAA students (42 percent) enjoy it.

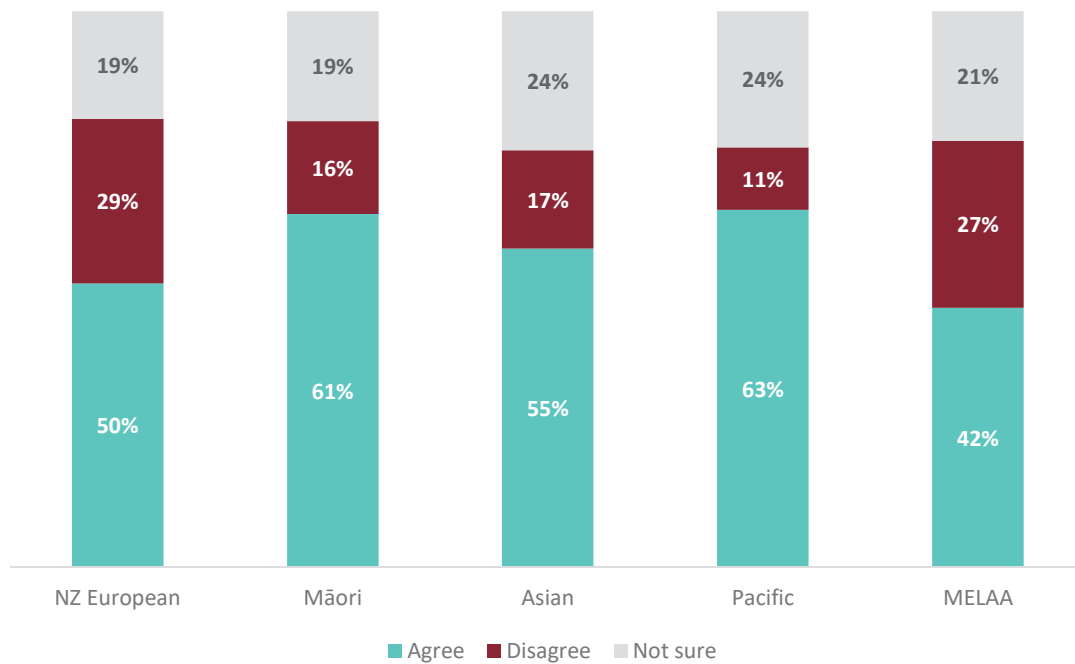
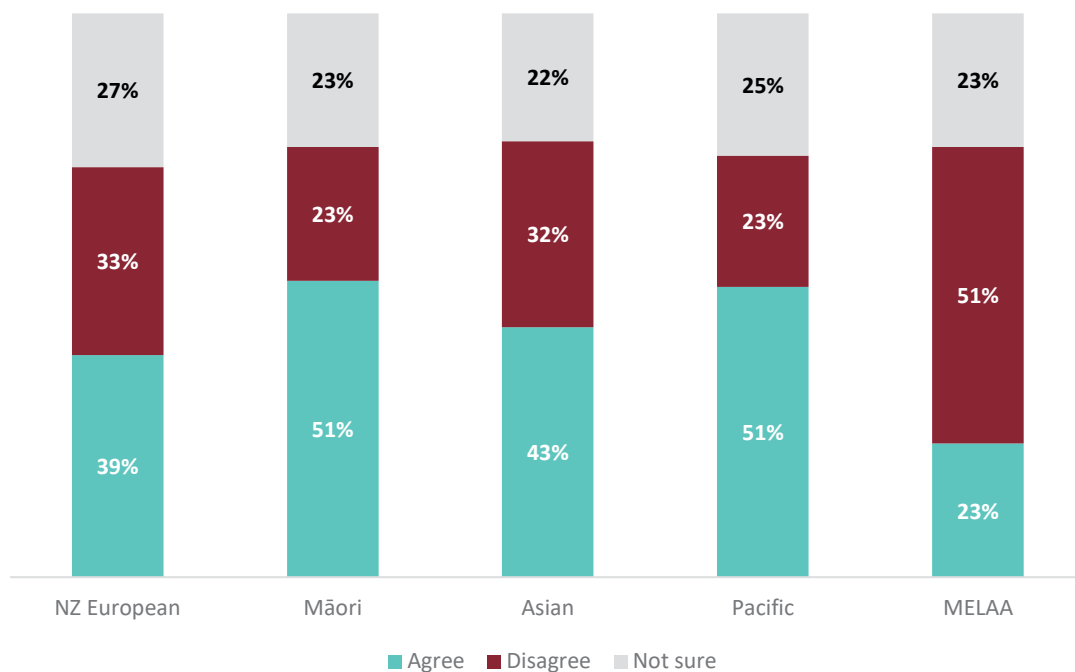
Finding 9: It is too early to measure the progress students are making in their learning in ANZ Histories. But nearly two in five students either aren't sure or don't think they are making progress in ANZ Histories. Some teachers are unclear on how to track progress.

Finding 10: Similar to ANZ Histories, more than half of students enjoy learning (56 percent) and like to participate (57 percent) in learning about Social Sciences. Asian and NZ European students are enjoying Social Sciences the most, and MELAA and Māori students the least, which is different to ANZ Histories.

“It's fun learning about our history. ... It makes me feel like I've embraced my culture.”

PACIFIC STUDENT



Figure 3: Student responses on whether they are enjoying ANZ Histories, by ethnicity**Figure 4:** Student responses on whether they are learning about people similar to them, by ethnicity

Area 3: Impact on school leaders and teachers

Teachers like teaching ANZ Histories, but some are overwhelmed by the scale of change and they don't have the skills or time needed to develop a local curriculum.

Finding 11: Three-quarters (75 percent) of leaders and teachers are confident in their understanding of the ANZ Histories content and nine in 10 teachers enjoy teaching it. We heard this is because teachers can make the learning more meaningful and relevant to their students.

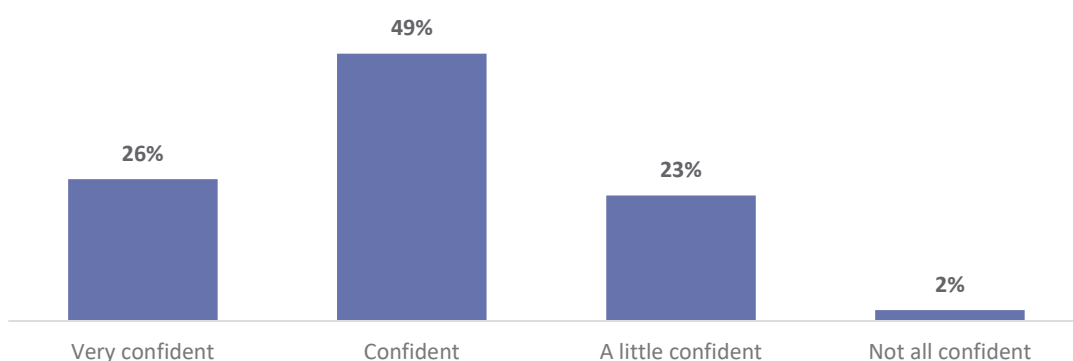
Finding 12: However, some teachers are overwhelmed by the scale of changes. Teachers describe the challenge, firstly, of growing their local histories knowledge, and then sharing that knowledge with their students. Half of schools have had limited or no engagement with local hapū or iwi on the curriculum. And some teachers do not feel safe teaching histories outside their culture, especially non-Māori teachers teaching Māori history.

Finding 13: In introducing ANZ Histories, the support teachers have found most helpful are teacher only days, in-person support from Ministry of Education's regionally based Curriculum Leads, and collaboration with other schools.

Finding 14: Schools find developing a local curriculum challenging. They don't understand what is required, they don't have the skills to develop a curriculum, and it takes a lot of time to access resources.

Finding 15: Leaders and teachers are less confident in their understanding of the refreshed Social Sciences compared to ANZ Histories. So far, just six in 10 (61 percent) are confident or very confident. Only six in 10 leaders and teachers say they have been supported by the school leadership team to implement the changes for Social Sciences, compared to seven in 10 for ANZ Histories.

Figure 5: *Leader and teacher confidence in their overall understanding of ANZ Histories content*



“Please tell me what to teach, I am so sick and tired of being left to figure it all out for myself.”

TEACHER

“[We have had the] opportunity to work in partnership with our communities and to share stories previously unheard by our staff, students, and their whānau.”

SCHOOL LEADER

Area 4: Impact on parents and whānau

Parents and whānau want their children to learn ANZ Histories. They want more global context included and say that how ANZ Histories is taught is as important as what is taught.

Finding 16: Many parents and whānau are unaware of the changes to the curriculum, and most have not been told about, nor involved in, the changes to ANZ Histories or the Social Sciences by their child's school.

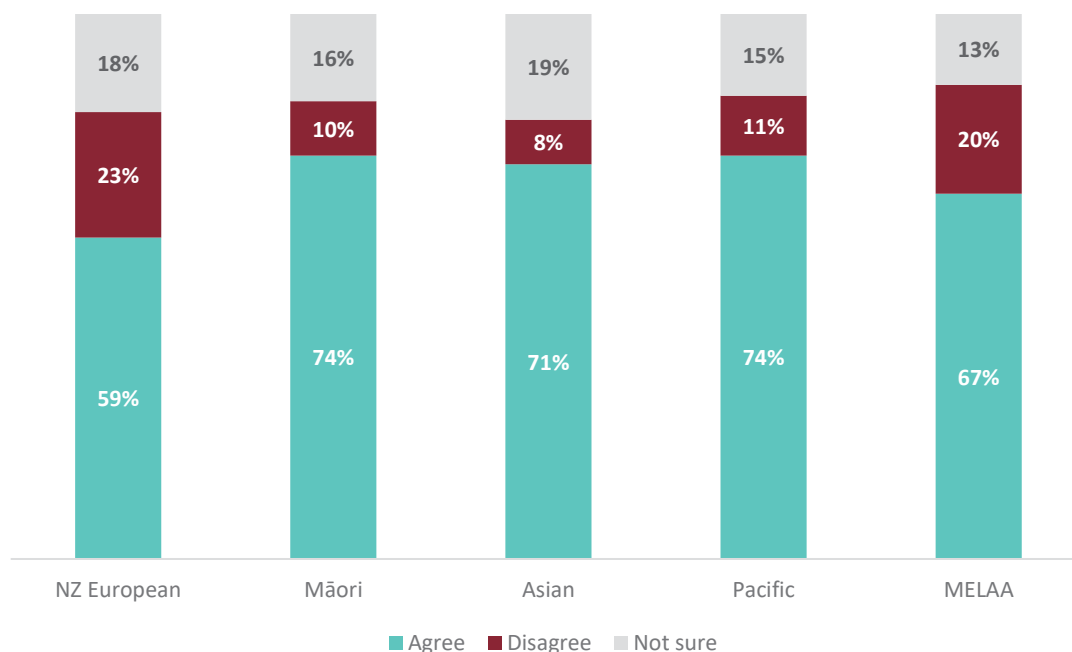
Finding 17: Two-thirds (66 percent) of parents and whānau think ANZ Histories is useful for their child's future. Most parents and whānau we spoke to are pleased that ANZ Histories is being implemented in schools, expressing that learning about ANZ Histories fits their expectations for what school should offer.

Finding 18: Only three in five (62 percent) parents and whānau think their child sees themselves represented in their learning for ANZ Histories. Some want the learning to include more national events and global histories, as their children are interested in global events and Aotearoa New Zealand should not be seen in a vacuum.

Finding 19: Parents and whānau think 'how' curriculum content is delivered is as important, or more important, than the material itself. They say that histories can be contentious and need to be taught sensitively to avoid disengaging students.

Finding 20: Similar to ANZ Histories, just over two-thirds (68 percent) of parents and whānau think Social Sciences is useful for their child's future, and three in five (61 percent) think their child sees themselves represented in their learning. Different to ANZ Histories, Asian and MELAA parents and whānau are most likely to say their child can see themselves in their learning for the Social Sciences. NZ European parents and whānau are the least likely to say their child can see themselves represented for both ANZ Histories and the Social Sciences.

Figure 6: Parent and whānau responses on whether the things their child is learning about ANZ Histories are useful for their future, by ethnicity



“I agree with the [ANZ] history and teaching, just as long as it’s told the right way and, actual factual history, where it’s not just someone’s opinion.”

PARENT

“It’s about developing other skills that they get, not just necessarily the information. I mean, we can google information until we’re blue in the face, but we need to be able to sort that information into what’s actually relevant to us. And I think that’s probably the more important skill than what we’re teaching the kids.”

PARENT

Lessons learnt

Based on ERO’s key findings, seven lessons have been identified for ensuring balanced ANZ Histories curriculum content, and for supporting the successful implementation of curriculum changes in other learning areas:

Lesson 1: Keep making ANZ Histories engaging, by teaching about people, places and events that students can relate to and history relevant to them and their communities.

Students are enjoying ANZ Histories. It has engaged a wide range of students, in particular Māori students. Teachers report positive impacts on student participation, and students (from all backgrounds) report learning in ANZ Histories helps them connect to 'being a New Zealander'. Students, especially Māori and Pacific students, enjoy learning ANZ Histories, and teachers and parents and whānau see students are engaged in their learning. It is important that this engagement and enjoyment is not lost, as implementation continues.

Lesson 2: Provide clearer expectations about what needs to be covered to make sure all areas of ANZ Histories are taught, including the national and global context.

Teachers are often interpreting ANZ Histories as the history of their immediate area, and Māori history. This has led to a lack of focus on the histories of Aotearoa New Zealand more broadly, and the histories of all people who call it home. Teachers would benefit from guidance around how much attention to give:

- Knowledge of history and the social science skills involved
- Māori history
- The histories of other people who call/have called Aotearoa New Zealand home
- The history of their immediate area
- The history of Aotearoa New Zealand more broadly
- Aotearoa New Zealand's place in the world
- Global relationships and connections.

Lesson 3: Have a more explicit curriculum and provide more 'can be used off the shelf' content and exemplars.

Schools are struggling to develop their ANZ Histories content because their teachers are not experts in curriculum design. Developing a school curriculum is a big ask of schools and they would benefit from more explicit guidance around curriculum design, or a more prescriptive curriculum. Local hapū and iwi can support development of content but cannot alone support the framing of events from multiple perspectives.

Lesson 4: Be realistic about the capacity of both schools and hapū and iwi to engage on changes to the curriculum.

Schools are expected to engage with local hapū and iwi to develop their ANZ Histories curriculum content, but this often isn't happening. Half of schools have limited or no engagement with local hapū and iwi on Social Sciences, including ANZ Histories. Some schools are facing challenges due to lack of capacity and capability to engage with hapū and iwi. We also heard from schools that hapū or iwi don't have the capacity to work with all the schools in their area (rohe). Schools would benefit from 'off the shelf' teaching and learning resources about Māori histories, to fill the gap until schools are able to develop those relationships. Hapū and iwi would benefit from resourcing or support so they can provide schools with the help they need.

Lesson 5: Provide further guidance and tools for assessing student progress.

While teachers appreciate the clarity of the Phases of Learning (learning progressions), they are unsure how to measure and track how well students are learning and progressing in ANZ Histories, or Social Sciences more broadly. Teachers would benefit from greater guidance on measuring and tracking progress, as well as easy-to-use assessment tools that align with the Phases of Learning and the skills students are expected to develop.

Lesson 6: Keep providing supports and resources (including Curriculum Leads who work with schools), but make sure they are available to schools for the start of implementation and are well signposted.

The most useful and impactful supports for the implementation of ANZ Histories have been teacher only days, in-person support from Curriculum Leads, and collaboration with other schools that are part of a cluster, such as Kāhui Ako. It is important that these supports are in place – and accessible to all schools – for the roll out of new curriculum areas. The Ministry's resources have also provided critical support for implementation, but teachers often don't know when new supports are available or where to find them. Schools stand a better chance of accessing the curriculum resources they need if they are made available for the start of implementation, and are accessible from a single website that is well-publicised.

Lesson 7: Better, more targeted support, tailored for schools at the different stages of implementation.

We found that schools are at different stages of implementation. Each stage of implementation has different support needs. Therefore, schools would benefit from targeted support to help them towards fully embedding changes.

What ERO did

We have taken a robust, mixed-methods approach to deliver breadth and depth, including:

- surveys of 447 school leaders and teachers
- surveys of 918 students
- surveys of 1,016 parents and whānau
- site visits at 11 schools
- in-depth interviews with school leaders, teachers, students, parents and whānau, experts in curriculum and other relevant subject matter, and one kaumatua of a hapū.

We collected our data in late Term 3 and early Term 4 of 2023.

We appreciate the contribution of all those who supported this evaluation, particularly the school leaders, teachers, students, parents and whānau, and experts who gave up their time for us. Their experiences and insights are at the heart of what we have learnt.



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