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Education
for Māori:
Relationships
between schools
and whānau



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The Ti Kōuka artpiece pictured on
the cover of this report was made
by Charlene Fraser

Education for Māori: Relationships between schools and whānau

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Contents

Wāhinga kōrero	3
Foreword by Māori Advisory and Reference Group	4
Auditor-General's overview	6
Some important terms	8
Part 1 – Introduction	9
Why we audited relationships between schools and whānau	9
How we carried out our audit	9
What we did not look at	11
The structure of our report	11
Part 2 – What helps build relationships?	12
School leaders valuing Māori	12
Whānau, iwi, and schools working together	13
Open and honest communication	14
Taking a flexible approach	15
Some people used policies to drive practice	16
Part 3 – Students' and whānau views on their relationships with schools	19
Do whānau think relationships are effective?	19
What students told us about their teachers	19
Do whānau find it easy to get involved with their child's school?	20
Do whānau think that schools keep them informed about their child?	21
Are schools committed to Māori students succeeding as Māori?	22
Our observations	23
Part 4 – Schools' views on their relationships with whānau	24
Do schools think relationships are effective?	24
How well do schools communicate school rules, policies, plans, and targets?	24
Do schools have policies to build relationships with whānau?	25
Do schools encourage whānau to help out in school?	25
Do schools think they communicate well with whānau about their child?	25
Our observations	27
Appendices	
1 – Student and whānau survey	28
2 – School survey	30
3 – Student and whānau survey results, by decile	32
4 – Student and whānau survey results, by proportion of Māori students	34
5 – School survey results, by decile	36
6 – School survey results, by proportion of Māori students	38
Figures	
1 – The proportion of whānau who find it easy to get involved with their child's school	20
2 – How often whānau and teachers were in contact	21
3 – Whether whānau think that their child's school is committed to Māori students succeeding as Māori	22
4 – How often schools say they consult with whānau on policies, plans, targets, and rules	25
5 – The proportion of schools that agreed they communicate well with whānau about their child	26
6 – The proportion of schools that contact whānau promptly about good news involving their child, by decile and proportion of Māori students	26

Wāhinga kōrero

E whakakoia ana te manawa i runga i ngā kōrerorero e puta mai ana mō te āhua o te whānaungatanga, heoi anō ka kawea tēnei kaupapa e ngā wānanga, e tēna me tēnā ahurea rānei, ka kaha ake te kapakapa o te manawa. Māringanui, mai i rānō i whakaritea he tikanga e te pūnaha mātauranga o Aotearoa kia kotahi ai te hoe o ngā kura me ō rātou hapori hei painga mō ā tātou tamariki. Nā te mahi o ngā pōari, o ngā kōmiti, o ngā mātua o te hapori, me ngā kaiako o te kura ēnei āhuatanga i tutuki kia whai hua ai mō ia tamaiti, mō ia tamaiti. Kua tautuhia, ā, kua whakaurungia hokia ngā uarā tika, ngā rautaki kōrerorero me te manaakitanga o ā tātou tamariki e ngā hapori pai. I runga anō i te wairua pai me te whakamahi i ngā tikanga ka puawai mai ai te rongoā hei hiki i ngā taumahatanga ki runga i ngā pokohiwi o ā tātou tamariki/ mokopuna. Me aha koa, kāore anō ngā kura kia tutuki pai ai i ngā wawatā ki te whakamana i ā tatou tamariki ki te tū pakari ai, ki te tū rangatira ai, otirā ki te tū Māori ai.

Ka kaha takarure mai tēnei pūrongo tuarua nā te Tari Arotake o te Motu i te hiahia o ngā kura me ngā hapori ki te mahitahi. Mā te ngātahi o te mahi ka tautoko ngā kura me ngā hapori i ngā ahurea me ngā uarā o tēnā, o tēnā. Ki te pukepuke te moana, pēnei ki ngā rangi e tū mai ana, ko te manaakitanga, ko te wawatā me te whānaungatanga he mea nui ki te tautoko, ki te poipoi i ā tātou tamariki ki roto i te akomanga ia rā, ia rā. E kawea ana te wairua o tēnei ariā e te whakataukī nei:

Nāu te rourou, nākū te rourou, ka ora ai tātou.

Kāore he ara kotahi mō ngā kura me ngā hapori ki te nohotahi, kōrero ai. Mā tēnā, mā tēnā tōna ake e whakarite. Heoi anō, ka tika ka tūpou te māhunga o ngā kura, ā, me toro hoki ō rātou ringa ki ō rātou whānau, hapū, ā, i ētahi wā ki te iwi hoki, whakawhiti kōrero ai. Ahakoa, kāore te pūrongo nei i whakatau mai he nui ake te hua mō te tamaiti mēnā tau ana te puehu i waenga i te hapori Māori me te kura, kua kitea te maha o te taunakitanga e whakaatu mai pēnei ana. Mēnā he raru e haere ana, he iti noa iho te hua e puta mai ana i ā tātou tamariki.

Foreword by Māori Advisory and Reference Group

There is always room for optimism when human relationships are on the agenda, but never more so than when institutions are engaged with each other or when inter-cultural relations have to be taken into account. Fortunately, the New Zealand education system, from its earliest stages, gave high priority to schools needing to work with the communities that they served in order to facilitate the learning and development of their students.

School committees, boards of trustees, and parent-teacher associations made up the backbone that would serve as the conduit between voluntary associations and the formal education system. These organisations, albeit in contemporary form, continue this heritage of working together to draw professional and lay communities into a proximity that will help to ensure that the best education possible will be provided for each and every child.

Healthy communities usually identify and practise a set of deeply held cultural values and standards; they also tend to be prepared to communicate by discussing things without too much filtering, and they role-model effective methods for dealing with moral dilemmas impacting on their children's well-being. Healthy communities offer opportunities for children to explore issues with cultural and spiritual guidance and give ideas for coping with difficult life challenges. That said, there remains much room for improvement in the way the schooling system responds to Māori community aspirations, and their expectations that the sector provides a context for tamariki “to be Māori”.

This second report from the Office of the Auditor-General reiterates the traditional willingness of schools and communities attempting to work in harmony as best they can on the assumption that successful learning is best conducted when the cultures of schools and homes reinforce the values of each other.

In turbulent times, such as many whānau are experiencing now, human happiness and hope need to be part of daily teachable moments in relations between teachers and students. This idea has never been more relevant nor expressed more succinctly as in the whakataukī:

Nāu te rourou, nākū te rourou, ka ora ai tātou.

With the gifts you bring combined with mine, we will all benefit.

Essentially, there is no “one way” or “best way” for schools and Māori communities to engage with each other. It is clear, however, that the balance of responsibility resides with the schools and the stance they adopt in communicating with whānau, hapū, and, on occasions, iwi. Although this report does not make a

conclusion that improved relations between schools and Māori communities necessarily lead to improved learning performances of Māori students, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that, where communicative relations are strained, mutual benefits are less likely to accrue.

Mere Berryman
Lorraine Kerr
Angus Hikairo Macfarlane
Wally Penetito
Graham Hingangaroa Smith

Auditor-General's overview

In 2012, my Office started a five-year programme of work to find out how well the education system supports Māori students to achieve their full potential. This is the second performance audit report of that programme.

In 2013, the Government updated its Māori education strategy, *Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success: 2008-2012*. The updated strategy gave greater focus to “educationally powerful” partnerships. These are partnerships where a school’s governors, teachers, students, and families work together to improve students’ overall performance. Some research shows that families and schools should have effective relationships before taking on such partnerships.

Our report presents information that has not been brought together before about relationships between families and schools. We also give examples of practices that build effective relationships. Multiple factors affect these relationships. What people told us raised a lot of questions – to which we do not have all the answers. However, our report provides an opportunity for people to think about their schools and their relationships, to understand the differences between schools, and to work to build and use relationships more effectively.

Our report discusses what is obvious about relationships; they occur between people, not between institutions. As the Māori Advisory and Reference Group told us, it is especially important for Māori to know who the people behind the school gate are, as well as what those people do. It is not surprising then that small practices – such as regularly meeting whānau at the school gate – can affect the quality of relationships.

As part of our audit, we surveyed whānau, and primary and secondary schools, to find out what they thought about their relationships. Our survey focused on the most basic elements expected of any school. About 60% of whānau members who responded to our survey believe that they have effective relationships with their child’s school, whereas about 90% of schools that responded to our survey believe that they have effective relationships with whānau. Despite the difference of perception, these results indicate that some schools have a foundation on which to build “educationally powerful” partnerships.

Whānau with students at decile 1-3 schools and whānau with students at schools with a higher proportion of Māori students on the roll were more likely to say that they had effective relationships with those schools. In contrast, whānau with students at decile 8-10 schools and whānau with students at schools with a lower proportion of Māori students were less likely to say that they had effective relationships with those schools.

There is a risk that some schools do not focus enough on improving their relationships because they think that they have better relationships with whānau than whānau think they do. This risk appears to be greater for high-decile schools and schools with a low proportion of Māori students.

Most Māori students attend schools where they form a small proportion of the total roll. This suggests that a large proportion of Māori students and their whānau could benefit from more effective relationships with schools.

We found that relationships are more effective when there is good communication, there is a willingness to be flexible to enable effective participation, and communities feel listened to. This is not easy and requires constant attention.

Our work on this performance audit is strongly linked to the next performance audit in our programme because effective relationships are clearly an important factor in achieving better outcomes for Māori students. Our next performance audit will look at whether resources in the education sector are delivering effective results for Māori and whether achievement is being appropriately monitored.

I thank the Māori Advisory and Reference Group for continuing to share its experience and wisdom with my Office. I also thank the staff from the many education sector entities who contributed during our performance audit. Last, but not least, I thank the many whānau and school staff members who took the time to take part in our surveys and other fieldwork. In particular, I thank those who hosted my audit team during their fieldwork.



Lyn Provost
Controller and Auditor-General

16 February 2015

Some important terms

There are a lot of statistics in our report. To make it easier to report on them:

- **agree(d)** means that we have added together the responses from schools and whānau who answered a survey question with “agree” or “agree very strongly”;
- **agree(d) to some extent** means that we have added together the responses from schools and whānau who answered a survey question with “agree just a little”, “agree”, or “agree very strongly”;
- **low-decile schools** means decile 1-3 schools;
- **middle-decile schools** means decile 4-7 schools;
- **high-decile schools** means decile 8-10 schools;
- **high proportion of Māori students** means that Māori students make up 31% or more of the school roll;
- **low proportion of Māori students** means that Māori students make up 30% or less of the school roll; and
- **whānau** means parents, caregivers, and families of Māori students.

Introduction

1.1 In this Part, we:

- discuss why we audited relationships between schools and whānau;
- discuss how we carried out our audit, including what we did not look at; and
- explain the structure of this report.

Why we audited relationships between schools and whānau

1.2 In 2012, we began a programme of work to answer the question:

How well does the education system currently support Māori students to achieve their full potential and contribute to the future prosperity of New Zealand?

1.3 We set out our programme of work in our report *Education for Māori: Context for our proposed audit work until 2017*. This is our second performance audit in that programme. Our first performance audit in the programme examined how effectively the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) and schools were carrying out *Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success: 2008-2012* (Ka Hikitia).¹ Despite some problems, we were optimistic that Ka Hikitia would be successfully implemented.

1.4 For this audit, we were going to examine partnerships between schools and whānau. Ka Hikitia was updated in 2013. The updated policy gave greater focus to “educationally powerful” partnerships. These are partnerships where a school’s governors, teachers, students, and families work together to improve a student’s overall performance. Teachers and parents working together can have strong beneficial effects on learning.²

1.5 Some research shows that schools and families should have effective relationships before taking on “educationally powerful” partnerships.³ Therefore, instead of examining *partnerships* between schools and whānau, we decided to look at the strength of *relationships* between schools and whānau.

1.6 In this report, an effective relationship means that whānau are generally satisfied with their relationship with their school and that we have confidence in basic interactions between schools and whānau.

How we carried out our audit

1.7 We looked for guidance that helps schools understand the maturity of their relationships with whānau and that suggests how schools go from a basic level of relationship towards “educationally powerful” partnerships. We could not find

1 Both reports are available on our website at www.oag.govt.nz.

2 Ministry of Education (2003), *The complexity of community and family influences on children’s achievement in New Zealand: Best Evidence Synthesis*, pages 143-172, available at www.educationcounts.govt.nz.

3 Berryman M & Ford T (2014), *Connecting with Māori Communities: Whānau, Hapu, and Iwi (Module 8)*, pages 4 and 17-21, unpublished draft (see <http://connect.vln.school.nz/InterviewDeakerBerryman>).

any such guidance. However, the Ministry has a self-review tool to help schools understand their current relationship with Māori, which includes guidance about what an “educationally powerful” relationship looks like (including examples).⁴

- 1.8 We surveyed whānau and schools about whether they thought their relationships were effective. We also asked them other questions to identify how well aspects of their relationships were working. Some of our questions were based on research about parental involvement in education.⁵
- 1.9 To carry out our survey, we selected a sample of 600 primary and secondary schools. We ensured that the sample represented schools by location, socio-economic status, and school type.⁶ Private schools are not audited by the Auditor-General, but we offered some of them an opportunity to take part in our survey, which most declined.
- 1.10 We relied on the 600 schools to distribute 13,500 survey forms to Māori students and whānau. For reasons of economy, we asked each school to send the survey to up to 30 whānau.
- 1.11 We took this approach to sampling whānau and students because we did not have a list of Māori students and whānau from which to take our own sample. Sampling in this way has advantages and disadvantages. It can be less precise than random sampling, but it is often the only feasible approach and is usually more economical.
- 1.12 As in all surveys, respondents choosing whether to participate can lead to selection bias. We looked at the profile of those who responded to our surveys, and the school and whānau respondents closely matched our sample profile. Appendix 1 shows the survey we sent to students and whānau. Appendix 2 shows the survey we sent to schools.
- 1.13 We got replies from 376 schools (a 62.7% response rate to our school survey) and from 1954 students/whānau (a 14.5% response rate to our student and whānau survey). The schools that responded closely matched the characteristics of our original sample of 600 schools in terms of location, socio-economic status, and school type. Not all whānau answered all questions, but we got more than 1859 responses from whānau to each question. We left the blank responses out of our analysis. Responses to survey questions that we report might not add up to 100% because of rounding.

4 See “Reviewing your school-whānau partnerships” available from <http://partnerships.ruia.educationalleaders.govt.nz>.

5 Whetsel, Darlene, Hoover-Dempsey, Kathleen V, Sandler, Howard M, Walker, Joan M (June 2002), *Parental involvement project: Parent and teacher questionnaires (study 1)*, available at www.vanderbilt.edu.

6 Schools are sorted into types, which are mainly defined by the years of schooling offered at the school. We sent surveys to a sample of area schools, composite schools (that is, those that can provide primary and secondary education), intermediate schools, primary schools, secondary schools, middle schools, and kura kaupapa Māori.

- 1.14 We invited schools to send us any documents or other information about the work they were doing to build relationships with whānau, and 229 schools did so. We analysed these documents, as well as schools' annual reports, school charters, and Education Review Office (ERO) reports to find out what they say about building relationships between schools and whānau. We also examined data the Ministry uses to monitor Ka Hikitia's implementation to see whether we could find any association between our analysis and student outcomes, such as retention and academic achievement.
- 1.15 We picked 15 schools to visit (from our original sample of 600 schools) that were a representative sample by location, socio-economic status, and school type. We met with principals and other senior staff, teachers, kaumātua, and members of boards of trustees in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Hamilton, Rotorua, Tokoroa, and Masterton. We held focus groups with whānau in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch. We completed all of our fieldwork in early 2014.
- 1.16 We designed the audit so we could match and compare responses from students and whānau with responses from their schools, the relevant ERO report, school charters, and annual reports.

What we did not look at

- 1.17 We did not:
- survey the Correspondence School, special schools, or teen parent units; or
 - ask schools about their relationships with individual whānau.

The structure of our report

- 1.18 In Part 2, we discuss what people told us in our surveys, focus groups, and school visits about what helped make relationships between students, whānau, and schools more effective.
- 1.19 In Part 3, we discuss the results of our survey of students and whānau.
- 1.20 In Part 4, we discuss the results of our survey of schools.

2

What helps build relationships?

- 2.1 In this Part, we discuss what people told us in our surveys, focus groups, and school visits about what helped make relationships between students, whānau, and schools more effective.
- 2.2 What people told us reinforces what is obvious about relationships: they occur between people, not between institutions. Often the simple, human exchanges affect the quality of relationships. Some of these straightforward and common-sense examples might seem “basic” to some people, but they are what people told us helped them engage.
- 2.3 We heard that it was important:
- for school leaders to value Māori;
 - for schools to collaborate with whānau and iwi;
 - to have open and honest communication;
 - to take a flexible approach; and
 - for some schools, to have policies on building relationships with whānau.

School leaders valuing Māori

- 2.4 The ERO sees leadership as a critical factor in determining home-school partnerships.⁷ We also found it to be a significant influence on school and whānau relationships.
- 2.5 The principal and staff at one secondary school we visited told us that they felt unable to engage with whānau or the community until they could prove to whānau that they were genuinely interested in Māori students’ outcomes. We heard a similar comment from whānau:
- The school has a very strong and valued kapa haka group that my child is part of. For me, this is one of the most important things the school does to enhance my child’s learning and feeling of being Māori. It means that regardless of whether the teacher is well versed in Māori cultural values, my child has the opportunity to be and learn Māori.*
- 2.6 We were told that a board of trustees involved with school life helps to build effective relationships with whānau. Whānau or Māori representation on the board also helps, as does a board that supports building stronger relationships with whānau. All but two of the schools we visited told us that the principal and/or their senior management team were the driving force behind Māori achievement.
- 2.7 We were told that it helped when the principal is proactive and open to taha Māori.⁸ It is important for the principal to model positive behaviours, such as

⁷ Education Review Office (2008), *Partners in Learning: Good Practice*, page 18, Wellington.

⁸ Taha Māori is a Māori perspective on, or dimension to, a subject.

talking to whānau outside the classroom. It also helped when the principal shared the responsibility for building relationships with whānau with teachers:

The success of the Māori students at this school is due to the Deputy Principal.

Due to the high percentage of Māori students at this school, I believe there needs to be more emphasis on learning the Māori language. Our principal doesn't always make himself approachable to parents.

The board of trustees recognised that a meaningful relationship with whānau means that whānau need to be represented at the governance level.

Whānau, iwi, and schools working together

- 2.8 Whānau and school staff told us that working together and accessing community networks and resources helped build stronger relationships. This is consistent with ERO findings.⁹
- 2.9 We were told about how some schools and whānau worked together in the school's daily life. For example, staff worked with:
- whānau members in the classroom;
 - whānau in school activities, such as teaching kapa haka;
 - iwi to build relationships with whānau and the wider community; and
 - a kaumātua, iwi, or a cultural advisor to provide cultural leadership in the school, such as leading protocol at school gatherings.
- 2.10 We were told that setting up a whānau group (mostly made up of parents) was a useful way of engaging with whānau. Schools consulted with whānau groups to get a Māori perspective on school projects and to connect with iwi. Whānau groups can provide advice on how to deal with behavioural problems with Māori students and can increase the visibility of Māori in the school community. They can also organise and run events, such as Matariki celebrations.
- 2.11 Creating purposeful events seemed a particularly effective strategy.
- 2.12 A low-decile college in the Wairarapa decided to host more community events in the school, aimed at enhancing "school spirit". We were told that these events had helped build relationships by getting people into the school. We were also told that these events had helped to promote the school to whānau, to reduce negative perceptions, and to foster positive thinking about the school by whānau. The 2012 ERO report for this school acknowledged that the "school spirit" events had contributed to more parental involvement.
- 2.13 A high-decile primary school in Christchurch helped to create a kapa haka competition with similar schools from the northern suburbs of Christchurch. The competition has increased the profile of Māori at the school and increased

9 Education Review Office (2008), *Partners in Learning: Good Practice*, page 26, Wellington.

interest in kapa haka. The 2009 and 2013 ERO review reports of this school acknowledged the kapa haka competition, as well as a range of initiatives by the school. The ERO concluded that the school had developed effective relationships with the Māori community.

- 2.14 Some schools find collaborating with whānau or iwi challenging because the schools do not have access to people with knowledge and experience of working with Māori or of Maori culture. Whānau and school staff told us that schools need access to people with knowledge of, and expertise in, Māori culture inside and outside the school to help them create an environment that supports taha Māori. For example, people with those skills had helped with leadership and governance. They had also helped to prepare policies and procedures, and put them into practice.
- 2.15 People with these skills can help staff build relationships with whānau because they are nearly always there and available when help is needed. Four schools told us that a lack of this expertise in the past had hampered their ability to build effective relationships with whānau.
- 2.16 Some schools we visited had help from iwi groups or kaumātua who were regularly involved with the school. Four of the 15 schools we visited did not have any such relationships and told us that this was a problem for them. Two schools had not contacted local iwi because they did not know how to find out who they are. If schools feel that they are unable to ask whānau for advice about who to contact, schools can contact Te Puni Kōkiri – the Ministry of Māori Development – for help in finding a local iwi contact:
- I think the school is trying hard to implement te reo and culture into the school but there is limited support in the community. We don't have kaumātua and other such resources.*
- 2.17 Two schools in Christchurch told us that they were part of a cluster of primary schools that supported each other by sharing good practice and information, and pooling resources. This is effective and efficient for iwi and the schools.

Open and honest communication

- 2.18 In 2014, the Education and Science Committee reported that schools should communicate with parents in ways that are timely, useful, easily understood, and culturally appropriate. Schools should view communication with parents as an important part of their role.¹⁰ The ERO has made similar observations.¹¹ We agree.

10 Education and Science Committee (July 2014), *Inquiry into engaging parents in the education of their children*, page 20, available at www.parliament.govt.nz.

11 Education Review Office (2008), *Partners in Learning: Good Practice*, page 28, Wellington.

- 2.19 The need for open and honest communication was something that whānau and school staff commented on in their survey responses, during our visits to schools, and in focus groups:

The open door policy at our school means that at any time I feel welcome in the classroom – to be part of the school and what is going on in my son’s class. I am continually informed about what is going on.

I know the school is committed to student achievement. This has improved my confidence in communicating to the teacher and feeling I will be heard. The school keeps me informed about my child, and improving outcomes for my child.

I have approached the teacher about my child’s learning and she didn’t think I had anything of value to offer.

Staying at the school is not encouraged. Teachers listen to what I have to say, but whether they act on it is another matter. Communication is always on short notice from the school. The school is not interested in what I have to offer as a parent. They have had one hui in the past four years.

The first email we have ever got from a teacher about Māori students in particular, was to tell us about your [the Auditor-General’s] survey!!! It would be better if the teacher “in control” of Māori students rang us at least once a year to check everything was ok!!!

- 2.20 All of these comments relate to whānau interacting with schools about their child’s learning progress and development. The range of views demonstrates the difference that open and honest communicating can have on whānau perceptions of the school.

Taking a flexible approach

- 2.21 Sometimes, it is the little things that count. Being flexible is also important. For example, teachers at some schools told us that simply greeting and smiling at parents helped make parents feel more comfortable walking through the school gate. We were also told that using emails and text messages to contact whānau who are otherwise hard to get hold of also helps to build relationships.
- 2.22 Some staff we talked to said that being aware of whānau circumstances was important in building an effective relationship. Two schools provided after-school childcare services and meals during hui with whānau. Teachers sometimes chatted to whānau over coffee at the school cafeteria. They did this to address potential barriers to whānau attending meetings. Staff considered that these things helped improve engagement.

- 2.23 Schools can use a variety of opportunities to engage whānau, such as sports and cultural events and school picnics.
- 2.24 All these practices are in line with the Education and Science Committee’s report, which said that schools should communicate with parents, face to face, outside of school hours, and outside of school grounds.¹²

Some people used policies to drive practice

- 2.25 National Education Goals require schools to be administered in certain ways. Some compel schools to “recognise and support parents as their children’s first teachers” and “to take account of the unique place of Māori as tangata whenua”. National Administrative Guidelines set out desirable principles and expectations about how schools are administered. One guides schools to “consult with their Māori communities on curriculum and report to them against the plans and targets identified through that consultation”.¹³ We saw various examples of schools developing policies to reflect the Goals and Guidelines.
- 2.26 Some school staff told us that they had found it difficult to build relationships with whānau and struggled to write policies to support them:
- We do a great deal to prioritise Māori student achievement and engagement. However, we have struggled to entice whānau engagement.*
- We do need to do extra work on policies and informing our parents. Our issue is getting parents into the school to attend meetings.*
- 2.27 Such comments could be seen as criticising whānau for not doing what the school wants, when it wants. As noted by the Māori Advisory and Reference Group in the Foreword, schools are responsible for making engagement relevant and easy for whānau to attend, increasing the chance that they will become involved with the school.
- 2.28 Other schools explained why they had not introduced any such policies. For example:
- Our school has a small number of Māori students so what the teachers do is work with individuals, instead of having specific policies for Māori students.*
- 2.29 Some schools gave us copies of their policies and processes that support building relationships with whānau. We include excerpts from two of them to show that a simple approach can be used.

¹² Education and Science Committee (July 2014), *Inquiry into engaging parents in the education of their children*, page 20, available at www.parliament.govt.nz.

¹³ National Education Goals set out government policy objectives. National Administrative Guidelines set out statements of desirable principles of conduct or administration of schools. The quotes are taken from <http://partnerships.ruia.educationaleaders.govt.nz/Partnerships-in-NZ-now/Legal-requirements>.

- 2.30 One school's policy covers all relationships. It says:
The Principal must retain and develop the special partnership between the College, families, local parishes, contributing schools, and interact with groups outside the school community which have contact with the College.
- 2.31 Another school had made its policy to help build relationships with whānau and the wider community publicly available. The document included these statements:
To ensure [the school] fulfils its obligation under the Charter and under the Treaty of Waitangi, and the requirements of Ka Hikitia.
The school will provide a welcoming atmosphere for all parents, caregivers and guardians reflecting the needs of all cultures.
The school in consultation with its Māori community develop and make known to the school community, policies, plans and targets for improving the achievement of Māori students.
- 2.32 Whānau whose children attended schools that have a policy to build relationships with whānau were a little more likely than other whānau to agree that they had effective relationships with their school. Therefore, we encourage schools that want to introduce a policy to build relationships with whānau – and are finding it difficult – to try new approaches. These schools might want to think about getting someone with relevant skills to help them engage with whānau.
- 2.33 However, having a policy is not enough. Schools that have policies must try to carry them out effectively or risk losing credibility with whānau.
- 2.34 For example, some whānau told us that they had found it difficult getting copies of school policies about building relationships with whānau. In other instances, whānau were concerned about how the policies had been put into practice:
When asked, the school wouldn't make their policies, plans, and targets for improving the achievement of Māori students available to me. I've tried several times this year to gain access and feel as though I've been fobbed off.
I'm sceptical whether the school's policies will be implemented though – could be lip service. Have seen the school time after time "consult with whānau" and that's as far as it goes.
There wasn't a school policy for Māori students until 2013. This wasn't written, but explained to me in a phone call. I still haven't received anything written. The school doesn't stand by what the principal says or what's written.
We're sadly lacking in Māori teaching and learning at the school. But a wonderful and strong group of hard working teachers. There are good policies on the whole,

where there are policies applying to all students. However, Māori are not seen as separate for cultural difference. I think this is a great shame, as so much more can be done. This school has more than 30 Māori students out of around 600.

- 2.35 In our view, schools that have policies on building relationships with whānau should make them available to whānau without them having to ask, such as on the school's website. If schools do not do this, they should send copies of policies and other documents to whānau who ask for them.

Students' and whānau views on their relationships with schools

3.1 In this Part, we discuss students' and whānau views on aspects of their relationships with schools.

Do whānau think relationships are effective?

3.2 We asked whānau whether they agreed with the statement "My child's school has an effective relationship with its Maori students and whānau." Sixty-six percent of whānau agreed that their child's school has an effective relationship with its Māori students and whānau, and 78% of whānau agreed to some extent.

3.3 Whānau tended to rate low-decile schools and schools with a high proportion of Māori students more highly. Responses that agreed that they had an effective relationship with their school ranged from:

- 79% for low-decile schools;
- 55% for high-decile schools;
- 77% for schools with a high proportion of Māori students; and
- 59% for schools with a low proportion of Māori students.

3.4 We looked at a range of documents from the 600 schools in our sample. Except for policies on building relationships with whānau, we found little association between charters, targets, and reporting practices and whether whānau agreed that relationships were effective.

What students told us about their teachers

3.5 We asked students four questions about their teachers. From the sample responses:

- 90% of students agreed that teachers know who they are;
- 78% of students agreed to some extent that teachers knew them as a person and what they can contribute;
- 76% of students agreed that teachers listen to what students want to achieve; and
- 70% of students agreed that teachers value their Māori heritage.

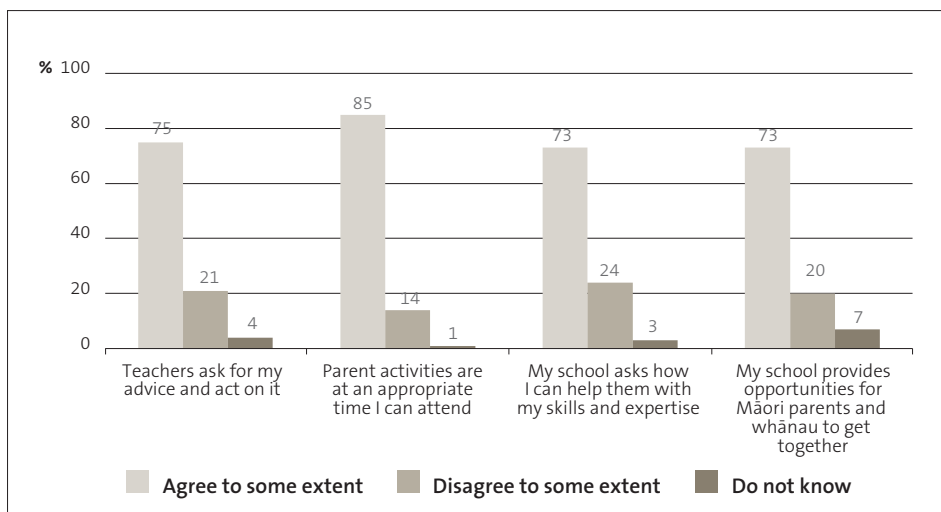
3.6 Students in low-decile schools tended to rate their teachers more highly (results ranged from 81% to 94% for the four questions) than those in high-decile schools (results ranged from 59% to 86% for the four questions).

3.7 Students in schools with a high proportion of Māori students tended to rate their teachers more highly (results ranged from 80% to 92%) than those in schools with a low proportion of Māori students (results ranged from 62% to 87%).

Do whānau find it easy to get involved with their child's school?

3.8 Figure 1 shows the proportion of whānau who agreed to some extent or disagreed to some extent with four questions about how easy it is for them to get involved with their child's school. About three-quarters of whānau think that their schools make it easy to become involved in one way or another.

Figure 1
The proportion of whānau who find it easy to get involved with their child's school



3.9 Whānau tended to rate low-decile schools and schools with a high proportion of Māori students more highly. Responses that agreed to some extent with the four questions ranged from:

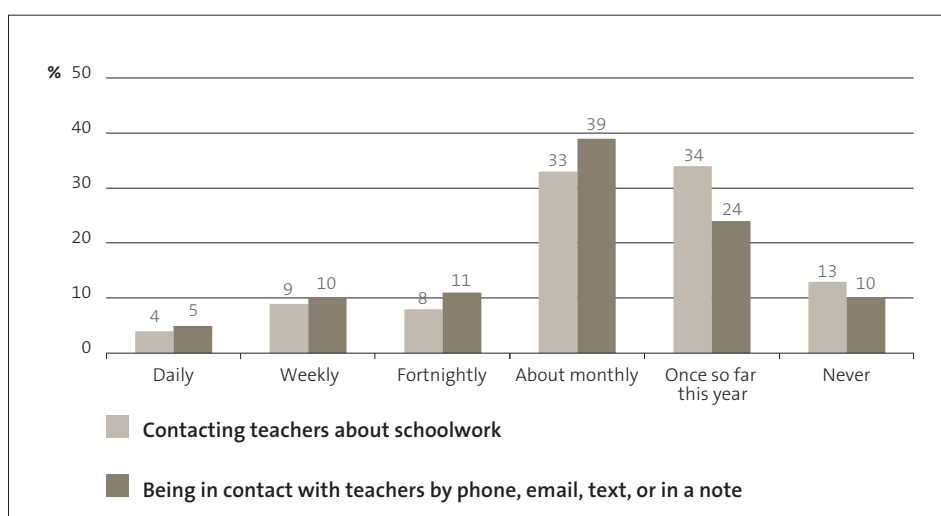
- 79% to 86% for low-decile schools;
- 63% to 84% for high-decile schools;
- 79% to 87% for schools with a high proportion of Māori students; and
- 67% to 84% for schools with a low proportion of Māori students.

3.10 We asked whānau whether they liked to spend time at their child's school – 86% of whānau agreed that they did.

3.11 We asked whānau whether they felt they could let teachers know about things that worry their child – 88% of whānau agreed that they could.

3.12 We wanted to know how often whānau contacted teachers about their child's schoolwork and were in contact with teachers generally. Figure 2 shows the range of responses that we got. Most whānau were in contact with teachers about monthly or had been in contact once.

Figure 2
How often whānau and teachers were in contact



Do whānau think that schools keep them informed about their child?

3.13 We asked whānau whether their school kept them well informed, feeling confident and part of what their children are doing at school – 75% agreed.

3.14 The results were:

- 83% for low-decile schools;
- 71% for high-decile schools;
- 82% for schools with a high proportion of Māori students; and
- 71% for schools with a low proportion of Māori students.

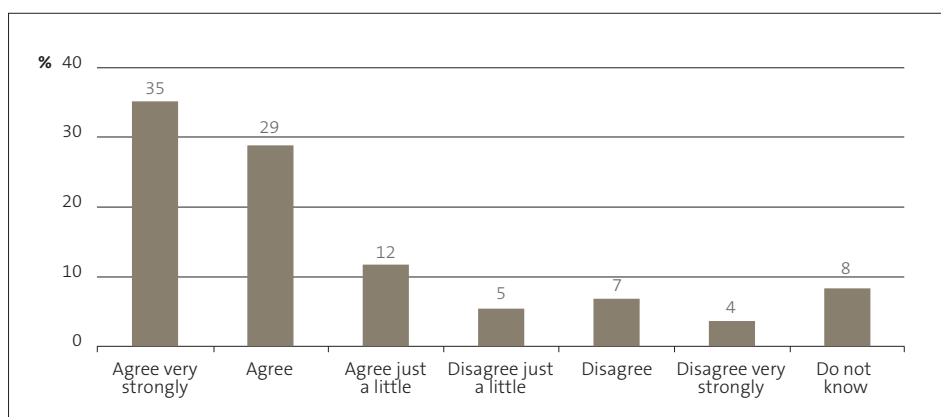
3.15 We asked whānau whether the school provided clear information about student achievement, including Māori students' achievement – 67% said yes, 20% said no, and 11% did not know.

3.16 Whānau with children at low-decile schools were 17% more likely to answer yes, and whānau with children at schools with a high proportion of Māori students were 13% more likely to say yes.

Are schools committed to Māori students succeeding as Māori?

3.17 We asked whānau whether they thought their child's school was committed to Māori students succeeding as Māori. In total, 64% of whānau agreed. Figure 3 shows the responses we got.

Figure 3
Whether whānau think that their child's school is committed to Māori students succeeding as Māori



3.18 Responses from whānau who agreed that their child's school was committed to Māori students succeeding as Māori were:

- 79% for low-decile schools;
- 52% for high-decile schools;
- 76% for schools with a high proportion of Māori students; and
- 56% for schools with a low proportion of Māori students.

3.19 We asked whānau whether their child's school changes things to improve outcomes for Māori students – 55% of whānau agreed that their school had.

3.20 The results were:

- 72% for low-decile schools and 42% for high-decile schools, which is a difference of 30%; and
- 69% for schools with a high proportion of Māori students and 44% for schools with a low proportion of Māori students, which is a difference of 25%.

3.21 We sorted the survey responses into two groups: those who agreed and those who agreed to some extent. Appendix 3 summarises the results for responses to questions by decile for students and whānau who agreed and agreed to some

extent. Appendix 4 summarises the results for responses to questions 1-14 by the school's proportion of Māori students for students and whānau who agreed and agreed to some extent.

- 3.22 Appendix 3 shows the parts of the relationship that whānau from these schools rated the lowest. These low ratings indicate that these schools could ask the advice of whānau, ask whānau about how they can help the school with their skills and expertise, provide more opportunities for whānau to get together, change things to improve outcomes for Māori students,¹⁴ and show more commitment to Māori students succeeding as Māori.
- 3.23 With only a few exceptions, the survey results for middle-decile schools to each question in our survey tended to be between the responses for low-decile schools and those for high-decile schools.

Our observations

- 3.24 When we discussed our findings with our Māori Advisory and Reference Group, we agreed that there were some encouraging results.
- 3.25 Whānau with students in low-decile schools and in schools with a high proportion of Māori students tended to rate their schools more highly. This suggests that many of these schools have basic connections with whānau and students.
- 3.26 In contrast, high-decile schools and schools with a low proportion of Māori students tended to be rated lower by students and whānau. Some of these schools have more work to do to improve their relationships with students and whānau.

¹⁴ Ka Hikitia suggests that some things schools could change are: integrating elements of Māori student identity, language, and culture; using student achievement data to better target resources; providing early, intensive support to students at risk of falling behind; creating better partnerships with parents, whānau, and iwi; and having high expectations of students to succeed.

4

Schools' views on their relationships with whānau

- 4.1 In this Part, we discuss schools' views on aspects of their relationships with Māori students and whānau. We also discuss schools' responses to survey questions 19-35 (see Appendix 2).¹⁵

Do schools think relationships are effective?

- 4.2 Ninety-four percent of schools agreed that they have effective relationships with whānau, and the same proportion of schools agreed that they have effective relationships with Māori students.

How well do schools communicate school rules, policies, plans, and targets?

Communicating with whānau

- 4.3 We asked schools whether they do a good job of letting whānau know about school rules and policies – 79% of schools agreed that they did.
- 4.4 We asked whānau whether they had read about the schools' policies, plans, and targets for improving Māori student's achievement. Of the 1920 responses to this question, 53% said yes, 36% said no, and 11% did not know.
- 4.5 In both low-decile schools and schools with a high proportion of Māori students, about 67% of whānau with children at the school answered yes. In both high-decile schools and schools with a low proportion of Māori students, about 44% of whānau with children at the school answered no.

Consulting with whānau

- 4.6 We also asked schools how often they consult whānau about community policies, plans, and targets for improving Māori students' achievement and how often they engage with whānau when establishing and reviewing rules and policies. Figure 4 shows that more than half of schools said that they had done so at least once in the last year.

¹⁵ We asked schools whether they were aware of the Ministry of Education's advice on building "educationally powerful" partnerships with whānau (question 32): 82% of schools said yes, 12% said no, and 6% did not know.

Figure 4
How often schools say they consult with whānau on policies, plans, targets, and rules

Our school:	Once so far this year	About monthly	Never	Other
consults with whānau about community policies, plans, and target for improving Māori students' achievement.	64%	21%	6%	9%
engages with whānau in a process for reviewing and establishing rules and policies.	57%	17%	16%	10%

Do schools have policies to build relationships with whānau?

- 4.7 We asked schools whether they have policies to build relationships with whānau – 50% of schools answered yes, 44% answered no, and 5% did not know.
- 4.8 We asked schools that did not currently have such a policy whether they were preparing a specific policy to build relationships with whānau – 56% said yes, 32% said no, and 12% did not know.

Do schools encourage whānau to help out in school?

- 4.9 We asked schools whether they did a good job of letting whānau know about ways they could help out in school, such as being in the classroom, helping out with school activities, and providing cultural leadership in the school – 84% agreed that they did.

Do schools think they communicate well with whānau about their child?

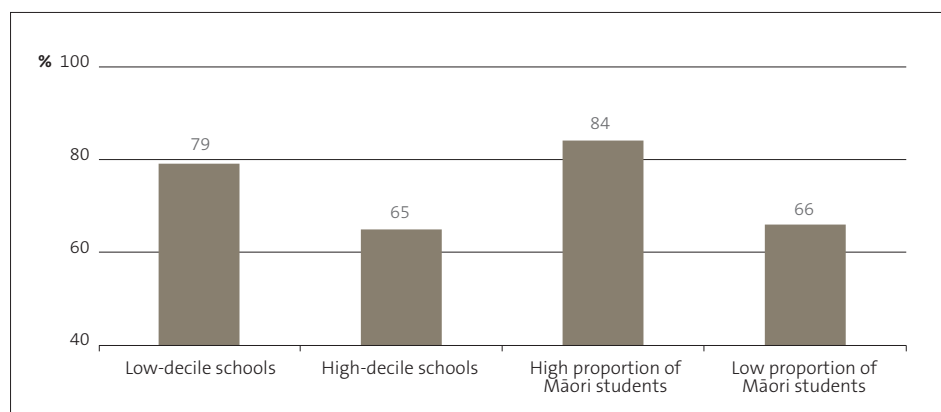
- 4.10 We asked schools four questions about how well they communicate with whānau about their child. Figure 5 shows that schools consider they do a good job. The proportion of schools that agreed they contact whānau promptly about good news about their child is the lowest by at least 17%. This is significantly lower than the schools' responses to the other questions.

Figure 5
The proportion of schools that agreed they communicate well with whānau about their child

Our school:	Agreed	Agreed to some extent
does a good job of letting whānau know about ways they can help their child(ren) at home.	89%	97%
staff contact whānau promptly about any problems involving their child(ren).	95%	100%
staff contact whānau promptly about any good news to do with their child(ren).	72%	95%
helps whānau understand their child(ren)'s progress and achievement.	92%	98%

- 4.11 Five of the 15 schools we visited said that telling whānau positive stories about their child had helped the school to engage with whānau and build effective relationships. We consider that schools wanting to improve their relationships with whānau should take an even-handed approach to communicating good news and problems involving Māori students.
- 4.12 We examined the results for these questions by decile and proportion of Māori students. The results were the same or very close, except for whether schools do a good job of contacting whānau promptly about good news involving their child. Low-decile schools and schools with a high proportion of Māori students were more likely to say that they contact whānau promptly about good news involving their child. Figure 6 shows the differences. The gap between low-decile schools and high-decile schools is 14%, and the gap between schools with a high proportion of Māori students and those with a low proportion is 18%.

Figure 6
The proportion of schools that contact whānau promptly about good news involving their child, by decile and proportion of Māori students



- 4.13 We sorted the survey responses into two groups, those who agreed and those who agreed to some extent. Appendix 5 shows the data for each response by decile for schools that agreed and agreed to some extent to questions 19-27. Appendix 6 shows the data for each response to questions 19-27 by the proportion of Māori students.

Our observations

- 4.14 Most schools tended to rate their relationships with whānau more highly than whānau did. Eighty-nine percent of schools agreed that they have an effective relationship, as opposed to 66% of whānau. A small percentage of whānau agreed that their relationship with their child's school was effective when the school did not.
- 4.15 The views of low-decile schools and schools with a high proportion of Māori students were more closely aligned with whānau who had children attending those schools. In contrast, the difference was greater between the views of whānau with children attending high-decile schools and schools with a low proportion of Māori students and the views of those schools.
- 4.16 There is a risk that schools could become complacent because they think that they have better relationships with whānau than whānau think they do. We consider that the wider the gap in opinions, the more likely schools will find it harder to have effective relationships with whānau. Therefore, this risk is likely to be greater for high-decile schools and schools with a low proportion of Māori students.
- 4.17 In our view, schools should periodically assess the quality of their relationships with all families, not only whānau. This will help schools check whether their opinion of the quality of the relationship matches families' opinions. It might show schools where they are doing well and where they can improve.
- 4.18 It would help if schools could compare their self-review results against best practices and provide more understanding about the relative position of the relationship. The Ministry could describe a range of relationships and suggest an optimal set of characteristics of an effective relationship. With their overall view of the school system, the Ministry could assist schools to progress their relationships, providing suggestions about what it has seen work in similar schools.

Appendix 1

Student and whānau survey

For questions 1-14 in this survey, respondents were asked to select one of the following statements that best describes whether or not they agree with each statement:

- Disagree very strongly;
- Disagree;
- Disagree just a little;
- Agree just a little;
- Agree;
- Agree very strongly; or
- Do not know.

Questions for students to answer

Q1. Teacher(s) value my Māori heritage.

Q2. Teacher(s) know who I am.

Q3. Teacher(s) listen(s) to what I want to achieve.

Q4. Teacher(s) know me as a person and what I can contribute.

Questions for whānau and/or parents to answer

Q5. I like to spend time at my child's school when I can.

Q6. I feel I can let the teacher(s) know about things that worry my child.

Q7. Teachers ask my advice and act on it.

Q8. Parent activities are at an appropriate time I can attend.

Q9. My school asks me about how I can help them with my skills and expertise.

Q10. My school provides opportunities for Māori parents and whānau to get together.

Q11. My child's school is committed to Māori students succeeding as Māori.

Q12. My child's school keeps whānau well-informed, feeling confident and part of what our children are doing at school.

Q13. My child's school does change things to improve outcomes for Māori students.

Q14. My child's school has an effective relationship with its Māori students and whānau.

For questions 15 and 16, whānau and/or parents were asked to select one of the following statements that best describes whether or not they agree with each statement:

- Never;
- Once so far this year;
- About monthly;
- Fortnightly;
- Weekly;
- Daily; or
- Do not know.

Q15. I contacted the teacher(s) with questions about schoolwork.

Q16. I have communicated by phone or email or text or in a note with any of my children's teachers.

For questions 17 and 18, whānau and/or parents were asked to select one of the following statements that best describes whether or not they agree with each statement:

- Yes;
- No; or
- Do not know.

Q17. I have read about the school's policies, plans, and targets for improving the achievement of Māori students.

Q18. The school provides me with clear information so I understand the achievement of all students at the school and of groups of students, including Māori students.

Appendix 2

School survey

For questions 19-31 in this survey, schools were asked to select one of the following statements that best describes whether or not they agree with each statement:

- Disagree very strongly;
- Disagree;
- Disagree just a little;
- Agree just a little;
- Agree;
- Agree very strongly; or
- Do not know.

Q19. This school does a good job of letting whānau know about ways they can help out in school.

Q20. This school does a good job of letting whānau know about ways they can help their child(ren) at home.

Q21. This school actively ensures whānau know about meetings and special school events.

Q22. School staff contact whānau promptly about any problems involving their child(ren).

Q23. Staff contact whānau promptly about good news to do with their child(ren).

Q24. This school does a good job of letting whānau know about school rules and policies.

Q25. This school has an effective relationship with whānau.

Q26. This school has an effective relationship with Māori students.

Q27. This school helps whānau understand their child(ren)'s progress and achievement.

For questions 28-31, schools were asked to select one of the following statements that best describes whether or not they agree with each statement:

- Never;
- Once so far this year;
- About monthly;
- Fortnightly;
- Weekly;
- Daily; or
- Do not know.

Q28. This school consults with whānau about community policies, plans, and targets for improving the achievement of Māori students.

Q29. This school engages with whānau in a process for reviewing and establishing rules and policies.

Q30. This school has undertaken activities to better understand the needs of whānau.

Q31. This school has undertaken activities to better understand the needs of its Māori students.

For questions 32-35, schools were asked to select one of the following statements that best describes whether or not they agree with each statement:

- Yes;
- No; or
- Do not know.

Q32. This school uses advice from the Ministry of Education to build educationally powerful partnerships with its whānau.

Q33. This school has specific policy to build relationships with whānau.

Q34. This school is developing specific policy to build relationships with whānau.

Q35. This school funds its own activities to build relationships with Māori parents/whānau.

Schools were also asked to indicate who had helped to complete the survey:

- Principal;
- Other senior staff;
- Other staff; and/or
- Board trustee.

Appendix 3

Student and whānau survey results, by decile

Questions for students	Agree		
	Low-decile schools	Middle-decile schools	High-decile schools
Q1. Teacher(s) value my Māori heritage.	82%	67%	59%
Q2. Teacher(s) know who I am.	94%	88%	86%
Q3. Teacher(s) listen(s) to what I want to achieve.	81%	74%	73%
Q4. Teacher(s) know me as a person and what I can contribute.	82%	76%	75%
Questions for whānau and/or parents			
Q5. I like to spend time at my child's school when I can.	89%	85%	85%
Q6. I feel I can let the teacher(s) know about things that worry my child.	89%	88%	85%
Q7. Teachers ask my advice and act on it.	69%	58%	49%
Q8. Parent activities are at an appropriate time I can attend.	73%	70%	65%
Q9. My school asks me about how I can help them with my skills and expertise.	66%	56%	49%
Q10. My school provides opportunities for Māori parents and whānau to get together.	74%	56%	48%
Q11. My child's school is committed to Māori students succeeding as Māori.	79%	61%	52%
Q12. My child's school keeps whānau well-informed, feeling confident and part of what our children are doing at school.	83%	75%	71%
Q13. My child's school does change things to improve outcomes for Māori students.	72%	49%	42%
Q14. My child's school has an effective relationship with its Māori students and whānau.	79%	65%	55%

Questions for students	Agree to some extent		
	Low-decile schools	Middle-decile schools	High-decile schools
Q1. Teacher(s) value my Māori heritage.	89%	79%	72%
Q2. Teacher(s) know who I am.	98%	94%	92%
Q3. Teacher(s) listen(s) to what I want to achieve.	91%	87%	84%
Q4. Teacher(s) know me as a person and what I can contribute.	92%	89%	89%
Questions for whānau and/or parents			
Q5. I like to spend time at my child's school when I can.	95%	94%	94%
Q6. I feel I can let the teacher(s) know about things that worry my child.	94%	95%	94%
Q7. Teachers ask my advice and act on it.	82%	75%	68%
Q8. Parent activities are at an appropriate time I can attend.	86%	85%	84%
Q9. My school asks me about how I can help them with my skills and expertise.	79%	72%	67%
Q10. My school provides opportunities for Māori parents and whānau to get together.	85%	70%	63%
Q11. My child's school is committed to Māori students succeeding as Māori.	86%	74%	68%
Q12. My child's school keeps whānau well-informed, feeling confident and part of what our children are doing at school.	91%	84%	83%
Q13. My child's school does change things to improve outcomes for Māori students.	80%	62%	54%
Q14. My child's school has an effective relationship with its Māori students and whānau.	87%	79%	69%

Appendix 4

Student and whānau survey results, by proportion of Māori students

Questions for students	Agree	
	Low proportion	High proportion
Q1. Teacher(s) value my Māori heritage.	62%	80%
Q2. Teacher(s) know who I am.	87%	92%
Q3. Teacher(s) listen(s) to what I want to achieve.	74%	80%
Q4. Teacher(s) know me as a person and what I can contribute.	76%	81%
Questions for whānau and/or parents		
Q5. I like to spend time at my child's school when I can.	84%	89%
Q6. I feel I can let the teacher(s) know about things that worry my child.	86%	89%
Q7. Teachers ask my advice and act on it.	51%	68%
Q8. Parent activities are at an appropriate time I can attend.	66%	74%
Q9. My school asks me about how I can help them with my skills and expertise.	53%	65%
Q10. My school provides opportunities for Māori parents and whānau to get together.	52%	71%
Q11. My child's school is committed to Māori students succeeding as Māori.	56%	76%
Q12. My child's school keeps whānau well-informed, feeling confident and part of what our children are doing at school.	71%	82%
Q13. My child's school does change things to improve outcomes for Māori students.	44%	69%
Q14. My child's school has an effective relationship with its Māori students and whānau.	59%	77%

Questions for students	Agree to some extent	
	Low proportion	High proportion
Q1. Teacher(s) value my Māori heritage.	74%	89%
Q2. Teacher(s) know who I am.	93%	97%
Q3. Teacher(s) listen(s) to what I want to achieve.	85%	91%
Q4. Teacher(s) know me as a person and what I can contribute.	88%	92%
Questions for whānau and/or parents		
Q5. I like to spend time at my child's school when I can.	94%	95%
Q6. I feel I can let the teacher(s) know about things that worry my child.	94%	95%
Q7. Teachers ask my advice and act on it.	70%	82%
Q8. Parent activities are at an appropriate time I can attend.	84%	87%
Q9. My school asks me about how I can help them with my skills and expertise.	68%	79%
Q10. My school provides opportunities for Māori parents and whānau to get together.	67%	81%
Q11. My child's school is committed to Māori students succeeding as Māori.	70%	84%
Q12. My child's school keeps whānau well-informed, feeling confident and part of what our children are doing at school.	83%	90%
Q13. My child's school does change things to improve outcomes for Māori students.	57%	77%
Q14. My child's school has an effective relationship with its Māori students and whānau.	74%	86%

Appendix 5

School survey results, by decile

Questions	Agree		
	Low-decile schools	Middle-decile schools	High-decile schools
Q19. This school does a good job of letting whānau know about ways they can help out in school.	87%	79%	87%
Q20. This school does a good job of letting whānau know about ways they can help their child(ren) at home.	90%	87%	90%
Q21. This school actively ensures whānau know about meetings and special school events.	99%	94%	88%
Q22. School staff contact whānau promptly about any problems involving their child(ren).	97%	95%	93%
Q23. Staff contact whānau promptly about good news to do with their child(ren).	79%	73%	65%
Q24. This school does a good job of letting whānau know about school rules and policies.	81%	80%	75%
Q25. This school has an effective relationship with whānau.	92%	88%	85%
Q26. This school has an effective relationship with Māori students.	98%	95%	89%
Q27. This school helps whānau understand their child(ren)'s progress and achievement.	92%	92%	92%

Questions	Agree to some extent		
	Low-decile schools	Middle-decile schools	High-decile schools
Q19. This school does a good job of letting whānau know about ways they can help out in school.	97%	95%	96%
Q20. This school does a good job of letting whānau know about ways they can help their child(ren) at home.	96%	98%	97%
Q21. This school actively ensures whānau know about meetings and special school events.	100%	98%	98%
Q22. School staff contact whānau promptly about any problems involving their child(ren).	100%	100%	98%
Q23. Staff contact whānau promptly about good news to do with their child(ren).	97%	95%	93%
Q24. This school does a good job of letting whānau know about school rules and policies.	95%	96%	96%
Q25. This school has an effective relationship with whānau.	98%	98%	97%
Q26. This school has an effective relationship with Māori students.	99%	99%	96%
Q27. This school helps whānau understand their child(ren)'s progress and achievement.	98%	99%	96%

Appendix 6

School survey results, by proportion of Māori students

Questions	Agree	
	Low proportion	High proportion
Q19. This school does a good job of letting whānau know about ways they can help out in school.	83%	86%
Q20. This school does a good job of letting whānau know about ways they can help their child(ren) at home.	88%	91%
Q21. This school actively ensures whānau know about meetings and special school events.	91%	99%
Q22. School staff contact whānau promptly about any problems involving their child(ren).	94%	97%
Q23. Staff contact whānau promptly about good news to do with their child(ren).	66%	84%
Q24. This school does a good job of letting whānau know about school rules and policies.	77%	83%
Q25. This school has an effective relationship with whānau.	85%	95%
Q26. This school has an effective relationship with Māori students.	92%	98%
Q27. This school helps whānau understand their child(ren)'s progress and achievement.	89%	97%

Questions	Agree to some extent	
	Low proportion	High proportion
Q19. This school does a good job of letting whānau know about ways they can help out in school.	95%	99%
Q20. This school does a good job of letting whānau know about ways they can help their child(ren) at home.	97%	97%
Q21. This school actively ensures whānau know about meetings and special school events.	98%	100%
Q22. School staff contact whānau promptly about any problems involving their child(ren).	99%	100%
Q23. Staff contact whānau promptly about good news to do with their child(ren).	94%	98%
Q24. This school does a good job of letting whānau know about school rules and policies.	95%	97%
Q25. This school has an effective relationship with whānau.	97%	99%
Q26. This school has an effective relationship with Māori students.	97%	99%
Q27. This school helps whānau understand their child(ren)'s progress and achievement.	97%	99%

Publications by the Auditor-General

Other publications issued by the Auditor-General recently have been:

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- Ministry for Primary Industries: Managing the Primary Growth Partnership
- Central government: Results of the 2013/14 audits
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- Ministry of Social Development: Using a case management approach to service delivery
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