

Wānangatia te Putanga Tauira  
National Monitoring Study  
of Student Achievement

# English: Reading

## 2014 – Contextual Report





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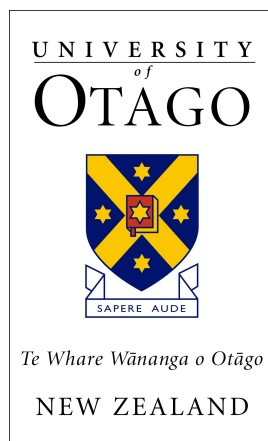
# English: Reading 2014

## Contextual Report

Educational Assessment Research Unit  
and  
New Zealand Council for Educational Research



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# Contents

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Acknowledgements	2
Executive Summary	3
Overview of the Contextual Report	6
Student Questionnaire: <i>About You</i>	9
Student Interview: <i>My Reading</i>	19
Teacher Questionnaire	28
Principal Questionnaire	37
Appendix 1: List of reports for 2014	41

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- principals and students of the schools where the tasks were piloted and trials were conducted
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- the Ministry of Education Research Team and Steering Committee.

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# Executive Summary

In 2014, the National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA) assessed student achievement at Year 4 and Year 8 in two areas of the *New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) – English: reading and social studies. This report examines a selection of contextual data collected as part of the study of English: reading. These data include responses to: the *About You* section of the student questionnaire<sup>1</sup> and the *My Reading* student interview; questions in the teacher questionnaire related to English: reading; and questions in the principal questionnaire related to general school characteristics and the school's English: reading programme.

The purpose of the report is to provide background information relevant to the English: reading study. Special attention is paid to relationships between the contextual data and achievement on the English: reading achievement measure used in the study – the Knowledge and Application of Reading (KARE) assessment. The report supplements *English: Reading 2014 – Overview* and the priority learner group reports in English: reading for Māori, Pasifika and students with special education needs<sup>2</sup>.

The report is written descriptively to outline the types of responses typical of the students, teachers and principals that made up the sample. It is important to note that two of these groups, the teachers and principals, are not necessarily representative of the corresponding groups in the general population. In addition, the students, teachers and principals are reporting their perceptions based on the meaning they make of the questions and their ability to recall information in order to make a response. Taken together, this means care should be applied when interpreting and generalising from the findings. Overall, however, the findings do provide indications and patterns that are useful when seeking to understand reading as part of the English learning area.

## The Knowledge and Application of Reading in English (KARE) assessment

The KARE assessment was made up of a mixture of pen-and-paper and oral tasks. The tasks focused on three cognitive targets, which were assessed across a range of written texts:

- locate and recall ideas and information
- integrate and interpret ideas and information
- critique and evaluate ideas and information.

The assessment of vocabulary understanding and application was also included and was integrated across the three targets.

Scores on the KARE assessment were located on a scale constructed using item response theory and common to both Year 4 and Year 8.

## The student questionnaire: *About You*

All students in the NMSSA study (about 2,200 at each year level) completed the NMSSA student questionnaire. The *About You* section asked students general questions about the amount of English spoken at home, the number of schools attended, absences from school and whether they thought their teacher liked them. All Year 4 and Year 8 students in the study were asked to respond to the same questions.

Most Year 4 and Year 8 students reported that they 'always' spoke English at home. Students who 'always' spoke English at home scored higher on average on the KARE assessment than students who spoke English 'often' or 'hardly ever' at home.

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<sup>1</sup> Students' responses to parts of the questionnaire directly related to English: reading have been reported in the chapter titled 'Students' Attitude to Reading and their Opportunities to Learn' in *NMSSA Report 5.1 English: Reading 2014 – Overview* and in similar sections of the associated priority learner group reports for Māori, Pasifika and students with special education needs (see Appendix 1).

<sup>2</sup> Six reports have been written to present the findings for social studies, and a parallel set of six reports have been written to present the findings for English: reading. A table of the reports for each learning area is provided in Appendix 1.

Sixty-four percent of Year 4 students reported that they had attended 1 school since their fifth birthday, and 66 percent of Year 8 students reported attending either 1 or 2 schools (many Year 8 students will have attended a contributing primary followed by an intermediate or secondary school). The number of schools that students had attended varied by school decile at Year 4 and by ethnicity at both year levels.

Year 4 students who had attended only 1 school scored higher on average on the KARE assessment than Year 4 students who had attended 2 or more schools. However, on average, Year 8 students' achievement was similar across the number of schools attended.

Greater proportions of students from low decile schools (deciles 1 to 3) reported frequent instances of whole-day absence and being late to school than students from mid (deciles 4 to 7) or high decile schools (deciles 8 to 10). The same was true for Māori and Pasifika students compared with non-Māori and non-Pasifika students. At both Year 4 and Year 8, students who reported a greater number of absences and being late for school tended to score lower on the KARE assessment. These results are likely to be somewhat confounded due to the school decile and ethnicity interaction.

At both year levels, students who reported greater numbers of absences and instances of being late for school scored lower on average on the KARE assessment than students who reported fewer absences and instances of lateness.

The majority of the students indicated some level of agreement with the statement 'my teacher likes me'. Students who responded to this statement with 'strongly agree' had higher scores on average on the Attitude to Reading scale compared with students who responded with 'agree', 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'.

### **Student interview: *My Reading***

A subset of the NMSSA sample, consisting of up to eight randomly selected students from each sampled school, completed a one-to-one structured interview called *My Reading* with trained teacher assessors. About 800 students from each of Year 4 and Year 8 were interviewed.

The students were asked a range of questions about their reading. The interviews were video-taped and the digital video files used to code students' responses in subsequent analyses.

For both Year 4 and Year 8 students, the most commonly reported places to find things they liked to read were 'school library', 'public library' and 'bookshop'. Response patterns were consistent across gender and school decile but varied to some extent across ethnic groups for the categories 'bookshop', 'home' and 'computer/cellphone'. A greater proportion of Year 8 students reported finding things they like to read on 'computer/cellphone' than Year 4 students.

About 15 percent of students at each year level indicated they spent more time reading on electronic devices (such as computers, iPads and cellphones) than reading books. Year 4 students' average scores on the KARE assessment increased with the relative amount of time spent reading from a book rather than an electronic device. However, a similar relationship was not found for Year 8 students.

'Familiar settings' and 'cultural identity' were the two main reasons given by students for reading books by New Zealand authors. The response patterns for these categories did show some difference across school decile and ethnicity.

At least 90 percent of students at each year level said it was important to be a good reader. Students listed 'learning benefits' and it being 'helpful in the future' as the main reasons for being a good reader.

The most commonly mentioned things that make reading easy were 'words/simple text' and 'diagrams/pictures', whereas 'difficult words' and 'text length/font/size' were stated the most when it came to things that make reading hard.

The desire to extend vocabulary was the most commonly cited area for improvement, followed by the need to read harder texts and wanting to improve comprehension.

## Teacher questionnaire

Up to three teachers in each of the schools involved in the NMSSA English: reading study completed a teacher questionnaire. About 80 percent of eligible teachers completed the questionnaire at each year level.

Overall, almost half of the teachers indicated they had taught for at least 10 years. The average class size for teachers of Year 4 and Year 8 was 27 and 29, respectively.

In general, teachers were found to have very positive attitudes towards reading and their own teaching of reading. Their responses to the questionnaire items related to their attitudes and practices in teaching reading were similar across the decile bands.

Meeting the differentiated reading needs of students was commonly achieved by ‘reading groups within the classroom’, ‘whole-class activities’, ‘extra individual assistance’ and ‘reading activities across the curriculum’.

The vast majority of teachers reported that students in their class often had opportunities to be involved in a range of learning activities and experiences in reading. The frequencies reported by teachers for each activity/experience were similar across school decile bands. Students responding to the student questionnaire also rated how often five of these learning activities and experiences happened. On average, students reported that they occurred less frequently than did the teachers.

When asked to describe the aspects they emphasised the most when teaching reading, teachers mentioned comprehension strategies more often than any other aspect.

Just over half of the teachers at both year levels rated the level of professional support that they received for the teaching of reading as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’.

Most teachers indicated that they were often (at least once a term) involved in a range of interactions with other teachers involving the teaching of reading. About 70 percent of teachers reported that they had an opportunity to observe a colleague teaching reading at least once a year. Teachers with less than 2 years of teaching experience reported more frequent opportunities to observe a colleague teaching reading than teachers with greater than 2 years of experience.

About 55 percent of teachers reported that they had received reading-focused professional learning and development in the last 12 months.

## Principal questionnaire

The principal in each of the schools selected for the 2014 NMSSA study was asked to complete a 4-part questionnaire. Over 80 percent of principals completed the questionnaire at each year level.

Twenty-six percent of Year 4 principals and 12 percent of Year 8 principals reported that the proportion of students in their school for whom English was not their first language was greater than 25 percent.

Year 4 and Year 8 principals reported that classes, on average, spent 5 and 4 hours per week, respectively, on their reading programmes.

The majority of the principals rated the provision for learning in reading at their school as ‘good’ or ‘very good’. About 30 percent of principals rated their school’s reading programme as ‘excellent’.

At least 90 percent of principals at each year level rated their school’s inclusion of students with special education needs in the reading programme as ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’.

# 1 Overview of the Contextual Report

## 1. Introduction

This report examines a range of contextual data collected as part of the 2014 NMSSA study of reading in English (English: reading). The report supplements *English: Reading 2014 – Overview* and the priority learner group reports in English: reading for Māori, Pasifika and students with special education needs<sup>3</sup>. The purpose of the report is to provide background information relevant to understanding the English: reading study, including the achievement patterns that were observed.

This chapter introduces the 2014 NMSSA study, including describing the range of achievement and contextual data collected in English: reading. A short summary of achievement results from the study is provided. The chapter finishes by describing the structure of the report.

## 2. 2014 National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement

NMSSA is a sample-based monitoring project designed to assess and understand student achievement at Year 4 and Year 8 in New Zealand English-medium state schools. NMSSA aims to cover all learning areas of the *New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) during a five-year cycle. In 2014, the study assessed English: reading and social studies. The study was carried out during Term 3 and involved a nationally representative sample of about 2,200 students from 100 schools at each year level.

## 3. How English: reading was assessed

A two-part assessment called the Knowledge and Application of Reading in English (KARE) was used to assess English: reading. In part 1, up to 25 students in each school completed a group-administered paper-and-pencil test. In part 2, eight of the ‘up to 25’ students in each school took part in a one-to-one assessment where they responded orally to questions from a teacher assessor.

KARE focused on three cognitive targets, which were assessed across a range of written texts:

- locate and recall ideas and information
- integrate and interpret ideas and information
- critique and evaluate ideas and information.

The assessment of vocabulary understanding and application was also included and was integrated across the three targets.

The approach taken to construct the KARE scale is based on Item Response Theory; specifically the Rasch model. The techniques used to do the scaling are similar to those used in studies such as PISA and TIMSS<sup>4</sup>. The scale allows scores for Year 4 and Year 8 students to be reported on the same metric. The scale has been constructed so that 100 scale score units represents the combined average score for Year 4 and Year 8, and 20 scale score units is equal to the average standard deviation for a year level.

Performance on the KARE assessment was linked to the English learning area of the NZC through a curriculum alignment exercise. The exercise considered the performance demands of the assessment against curriculum expectations at curriculum levels 1 to 4 and resulted in cut scores being defined on the KARE scale to differentiate performance across these levels.

<sup>3</sup> Contextual information about students’ attitudes to reading, learning opportunities and experiences in reading are included in *NMSSA Report 5.1 English: Reading 2014 – Overview* and priority learner group reports. See Appendix 1.

<sup>4</sup> PISA – Programme for International Student Assessment, TIMSS – Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study



## 4. Summary of achievement

Figures 1.1 and 1.2 display the scale score<sup>5</sup> distributions for gender and ethnicity<sup>6</sup> at Year 4 and Year 8 on the KARE assessment. On average, Year 8 students scored 29 units higher on the KARE scale than Year 4 students (an annualised difference of about 7 scale score units per year).

Girls scored higher, on average, than boys at both year levels. The average difference between girls and boys of 7 scale score units was of a similar magnitude across ethnic groups.

At both year levels, NZ European and Asian students scored higher, on average, than Māori and Pasifika students.

At both year levels, the average score for students from high decile schools<sup>7</sup> was greater than the average scores for students from mid and low decile schools. At Year 4, the difference between the average scores for students in the low and high decile bands was 16 scale score units. At Year 8 it was 13 scale score units.

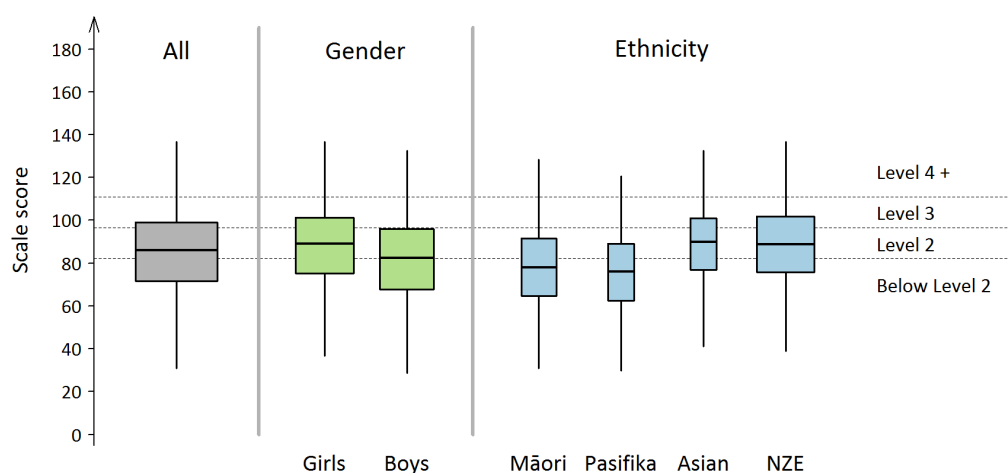


Figure 1.1 Distribution of Year 4 students' scores on the Knowledge and Application of Reading in English assessment, by gender and ethnicity (NZE=NZ European)

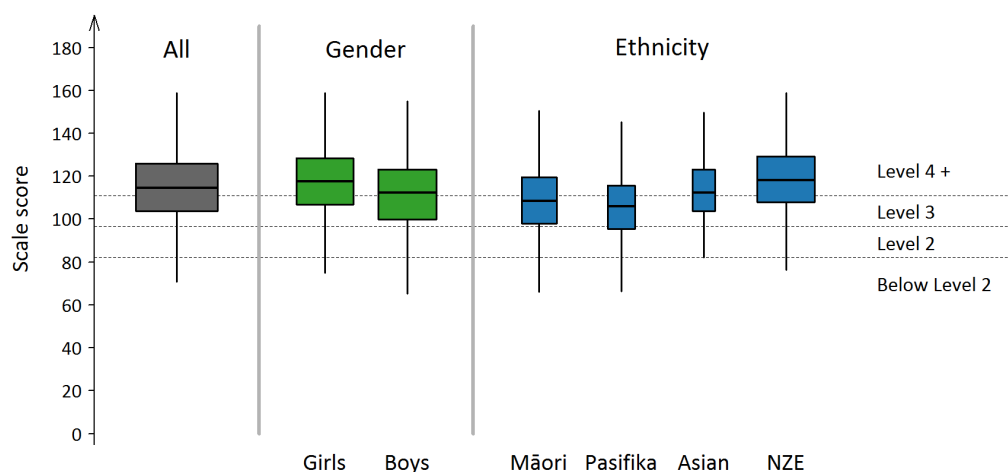


Figure 1.2 Distribution of Year 8 students' scores on the Knowledge and Application of Reading in English assessment, by gender and ethnicity (NZE=NZ European)

<sup>5</sup> Please refer to Chapter 1 of *NMSSA Report 5.1 English Reading 2014 – Overview* for information about scale scores and the KARE assessment more generally.

<sup>6</sup> Non-prioritised ethnicity was used where students could identify with up to three ethnicities. This meant they could be present in multiple ethnic groups. Student ethnicity data were obtained from student National Student Number information held on the Ministry of Education ENROL database. The 'NZ European' category included NZ Pākehā only. The 'Pasifika' category included Tokelauan, Fijian, Niuean, Tongan, Cook Islands Māori, Samoan and other Pacific peoples. The 'Asian' category included Filipino, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Other Southeast Asian, Indian, Chinese, Sri Lankan, Japanese, Korean, and other Asians. The 'Other' category included Australians, British/Irish, German, Dutch, Greek, Polish, South Slav, Italian and other Europeans, Middle Eastern, Latin American, African, and Not Stated. About 7 percent of students at Year 4 and about 6 percent at Year 8 indicated they belonged to ethnic groups categorised as 'Other'.

<sup>7</sup> School decile was used to create three decile bands for reporting purposes: low (deciles 1 to 3), mid (deciles 4 to 7) and high (deciles 8 to 10).

## 5. What contextual data were collected?

Questionnaires for students, teachers and principals were used to collect a range of contextual data. There was also a one-to-one structured interview with students called *My Reading*.

### **Student, teacher and principal questionnaires**

All students in the NMSSA study (about 2,200 students at each year level) completed a student questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered as a paper-and-pencil instrument, and was read out to students in Year 4 by the teacher assessor. The questionnaire asked students about their attitude to reading, their learning opportunities and experiences in reading at school and the amount of time they spent reading at home. The questionnaire also contained a range of general questions about the students themselves. In terms of the student questionnaire, this report focusses on the general questions. The *English: Reading 2014 – Overview* report and priority learner group reports provide information on students' attitudes to reading, learning opportunities and experiences in reading at school, and the amount of time they spend reading at home.

The teacher questionnaire was completed by up to three teachers in each school who were working at the year level assessed in their school (Year 4 or Year 8). Teachers were asked for information about themselves; their attitude toward reading, and teaching reading; the reading opportunities and experiences students were exposed to in their class; and the professional support they received in reading.

The principal questionnaire was completed by the principal of each school involved in the NMSSA study. Principals were asked about the reading programme across the school, including how much time was dedicated to teaching reading.

### ***My Reading* interview**

The *My Reading* interview was a short, one-to-one structured interview with a teacher assessor about the student's reading. It was carried out with eight students in each school (the same eight students at each school involved in the second part of the KARE assessment). The students were asked a range of questions, including where they found things to read, the amount of reading they did on electronic devices, their interactions with New Zealand literature, and what they found easy and hard about reading. Each of the interviews was videotaped and the responses to the questions were coded.

## 6. Structure of the report

This report looks at each of the contextual data sources starting with the student questionnaire. The data are examined with a focus on notable findings related to variables such as year level, gender, ethnic group and decile band. Where appropriate, the link between students' responses to questions and their performance on the KARE assessment is examined. Graphs and tables<sup>8</sup> are used to present the information. Linear regression has been applied in some instances, to look at the relationship between achievement and responses to questions across school decile bands.

The report is written descriptively to outline the types of responses typical of the students, teachers, and principals who made up the sample. It is important to note that two of these groups – the teachers and principals – are not necessarily representative of the corresponding groups in the general population. In addition, the students, teachers and principals are reporting their perceptions based on the meaning they make of the questions and their ability to recall information in order to make a response. Taken together, this means care should be applied when interpreting and generalising from the findings. Overall, however, the findings do provide indications and patterns that are useful when seeking to understand reading as part of the English learning area.

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<sup>8</sup> In tables and in the text any percentages reported have been rounded to whole numbers.

# 2 Student Questionnaire: *About You*

## 1. Introduction

All students in the NMSSA study (about 2,200 at each year level) completed a student questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. Part 1 asked the students for information about social studies. Part 2 asked the students for information about English: reading. Part 3 asked the students for general information about themselves and was titled *About You*. Students' responses to parts 1 and 2 of the questionnaire have been reported previously<sup>9</sup>. This chapter describes how students responded to some of the questions in the *About You* section of the student questionnaire and relates students' responses to patterns in achievement on the KARE assessment. The findings are examined by year level, ethnicity, and school decile band. Where notable gender differences exist, these are also described. However, response patterns across genders were similar for most of the *About You* questions.

## 2. The *About You* section

The *About You* section asked students general questions about themselves and their experience of school. All Year 4 and Year 8 students in the study were asked to respond to the same questions about the amount of English spoken at home, the number of schools attended, absences from school, and whether they thought their teacher liked them.

## 3. Speaking English at home

Students were asked to indicate how often they spoke English at home, using 'hardly ever', 'often', or 'always'. Seventy-three percent of Year 4 students reported that they 'always' spoke English at home, as did 82 percent of Year 8 students.

Figures 2.1 and 2.2 show how students responded to this question, by ethnicity, at Year 4 and Year 8. At both year levels, greater proportions of NZ European and Māori students, than Pasifika or Asian students, indicated that they 'always' spoke English at home. A lesser proportion of Asian students, at both year levels, reported always speaking English at home, compared with students in other ethnic groups.

<sup>9</sup> Students' responses to part 1 of the questionnaire have been reported in the chapter titled 'Students' Attitude to Social Studies and their Opportunities to Learn' in *NMSSA Report 6.1 Social Studies 2014 – Overview* and in similar chapters in the associated priority learner group reports for Māori, Pasifika and students with special education needs. Students' responses to part 2 of the questionnaire have been reported in the chapter titled 'Students' Attitude to Reading and their Opportunities to Learn' in *NMSSA Report 5.1 English Reading 2014 – Overview*. They are also reported in similar chapters in the associated priority learner group reports for Māori, Pasifika and students with special education needs. (see Appendix 1).

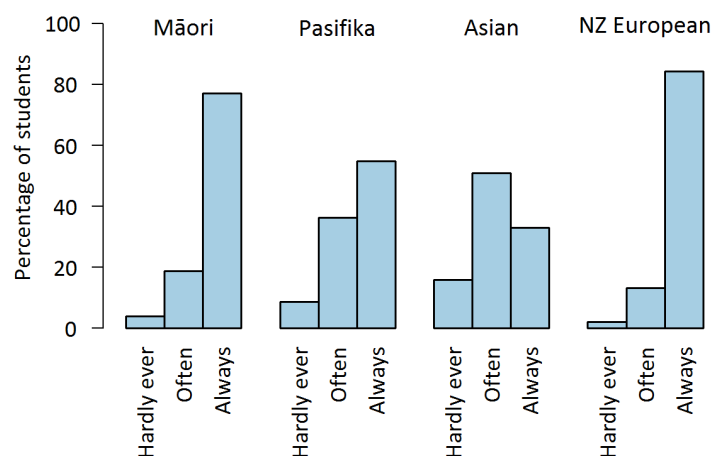


Figure 2.1 Year 4 percentage frequency of how often English is spoken at home by ethnicity

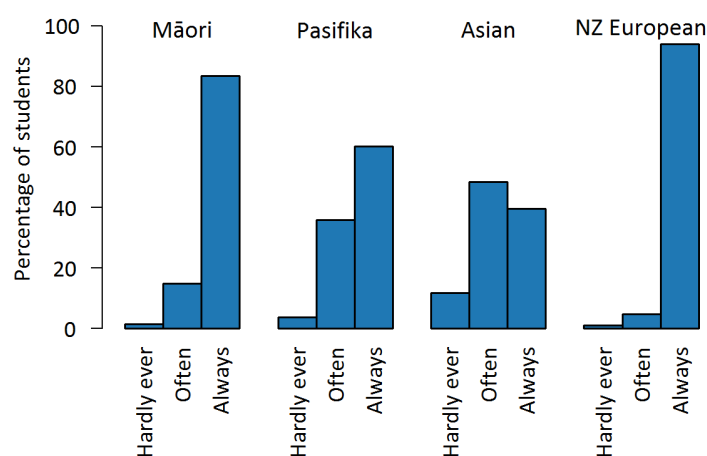


Figure 2.2 Year 8 percentage frequency of how often English is spoken at home by ethnicity

As Table 2.1 shows, a smaller proportion of students from low decile schools than those from mid or high decile schools reported that they ‘always’ spoke English at home. These decile differences are not surprising given the different ethnic compositions of student groups across decile bands (see *English: Reading 2014 – Overview*).

Table 2.1 Percentage frequency of how often English is spoken at home by school decile band

Decile band	Hardly ever	Often	Always
Low	7	27	66
Mid	4	19	76
High	5	20	75

### Speaking English at home and reading achievement

Figures 2.3 and 2.4 use boxplots to show the relationship between students' reports of how often English is spoken at home and their scores on the KARE assessment at Year 4 and Year 8. On average and at both year levels, students who reported that they 'always' spoke English at home scored higher on the KARE assessment than students who reported that they did so 'often' or 'hardly ever'. The average score difference between students who selected the 'hardly ever' response category and students who selected the 'always' response category was greater at Year 8 (15 scale score units) than Year 4 (9 scale score units).

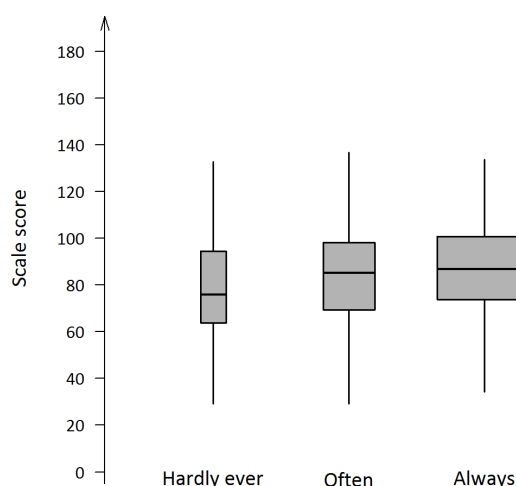


Figure 2.3 Year 4 achievement on the Knowledge and Application of Reading in English assessment by how often students spoke English at home

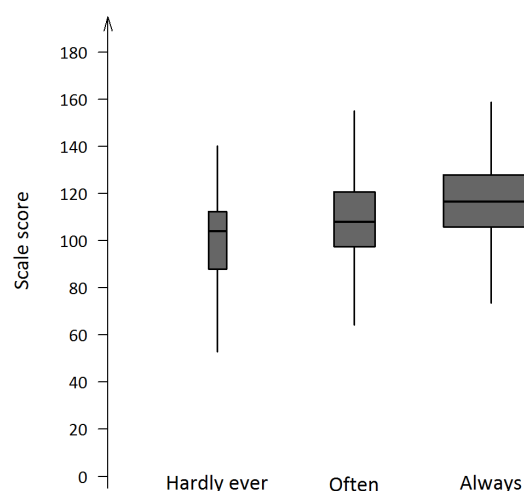


Figure 2.4 Year 8 achievement on the Knowledge and Application of Reading in English assessment by how often students spoke English at home

A regression analysis by year level indicated that, after taking decile into account, students who responded with 'always' to the question about how often they spoke English at home had higher KARE scores, on average, than students who selected 'hardly ever'<sup>10</sup>.

## 4. Number of schools attended

Students were asked how many schools they had attended since they turned 5. They responded by selecting one of the following: '1 school', '2 schools', '3 schools' or '4 or more schools'. At Year 4 the minimum number possible is 1 school. At Year 8 the minimum possible was 1 or 2 schools (64 percent of Year 8 students in the sample attended an intermediate or secondary school).

Figure 2.5 shows that 65 percent of students in Year 4 reported having attended only 1 school. At Year 8, 66 percent of students attended 1 or 2 schools.

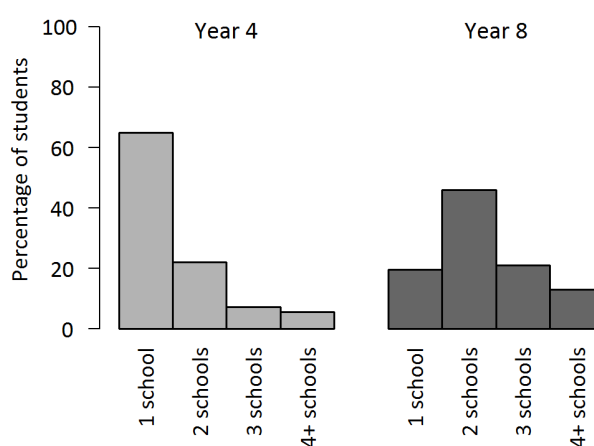


Figure 2.5 Percentage frequency of the number of schools students attended by year level

<sup>10</sup> Decile is generally a strong predictor of achievement. That is, decile explains a sizeable amount of the variance in reading scores. When the amount of English spoken at home is added into a regression model that already uses decile as a predictor, the amount of variance described increases enough for the change to be considered statistically significant. ANOVA tests were used to compare the regression models.

At Year 4, there was some variation in the number of schools attended by decile. As shown in Table 2.2, the proportion of Year 4 students who reported attending only 1 school was lowest for students from low decile schools, and highest for students from high decile schools. A greater proportion of Year 4 students from low decile schools, than from mid or high decile schools, also reported attending 3 or more schools. Table 2.3 shows that the pattern by decile for Year 8 students was different. The proportion of Year 8 students who reported attending one or two schools was relatively similar for students across low, mid and high decile schools (67, 61 and 70 percent, respectively). There was also little difference, by decile, in the proportions of Year 8 students who reported attending 3 schools, or 4 or more schools. This difference between Year 4 and Year 8 might be explained by the different school types available at each year level and present in the sample at different decile bands.

Table 2.2 Percentage frequency of the number of schools Year 4 students attended by decile band

Decile band	1 school	2 schools	3 schools	4 or more schools
Low	54	23	11	12
Mid	67	24	7	3
High	71	20	5	4

Table 2.3 Percentage frequency of the number of schools Year 8 students attended by decile band

Decile band	1 school	2 schools	3 schools	4 or more schools
Low	28	39	20	14
Mid	13	48	24	14
High	23	47	19	12

Tables 2.4 and 2.5 show that, at Year 4, greater proportions of Māori and Pasifika students than NZ European or Asian students reported having attended 3 or more schools. At Year 8, there were greater proportions of Māori and Asian students than Pasifika or NZ European students who reported having attended 3 or more schools.

Table 2.4 Percentage frequency of the number of schools Year 4 students attended by ethnicity

Ethnicity	1 school	2 schools	3 schools	4 or more schools
NZ European	72	19	6	4
Māori	56	23	10	12
Pasifika	51	28	11	10
Asian	63	28	7	2

Table 2.5 Percentage frequency of the number of schools Year 8 students attended by ethnicity

Ethnicity	1 school	2 schools	3 schools	4 or more schools
NZ European	21	48	20	11
Māori	18	39	27	16
Pasifika	21	47	20	13
Asian	8	52	22	18



### Number of schools attended and achievement

Figures 2.6 and 2.7 show the relationship between the reported number of schools attended and achievement on the KARE assessment for Year 4 and Year 8, respectively. At Year 4, there was a general trend towards lower average scores as the number of schools attended increased. At Year 8, the average level of achievement was fairly consistent across the number of schools attended.

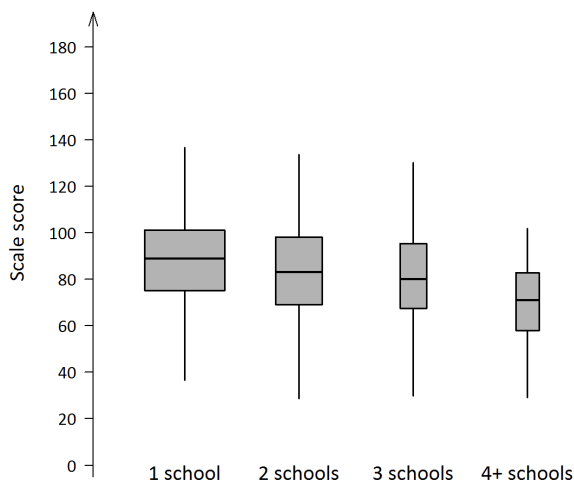


Figure 2.6 Year 4 achievement on the Knowledge and Application of Reading assessment by number of schools attended

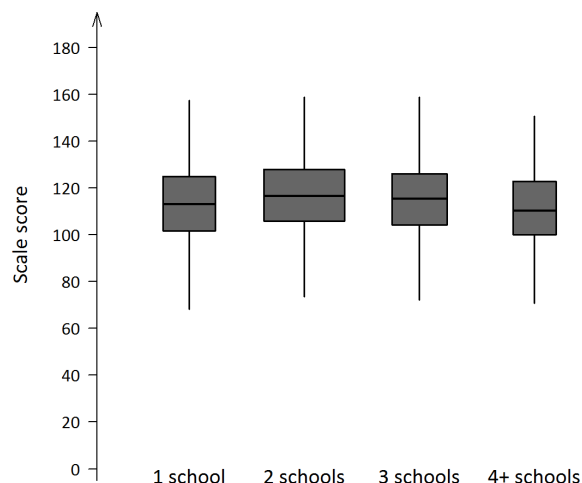


Figure 2.7 Year 8 achievement on the Knowledge and Application of Reading assessment by number of schools attended

A regression analysis by year level indicated that after taking decile into account, Year 4 students who attended fewer schools had higher KARE scores, on average, than those who attended more schools. There was no association found between achievement and the number of schools attended for Year 8 students, after accounting for decile.

## 5. School attendance

Students responded to two questions that related to their attendance at school over the previous two weeks<sup>11</sup>. The first question asked how many times students were absent from school for a whole day and the second asked how many times they had arrived late for school.

### Absences

Figure 2.8 shows the number of absences from school over the previous 2 weeks, as reported by students in Year 4 and Year 8. A greater proportion of Year 8 students than Year 4 students reported 'never' being absent from school in the previous two weeks, while a greater proportion of Year 4 students than Year 8 students reported three or more absences.

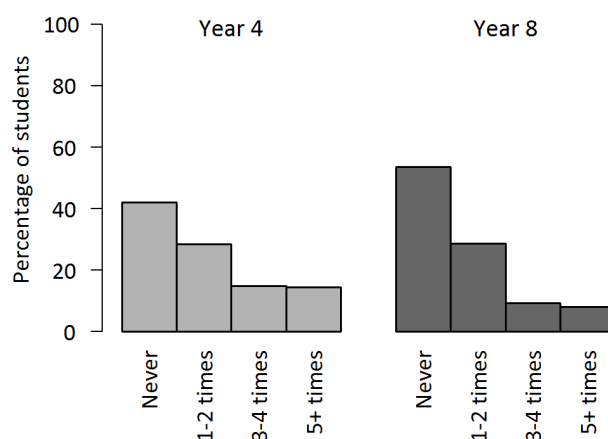


Figure 2.8 Percentage frequency of the number of times students were absent from school, by year level

<sup>11</sup> NMSSA assessments were undertaken in Term 3 of 2014.

Figures 2.9 and 2.10 show that this pattern of absences by year level held across school decile bands. At both year levels, a greater proportion of students from low decile schools than from mid or high decile schools reported that they were absent from school three or more times during the previous 2 weeks. Greater proportions of Māori and Pasifika students than non-Māori and non-Pasifika students reported that they were absent from school three or more times. However, the results for ethnicity groups and decile groups are likely to be somewhat confounded because there were more Māori and Pasifika students at low decile schools than at mid or high decile schools.

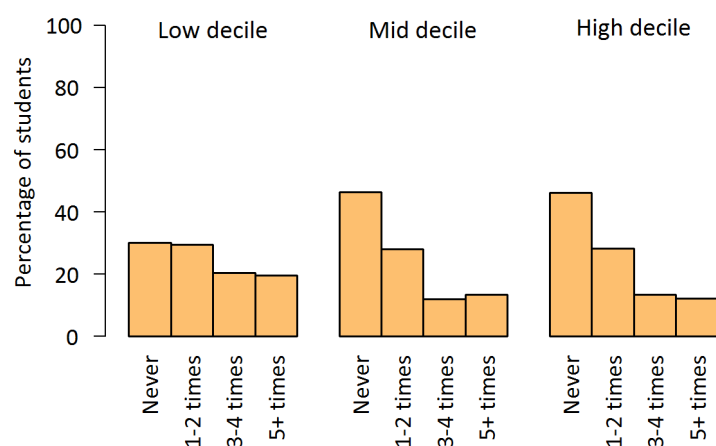


Figure 2.9 Year 4 percentage frequency of number of times students were absent from school, over the last 2 weeks, by decile band

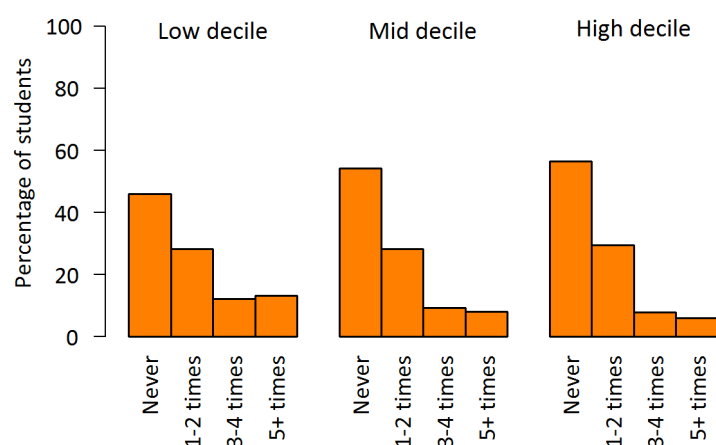


Figure 2.10 Year 8 percentage frequency of number of times students were absent from school, over the last 2 weeks, by decile band

### Comparison with national data

Data available from the Education Counts website, and related to a report on attendance in New Zealand schools in 2013 (Loader, 2014<sup>12</sup>), indicates an absence rate for New Zealand students in Year 4 and Year 8 of 7.3 and 8.1 percent respectively. This is not consistent with the self-reported absences of the students in the NMSSA sample where Year 4 students reported more absences than those in Year 8. Moreover, the number of absences reported over the 2-week period indicates a daily absence rate in excess of 10 percent at both year levels. These inconsistencies could suggest that the students in the NMSSA sample, particularly those in Year 4, over-reported their absences. However, patterns in the NMSSA data, in terms of the relative proportions of reported absences by gender, ethnicity and school decile, were generally in agreement with the attendance data provided by Loader<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Loader, M. (2014). *Attendance in New Zealand Schools 2013*. Retrieved from <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2503/attendance-in-new-zealand-schools-in-2013>

<sup>13</sup> Loader's data about absences are based on roll returns from schools.

## Absences and achievement

At both year levels, students who reported a greater number of absences tended to score lower on the KARE assessment. Figures 2.11 and 2.12 show the relationship between reported absence categories and achievement on the KARE assessment. At Year 4, while a pattern of decreasing achievement is clear for the first three categories, the last category does not follow this pattern. This inconsistency in the pattern may be due to some Year 4 students finding it difficult to give a precise answer to a question that asks them to think back over the 2 previous weeks.

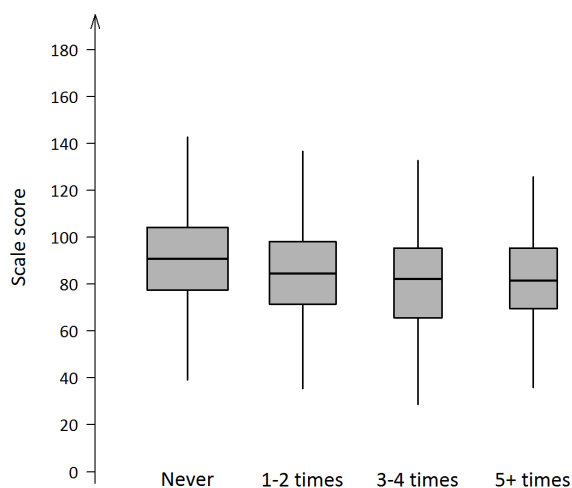


Figure 2.11 Year 4 achievement on the Knowledge and Application of Reading assessment, by number of times students were absent from school

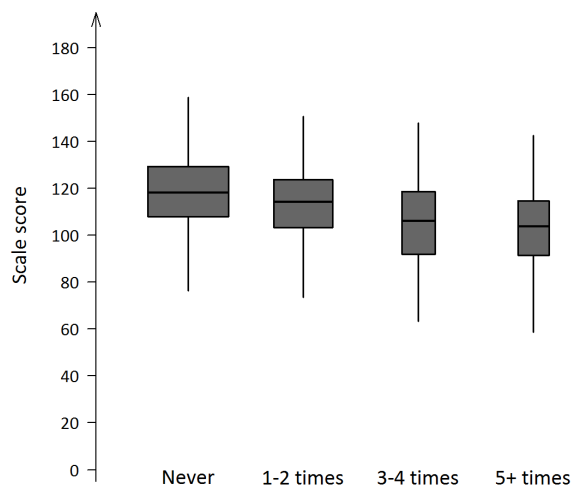


Figure 2.12 Year 8 achievement on the Knowledge and Application of Reading assessment, by number of times students were absent from school

A regression analysis by year level indicated that, after taking decile into account, students who were less often absent from school had higher KARE scores, on average, than those who were more often absent from school. Figure 2.13 shows the relationship between achievement on the KARE assessment and absence across decile bands by year level.

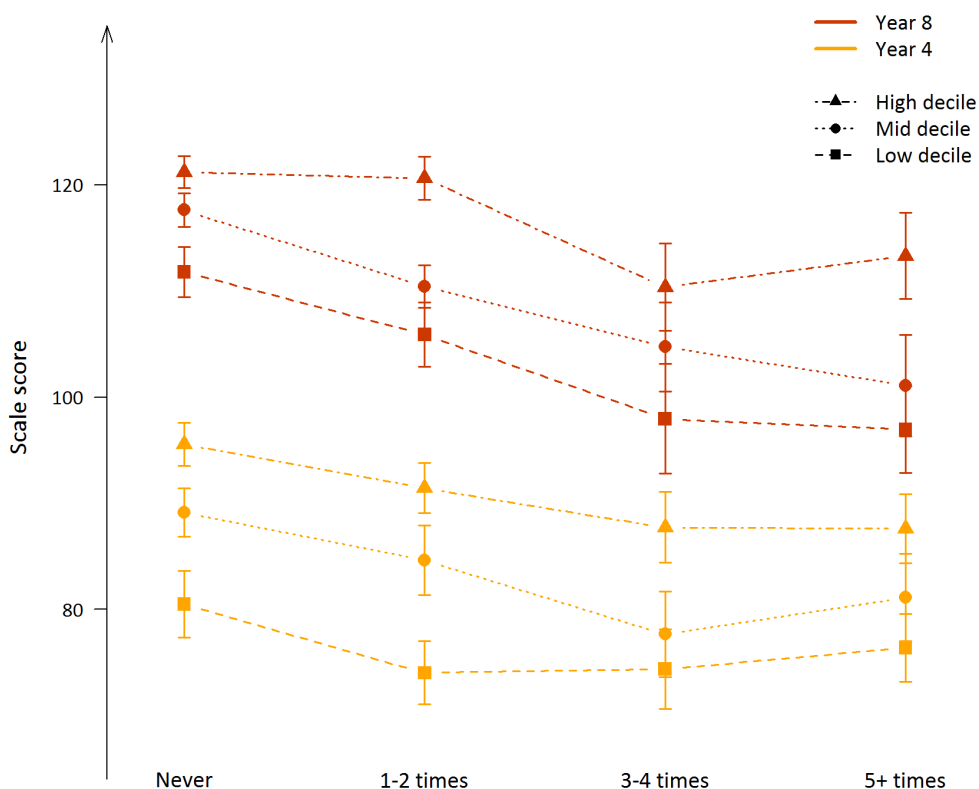


Figure 2.13 Year 4 and Year 8 achievement on the Knowledge and Application of Reading assessment, by the number of times students were absent from school, by decile band

## Lateness

Figure 2.14 shows students' reports of how many times they were late for school over the previous 2 weeks. A greater proportion of Year 4 students than Year 8 students reported being late for school one or more times. At both year levels, a greater proportion of students from low decile schools reported being late for school one or more times than those from mid or high decile schools. Māori and Pasifika students also reported more instances of lateness than non-Māori and non-Pasifika students respectively. As with absences, the results for ethnicity groups and decile groups are likely to be somewhat confounded because there are more Māori and Pasifika students at low decile schools than at mid or high decile schools.

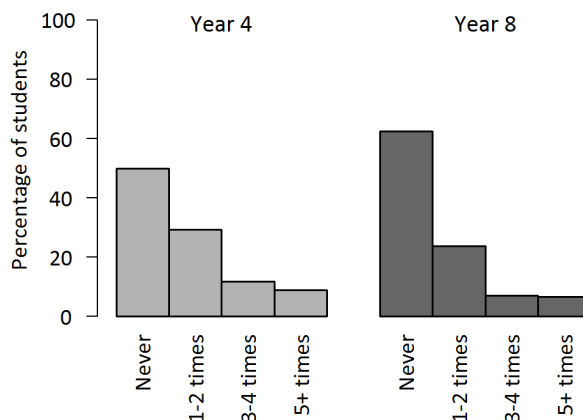


Figure 2.14 Percentage frequency of the number of times students were late for school by year level

## Lateness and achievement

At both year levels, students who reported being late a greater number of times tended to score lower on the KARE assessment. Figures 2.15 and 2.16 show the relationship between reported lateness categories and average achievement scores on the KARE assessment. There was a similar relationship between lateness and achievement as between absence and achievement. A regression analysis by year level indicated that after taking decile into account, students who were less often late for school had higher KARE scores, on average, than those who were more often late for school.

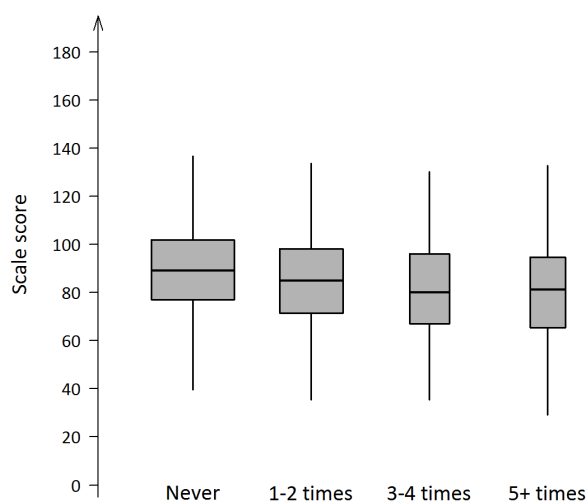


Figure 2.15 Distribution of Year 4 students' scores on the Knowledge and Application of Reading in English scale, by the number of times they were late for school

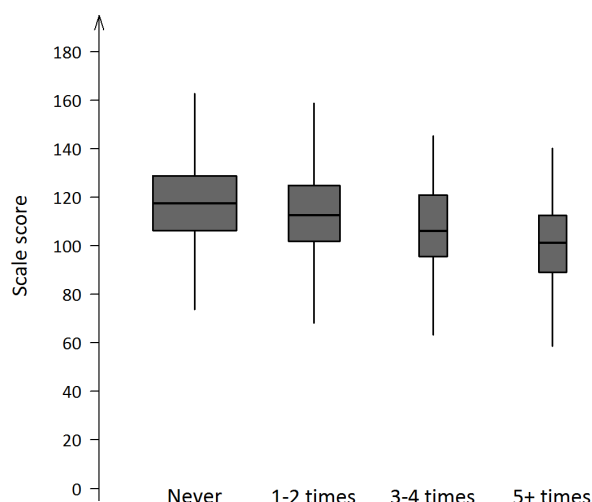


Figure 2.16 Distribution of Year 8 students' scores on the Knowledge and Application of Reading in English scale, by the number of times they were late for school

## Comparison with findings from the Programme for International Student Assessment

The question about instances of lateness for school used in the NMSSA student questionnaire was based on a similar question used as part of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). According to Lamy and May (2014)<sup>14</sup>, the 2012 PISA study, which focused on 15-year-old students in Year 10 and Year 11, found that arriving late was more prevalent amongst students with what the report termed 'low economic, social and cultural status'. The report also indicated that lateness was associated with lower mathematics achievement scores.

<sup>14</sup> Lamy, M with May, S. (2014). *PISA 2012, series on the learning environment, volume 111: Student behaviour*. Retrieved from <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2543/pisa-2012/146186>

## 6. 'My teacher likes me'

Students were asked to indicate how much they agreed with the statement 'my teacher likes me' by selecting one of the following response categories: 'do not agree at all', 'agree a little', 'agree quite a lot' and 'totally agree'.

The majority of students agreed 'quite a lot' or 'totally' with the statement. Figures 2.17 and 2.18 show the percentage of students selecting each response category by gender for Year 4 and Year 8. There is some variation in the proportion of students who selected 'totally agree' by year level and gender. This option was more often selected by Year 4 students than Year 8 students, and more often selected by girls than boys. There were no notable differences in responses to 'my teacher likes me' by school decile or ethnicity.

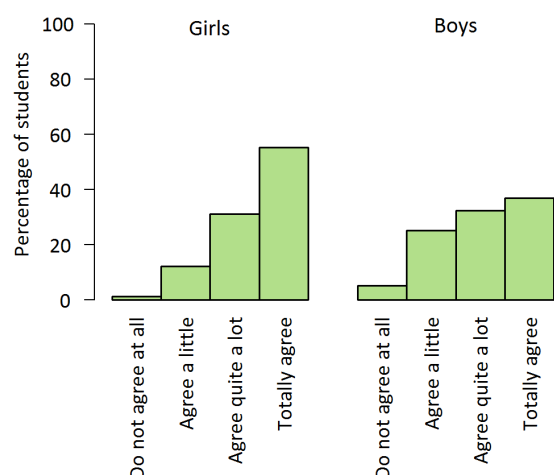


Figure 2.17 Percentage frequency of Year 4 students' agreement with the statement 'my teacher likes me', by gender

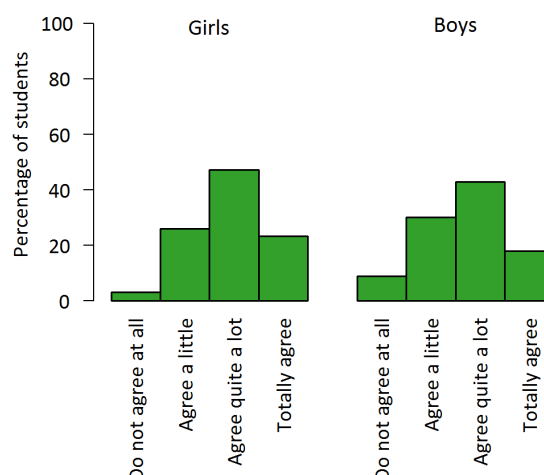


Figure 2.18 Percentage frequency of Year 8 students' agreement with the statement 'my teacher likes me', by gender

### 'My teacher likes me' and achievement

A weak, but statistically significant relationship was detected between responses to this statement and achievement on the KARE scale at Year 4 and Year 8. Stronger agreement with 'my teacher likes me' was associated with slightly higher achievement on the KARE scale, on average.

A much more definite effect was shown between responses to the 'my teacher likes me' statement and students' scores on the Attitude to Reading scale. Students who agreed more strongly with this statement had, on average, more positive attitudes to reading at both Year 4 and Year 8. Figures 2.19 and 2.20 show the relationship between responses to this statement and scores on the Attitude to Reading scale for Year 4 and Year 8.

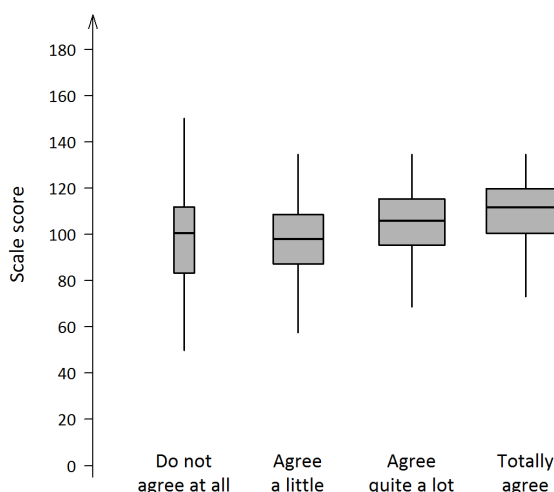


Figure 2.19 Distribution of Year 4 students' scores on the Attitude to Reading scale, by level of agreement with the statement 'my teacher likes me'

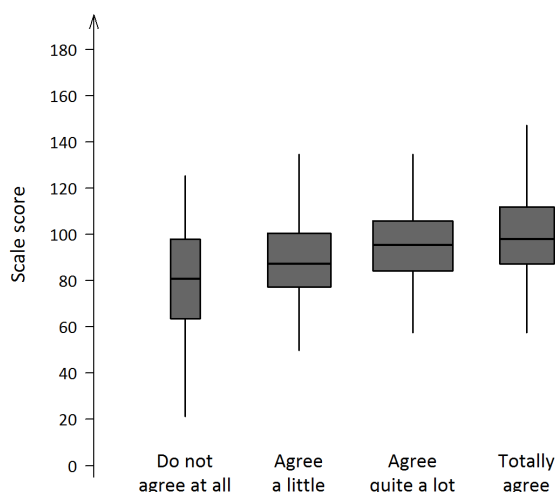


Figure 2.19 Distribution of Year 8 students' scores on the Attitude to Reading scale, by level of agreement with the statement 'my teacher likes me'

## 7. Summary

This chapter examined students' responses to the *About You* section of the 2014 NMSSA student questionnaire.

Most Year 4 and Year 8 students reported that they 'always' spoke English at home. Students who 'always' spoke English at home scored higher on average on the KARE assessment than students who spoke English 'often' or 'hardly ever' at home.

Sixty-four percent of Year 4 students reported that they had attended 1 school since their fifth birthday, and 66 percent of Year 8 students reported attending either 1 or 2 schools (many Year 8 students will have attended a contributing primary followed by an intermediate or secondary school). The number of schools that students had attended varied by school decile at Year 4 and by ethnicity at both year levels.

Year 4 students who had attended only 1 school scored higher on average on the KARE assessment than Year 4 students who had attended 2 or more schools. However, on average, Year 8 students' achievement was similar across the number of schools attended.

Greater proportions of Māori and Pasifika students and students from low decile schools reported frequent instances of absences and being late to school than non-Māori and non-Pasifika students and students from mid or high decile schools, respectively. These results are likely to be somewhat confounded due to the school decile and ethnicity interaction.

At both year levels, students who reported greater numbers of absences (being away from school for a whole day) and instances of being late for school scored lower on average on the KARE assessment than students who reported fewer absences and instances of lateness.

The majority of the students indicated some level of agreement with the statement 'my teacher likes me'. Students who responded to this statement with 'strongly agree' had higher scores on average on the Attitude to Reading scale compared with students who responded with 'agree', 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'.



# 3 Student Interview: *My Reading*

## 1. Introduction

A subset of the NMSSA sample consisting of up to eight randomly selected students from each sampled school completed a one-to-one structured interview called *My Reading* with trained teacher assessors. About 800 students from each of Year 4 and Year 8 were interviewed. This chapter looks at how students responded to the questions in the interview. It looks at responses by gender, decile and ethnicity and reports notable differences between these sub-groups. Relationships between responses to the *My Reading* interview and achievement on the KARE scale were also investigated and notable associations are reported.

## 2. Student interview: *My Reading*

The purpose of the *My Reading* interview was to probe aspects of students' reading which were not part of the paper-and-pencil reading assessment and which did not fit naturally in the student questionnaire. The interview took the form of a conversation between teacher assessors and students and was video-recorded for later analysis. It included questions about what students like to read, how they access reading material, what their preferences are for different reading media, the importance they place on reading as a skill and what they think is easy or difficult about reading.

Following the interviews, the videoed responses were coded to categories developed by NMSSA researchers.

## 3. Where students find the things they like to read

Students were asked where they find the things they like to read, and were prompted to give at least three responses. The categories identified in students' responses are presented in Table 3.1, which shows the percentage of student responses in each category. Over two-thirds of students at both year levels reported finding the things they like to read at 'school libraries' or 'public libraries'. Nearly one third of students identified a 'bookshop' as a place for finding books they like to read. Notably, a higher proportion of Year 8 students than Year 4 students said they find what they like to read on a 'computer/cellphone'. A greater proportion of Year 4 students than Year 8 students said they find the things they like to read at 'home'.

Table 3.1 Percentage frequency of where students find the things they like to read by year level

Response categories	Year 4	Year 8
School library	70	74
Public library	72	71
Bookshop	31	28
Home	31	21
Computer/cellphone	10	28
Friends	5	8
Gifts	5	1
Duffy Books	2	1

There were no notable differences between girls' and boys' responses to this question. However, some variation in where students found the things they like to read was associated with school decile (see Figure 3.1). At both year levels, there were consistent response patterns across school decile bands indicating that a greater proportion of students from higher decile schools than lower decile schools find the things they like to read on 'computers/cellphones' or in 'bookshops'.

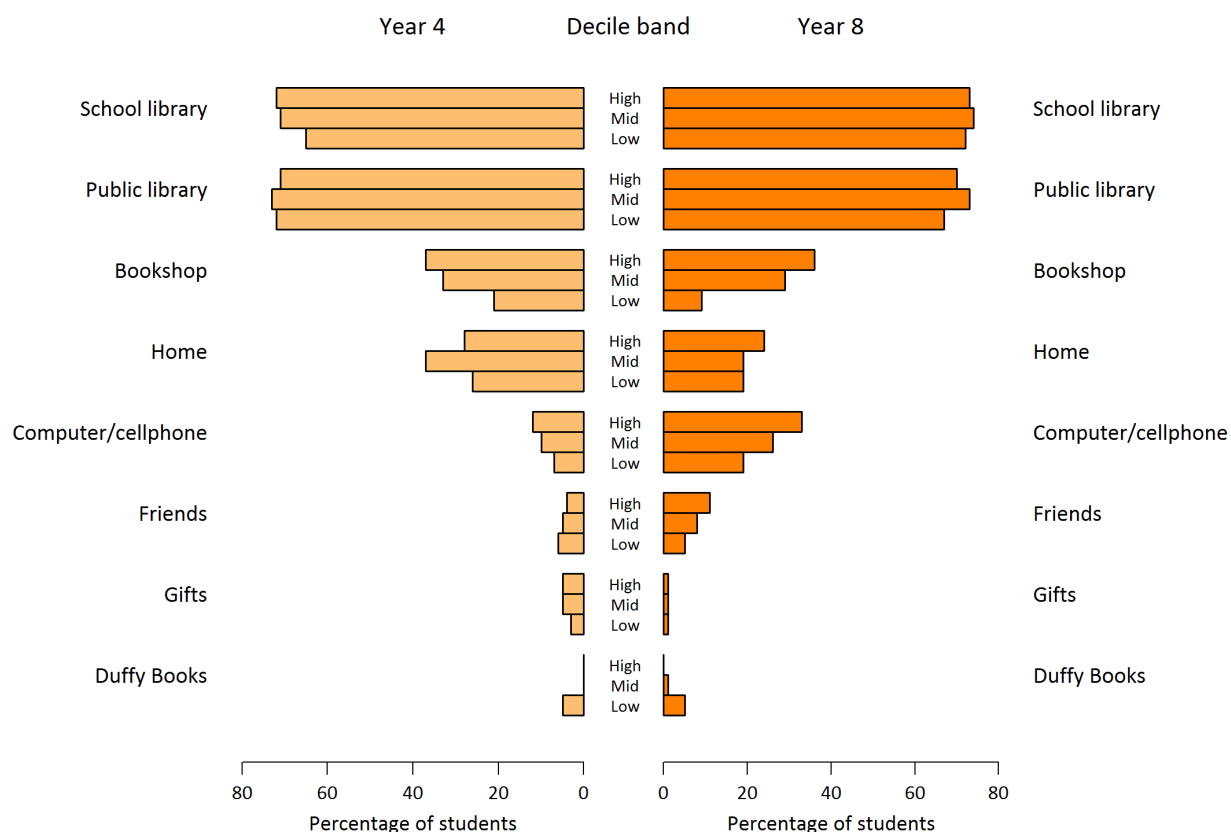


Figure 3.1 Percentage frequency of where students find the things they like to read by year level and school decile band

Responses in the 'bookshop', 'home' and 'computer/cellphone' categories also showed some variation across ethnicity (see Figure 3.2). Pasifika students were far less likely than students from other ethnic groups to say they found things they like to read in 'bookshops'. Māori students were somewhat less likely than NZ European or Asian students to respond in this category. Differences by ethnicity are likely to be confounded with decile.

At Year 8, Asian students were more likely than non-Asian students to report they used 'computer/cellphone' to find the things they like to read. Asian students at both year levels were somewhat less likely to report they find books they like to read at 'home' compared with their non-Asian counterparts.

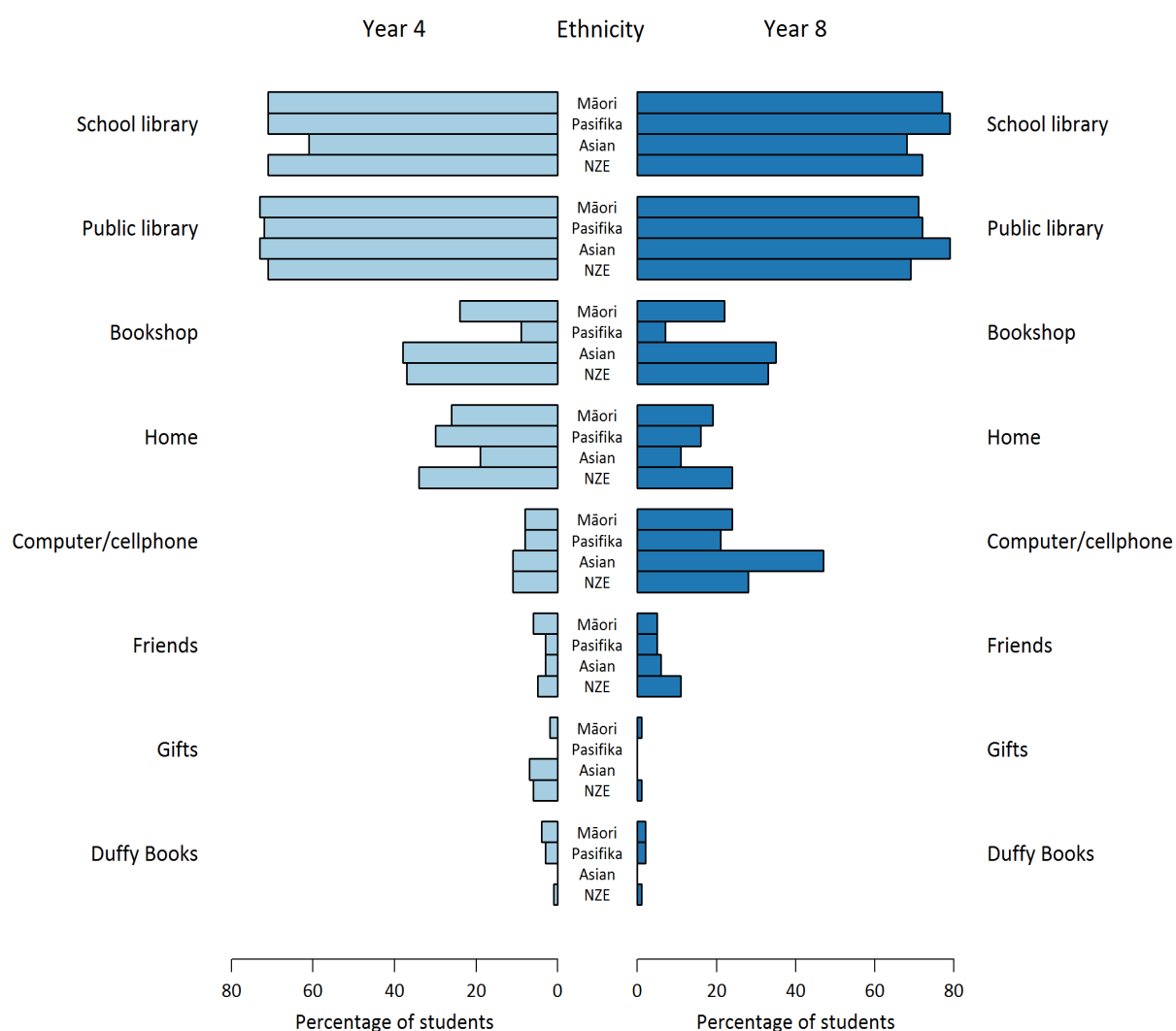


Figure 3.2 Percentage frequency of where student find the things they like to read, by year level and ethnicity

## 4. Reading media preferences

Students were asked to compare the time they spend reading books with the time they spend reading on ‘computer/cellphone’. ‘Computer/cellphone’ included computers, iPads and cellphones. Table 3.2 shows that Year 4 and Year 8 responses to this question followed a very similar pattern. Well over half of all students reported they spend less time reading on computers than reading books or no time reading on computers at all. A small proportion of students at both year levels said they spend more time reading on computers than reading books.

Table 3.2 Percentage frequency of reading media preferences, by year level

Response categories	Year 4	Year 8
More time on computers	13	15
About the same time	24	23
Less time on computers	40	41
No time on computers	22	20

At Year 4, students in low decile schools were more likely to say they read mostly on computers than students from high decile schools (22 percent compared with 7 percent). Students in high decile schools were more likely to indicate they spent no time reading on computers compared with students from low decile schools (25 percent compared with 17 percent).

At Year 4, Māori and Pasifika students were more likely to report that they spent more time reading on computers (24 percent and 23 percent, respectively) than non-Māori and non-Pasifika students (10 percent and 12 percent, respectively). This was not the case at Year 8, where no clear decile or ethnicity-related patterns could be observed.

### Preferred reading media and the amount of students' own time spent reading

In the student questionnaire, Year 8 students were asked to estimate how many hours each week they spent reading in their own time. A comparative analysis between the interview and questionnaire responses showed that spending more time reading on computers compared with books was associated with students doing less reading in their own time. In contrast, Year 8 students who indicated that they spent less time reading on computers compared with books were more likely to report a greater amount of reading in their own time than other Year 8 students.

### Reading media preference and achievement

Figures 3.3 and 3.4 show the relationship between reading media preference and achievement on the KARE assessment for Year 4 and Year 8, respectively. At Year 4, there was a general trend towards higher scores on the KARE scale as the preference for reading books (rather than on computers) increased. However, at Year 8, there was no consistent corresponding relationship.

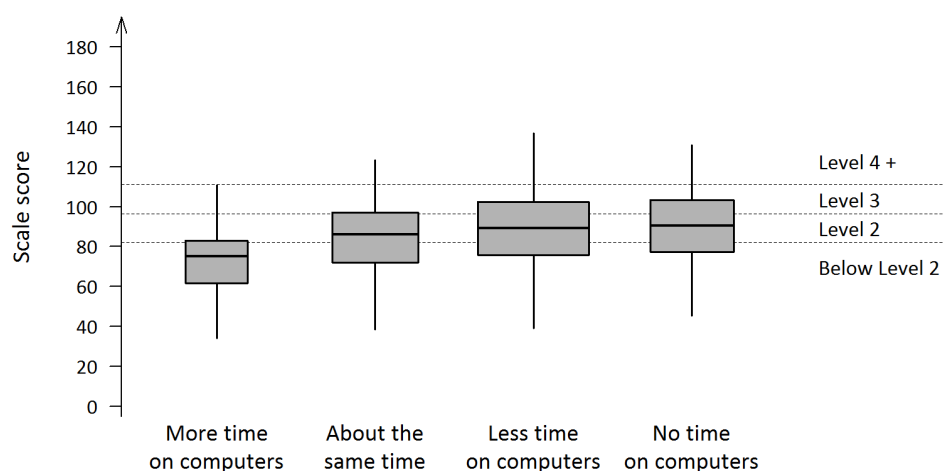


Figure 3.3 Distribution of Year 4 students' scores on the Knowledge and Application of Reading in English scale, by reading media preference

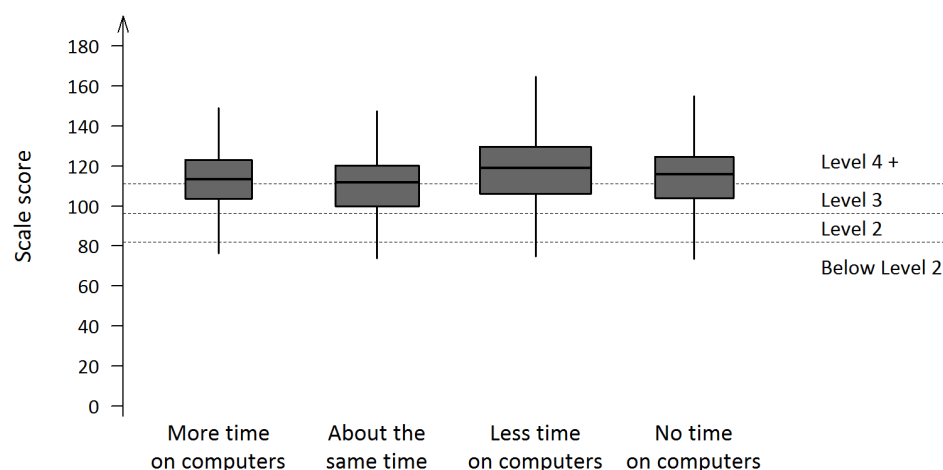


Figure 3.4 Distribution of Year 8 students' scores on the Knowledge and Application of Reading in English scale, by reading media preference

## 5. Reading books by New Zealanders

The student interview also explored the extent to which students demonstrated an understanding about New Zealand literature and how it can shape individual and cultural identity. Students were shown covers of books by New Zealand authors and asked why they think it is good to read books that are written by New Zealanders. Four categories were identified in students' responses. Table 3.3 shows the percentage frequency of students' responses in each category by year level. In general, it appeared that Year 8 students found this question easier to reflect upon and to articulate responses than Year 4 students; proportions in the four response categories were all greater for Year 8 students than for Year 4 students.

Table 3.3 Percentage frequency of reasons for reading books by New Zealand authors, by year level

Response categories	Year 4	Year 8
See themselves in stories	2	8
Familiar settings	36	55
Cultural identity	21	37
Supports NZ	5	11

Responses were also investigated by gender, school decile and ethnicity. There were no notable gender differences at either year level, but some interesting differences were observed between students at schools in different decile bands whose responses were coded in the 'familiar settings' and 'cultural identity' categories. Figure 3.5 shows that at both year levels the higher the decile band the greater the proportion of students who responded in each of these two categories. It is important to consider that the results might reflect students' differing comfort levels with expressing opinions, their varying awareness and experience of cultural identity being represented in what they read, and their experience in articulating these concepts.

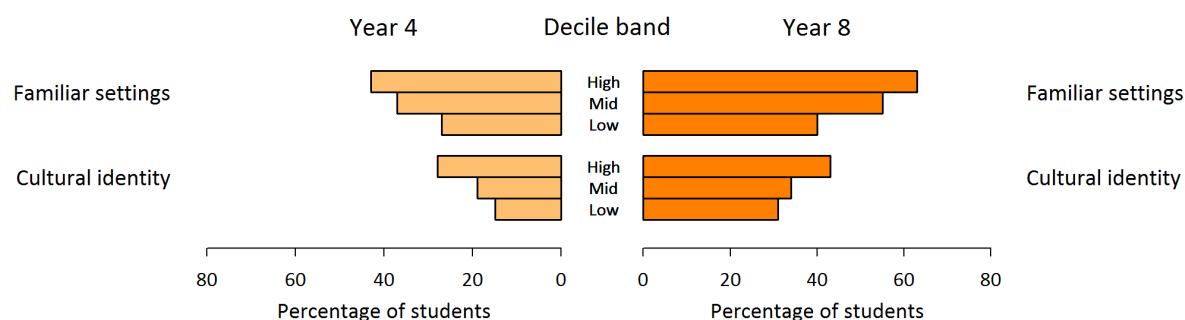


Figure 3.5 Percentage frequency of the 'familiar setting' and 'cultural identity' response categories for reasons for reading books by New Zealand authors, by year level and decile band

Students' ideas about New Zealand books reflecting familiar settings and cultural identity are shown by year level and ethnicity in Figure 3.6. At both year levels, NZ European and Asian students were more likely than their Māori and Pasifika counterparts to identify 'familiar settings' as a good reason to read books by New Zealand authors.

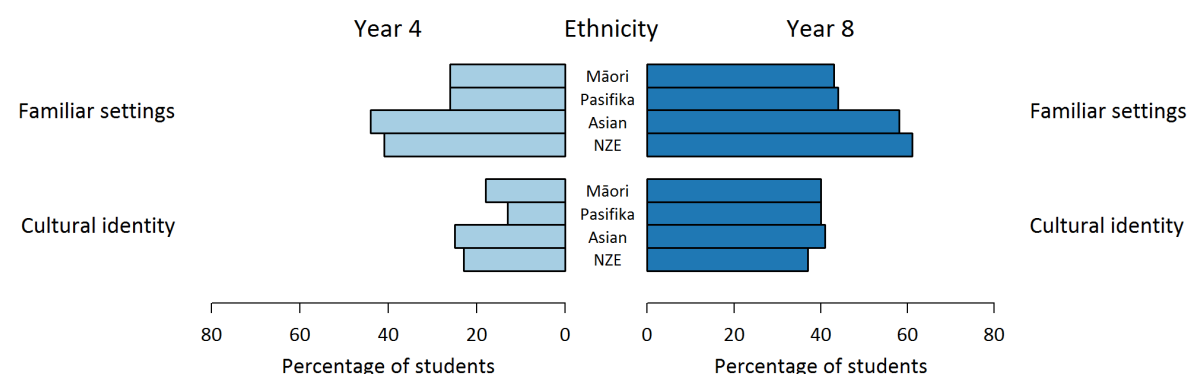


Figure 3.6 Percentage frequency of the 'familiar setting' and 'cultural identity' response categories for reasons for reading books by New Zealand authors, by year level and ethnicity

## 6. The importance of being a good reader

Students were asked if they thought it was important to be a good reader. Table 3.4 shows the vast majority of students at both year levels thought it was important. Response patterns for this question did not show any marked difference by year level, gender, school decile or ethnicity.

Table 3.4 Percentage frequency of students' responses to the question  
"Do you think it is important to be a good reader?"

Responses	Year 4	Year 8
Yes	94	90
Yes and no	3	7
No	2	3

### Reasons for being a good reader

Students were asked to explain their responses about the importance of being a good reader. The responses from those students who answered 'yes' to the first part of the question were coded as shown in Table 3.5. Just less than half of students at each year level indicated that their learning benefits from them being a good reader. More than half of Year 8 students said that being a good reader would be helpful in the future – for instance, with their career. A smaller proportion of Year 4 students gave responses in this category. A relatively small proportion of students at both year levels mentioned that being a good reader was important for personal enjoyment (for example, reading to oneself or to others), or was helpful in other curriculum areas (for example, in spelling and writing).

Table 3.5 Percentage frequency of students' reasons for reading books by  
New Zealand authors, by year level

Reasons	Year 4	Year 8
Learning benefits	46	43
Helpful in the future	37	54
Personal enjoyment	15	13
Transferring to other curriculum areas	14	17

Interestingly, a greater proportion of Year 8 boys compared with Year 8 girls gave responses that indicated they thought that reading well would help them in the future (59 percent and 48 percent, respectively). On the other hand, a greater proportion of Year 8 girls compared to Year 8 boys thought that being a good reader benefits their learning (48 percent and 38 percent, respectively). At Year 4, there were no corresponding differences.

At both year levels, students in lower decile schools were less likely than those in higher decile schools to mention 'personal enjoyment' as a reason why it is important to be a good reader. They were also less likely to mention 'transferring to other curriculum areas'.

Making a connection between being a good reader and thinking about being equipped for the future is more prevalent amongst Year 8 students than amongst Year 4 students. This pattern is repeated across all ethnic groups. NZ European students at Year 4, however, did give a future-focused response relatively more frequently than their non-NZ European counterparts.



## 7. Things that make reading easy or hard for students

Students were asked to talk about what makes reading easy for them, and what makes reading hard. These were open-ended questions and students' responses were coded into one or more thematic response categories.

### Things that make reading easy

Table 3.6 shows the proportions of students by year level who responded in the various categories associated with the question about what makes reading easy. Year 4 students most commonly mentioned 'words/simple texts' and 'diagrams/pictures'. Year 8 students most commonly mentioned having an 'interest in the topic' and 'external conditions' as making reading easy for them.

Table 3.6 Percentage frequency of what makes reading easy for students, by year level

Things that make reading easy	Year 4	Year 8
Text length/font/size	8	6
Words/simple text	21	10
Diagrams/pictures	11	10
Interest in topic	3	14
Genre	2	4
Read aloud	9	4
External conditions	4	12
Help/feedback	7	5

There were no notable differences by gender. The only notable difference by school decile was that at Year 8, a greater proportion of students from mid and high decile schools (16 percent and 15 percent, respectively) cited an 'interest in the topic' as making reading easy for them compared with Year 8 students at low decile schools (6 percent).

Asian students at Year 4 mentioned that 'words/simple text' made reading easy for them relatively more frequently than non-Asian Year 4 students (29 percent compared with 20 percent). At Year 8, greater proportions of Pasifika and Asian students (16 percent and 20 percent, respectively) than non-Pasifika and non-Asian students (9 percent for both groups) said that diagrams and pictures made their reading easy.

### Things that make reading hard

Table 3.7 shows students' coded responses to the question about what makes reading hard. At both year levels by far the most commonly mentioned feature was 'difficult words'. Notable proportions of Year 8 students mentioned 'external conditions' and 'no connection with the text' as things that also made reading hard.

Table 3.7 Percentage frequency of what makes reading hard for students, by year level

Things that make reading hard	Year 4	Year 8
Text length/font/size	16	16
Difficult words	58	42
Boring text	0	7
Genre	4	5
Reading aloud	2	1
External conditions	6	16
Subsequent activities	1	1
No connection with text	1	10

At Year 8, a greater proportion of boys than girls said that ‘text length/font/size’ made reading hard (20 percent compared with 12 percent) and a greater proportion of girls than boys said that ‘difficult words’ made reading hard (45 percent compared with 38 percent). At Year 4, there were no notable differences by gender.

At Year 8, students in low decile schools cited ‘difficult words’ relatively more frequently than students in mid and high decile schools as making reading hard (53 percent, 41 percent and 37 percent, respectively). Conversely, students in high decile schools said that ‘text length/font/size’ were things that made reading hard relatively more frequently than students in mid and low decile schools (21 percent, 14 percent and 10 percent, respectively).

Greater proportions of Year 8 Māori, Pasifika and Asian students (50 percent, 45 percent and 55 percent, respectively) than NZ European students (35 percent) said that ‘difficult words’ made reading hard. This observation may be confounded with the decile effect noted above.

## 8. Areas identified by students reading for improving their reading

Students were asked to identify the two main things that they would like to improve or get better at in their reading. Table 3.8 shows students’ coded responses by year level.

The desire to extend vocabulary was the most commonly cited improvement for students at both year levels. This category encompassed responses involving both learning more words and coming to grips with more complicated or longer words. Reading harder (both longer and more complicated) texts was mentioned by about a quarter of students at both Year 4 and Year 8. A greater proportion of Year 8 students than Year 4 students mentioned ‘comprehension’ as an area they would like to improve in their reading. Improving reading ‘speed’ was also more of a concern for Year 8 students than for Year 4 students. Year 4 students mentioned ‘reading aloud’ more frequently than Year 8 students.

Table 3.8 Percentage frequency of areas for reading improvement by year level

Areas for improvement	Year 4	Year 8
Vocabulary	38	34
Comprehension	12	26
Read harder texts	25	26
Read different genre	6	11
Speed	13	18
Reading aloud	18	12
Concentration or work skills	9	10

Year 4 girls and boys responded to this question in a very similar way. However, at Year 8, girls were more likely than boys to say they wanted to improve their ‘vocabulary’ (38 percent compared with 30 percent) and boys were more likely than girls to say they wanted to improve their reading ‘speed’ (21 percent compared with 15 percent).

At Year 4, improving ‘comprehension’ skills appeared to be more of a concern for students at high decile schools compared with students from low decile schools (17 percent and 7 percent, respectively).

At Year 8, increasing reading ‘speed’ was mentioned by a greater proportion of students in high and mid decile schools compared with Year 8 students in low decile schools (21 percent, 19 percent and 10 percent, respectively).

At both year levels, NZ European students were more likely than non-NZ European students to say they wanted to improve their reading ‘speed’. This was particularly noticeable at Year 8, where 24 percent of NZ European students reported wanting to improve their ‘speed’, compared with 8 percent of non-NZ European students.

## 9. Summary

The *My Reading* interview was a one-to-one interview carried out by teacher assessors with about 800 students at each of Year 4 and Year 8. The interview took the form of a structured conversation and asked students a range of questions about their reading. The interviews were video-taped and the digital video files used to code students' responses in subsequent analyses.

For both Year 4 and Year 8 students, the most commonly reported places to find things they liked to read were 'school library', 'public library' and 'bookshop'. Response patterns were consistent across gender and school decile but varied to some extent across ethnic groups for the categories 'bookshop', 'home' and 'computer/cellphone'. A greater proportion of Year 8 students reported finding things they like to read on 'computer/cellphone' than Year 4 students.

About 15 percent of students at each year level indicated they spent more time reading on electronic devices (such as computers, iPads and cellphones) than reading books. Year 4 students' average scores on the KARE assessment increased with the relative amount of time spent reading from a book rather than an electronic device. However, a similar relationship was not found for Year 8 students.

'Familiar settings' and 'cultural identity' were the two main reasons given by students for reading books by New Zealand authors. The response patterns for these categories did show some difference across school decile and ethnicity.

At least 90 percent of students at each year level said it was important to be a good reader. Students listed 'learning benefits' and it being 'helpful in the future' as the main reasons for being a good reader.

The most commonly mentioned things that make reading easy were 'words/simple text' and 'diagrams/pictures', whereas 'difficult words' and 'text length/font/size' were stated the most when it came to things that make reading hard.

The desire to extend vocabulary was the most commonly cited area for improvement, followed by the need to read harder texts and wanting to improve comprehension.

# 4 Teacher Questionnaire

## 1. Introduction

This chapter explores data collected using the teacher questionnaire. Up to three teachers in each school completed the questionnaire which was divided into three parts. Part 1 asked the teachers for some information about themselves. Part 2 asked them about their teaching of English: reading. Part 3 asked them about their teaching of social studies. This chapter describes how teachers responded to the sections about themselves and their teaching of reading.

## 2. Who responded

In total, 210 Year 4 teachers from 94 schools and 212 Year 8 teachers from 92 schools responded to the questionnaire. These figures represent a response rate of 83 percent at Year 4 and 80 percent at Year 8.

Table 4.1 shows how many teachers responded by year level taught and school decile band. There were more questionnaires completed by teachers from mid and high decile schools than by teachers from low decile schools. In particular, fewer questionnaires were completed by Year 8 teachers in low decile schools than by Year 8 teachers in mid or high decile schools.

Table 4.1 Respondents to the 2014 NMSSA teacher questionnaire

School decile band	Number of teachers (schools represented)	
	Year 4	Year 8
	<b>N = 210 (94)</b>	<b>N = 212 (92)</b>
Low	60 (28)	33 (16)
Mid	63 (29)	90 (39)
High	87 (37)	89 (37)

Nearly all teachers who responded categorised themselves as classroom teachers rather than as reading specialists. Of the teachers who responded to the question about gender, about 80 percent indicated they were female.

It is important to note that the teachers who completed the questionnaire were not selected as a nationally representative sample of teachers. Each school was invited to involve up to three teachers who taught reading at the year level being assessed. The teachers could either be general classroom teachers or specialist teachers of reading. The findings presented in this chapter describe the views of teachers in the NMSSA study and provide an indication of New Zealand teachers' views about reading.

### 3. Teacher characteristics

#### Experience

Figure 4.1 shows the number of years of teaching experience reported by Year 4 and Year 8 teachers. Overall, 54 percent of teachers indicated they had taught for 10 or more years. A smaller proportion of Year 4 teachers than Year 8 teachers indicated that they had taught for 10 or more years.

A smaller proportion of teachers from low decile schools (47 percent) than from mid or high decile schools (58 and 54 percent, respectively) reported they had taught for more than 10 years. Thirty-one percent of teachers from low decile schools reported they had taught for more than 20 years compared with 19 and 22 percent of teachers from mid and high decile schools respectively.

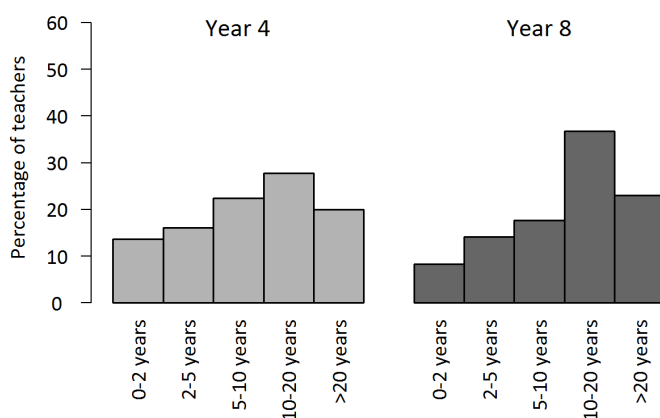


Figure 4.1 Percentage frequency of years of teaching experience reported by Year 4 and Year 8 teachers

#### Leadership responsibilities and qualifications

About 20 percent of all teachers indicated that they had syndicate or school leadership responsibilities in reading. This figure was similar across both year levels and across school decile bands.

The percentage of teachers who reported that they had a specialist qualification in reading was also about 20 percent. Examples of qualifications included an English major in their teacher education degree and English-focused university papers. This proportion was similar for teachers from low, mid and high school decile bands.

### 4. Class profile and support in the classroom

#### Class profile

The average class size reported by Year 4 teachers was 27 students compared with 29 students for Year 8 teachers. On average, teachers in low decile schools reported slightly smaller class sizes than teachers in mid or high decile schools at both year levels.

The average number of students per class who spoke English as a second language was 4. The average was the same for each year level. However, the average was higher for teachers from low decile schools (7 students) than for teachers from mid or high decile schools (3 students in both cases).

#### Support in the classroom

Teachers were asked to indicate who supported them in the classroom by selecting all that applied from a given list of people. Figure 4.2 shows the list and the proportion of teachers who selected each option according to year level. About 50 percent of all teachers selected 'teacher aide' as support in the classroom. Apart from 'teacher aides', no other support category was selected more than 20 percent of the time and 'cultural advisor' was selected by only 2 teachers.

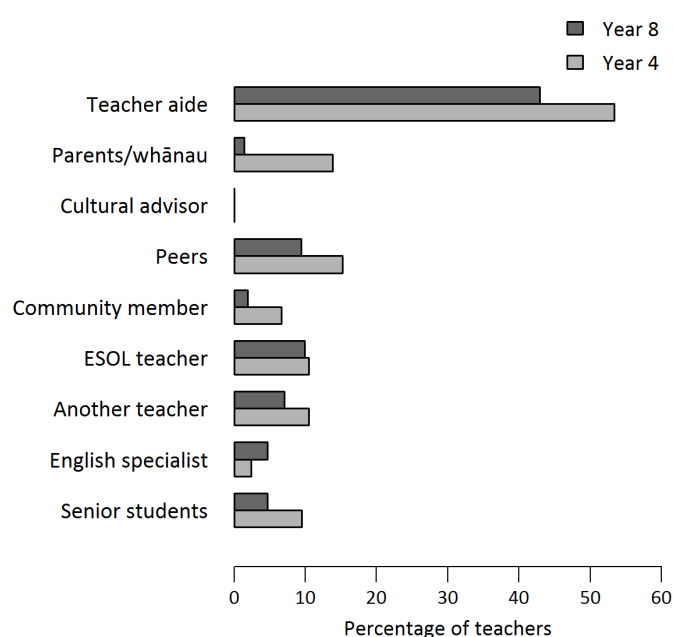


Figure 4.2 Percentage frequency of types of support in the classroom by Year 4 and Year 8 teachers

The response pattern for most statements was similar across school decile bands. One exception was the statement, ‘the cultural backgrounds of the students are reflected in the reading programme’, where 20 percent of teachers from low decile schools reported this activity happened ‘4–5 days per week’, compared with 6 percent of the teachers from high decile schools.

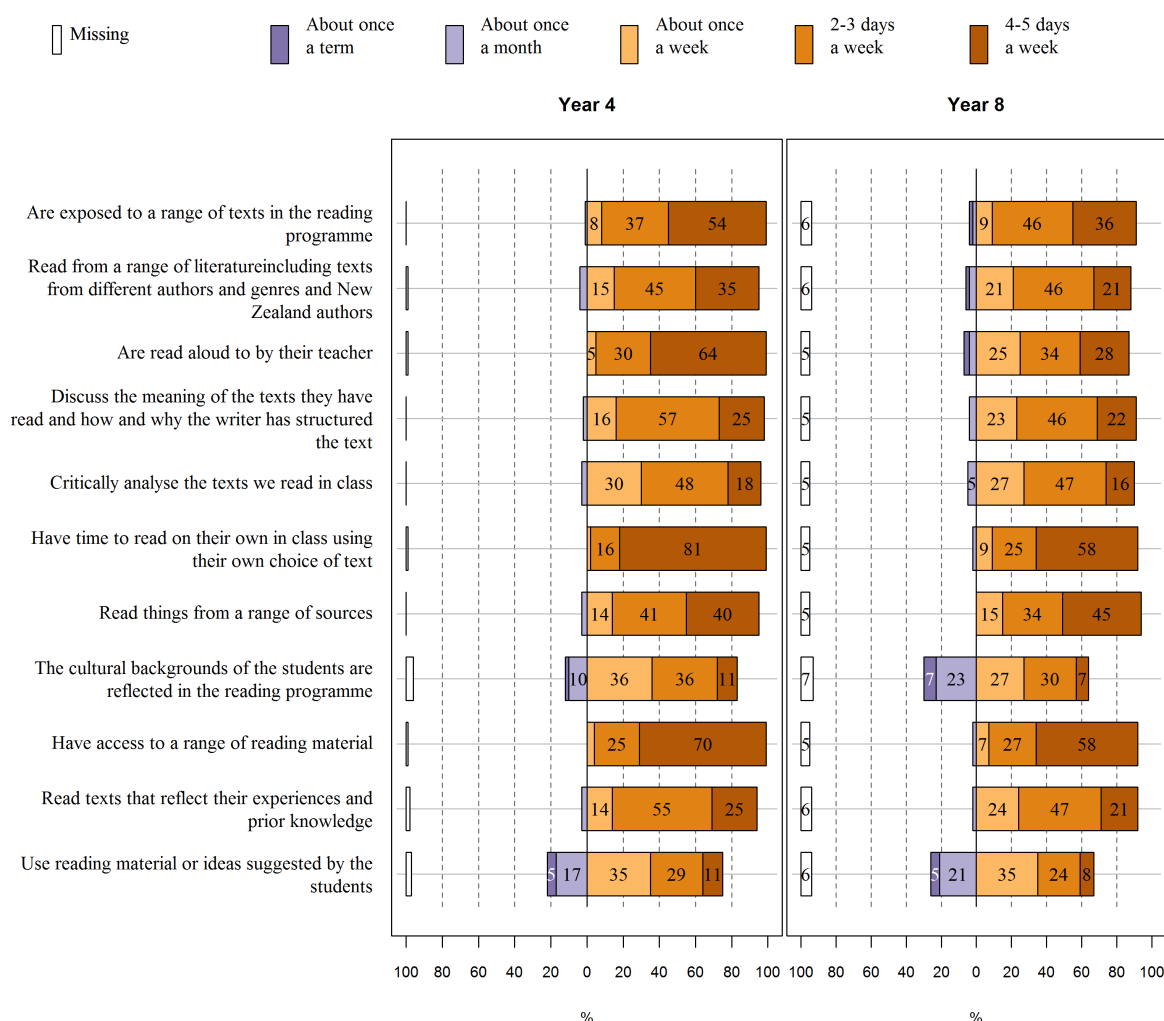


Figure 4.5 Percentage frequency of reading activities in the classroom reported by Year 4 and Year 8 teachers

### Comparison of teacher and student responses

Five statements about classroom activities in the teacher questionnaire were similar to statements contained in a parallel section of the student questionnaire. Table 4.2 shows the parallel statements and the percentage of teachers and students who reported that the learning opportunities described happened with ‘high frequency’. ‘High frequency’ was defined as responses of ‘2-3 days a week’ and ‘4-5 days a week’ for teachers, and ‘often’ or ‘very often’ for students.

Overall, greater proportions of teachers reported high frequency occurrences of the comparable activities than students. At both year levels, the most pronounced differences between teachers and students were for the parallel statements about ‘cultural relevance’ and ‘meaning discussed’.

Table 4.2 Percentage of teachers and students reporting high frequency occurrences for parallel learning opportunities and experiences questionnaire statements, by year level

		Teachers		Students		
Dimension	Statement	Year	%	Statement	Year	%
Student choice	Have time to read on their own in class using their own choice of text	4	91	We have time to read books that we choose ourselves in class	4	68
		8	87		8	71
Teacher reads aloud	Are read aloud to by their teacher	4	95	My teacher reads aloud to our class	4	65
		8	66		8	48
Meaning discussed	Discuss the meaning of the texts they have read and how and why the writer has structured the text	4	83	We talk about the meaning of the things we read and how the writer has put the story together	4	49
		8	72		8	42
Cultural relevance	The cultural backgrounds of the students are reflected in the reading programme	4	49	The things we read in class are about people like me and my family/whānau	4	32
		8	39		8	16
Range of reading material	Have access to a range of reading material	4	96	There are lots of books for me to choose from in my classroom	4	71
		8	91		8	45

### Emphasis in teaching reading

Teachers were asked to describe aspects they emphasised the most when teaching reading. The question was presented as an open-response item and teachers were given three blank lines to write their response. The responses were coded using one or more of five categories to describe themes present in the responses. The categories are described below.

‘Comprehension strategies’ included references to teaching reading strategies to make sense of a text and identify its purpose. For example, “comprehension strategies – character description, author’s purpose, summarising, making connections to the text”.

‘Reading for enjoyment’ referred to instances where teachers noted reading for enjoyment. For example, “reading for enjoyment and understanding”.

‘Language knowledge’ included responses with a focus on decoding and developing vocabulary knowledge. For example, ‘language features, author intent for more able students, phonics for less able students’.

‘Reading mileage’ included comments related to providing multiple opportunities for students to gain reading experience. For example, ‘daily exposure to reading in class supported by reading material that goes home’.

‘Making connections’ dealt with comments that mentioned making connections between reading and other learning areas. For example, ‘making connections with writing’ and ‘using reading to learn across the curriculum’.

Table 4.3 shows the proportion of responses that were coded in each category by year level. Teachers’ responses could belong to more than one category, therefore percentages total more than 100 percent at each year level.

Table 4.3 Percentage of teachers' responses emphasising each reading aspect, by year level

Aspect	Year 4	Year 8
	<i>N</i> = 201	<i>N</i> = 179
	%	%
Comprehension strategies	91	88
Reading for enjoyment	33	30
Language knowledge	37	21
Reading mileage	18	15
Making connections	10	13

Teaching to develop ‘comprehension strategies’ was mentioned in about 90 percent of responses at both year levels. The other themes were much less prominent, although ‘reading for enjoyment’ was mentioned by about 30 percent of teachers at both year levels. Notably, a greater proportion of Year 4 teachers (37 percent) than Year 8 teachers (21 percent) emphasised developing ‘language knowledge’.

## 7. Professional support for teaching reading

### Professional support at school

Table 4.4 shows how teachers rated the level of professional support for teaching of reading that they received, or participated in, at school. ‘Support’ was defined in the questionnaire as working with other teachers or a reading specialist/advisor to prepare reading materials, discussing approaches to teaching or assessing reading, or observing a colleague teaching reading.

Table 4.4 Percentage frequency of teachers’ rating of the level of professional support within their school for reading, by year level

Rating	Year 4	Year 8
	%	%
Very poor	2	1
Poor	7	12
Fair	37	35
Good	39	40
Excellent	16	12

The majority of teachers rated the level of professional support they received as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’. A fairly sizable group selected ‘fair’ and a relatively small proportion chose ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’.

The response pattern for each school decile band was similar.

### Interactions with other teachers

Teachers were asked to rate how often they were involved in a range of interactions with other teachers about reading. Figure 4.6 shows how they responded. Three of the four interactions were reported by a large majority of teachers as happening at least once a term: ‘work with other teacher or a reading specialist/advisor to prepare reading materials’, ‘discuss useful approaches for teaching reading to a diverse range of students’, and ‘discuss ways of assessing students’ reading’. In contrast, the majority of teachers reported they had observed a colleague teaching reading either ‘once a year’ or ‘never’. The exception to this contrast was for teachers who had taught for less than 2 years. The majority of these teachers reported being observed at least once a term.

For all statements, the pattern of responses was similar across school decile bands, with two notable exceptions. A greater proportion of teachers from low decile schools than teachers from mid or high decile schools indicated that ‘at least once a week’ they ‘work with other teachers or a reading specialist/advisor to prepare reading materials’ or ‘discuss useful approaches for teaching reading to a diverse range of students’. On the other hand, a greater proportion of teachers from high decile schools than teachers from low and mid decile schools reported that they had ‘never’ had the opportunity to ‘observe a colleague teaching reading’.



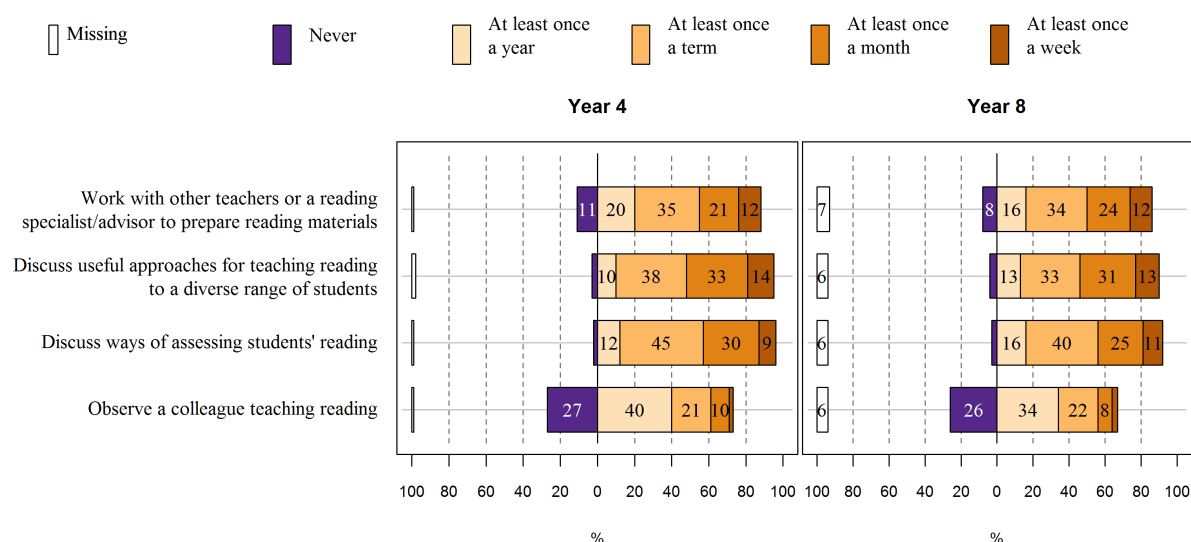


Figure 4.6 Percentage frequency of interactions with other teachers about reading reported by Year 4 and Year 8 teachers

### Professional learning and development in reading

The final question asked teachers whether they had had any opportunities in the last 12 months for professional learning and development (PLD) focused on reading. About 55 percent of all teachers indicated they had undertaken PLD focused on reading in the last 12 months. The percentage was similar at each year level, but differed by school decile band where 67 percent of the teachers from low decile schools compared with 51 percent from mid and high decile schools indicated they had undertaken PLD focused on reading in the last 12 months.

If teachers indicated they had not received any PLD in reading in the last 12 months then they were asked to report the last time they did receive it. Figure 4.7 shows that the majority of these teachers reported reading-focused PLD in the past 3 years. Only a small proportion of them reported 'never' receiving PLD. A slightly greater proportion of Year 8 teachers in this group than Year 4 teachers reported either receiving reading-focused PLD 'more than 5 years ago' or 'never'. Teachers in this group from different decile bands responded in a similar way.

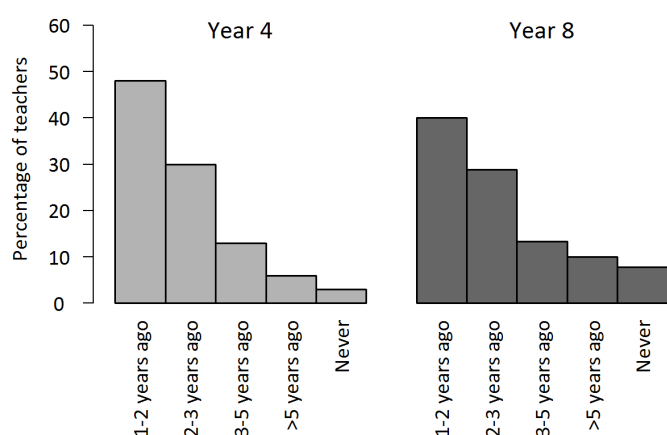


Figure 4.7 Percentage frequency of the most recent reading-focused professional learning and development for teachers reporting none in the last 12 months, by year level

## 8. Summary

This chapter has described how teachers from the schools involved in the 2014 NMMSA study responded to questions in the teacher questionnaire about themselves and their teaching of reading. Up to three teachers in each of the schools involved in the NMSSA English: reading study completed a teacher questionnaire. About 80 percent of eligible teachers completed the questionnaire at each year level.

Overall, almost half of the teachers indicated they had taught for at least 10 years. The average class size for teachers of Year 4 and Year 8 was 27 and 29, respectively.

In general, teachers were found to have very positive attitudes towards reading and their own teaching of reading. Their responses to the questionnaire items related to their attitudes and practices in teaching reading were similar across the decile bands.

Meeting the differentiated reading needs of students was commonly achieved by ‘reading groups within the classroom’, ‘whole class activities’, ‘extra individual assistance’ and ‘reading activities across the curriculum’.

The vast majority of teachers reported that students in their class often had opportunities to be involved in a range of learning activities and experiences in reading. The frequencies reported by teachers for each activity/experience were similar across school decile bands. Students responding to the student questionnaire also rated how often five of these learning activities and experiences happened. On average, students reported that they occurred less frequently than did the teachers.

When asked to describe the aspects they emphasised the most when teaching reading, teachers mentioned comprehension strategies more often than any other aspect.

Just over half of the teachers at both year levels rated the level of professional support that they received for the teaching of reading as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’.

Most teachers indicated that they were often (at least once a term) involved in a range of interactions with other teachers involving the teaching of reading. About 70 percent of teachers reported that they had an opportunity to observe a colleague teaching reading at least once a year. Teachers with less than 2 years of teaching experience reported more frequent opportunities to observe a colleague teaching than teachers with greater than 2 years of experience.

About 55 percent of teachers reported that they had received reading-focused PLD in the last 12 months.

# 5 Principal Questionnaire

## 1. Introduction

The principal in each of the schools selected for the 2014 NMSSA study was asked to complete a 4-part questionnaire. Part 1 asked principals about how their school provided for students' learning in reading. Part 2 asked principals about how their school provided for learning in social studies. For the questions in parts 1 and 2, principals were directed to respond in relation to the learning of either Year 4 or Year 8 students in their schools. Part 3 asked principals about overall school characteristics. Part 4 had questions about provisions for priority learner groups (Māori, Pasifika and students with special education needs).

This chapter describes how principals responded to the questions about general school characteristics and the reading programme in their school. If principals felt they did not have time to complete the questionnaire, they were asked to delegate it to a member of the school leadership team. In this report, all respondents are referred to as principals.

## 2. Who responded

In total, 161 principals returned the questionnaire. Table 5.1 shows how many principals responded to the questionnaire by year level and school decile band.

At Year 4, 80 responses were received from 99 schools, and at Year 8, there were 81 responses from 100 schools. There were fewer responses from principals at low decile schools than at mid or high decile schools. It is important to note that this is not necessarily a nationally representative sample of principals. The findings discussed in this chapter should be broadly interpreted to indicate principals' views about reading.

Table 5.1 Respondents to the 2014 NMSSA principal questionnaire

School decile band	Number of principals	
	Year 4	Year 8
	<b>N = 80</b>	<b>N = 81</b>
Low	25	16
Mid	22	36
High	33	29

### 3. Students who do not speak English as a first language

Principals were asked what proportion of students in their school did not have English as their first language. Table 5.2 shows that the majority of Year 4 and Year 8 principals reported that '25% or less' of students in their schools did not speak English as their first language. These figures were higher for mid and high decile band schools and substantially lower for principals from low decile schools. At the other extreme, relatively small percentages of Year 4 and Year 8 principals reported more than 50 percent of their students did not have English as their first language. The majority of these principals were from low decile schools.

Table 5.2 Percentage of students who do not speak English as their first language by year level and decile band

Percentage of students who do not speak English as their first language	Percentage of principals				
	Year level		School decile		
	Year 4	Year 8	Low	Mid	High
25% or less	74	88	49	93	90
26 to 50%	16	6	27	3	8
51 to 75%	5	3	10	3	-
76 to 90%	4	3	12	-	-
More than 90%	1	1	2	-	2

### 4. School reading programme

#### Time spent reading

Principals were asked how much time was spent on the reading programme. Figure 5.1 shows the average number of hours per week spent on the reading programme by year level.

Overall, and on average, Year 8 principals reported slightly fewer hours per week spent on the reading programme than the Year 4 principals. Principals most commonly specified 5 hours of reading per week at Year 4, and 4 hours of reading per week at Year 8. There were no notable differences between decile bands.

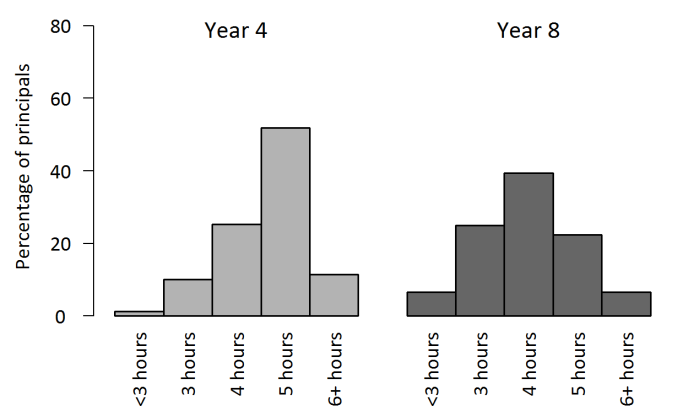


Figure 5.1 Percentage frequency of average time per week spent on the reading programme, by year level

### Provision for student learning in reading

Principals were asked to rate their school's provision for learning in reading as 'poor', 'fair', 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent'. Figure 5.2 shows the distribution of responses by year level. Almost all principals rated their reading programmes as 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent'.

At Year 4, principals at high decile schools all rated their reading programmes as 'very good' or 'excellent', while the percentages of principals using these categories were 85 percent and 68 percent at mid and low decile schools respectively.

At Year 8, principals from low decile schools were more likely to rate their reading programmes as 'good' compared with principals from high decile schools (27 percent and 8 percent respectively). On the other hand, Year 8 principals from high decile schools were more likely to rate their reading programmes as 'excellent' compared with principals from low decile schools (36 percent compared with 20 percent).

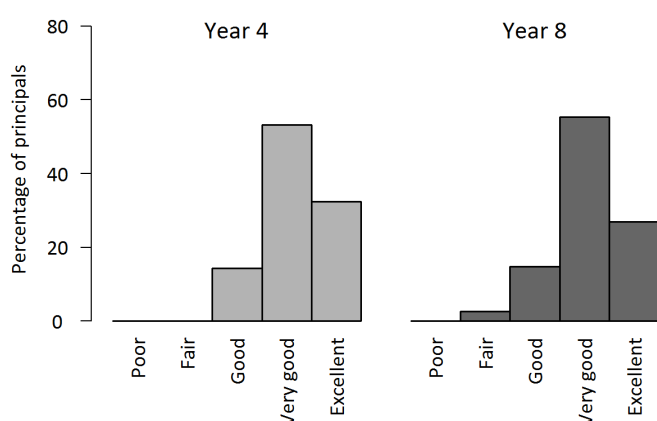


Figure 5.2 Percentage frequency of principals' rating of their school's provision for learning in reading, by year level

## 5. Inclusion of students with special education needs in the reading programme

Principals were asked how many students in their school fell into each of three special education needs categories<sup>15</sup>. The numbers reported were converted into a percentage of the school's total roll and then categorised in one of four percentage ranges. Table 5.3 shows how principals responded for each category of special education needs by year level.

Table 5.3 Principals' report of the percentage of students in their school by type of special education need and year level

Percentage of students	Percentage of principals indicating each type of special education needs					
	High/Very high needs		Moderate needs		On referral	
	Year 4	Year 8	Year 4	Year 8	Year 4	Year 8
Less than 1%	58	70	15	8	49	76
1% – 3%	35	24	21	36	34	24
3% – 5%	4	4	14	20	11	0
More than 5%	3	1	50	36	6	0

<sup>15</sup> The categories of special education needs were those commonly used in schools and therefore easy for principals to respond to. High/Very high needs and Moderate needs were associated with levels of support, including the funding supports in place for children with special education needs to access the curriculum, through ORS, SLS, RTLB, Ministry of Education specialist staff, and school funds. To capture any unmet needs, they were also asked to note students who were on referral to Ministry of Education Special Education staff or to CYFS with action pending. These categories were discussed and endorsed by the NMSSA special education needs reference group.

Principals were asked to rate their school's inclusion of students with special education needs in the reading programme as 'poor', 'fair', 'good', 'very good' and 'excellent'. Figure 5.3 shows that about 90 percent of principals rated inclusion as 'very good' or 'excellent' at both year levels. A greater proportion of principals from high decile schools (97 percent) than those from mid or low decile schools (89 percent and 82 percent) rated inclusion as 'very good' and 'excellent'.

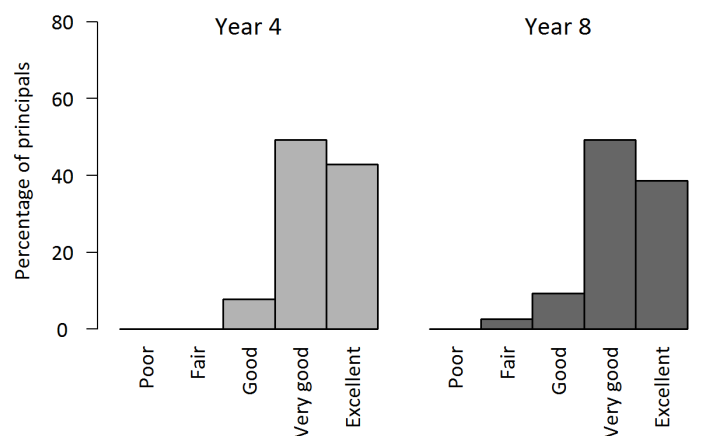


Figure 5.3 Percentage frequency of principals' ratings of their school's inclusion of students with special education needs in the reading programme by year level

## 6. Summary

This chapter has explored responses to questions in the 2014 NMSSA principal questionnaire. The principal in each of the schools selected for the 2014 NMSSA study was asked to complete a 4-part questionnaire. Over 90 percent of principals completed the questionnaire at each year level.

Twenty-six percent of Year 4 principals and 12 percent of Year 8 principals reported that the proportion of students in their school for whom English was not their first language was greater than 25 percent.

Year 4 and Year 8 principals reported that classes in their school, on average, spent 5 and 4 hours per week respectively on their reading programmes.

The majority of the principals rated the provision for learning in reading at their school as 'good' or 'very good'. About 30 percent of principals rated their school's reading programme as 'excellent'.

At least 90 percent of principals at each year level rated their school's inclusion of students with special education needs in the reading programme as 'very good' or 'excellent'.

# Appendix 1: List of reports for 2014

## Reports of findings for English: reading

- 5.1 NMSSA English: Reading 2014 – Overview
- 5.2 NMSSA Māori Student Achievement in English: Reading – Key findings 2014
- 5.3 NMSSA Pasifika Student Achievement in English: Reading – Key findings 2014
- 5.4 NMSSA Achievement of Students with Special Education Needs in English: Reading – Key findings 2014
- 5.5 NMSSA English: Reading 2014 – Contextual Report
- 7 NMSSA Technical Information 2014 – Social Studies, English: Reading

## Reports of findings for social studies

- 6.1 NMSSA Social Studies 2014 – Overview
- 6.2 NMSSA Māori Student Achievement in Social Studies – Key findings 2014
- 6.3 NMSSA Pasifika Student Achievement in Social Studies – Key findings 2014
- 6.4 NMSSA Achievement of Students with Special Education Needs in Social Studies – Key findings 2014
- 6.5 NMSSA Social Studies 2014 – Contextual Report
- 7 NMSSA Technical Information 2014 – Social Studies, English: Reading

All reports are available on line at <http://nmssa.otago.ac.nz/reports/index.htm>.









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