

Achievement in English

Summary of results from the 2019 National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement for teachers and principals



The National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA) is designed to assess student achievement across the New Zealand Curriculum at Year 4 and Year 8 in English-medium state and state-integrated schools. The study, which carried out its first assessments in 2012, is now in its second five-year cycle.

In 2019, NMSSA focused on the English learning area. The study followed a series of separate studies related to English that were carried out in Cycle 1: writing in 2012, reading in 2014, and listening and viewing in 2015.

NMSSA English study

In 2019, we assessed the English learning area using nationally representative samples of about 2,000 students from 100 schools at each of Year 4 and Year 8. Separate assessments were undertaken of six different language modes: writing, speaking and presenting from the creating-meaning strand and reading, listening and viewing from the making-meaning strand.

The assessments focused on literary texts (written, oral and visual) that use language in aesthetic, imaginative and engaging ways to entertain, engender emotion, express cultural identity and invite reflection. The study did not assess English used for learning in other learning areas.

Scores on the assessments were located on separate measurement scales. We used results from tasks administered in both 2019 and in Cycle 1 to link the scales for writing, reading and listening with their Cycle 1 counterparts. This allowed us to report changes in achievement between Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 in these modes. The study also used questionnaires to gather contextual information from students, teachers and principals.

Profile of achievement across the English learning area

Achievement against the curriculum

- A greater proportion of Year 4 students met curriculum expectations (level 2) than Year 8 students (Level 4) in each language mode.
- A greater proportion of Year 4 and Year 8 students met expected curriculum levels in listening and viewing than in the other modes.
- There were differences in achievement in each language mode related to gender, ethnicity and school decile.

Percentage of students meeting curriculum expectations in the English language modes at Year 4 and Year 8

	Creating meaning		Making meaning		
	Writing (%)	Speaking (%)	Reading (%)	Listening (%)	Viewing (%)
Year 4 (Level 2+)	63	56	63	76	78
Year 8 (Level 4+)	35	40	56	65	65

Note: The presenting scale, which was based on one task, was not benchmarked against the curriculum.

Overall changes in achievement between Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

- In 2019, the average score in writing for Year 4 students was 2 scale score units lower than in 2012. This difference was statistically significant.



Questions for teachers, principals and curriculum leaders

- What opportunities do we give students to create and make meaning from a range of oral, visual and written texts?
- How are students encouraged to read in their own time?
- How well do our English programmes engage different learners, including boys?
- How well do we engage students in posing questions, reflecting, exploring the perspectives of others, and thinking critically in English?



How we assessed English writing

Writing in the English learning area was assessed using five prompts. Each prompt covered a different purpose for writing: to describe, explain, persuade, narrate and recount. Students wrote to one prompt for up to 40 minutes. Their responses were assessed for: ideas, structure and language features, organisation, vocabulary, sentence structure, punctuation and spelling.

Scores from the writing assessment were located on a scale called the Writing in the English Learning Area (WELA) scale.

Key findings

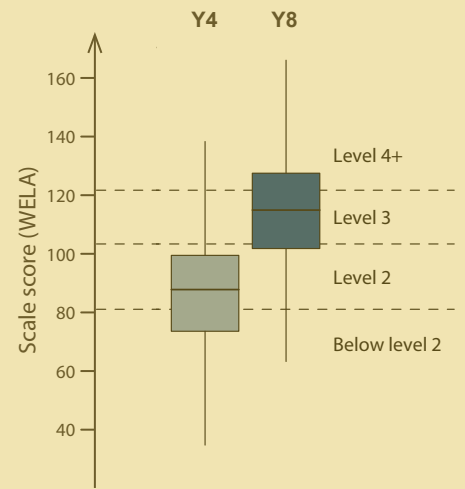
Achievement in 2019

- About 63 percent of Year 4 students achieved at curriculum level 2 or above. In Year 8, 35 percent of students achieved at or above curriculum level 4.
- The average score for Year 8 students was 29 WELA units higher than for Year 4 students. This indicates that students make, on average, about 7 WELA units of 'progress' per year.
- Girls scored higher, on average, than boys by 11 WELA units at Year 4 and 12 units at Year 8.
- Māori students scored lower, on average, than non-Māori students by 5 WELA units at Year 4 and 10 units at Year 8.
- The difference in average scores between Pacific and non-Pacific students was not statistically significant at Year 4. At Year 8, Pacific students scored lower, on average, than non-Pacific students by 3 WELA units.
- Students from high decile schools scored higher, on average, than those from mid and low decile schools. The difference between the average scores for students in high and low decile schools was 8 WELA units at Year 4 and 12 units at Year 8.

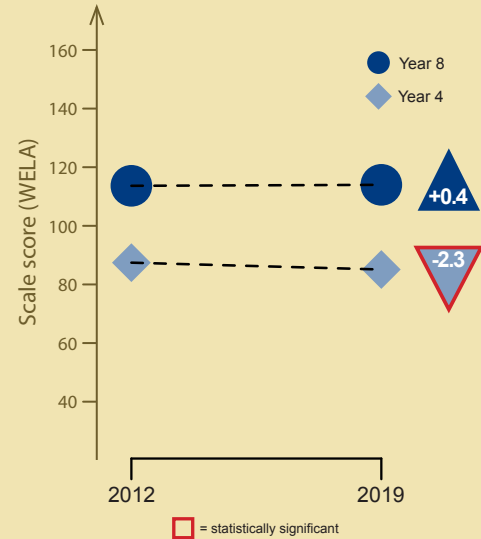
Changes in achievement between 2012 and 2019

- In 2019, the average writing score for Year 4 students was 2 WELA units lower than in 2012.
- At Year 4, the average score had declined for boys (3 WELA units); New Zealand Europeans/Pākehā (4 WELA units) and students from high decile schools (4 WELA units).

Distribution of scores on the Writing in the English Learning Area (WELA) scale



Trend of scale scores 2012 - 2019

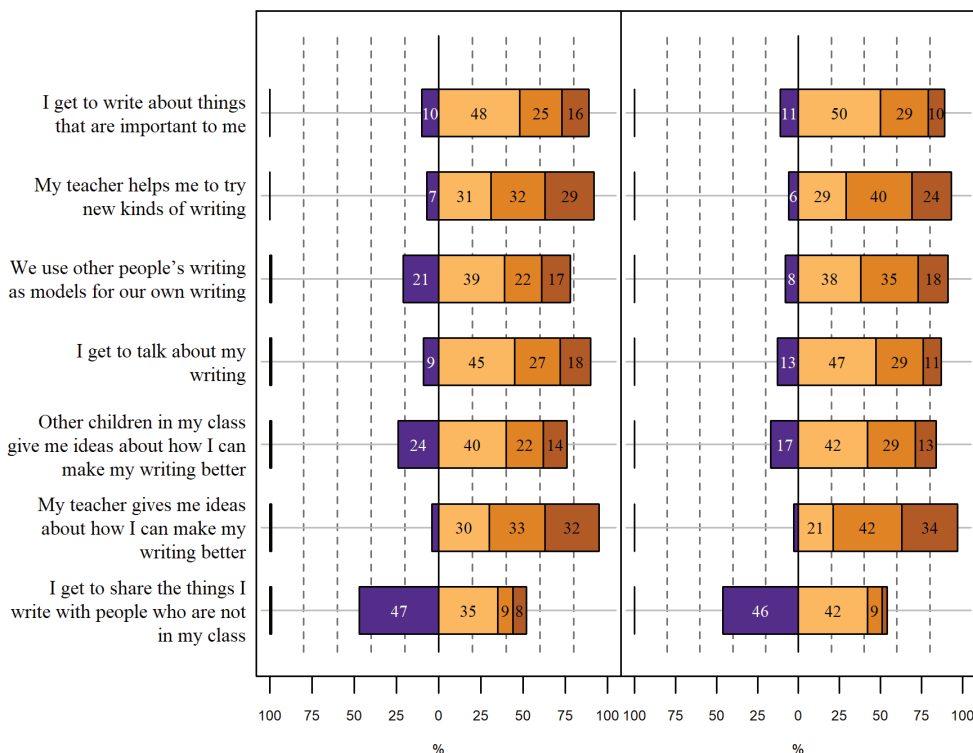


Students' learning opportunities in English writing, by year level (percentage responses)

Legend: Never (dark purple), Sometimes (light orange), Often (medium orange), Very often (dark orange)

Year 4

Year 8



Students' attitude to writing and confidence in writing

Around 75 percent of Year 4 students and 55 percent of Year 8 students agreed 'totally' or 'quite a lot' that they enjoyed writing and were good at writing.

In general, girls reported greater levels of enjoyment of, and confidence in, writing.

Opportunities to learn and do writing

Most students reported that each item on a list of opportunities to learn in writing happened at least sometimes. One exception to this was the opportunity to share things they wrote with people outside the classroom.



Speaking in the English Learning Area

Y4: 826

Number assessed

Y8: 826

How we assessed English speaking

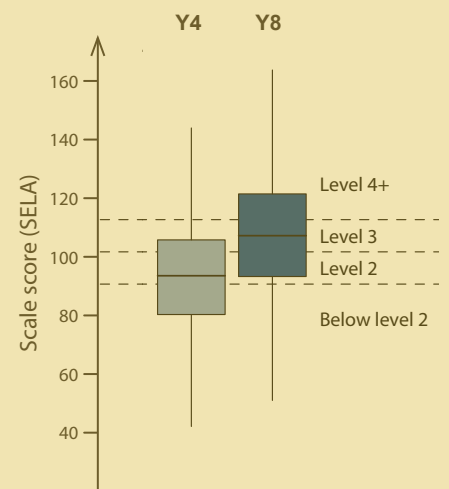
Speaking was assessed with four performance tasks. Three tasks were carried out in groups of four and involved each student talking about a topic, presenting a poem, and creating a paired conversation between two puppets. The fourth task (retelling a story) was done in an interview with the teacher assessor. Students were given time to plan and practise their presentations.

Scores from the speaking assessment were located on the Speaking in the English Learning Area (SELA) scale.

Key findings

- In Year 4, 56 percent of students achieved at or above curriculum expectations (level 2). In Year 8, 40 percent of students achieved at or above curriculum expectations (level 4).
- The average score for Year 8 students was 15 SELA units higher than for Year 4 students. This indicates that students make, on average, about 4 SELA units of 'progress' per year. This was the lowest rate of progress of the language modes (compared with 9 RELA units for reading).
- Girls scored higher, on average, than boys by 5 SELA units higher at Year 4 and 4 units at Year 8.
- Māori students scored lower, on average, than non-Māori students by 9 SELA units at Year 4 and 8 units at Year 8.
- Pacific students scored lower than non-Pacific students by 10 SELA scale score units at Year 4 and 11 units at Year 8.
- Students from high decile schools scored higher, on average, than those from mid and low decile schools. The difference between the average scores for students in high and low decile schools was 17 SELA units at both year levels.

Distribution of scores on the Speaking in the English Learning Area (SELA) scale



Presenting in the English Learning Area

Y4: 729

Number assessed

Y8: 749

How we assessed English presenting

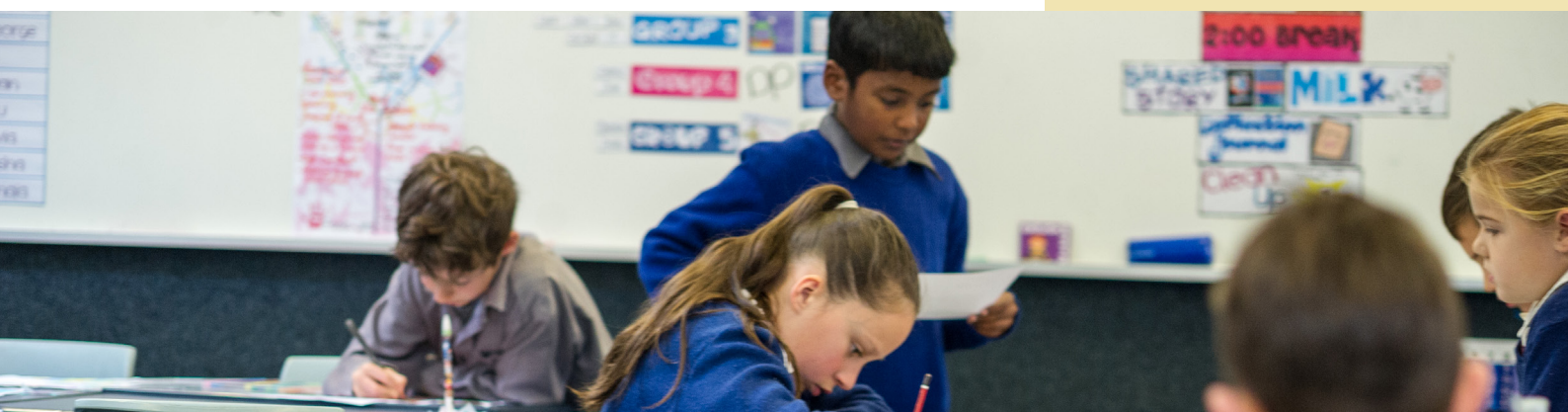
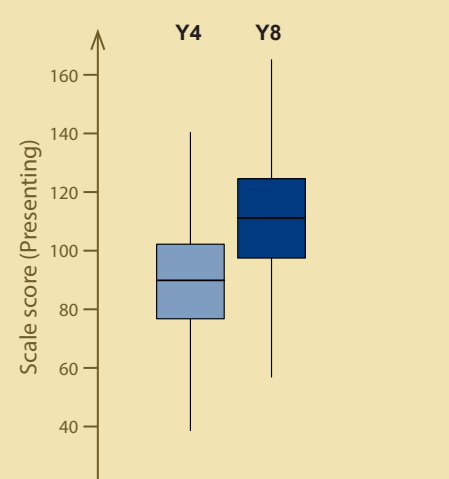
The presenting assessment was based on a single task. Students were asked to identify the message contained in a video and then design a poster to convey the message to children in their school. Some students participated in an interview to discuss the design decisions they made when they created their poster.

Scores on the presenting assessment were located on the Presenting Task scale. The scale was not benchmarked against curriculum expectations.

Key findings

- The average score for Year 8 students was 22 scale score units higher than for Year 4 students. This indicates that, on average, students make about 6 scale score units of 'progress' per year.
- Girls scored higher, on average, than boys by 6 scale score units at Year 4 and 7 units at Year 8.
- Māori students scored lower, on average, than non-Māori students by 9 scale score units at Year 4 and 8 units at Year 8.
- Pacific students scored lower, on average, than non-Pacific students by 10 scale score units at Year 4 and 11 units at Year 8.
- Students from high decile schools scored higher, on average, than those from mid and low decile schools. The difference between the average scores for students in high and low decile schools was 14 WELA units at Year 4 and 10 units at Year 8.

Distribution of scores on the Presenting Task scale





How we assessed English reading

English reading was assessed with a 40-minute assessment using selected response and short-answer questions, and a one-to-one interview in which students talked about the reading passages they had read. Passages included poetry, fiction and literary non-fiction texts.

Scores from the reading assessment were located on a scale called the Reading in the English Learning Area (RELA) scale.

Key findings

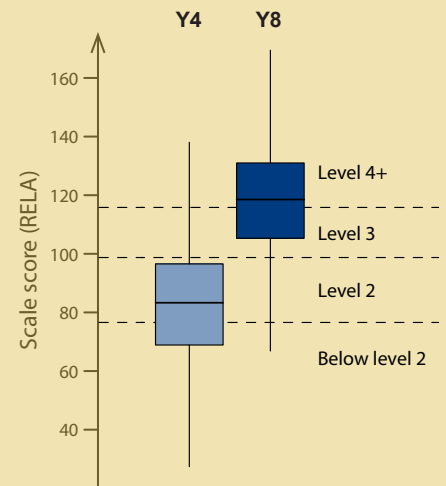
Achievement in 2019

- About 63 percent of Year 4 students achieved at curriculum level 2 or above. About 56 percent of Year 8 students achieve at or above curriculum level 4.
- The average score for Year 8 students was 36 RELA scale score units higher than for Year 4 students. This indicates that students make, on average, about 9 RELA units of 'progress' per year.
- Girls scored higher, on average, than boys by 7 RELA units at Year 4 and 5 units at Year 8.
- Māori students scored lower, on average, than non-Māori students by 9 RELA units at Year 4 and 10 units at Year 8.
- Pacific students scored lower, on average, than non-Pacific students by 12 RELA units at Year 4 and 13 units at Year 8.
- Students from high decile schools scored higher, on average, than those from mid and low decile schools. On average, students from high decile schools scored higher than those from low decile schools by 17 RELA units at Year 4 and 16 units at Year 8.

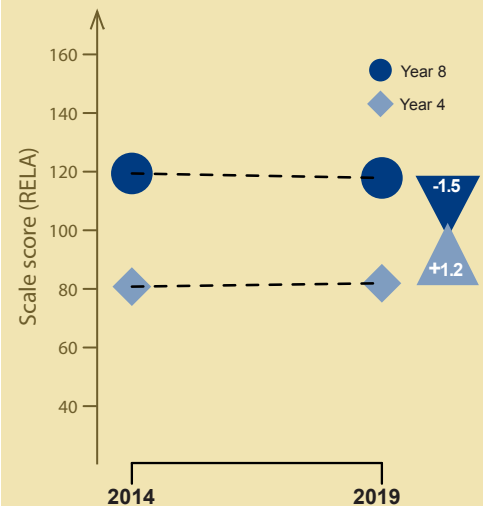
Changes in achievement between 2014 and 2019

- The overall change in the average score in reading between 2014 and 2019 was not statistically significant at Year 4 or Year 8.
- Year 8 girls scored lower, on average, in 2019 compared with 2014 (-3 RELA units).

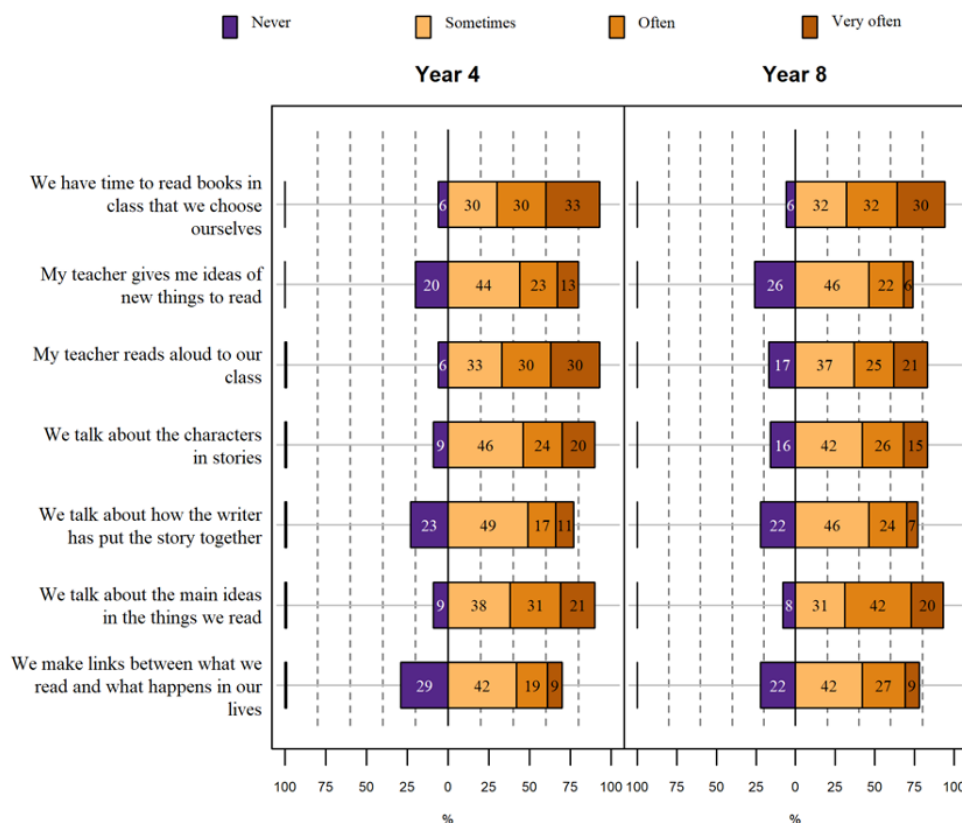
Distribution of scores on the Reading in the English Learning Area (RELA) scale



Trend of scale scores 2014 - 2019



Students' learning opportunities in English reading, by year level (percentage responses)



Students' attitude to reading and confidence in reading

Around 80 percent of Year 4 students and 60 percent of Year 8 students agreed 'totally' or 'quite a lot' that they enjoyed reading and were good at reading.

In general, girls reported greater levels of enjoyment of, and confidence in, reading.

Opportunities to learn and do reading

Most students reported that each item on a list of opportunities to learn in reading happened at least sometimes. Three opportunities happened less often:

- my teacher gives me ideas of new things to read.
- talking about the writer's craft.
- linking what we read to our own lives.



How we assessed English listening

Students spent up to 30 minutes listening to recorded oral texts and answering selected-response and short constructed-response questions that followed each text. A range of fiction and literary non-fiction texts were used, including extracts from novels and plays, scripted conversations, poetry, expository texts and memoirs.

Scores from the listening assessment were located on a scale called the Listening in the English Learning Area (LELA) scale.

Key findings

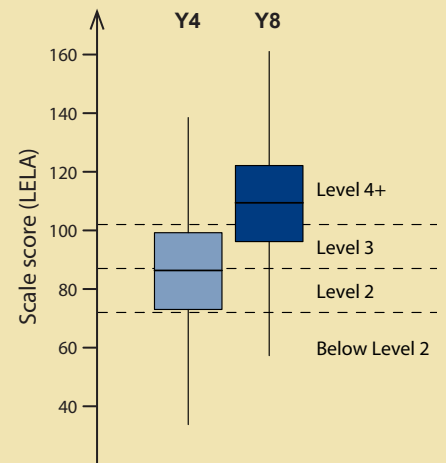
Achievement in 2019

- At Year 4, 76 percent of students achieved at curriculum level 2 or above and at Year 8, 65 percent of students achieved at curriculum level 4 or above.
- The difference between the average scores on the LELA scale for Year 4 and Year 8 students was 23 units. This indicates that students make, on average, about 6 units of 'progress' each year.
- Girls scored higher, on average, than boys by 4 LELA units at Year 4 and 6 units at Year 8.
- Māori students scored lower, on average, than non-Māori students by 7 LELA units at Year 4 and 9 units at Year 8.
- Pacific students scored lower, on average, than non-Pacific students by 10 LELA units at Year 4 and 11 units at Year 8.
- Students from high decile schools scored higher, on average, than those from mid and low decile schools. On average, students from high decile schools scored higher than those from low decile schools by 17 LELA units at Year 4 and Year 8.

Changes in achievement between 2015 and 2019

- There was no statistically significant change at either Year 4 or Year 8 in the overall average listening (LELA) scale scores in 2019 compared with 2015.
- Several subgroups scored lower, on average, in 2019 than in 2015: Year 8 boys (-5 LELA units); Year 4 New Zealand European/Pākehā students (-4 LELA units); and Year 4 and Year 8 students from high decile schools (-5 LELA units).

Distribution of scores on the Listening in the English Learning Area (LELA) scale



How we assessed English viewing

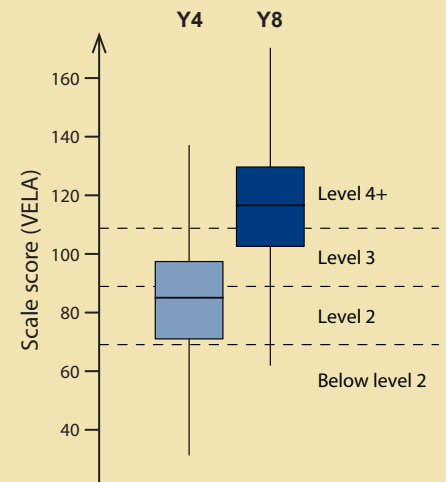
English viewing was assessed in two parts. In Part 1, students spent up to 30 minutes responding to visual texts with static images (illustrations with and without supporting written text taken from picture books and graphic novels). In Part 2, students viewed five moving images (short film clips) presented on laptops. Four tasks required students to answer short response questions in a booklet. One task was presented in an interview. The moving images included an animated legend, a film adaptation from a novel, animated fictional short stories and a short, live-action narrative.

Scores from the viewing assessment were located on the Viewing in the English Learning Area (VELA) scale.

Key findings

- At Year 4, 78 percent of students achieved at curriculum level 2 or above, and at Year 8, 65 percent of students achieved at curriculum level 4 or above.
- The difference in average achievement between Year 4 and Year 8 was 32 VELA scale score units. This indicates that students make, on average, about 8 units of 'progress' per year level.
- Girls scored higher, on average, than boys by 6 VELA units at Year 4 and 10 units at Year 8.
- Māori students scored lower, on average, than non-Māori students by 9 VELA units at Year 4 and 11 units at Year 8.
- Pacific students scored lower, on average, than non-Pacific students by 8 VELA units at Year 4 and 12 units at Year 8.
- Students from high decile schools scored higher, on average, than those from mid and low decile schools. On average, students from high decile schools scored higher than those from low decile schools by 19 VELA units at Year 4 and Year 8.

Distribution of scores on the Viewing in the English Learning Area (VELA) scale



Teaching and learning in the English learning area — contextual factors

Relationship between the amount of reading done at home and achievement

The amount of reading students reported doing outside of school was positively associated with achievement in all language modes.

The effect was greater at Year 8 than Year 4. For example, on average, Year 4 students who read at home for 'more than five hours a week' scored 11 RELA units higher than those who did 'none or very little'. At Year 8, this difference increased to 18 RELA units.

Student confidence and achievement

Most students were generally positive and confident about writing, reading, viewing and creating visual texts. Fewer (about one half of Year 4 students and one third of Year 8 students) were positive and confident about speaking and giving presentations.

For each language mode, students who reported high levels of confidence tended to achieve more highly than those who were less confident. The strength of this relationship was greater at Year 8 than Year 4.

Teacher confidence

Almost all principals reported that their schools were places where 'overall, teachers respond effectively to the learning needs of all students' and 'teachers provide effective and inclusive programmes in the English learning area for students who need support'.

Almost all teachers felt confident to teach each language mode. They were most confident teaching reading, followed by writing and speaking. They were least confident teaching viewing.

Teachers at both Year 4 and Year 8 reported that their students had frequent opportunities to engage in a range of writing and reading activities.

Professional Support

Over 70 percent of Year 4 teachers and about 60 percent of Year 8 teachers rated the in-school support they received in writing and reading as 'good' or 'very good'. This compares with about 30 percent of teachers who rated the support they received for viewing and presenting as 'good' or 'very good'.

Teachers reported that their access to professional learning and development (PLD) in reading and writing was markedly greater than for the other language modes.

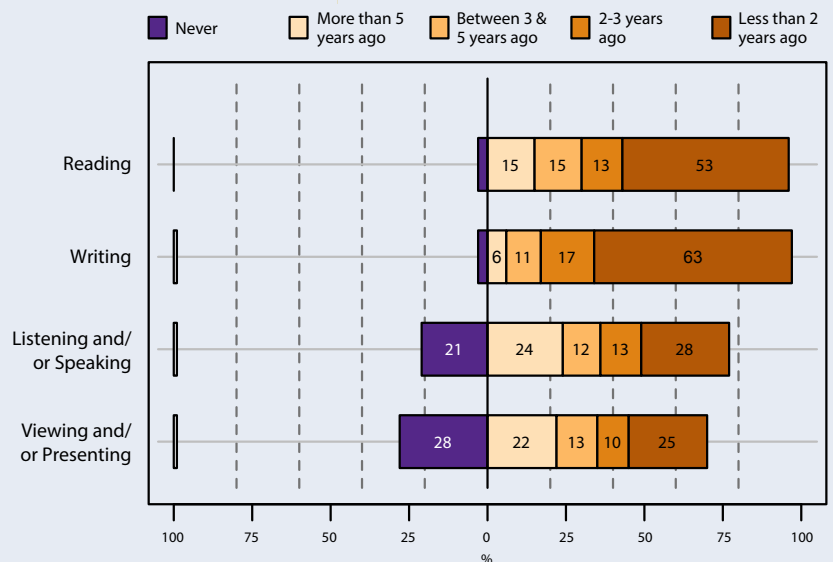
Changes in PLD between Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

In 2019, the proportion of teachers who reported they had participated in any PLD associated with writing within the last two years was 19 percentage points lower than it was in 2012. For reading the proportion was 14 percentage points lower than in 2014.

The majority (90 percent or more) of teachers reported that they could plan lessons to 'match students' individual needs', 'motivate students who show little interest in the English learning area' and 'provide an inclusive programme for students who need learning support in the English learning area'.



Recency of PLD in the modes of English, as reported by teachers



Other reports of interest to teachers and curriculum leaders

Insights for teachers

Using data from the 2019 studies, these reports describe insights about student learning in English and how we can respond in the classroom.

Key Findings

The Key Findings report provides a detailed summary of the 2019 English study.

Data Window

The Data Window allows users to generate tables and graphs based on data for the 2019 study.

All reporting items can be found at <https://nmssa.otago.ac.nz/>

