

A Report on New Zealand Student Engagement 2006

Student engagement is essential for educational achievement

Kia ora koutou katoa

This is the seventh annual report on student engagement and presence in New Zealand schools. It provides a picture of how engaged New Zealand students are in schooling by looking at the key indicators of disengagement – stand-down, suspension, exclusion, expulsion and early-leaving exemption – during the 2006 school year.

Although this report shows that suspensions have decreased since 2005, the overall number of students being suspended is still too high. The Ministry is also concerned about the increased demand for Early Leaving Exemptions.

It is important for schools to monitor and review the engagement levels of their students. School stand-down, suspension, attendance, retention and achievement data, forms the basis of effective review. Such a review can be used to inform the development of improvements to school processes that lift student engagement levels.

Schools participating in the Student Engagement Initiative have demonstrated the value of this approach and achieved significant reductions in suspensions.

Staying at school is important. Successful school engagement and presence has lifelong social and economic benefits both to an individual and to the community.

Both the Minister and the Ministry of Education have 'staying at school' as a priority. This priority is also shared by many schools for, as this report shows, 50% of schools do not use stand-downs and 75% do not use suspensions as processes for managing student behaviour. These schools are to be congratulated for their efforts.

The Ministry will continue to work in partnership with schools to assist in managing the challenging behaviour of some students. This will ensure a minimum of disruption to student learning and therefore increase the opportunity for all our students to reach their potential.

It is intended that this report be used as a starting-point for further analysis of student engagement trends within individual schools. The goal of this analysis is a continuing improvement of engagement in schooling for New Zealand students, and a fundamental condition for high levels of achievement.



Kathy Phillips
Senior Manager
National Operations

Glossary

Student Engagement Indicators

Data collected on the numbers of stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions expulsions, early leaving exemptions and truancy (the latter not included in this report) can be used as indicators of the level of student engagement across the school system.

Stand-down

As a consequence of a serious breach of school rules a school principal can direct a student to stand-down from school for a period of up to five school days. Stand-down, for any student, can total no more than five school days in any term, or 10 days in a school year. Students return automatically to school following stand-down.

Suspension

For very serious breaches of school rules a principal may suspend a student from attending school until the school board of trustees decides on the consequence for the student. The board may decide to lift the suspension with or without conditions, to extend the suspension, or in the most serious cases, to either exclude or expel the student.

Exclusion and Expulsion

For behaviour judged to be 'gross misconduct' a board may not allow a student to return to the school and the student must enrol in another school. Only students under the age of 16 (the legal leaving age) can be excluded. Students aged 16 and over can be expelled and are not required to re-enrol in another school, but may choose to do so.

Early Leaving Exemption

The Ministry may grant a student aged 15 an exemption from schooling if it is judged to be in the best interests of the student given their behaviour and learning issues

About this report

Schools are required to report to the Ministry of Education on any disciplinary action taken that, as a consequence, denies a student access to school. The statistics in this report are from that data reported by state or state-integrated schools during the 2006 calendar year.

Schools provide a wide range of responses to breaches of school rules and only those that result in a student being denied access to school are reported here. This report therefore is on school actions and not on the prevalence of any form of student behaviour.

Stand-downs are a form of timeout actively managed by the principal to ensure behavioural issues are addressed with minimum disruption to a student's learning. It is preferable that schools use stand-downs instead of suspensions to manage challenging behaviour by students.

Suspension, which is managed by the board, is for the most serious of issues, and has a broader range of consequences. A suspension can have significant impact on a student's learning and should be avoided if at all possible.

Stand-down and suspension are reported separately and are not to be combined for reporting purposes as they are separate processes with significantly different consequences.

Schools should use the information in this report as a basis for reviewing their own levels of student engagement.

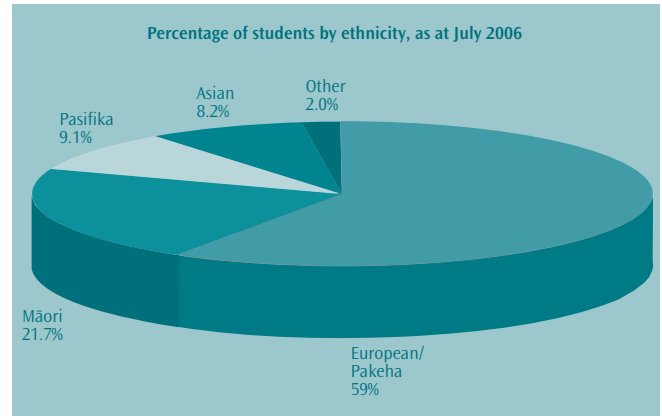
The number of cases e.g., (n=5,008) totals more than the number of students (n=4,589) because some students were stood-down, or suspended, more than once. The report is focussed on the number of stand-down and suspension events, rather than the number of students involved.

The report uses 'rate per 1,000 students' to present or discuss changes over time. The rate per 1,000 is calculated by dividing the number of events by the total number of students enrolled and then multiplying by 1,000. Rate per 1,000 provides a consistent measure and allows for comparisons over time.

Engagement and the student population

In 2006 there were 724,419 students enrolled in New Zealand state and state-integrated schools and the ethnic composition of the student population is changing. During the period 2002-2006 the proportionate number of Māori, Pasifika, and Asian students increased (by 7%, 13%, and 25% respectively) while the number of New Zealand European/Pakeha students decreased (by 6%).

Percentage of students by ethnicity, as at July 2006
(Source: Demographic & Statistical Analysis Unit)



The number of primary school students peaked in 2003, with a decline seen in 2004 and a continuing decline expected to 2008. In contrast, the number of secondary school students continues to grow and is expected to peak in 2007 or 2008. This shift is important because most stand-downs and suspensions occur in secondary schools.

2006 – Quick Facts

Stand-downs

50% of schools did not use stand-downs.

There were 22,467 stand-down cases in 2006. This is about three stand-downs for every hundred students.

Stand-down rates have risen slightly from last year.

The most common reasons for stand-down were continual disobedience, physical assault of other students, or verbal abuse of teachers.

For most students who were stood-down, this was a once-only event.

Stand-downs were most likely to occur in secondary schools.

More male students were stood-down than female students.

The proportion of Māori students stood-down was higher than the proportion of students of any other ethnicity.

Suspensions

About 75% of all schools did not use suspensions.

There were 5,008 suspension cases in 2006. This is a rate of less than one suspension for every hundred students.

Overall, suspension rates have dropped. This is particularly noticeable in secondary schools where the suspension rate is the lowest it has been in seven years.

Suspensions related to drug abuse have fallen 33% since 2000.

For most students who were suspended, this was a once-only event.

Suspensions were most likely to occur in secondary schools.

More male students were suspended than female students.

The proportion of Māori students suspended was higher than the proportion of students of any other ethnicity.

Analysis of Stand-down Cases

Nearly eighty percent of all stand-down cases were single instances, that is, students who were only stood-down once in that year.

Both the number of stand-down cases, and the rate, have increased each year since 2000 (stand-down has only been available to schools since July 1999).

In most cases, less formal options will have been tried before the imposition of a stand-down. These may include contacting parents,

counselling, discussion and mediation, apologies and restorative practices, or detentions.

Although there were 22,467 stand-down cases in 2006, fewer than 3% of the total student population were involved. Nearly eighty percent of all stand-down cases were single instances, that is, students who were only stood down once in that year.

Stand-down numbers	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Number of Stand-Down Cases							
Cases	16,931	17,141	17,943	19,885	20,468	21,862	22,467
Student Population	697,478	699,062	711,144	724,482	726,891	726,087	724,419
Rate per 1,000 Students	24	25	25	27	28	30	31

School Type

Stand-downs are much more likely to occur in secondary schools. 312 secondary schools accounted for 70% (15,705) of all the 2006 stand-down cases. The remaining 30% of stand-downs were made by 998

primary and secondary schools. A further 1,264 schools did not use stand-downs at all.

Stand-downs in Secondary Schools	Number of schools	Percentage of schools	Number of Cases	Percentage of Cases
Number of secondary schools with 100+ cases	39	12.5	5860	37.3
Number of secondary schools with 50 - 99 cases	79	25.3	5502	35
Number of secondary schools with 1 - 49 cases	194	62.2	4343	27.7
Total	312	100	15705	100

School Decile

The incidence of stand-downs is not evenly spread across deciles. Deciles 2 to 5 make up the bulk of total stand-downs (53%).

Reasons for stand-down

The most common behaviours reported, that lead to a stand-down, are continual disobedience (26%), physical assault of other students (24%), and verbal abuse of teachers (15%). From 2000 to 2006, these three reasons have accounted for 65% of all stand-down cases.

Gender and Age

Nearly three quarters of all stand-down cases involved male students.

Overall, the 2006 stand-down rate for female students was 18 cases per 1,000 (female) students; the stand-down rate for male students was 44 per 1,000 (male) students.

On average, students aged 13-15 years account for nearly two thirds of all stand-down cases.

Fourteen is the most likely age for both male and female students to be stood-down. 74% percent of all female students stood-down in 2006 were aged 13-15 years old. For males 57% were aged 13 to 15 years.

Ethnicity

Students of New Zealand European/Pakeha, Māori, and Pasifika ethnicities are most frequently stood-down. The stand-down rates for these three groups show that, overall, Māori are more than twice as likely to be stood down than NZ European/Pakeha, and a third more likely to be stood-down than Pasifika students.

Stand-down Rate (per 1,000) by Ethnicity	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
NZ European/Pakeha	19	19	19	21	21	22	23
NZ Māori	46	48	60	54	54	55	56
Pasifika	24	25	33	35	34	39	42
Overall Stand-down Rate	24	25	25	27	28	30	31

The overall stand-down rate for Pasifika students increased by 8% in 2006, up on the growth of the previous year.

Stand-down rates for secondary students have increased slightly.

No significant change was reported for the year 2005-2006 for stand-downs of NZ European/Pakeha and Māori students.

Analysis of Suspension Cases

Total secondary suspensions are down 8% on last year and sit at 80% of the rate in 2000.

A suspension is a more serious consequence than a stand-down. In most cases the same sorts of student management processes will have been used by a school before suspending a student, as would have been used before imposing a stand down. While a stand-down may have occurred prior to a suspension, suspension is often the consequence of a more severe single instance.

Less than 1% of the 2006 student population were involved in the 5,008 suspension cases. 91% of all suspension cases were single instances, that is, students who were only suspended once in that year.

Of the 2440 state and state-integrated schools in 2006, 731 recorded one or more suspension cases. Close to three-quarters of all schools did not use suspension in 2006.

Suspension Comparisons	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Suspension Cases (all students)	5,104	4,801	4,934	4,898	4,782	5,145	5008
Student Population (all students)	697,478	699,062	711,144	724,482	726,891	726,087	724,419
Rate per 1,000 Students (all students)	7.3	6.8	6.5	6.7	6.5	7.0	7.0
Suspension Cases (secondary students)	4,059	3,745	3,782	3,802	3,753	3,973	3,766
Student Population (secondary students)	231,944	234,195	241,943	250,959	257,974	261,017	262,262
Rate per 1,000 Students (secondary students)	17.5	15.9	15.6	15.1	14.5	15.2	14

School Type

Almost one third of secondary schools did not use suspension in 2006 although most suspensions occur in secondary school. The age difference, and the fact that most secondary schools are larger than most primary schools, are two possible factors in explaining the higher number of secondary compared with primary suspensions.

The remaining two thirds of secondary schools (296 in number) imposed a total of 3,766 suspensions. This is 75% of all suspensions.

The secondary school suspension rate was slightly over 14 cases per 1,000 students. Total secondary suspensions are down 8% on last year and sit at 80% of the rate in 2000.

25% of secondary schools (74 schools) imposed between 19 and 91 suspensions with an average of 23 suspensions each. Their suspension rates, on average, were 29 cases per 1,000 students. This is more than twice the national rate for all secondary schools.

95% of the secondary schools with stand-down cases in 2006 also had suspension cases.

Secondary Schools and Suspensions	Schools	Percentage of schools	Number of Cases	Percentage of Cases
Number of secondary schools with 40+ cases	7	2.4	383	10.2
Number of secondary schools with 20 - 39 cases	65	22	1693	45
Number of secondary schools with 1 - 19 cases	224	75.6	1690	44.8
Total	296	100	3766	100

Reasons for suspension

The most common reasons for suspension are continual disobedience (27%), misuse of drugs (20%) and physical assault of other students (18%). These reasons account for an average of 65% of all suspension cases.

Suspensions for the misuse of drugs have comprised more than a quarter of all suspension cases since 2000. 2006 saw drug abuse as

criteria for suspension at its lowest ebb since 2000; down by over 33% for this period. This change perhaps reflects the success of drug treatment programmes working with schools. The 'High on Life' model for example has health providers, in conjunction with schools, providing drug and alcohol counselling services to students.

Gender and Age

More than 70% of all suspension cases involve male students.

The female suspension rate has reduced by 10% from 2005. The male suspension rate has reduced by 13%.

Most suspension cases involve students aged between 13 and 15 years old.

This age group accounts for over two thirds of all suspension cases. The suspension rate for this age group has decreased by 18% over 2000-2006.

Of the 13-15 year olds suspended in 2006, males were suspended most for continual disobedience (29%), drugs (22%), physical assault on other students (17%), theft (6%) and verbal assault on staff (5%).

Females of this age group were suspended most for continual disobedience (30%), drugs (23%), physical assault on other students (17%), alcohol (7%) and verbal abuse of staff (5%).

Alcohol was involved in 7% of female student suspension cases but only 2% of male student suspension cases.

Ethnicity

The most frequently suspended students are Māori. Māori students have a higher suspension rate per thousand students than New Zealand

European/Pakeha. Suspension cases involving Pasifika students have increased since 2000.

Suspension Rate (per 1,000) by Ethnicity	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
NZ European/Pakeha	5	5	5	4	4	5	4
NZ Māori	17	15	16	15	14	16	15
Pasifika	6	7	8	7	9	8	10
Overall Suspension Rate	7	7	7	7	7	7	7

The Student Engagement Initiative (SEI)

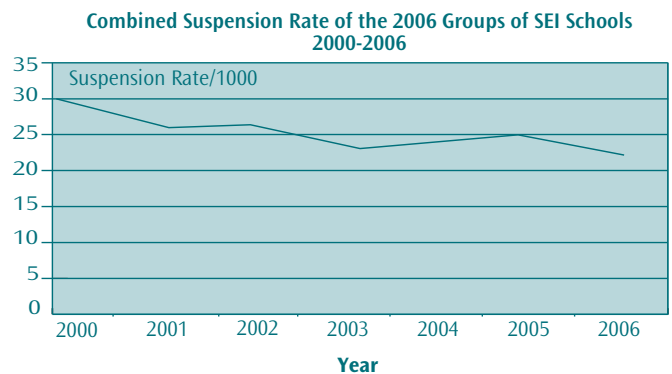
Suspension rates for Māori within SEI schools are down 37.5% from 2000 levels.

The Ministry of Education's SEI initiative works in schools (around 100 in 2006) with high truancy rates, high numbers of early leaving exemptions, or high rates of suspension. The SEI began in 2001.

SEI schools use their engagement data to review their procedures and practices and to develop programmes to overcome their specific engagement issues. There is a great variety of programmes that individual schools adopt. For example, some schools have introduced a combination of restorative justice and peer support to assist with the management of behaviour, while others may create a programme of incentives to improve student attendance and drug education programmes to reduce the rate of suspensions. The schools that make self sustaining gains in increasing engagement are those that are able to embed the new practices as part of the culture of the school.

During the period of 2000-2006, SEI schools have reduced their Māori secondary school student suspension rate from 64 per thousand to 40 per thousand. As a result, the suspension reductions made within the SEI schools appear to have affected the suspension rates across all

secondary schools. For example, the secondary school suspension rate has reduced from 15 cases per thousand in 2005 to 14 in 2006. The national Māori secondary school student rate has also reduced from 38 to 35 cases per thousand.



Analysis of Exclusions and Expulsions

Significant reduction in exclusions related to drug use

Exclusions

Only students under the age of 16 can be excluded. In 2006 there was a drop in both the number and rate of exclusions. There were 1,556

exclusions imposed. This is a rate of 2.1 exclusions per 1,000 students. Since 2000, 30% of suspension cases each year have resulted in exclusion.

Suspension and Exclusion Cases	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Number of Exclusion Cases	1558	1319	1487	1503	1464	1622	1556
Number of Suspension Cases	5104	4801	4934	4898	4782	5145	5008
Exclusion Rate	2.2	1.9	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.2	2.1

School Type

In 2006, over 80% of schools had no exclusions and 8% (466) schools recorded one or more exclusion cases. 75% of exclusion cases occur in secondary schools

Reasons for Exclusions

The majority of exclusion cases (70%) relate to continual disobedience (39%), misuse of drugs (14%) and the physical assault of other students (17%).

In 2006, the misuse of drugs accounted for nearly 14% of all exclusion cases. This is a significant drop since 2000 when drug misuse comprised 24% of all exclusions.

Gender, Age and Ethnicity

Suspension and Exclusion Cases	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Gender of Excluded Student by %	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Female	21.2	20.5	23.7	24.2	25.3	24.8	22.6
Male	78.8	79.5	76.3	75.8	74.7	75.2	77.4
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Those aged 13-15 were most frequently excluded in 2006. This age group accounted for 78% of all exclusion cases. The number of exclusions in this group remain fairly steady from 2000 – 2006.

On average, Māori students make up almost half of exclusion cases.

Exclusion Outcome

On average, 94% of excluded students return to a legal learning situation and the majority (55%) enrol in a new school.

Expulsions

Only students aged 16 and over can be expelled. Expelled students do not have to return to schooling, unlike students who are excluded.

On average, around 3% of suspension cases end in expulsion.

The actual number of expulsion cases has reduced by 14% since 2000.

Expulsions	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Expel (Return to Schooling) Cases	22	14	27	24	21	36	27
Expel (Finish Schooling) Cases	152	130	129	142	108	105	123
Total Expulsions	174	144	156	166	129	141	150

Ethnicity

Students of Māori ethnicity were most likely to return to schooling after expulsion. Students of New Zealand European/Pakeha ethnicity were the most likely to end their schooling subsequent to an expulsion.

Analysis of Early Leaving Exemptions

Under exceptional circumstances the parents/caregivers of 15 year old students can apply for an exemption from attending school for their child (referred to as an Early Leaving Exemption, or ELX), providing students enter further training or full-time employment. In 2006, 7.5% of the 15 year old student population was granted an ELX.

Although the number of approved ELX applications has increased by 18% over 2000-2006, the proportion of ELX applications that are declined has nearly doubled over this period.

ELX Applications by Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
ELX Cases Granted	3,239	3,416	3,703	3,840	3,830	4,191	3,956
ELX Cases Declined	134	165	171	154	282	320	264
Total Applications	3,373	3,581	3,874	3,994	4,112	4,511	4,220

The majority of approved ELX cases originate in schools of deciles 2, 4, and 5, accounting for an average of 37% of all applications over 2000-2005.

Gender

On average, female students comprise 37% of all ELX cases approved since 2000, with male students comprising the rest.

Approved ELX cases involving female students have increased by 36% over 2000-2006; cases involving male students have increased by 15% over the same period.

Ethnicity

In 2006 New Zealand European/Pakeha students comprised 420 per thousand of approved ELX cases; Māori students comprised 410 per thousand of approved ELX cases; and Pasifika students comprised 60 per thousand of approved ELX cases.

Destination

On average, the destination of students granted ELX can be broken down thus: 76% of students enrol in training provider courses, 5% in polytech or university courses, the remaining 19% enter full time employment.

The ministry is concerned about the high rate of applications. Current evidence indicates that leaving school early is not in the long term interest of the student. Therefore the ministry has revised its procedures and is working with parents and schools to ensure that the best possible decision is made in the interest of students and their learning.

Additional data and information can be requested from the Ministry of Education. This report, and more, is available online at www.educationcounts.govt.nz.

Information about analysing engagement data can be found on the TKI website <http://www.tki.org.nz>.
If you require more information, or assistance, please contact the Student Support staff of your local Ministry office.
They are happy to help!



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

