

A Report on New Zealand Student Engagement

Engagement 2005

Student engagement is essential for educational achievement

New Zealand has a good education system with students achieving at high levels. However, there is a wide gap between those at the top and those at the bottom. Too many students, especially those from low socio-economic backgrounds or who are Māori or Pasifika, are not receiving the value from education that they should, and are not doing as well as they should. Effective teaching, engaging the family and

community in education, and quality providers are vital for the future success of these students. Engagement is essential for their educational achievement.

Students who miss school, for whatever reason, will, if they are frequently absent, reduce their life chances and choices. Keeping students in school is important.

Kia ora koutou katoa

This is the sixth annual report on student engagement.

We know the longer young people remain engaged in education the better the outcome. Everything we do to ensure engagement and to reduce the numbers of students leaving school without formal qualifications is of benefit, not only directly to the young person and their family, but also to our communities and work places.

Although we use national data sets of attendance, stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions, and expulsions, these are only one part of the student engagement equation. Achievement is the other part. High levels of achievement are the product of high levels of engagement. There is a need to understand the relationship between these two sets of indicators.

It is important to analyse student engagement. All of us, parents, schools, communities and the Ministry, need to understand what is happening. At the classroom level, interesting relevant programmes combined with environments of mutual respect will keep many students in school, and happily engaged. At the systems level the analysis of wider indicators of engagement such as attendance patterns, and the incidence of stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions, and expulsions will provide the platform for action.

To gain a full picture of what is happening, these indices can be contrasted with achievement levels. Improved levels of engagement go hand-in-hand with gains in achievement.

Some schools have been able to dramatically improve their student engagement levels through gaining a better understanding of their data. For one school, an analysis

of their suspension data prompted them to provide extra support to students who had recently made the transition from intermediate to secondary school. Other schools have successfully improved student attendance levels by implementing awards for classes with the best attendance rates, or ensuring staff liaise with families and whanau about attendance barriers.

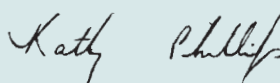
These sorts of initiatives provide excellent opportunities for schools to encourage and foster engagement without resorting to the formal sanctions.

Stand-down, suspension, exclusion, and expulsion are the most serious sanctions available to schools. The incidence of these sanctions provides broad measures of our challenge to engage students. It is important that both schools and the Ministry work in partnership to reduce the incidence of these sanctions.

Student engagement is integral to the Ministry's Statement of Intent: to "raise achievement and reduce disparity". Our commitment to schools is to support them in their endeavour to enable all students in their care to reach their full educational potential. The key to this commitment is for students to stay at school as long as possible to secure the best life outcomes they can.

Keeping students in school is important.

Heoi ano, nā



Kathy Phillips
Senior Manager
National Operations.

The Ministry of Education has several national sets of information available to measure of student engagement. These include:

- roll data;
- school leaver data;
- data on disciplinary events like stand-downs and suspension;
- early leaving exemption data; and
- attendance and absence data.

This report gives a national picture of student engagement in relation to stand-downs, suspensions, and early leaving exemptions. The information can be used by schools to maintain and improve their own student engagement.

The statistics in this report are about students enrolled in state or state-integrated schools during the 2005 calendar year. The averages are calculated using the six year timeframe of 2000-2005.

The number of cases totals more than the number of students because some students were stood-down, or suspended, more than once. The report is focussed on the number of stand-down and suspension cases, rather than the number of students.

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 cases by the number of students and then multiplying by 1,000. Rate per 1,000 provides a consistent measure and allows for comparisons over time.

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

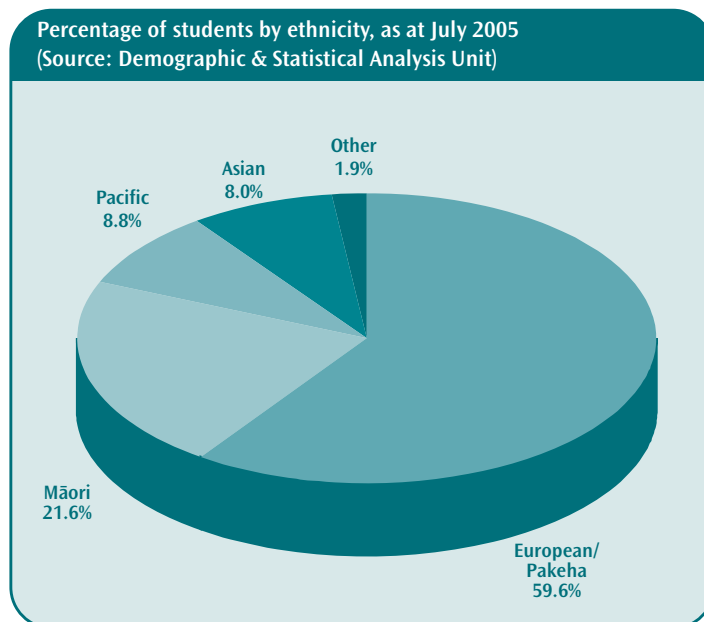
2005 – Quick Facts

- There were 726,087 students enrolled in state and state-integrated schools.
- There were 21,862 stand-down cases and 5,145 suspension cases.
- Fewer than three in every hundred students were stood-down and fewer than one in every hundred were suspended.
- Stand-downs and suspensions were most likely to occur in secondary schools.
- One third of secondary schools did not use stand-downs.
- Nearly three quarters of all schools did not use suspensions.
- More male students were stood-down or suspended than female students.
- A higher proportion of Māori students were stood-down or suspended than students of any other ethnicity.
- The most common reasons for stand-down were continual disobedience, physical assault of other students, or verbal abuse of teachers.
- The most common reasons for suspension were continual disobedience, the misuse of drugs, or the physical assault of students.
- For most students, a stand-down or a suspension was a once-only event.

Engagement and the Student Population

In 2005 there were 726,087 students in New Zealand state and state-integrated schools.

The composition of the student population is changing. During the period 2001-2005 the number of Māori, Pasifika, and Asian students increased (by 9%, 13%, and 38% respectively) while the number of New Zealand European/Pakeha students decreased (by 3%). Growth in the number of Asian students has resulted largely from increased migration from Asia in recent years.



The number of primary school students peaked in 2003, with a decline seen in 2004 and 2005 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.

Analysis of Stand-down Cases

Both the number of stand-down cases, and the rate, has increased each year since 2000 (stand-downs have 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 21,862 stand-down cases in 2005, less than 3% of the total student population were involved. Eighty percent of all stand-down cases were single instances, that is, students who were only stood down once in that year.

There is evidence that some schools are using stand-downs instead of suspensions.

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

Of the 1,255 schools with one or more stand-down cases, 310 were secondary schools. These 310 secondary schools account for 71% (15,440) of all the 2005 stand-down cases. 124 secondary schools did not stand-down any students in 2005.

School Type

Stand-down cases are not evenly spread across types of schools.

Twelve percent of secondary schools accounted for a third of the secondary school stand-down cases. Most secondary schools (61%) had between one and 49 stand-downs. These schools, in total, accounted for less than a third of all secondary school stand-down cases.

Stand-downs in Secondary Schools	# of Schools	% of Schools	# of Cases	% of Cases
Number of secondary schools with 100+ cases	38	12.3	5,483	35.5
Number of secondary schools with 50-99 cases	82	26.4	5,750	37.2
Number of secondary schools with 1-49 cases	190	61.3	4,207	27.2
Total	310	100	15,440	100

School Decile

The incidence of stand-downs is not evenly spread across deciles. In 2005, decile 4 schools accounted for the largest amount of stand-down cases (15%). Fourteen percent of stand-down cases occurred in schools of decile 2, and 13% occurred in decile 5 schools.

Patterns of behaviour that lead to stand-down

There are many reasons behind stand-downs. The most common reasons are continual disobedience (25%), physical assault of other students (24%), and verbal abuse of teachers (16%). On average, these three reasons account for 65% of all stand-down cases.

The number of stand-down cases for arson has reduced by 35% from 161 in 2000 to 104 in 2005. Stand-downs for smoking at school have remained stable at around 4%. Theft has also remained stable since 2000, at nearly 5% of cases.

Treating the misuse of drugs and alcohol as a health issue rather than as a disciplinary issue:

The misuse of drugs and alcohol typically accounts for 10% of all stand-down cases. Over the 2000–2005, period stand-downs for alcohol have reduced by nearly one third (from 1033 to 719). These reductions may reflect the different approaches to drug and

alcohol misuse that many schools are using to help their students. The High On Life model*, for example, works with local alcohol and drug health providers to give schools a range of effective tools as alternatives to stand-down and suspension to support behaviour change.

* For information about the High On Life model, contact the Student Support Manager at your regional Ministry office.

Sex and Age

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

Overall, the 2005 stand-down rate for female students was 18 cases per 1,000 (female) students; the stand-down rate for male students was 41 per 1,000 (male) students.

Fourteen is the most likely age for both male and female students to be stood-down. Seventy-four percent of all female students stood-down in 2005 were aged 13-15 years old. For males 58% were aged 13 to 15 years.

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

Stand-down Rate by Ethnicity	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
NZ European/Pakeha	19	19	19	21	21	22
NZ Māori	46	48	50	54	54	55
Pasifika	24	25	33	35	34	39
Overall Stand down rate	24	25	25	27	28	30

Ethnicity

Although 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 one and a half times more likely to be stood-down than Pasifika students.

The overall stand-down rate for Pasifika students increased by 13% between 2004 and 2005. For Pasifika secondary school students the increase was 7% over this period.

During the same period the overall stand-down rate for New Zealand European/Pakeha students increased by 5%. For New Zealand European/Pakeha secondary students the increase was 2%.

For Māori students, the overall stand-down rate increased by only 2% and the rate for Māori secondary students reduced by 1.6% over this period.

Analysis of Suspension Cases

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 prior to imposing a stand-down.

Less than 1% of the 2005 student population were involved in the 5,145 suspension cases. Ninety-one percent of all suspension cases were single instances, that is, students who were only suspended once in that year.

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

Of the 2,499 state and integrated schools in 2005, 700 recorded one or more suspension cases. Close to three-quarters of all schools did not use suspension in 2005.

Close to one third of secondary schools did not use suspension in 2005. However, over two thirds of all secondary schools (289) imposed a total of 3,973 suspensions. This is 77% of the total number of suspensions.

Overall, the secondary school suspension rate was slightly over 15 cases per 1,000 students.

Seventy secondary schools each imposed between 20 and 116 suspensions. These schools averaged 31 suspensions each. Their suspension rates, on average, were 35 cases per 1000 students. This is more than twice the national rate for secondary schools.

Of the secondary schools with stand-down cases in 2005, 87% also had suspension cases.

Secondary Schools and Suspensions	Schools	% of Schools	# of Cases	% of Cases
Number of secondary schools with 40+ cases	9	3.1	513	12.9
Number of secondary schools with 20-39 cases	61	21.1	1,691	42.6
Number of secondary schools with 1-19 cases	219	75.8	1,769	44.5
Total	289	100	3,973	100

Patterns in behaviour that lead to suspension

As with stand-down, there are many patterns of behaviour that result in suspension cases.

The most common reasons for suspension are misuse of drugs (29%) continual disobedience (25%), and physical assault of other students (16%). These reasons account for an average of 69% of all suspension cases.

Suspensions for misuse of drugs – comprising an average of 29% of all suspension cases since 2000 – reduced by 15% over this period.

Cases involving the physical assault of staff comprised 4% of all suspension cases in 2005; cases involving weapons comprised 2%.

Suspensions for verbally assaulting other students (from 67 cases in 2000 to 40 cases in 2005), smoking (from 56 to 37), and arson (from 82 to 44) have reduced dramatically; each comprised less than 1% of all suspension cases in 2005.

Suspension by sex and age

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

This age group accounts for two thirds of all suspension cases. The suspension rate for this age group has decreased by 13% over the 2000-2005 period.

Approximately 70% of all suspension cases involve male students.

The female student suspension rate has reduced by 10% over this period. The male student suspension rate has reduced by 13% over the 2000-2005 period.

Of the 13-15 year olds suspended in 2005, males were suspended most for drugs (29%), continual disobedience (26%), physical assault of other students (16%), verbal assault on staff (6%), and theft (5%).

Females of this age group were suspended most for continual disobedience (31%), drugs (28%), physical assault of other students (16%), verbal abuse of staff (5%), and other harmful or dangerous behaviour (5%).

Alcohol was involved in 4% of female student suspension cases but only 2% of male student suspension cases.

Ethnicity

Similar to the stand-down trend, students of Māori, New Zealand European/Pakeha, and Pasifika ethnicity are most frequently suspended.

There are disparities between the suspension levels of the three major ethnicity groups.

Māori students have a higher suspension rate than New Zealand European/Pakeha. Suspension cases involving Pasifika students have increased since 2000.

Suspension Rate by Ethnicity	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
NZ/European/Pakeha	5	5	5	4	4	5
NZ Māori	17	15	16	15	14	16
Pasifika	6	7	8	7	9	8
Overall Suspension Rate	7	7	7	7	7	7

The Student Engagement Initiative

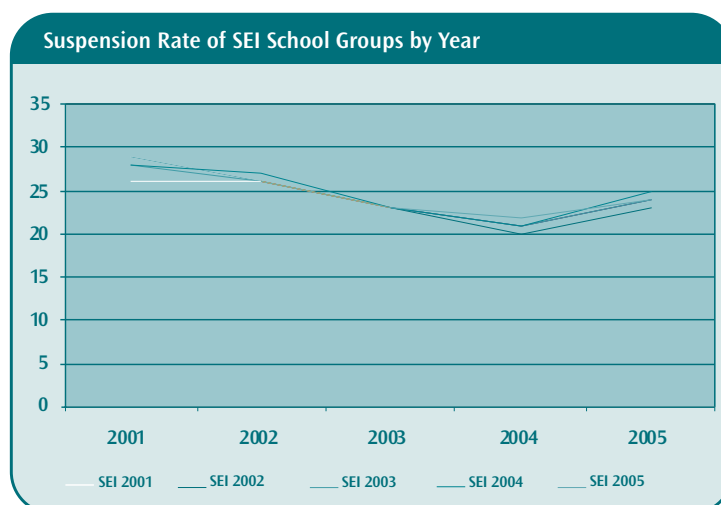
The Student Engagement Initiative (SEI) began in 2001.

The initiative works with schools with significant student engagement issues. These are identified through high truancy rates, high numbers of early leaving exemptions, and high rates of suspension.

SEI schools develop programmes to overcome their specific engagement issues. There is a great variety amongst the programmes that individual schools adopt. For example, one school may introduce a combination of restorative justice and peer support

to assist with the management of behaviour, another school may create a programme of incentives to improve student attendance. Many schools sustain their original initiatives because the new practice becomes part of the culture of the school.

The analysis of the SEI schools' student engagement data demonstrates that long-lasting improvements can be achieved. For example, the combined suspension rate of Māori students in the SEI schools has reduced by 26% over the 2001-2005 period.



Analysis of Exclusions and Expulsions

Exclusions

In 2005 there were 1,622 exclusions imposed. This is a rate of 2.2 exclusions per 1,000 students. Since 2000, about 30% of suspension cases each year result in exclusion.

In 2005, 464 schools recorded one or more exclusion case. Fifty-one percent of these schools were secondary schools. Secondary schools accounted for 76% of all exclusion cases.

Suspension and Exclusion Cases	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Number of Exclusion Cases	1,558	1,319	1,487	1,503	1,464	1,622
Number of Suspension Cases	5,104	4,801	4,934	4,898	4,782	5,145
Exclusion Rate	2.2	1.9	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.2

The majority of exclusion cases (72%) relate to continual disobedience (34%), drugs (21%), and the physical assault of other students (17%).

In 2005 the misuse of drugs accounted for nearly 19% of all exclusion cases. This is a 21% reduction since 2000 when drug misuse comprised 24% of all exclusions.

Sex

The number of exclusion cases involving female students has increased by 22.1% since 2000. The number of cases involving male students has reduced by less than 1%.

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

The most excluded group

Those aged 13-15 were most frequently excluded in 2005. This age group accounted for 79% of all exclusion cases.

Although over the 2000-2005 period the number of exclusion cases involving this group has increased by 5%, the rate has reduced by 9%.

Ethnicity

On average, students of New Zealand European/Pakeha ethnicity comprise the most exclusion cases (47%). The proportion of cases involving Māori students has reduced by 18% since 2000.

Exclusion Outcome

On average, 91% of excluded students return to a legal learning situation and the majority enrol in a new school (57%).

Expulsions

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

On average, less than 3% of suspensions cases end in expulsion.

The actual number of expulsion cases has reduced by 19% since 2000.

More expelled students are finding other schools to enrol at. Since 2000, the proportion of students who do return has increased 64%.

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

Sex

There is a more pronounced gender gap in expulsion cases compared to stand-downs, suspensions, or exclusions. Female students comprise an average of 19% of all expulsion cases; male students comprise an average of 81% of all expulsion cases.

Ethnicity

In 2005, students of New Zealand European/Pakeha ethnicity comprised the majority of expulsion cases (33%); Māori were close behind (30%); then Pasifika (22%). 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

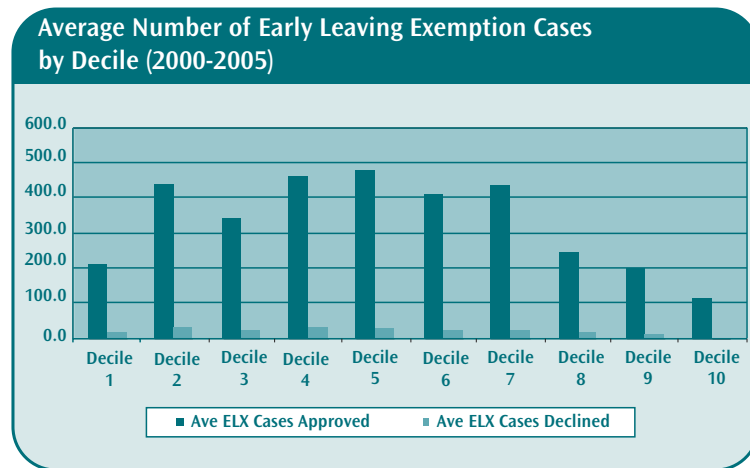
The parents/caregivers of 15 year old students can apply for an exemption from attending school for their child (referred to as an Early Leaving Exemption, or ELX), providing students enter further training or employment. The number of ELX applications made has increased by one third over the 2000-2005 period. In 2005, 7.5% of the 15 year old student population were granted an ELX.

Although the number of approved ELX applications has increased by 29% over 2000-2005, the proportion of ELX applications that are declined has nearly doubled over this period.

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

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

Deciles 9 and 8 had the biggest increase in approved ELX cases over the 2000-2005 period (67% increase and 66% increase respectively).



Sex

Female students comprise an average of 36% of all ELX cases approved since 2000, while male students comprise an average of 64%.

Approved ELX cases involving female students have increased by 42% over 2000-2005; cases involving male students have increased by 23% over the same period.

Ethnicity

New Zealand European/Pakeha students comprised

the majority of approved ELX cases in 2005 (42%); Māori comprised 38%; and Pasifika 7%.

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, and the remaining 19% enter full time employment. More and more students are entering polytech courses and the workforce.

Analysing your School's Student Engagement Data

To inform your school's engagement policies, look for patterns or differences in your data. For example:

- Are male and female students stood-down/suspended/excluded for different behaviours?
- Which students are most often excluded following a suspension?
- Is the decrease in suspension cases at your school offset by the increase in stand-down cases?
- Do students granted an early leaving exemption have a history of stand-down and suspension?
- When reviewing the history of suspended students, were there opportunities to intervene earlier or differently?
- How many students referred to the Non-Enrolled Truancy Service (NETS) have been suspended?
- Is there a particular time of day, day of the week, or month of the year, when truancy rates are at their highest?
- How does your school compare to others of your decile and type?

Information about analysing engagement data can also 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!

You may also like to read about the Ministry's Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) programme.

From extensive research it tells us about effective teaching approaches and can provide you with the principles by which to gather and analyse student engagement data. Information about the BES programme can be found by entering "BES" into the search window at either www.minedu.govt.nz or www.leadspace.govt.nz.

Definitions

Stand-down

Students on stand-down are not allowed to attend school for a period of up to five school days. The school principal can decide on whether a student should be stood-down and they can decide on how many days the stand-down will last for. Stand-downs, for any student, can total no more than five school days in any term, or 10 days in a school year. Following stand-downs, students return automatically to school.

Suspension

Students who are suspended are not allowed to attend school until the board of trustees decides the outcome at a suspension meeting. The school principal can suspend a student, however the school board decide the next step. 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

Students who are excluded are not allowed to return to the school and must enrol elsewhere. Only students under the age of 16 can be excluded.

Expulsion

Students who are expelled are not allowed to return to the school. They may enrol at another school. Only students aged 16 or over can be expelled from a school.

Early Leaving Exemption

Parents may apply for permission for a student to leave school at the age of 15. The application must be based on the student's educational problems or conduct, or the estimated benefit of their staying at school. Students granted Early Leaving Exemptions take up training courses, or enter polytech, university, or full-time employment.

