Key Findings

Education is central to this government’s goal to transform New Zealand into a knowledge-based country – it shapes us as a nation and it is the foundation of our society.
Key Findings

Student Achievement

Achievement at school contributes to students’ successful participation in employment, tertiary education and society. International studies show that New Zealand’s student achievement compares very favourably with other countries’. The Programme for International Student Assessment results show that New Zealand students’ achievement is near the top in reading, mathematics and scientific literacy.

Students at schools involved in the Literacy Professional Development Project appear to have made good gains.

The overall picture for school leavers is one of improvement. Analysis of 2007 data suggests that the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) is continuing to have a positive effect, with the proportion of students leaving with NCEA Level 3 and university entrance increasing and fewer leaving with no qualifications. Sixty-six percent of all school leavers had attained a Level 2 or higher qualification, compared with 60 percent in 2006, and 18 percent of 2007 school leavers did not gain a qualification.

Māori achievement has improved but remains a concern – 44 percent of Māori school leavers in 2007 had attained a Level 2 or higher qualification, compared with 37 percent of 2006 Māori school leavers, and 35 percent of Māori school leavers in 2007 did not gain a qualification.

Pasifika achievement has also improved – 56 percent of Pasifika school leavers attained a Level 2 or higher qualification, compared with 50 percent of 2006 Pasifika school leavers, and 26 percent of Pasifika school leavers in 2007 did not gain a qualification.

A study of the 2005 student cohort’s NCEA achievement between 2005 and 2007 shows that the majority of students achieved at least one qualification, over a quarter achieved two and almost one-third achieved three qualifications by the end of Year 13.

Female students were more likely to gain three qualifications by the end of Year 13 than their male counterparts – 38 percent compared with 26 percent.
Key Findings

Student, Family and Community Engagement

The more that students are engaged with learning, the more likely they are to succeed. There are many influences on student involvement and so helping students to engage more fully is an issue for the whole school community – students, teachers, families and communities.

Research studies present a reasonably positive picture of student engagement in New Zealand schools. Across most indicators of engagement, around 80 to 90 percent of New Zealand students are effectively engaged in schooling. These indicators include school attendance, length of time students stay on at school, qualifications attained and progression to tertiary education.

Substantial progress has been made in reducing the number of students who leave school early. After seven years without significant change, a strengthened application and approval process for gaining an exemption halved the number of early-leaving exemptions in 2007.

Managing student behaviour is an important element of learning within all levels of the curriculum framework. Schools have access to a number of supports to deal with challenging student behaviours. For a number of years the Student Engagement Initiative has made significant progress in reducing suspension rates, by nearly 50 percent overall, in long-term participating schools.

Most New Zealand students are actively engaged in their education environment. Significant challenges remain, however, to successfully engage all students, particularly those with serious behavioural issues.
The Teacher Professional Learning and Development Best Evidence Synthesis shows that effective professional development is an essential foundation for decisions about teaching practice and develops the skills of inquiry to judge the impact of teaching on learning.

In the Literacy Professional Development Project, analysis of the 2006 cohort shows that gains in writing and reading by students on the project are twice those that could be expected without professional development.

The Numeracy Development Project is achieving impressive gains in the numeracy achievement of students and reducing the percentage of students categorised as ‘at risk’.

The New Zealand Curriculum was released in 2007 and provides a clear statement of what is deemed important in education. It is the result of extensive consultation with the education community that drew more than 10,000 submissions. The New Zealand Curriculum envisions students as lifelong learners and contains a clear set of principles upon which to base curriculum decision-making. It also identifies key competencies that are critical for participation in society and lifelong learning.
Boards of trustees play a crucial governance role and ensure that schools are accountable to the government and community. A recent report from the Education Review Office confirms that the majority of New Zealand schools are well run with a clear strategic focus on improving student learning and achievement.

Last year, the seventh trustee elections were held – one of the largest democratic events in New Zealand – with more than 14,000 candidates.

Government investment in education continues to increase – total government funding per student increased 11.8 percent between 2003 and 2007.

Investment in schools in 2007 was as follows – $2,858 million was spent on staffing, $918 million on operational funding, including property maintenance, and $358 million on property capital works. A further $89 million was spent on a variety of school support programmes. In addition, schools received various ‘in-kind’ resourcing in areas such as information and communication technologies support and professional development.

Analysis of 2007 statistics shows that, overall, New Zealand schools are being capably governed and are in financially healthy positions.

High-quality leadership is a critical factor in determining whether schools are effective and achieve successful outcomes for students. School leadership in New Zealand is a collaborative partnership between the school, the local community and the government.