

Briefing Note: Release of 2019 data for 18-year-olds with a minimum of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent

To:	Hon. Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
Cc:	Hon. Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education Hon. Kelvin Davis, Associate Minister of Education Hon. Aupito William Sio, Associate Minister of Education		
Date:	7 May 2021	Priority:	High
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1257973
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Messaging seen by Communications team:	Yes	Round Robin:	No

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

- Note** the 2019 results for 18-year-olds with a minimum of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent.
- Note** that we propose to release this 2019 update on 19 May 2021.
- Agree** to proactively release this Briefing Note.

Agreed / Not Agreed

Summary

Key highlights for 2019 are:

- a. This 18-year-old attainment measure was a Better Public Service target which the Ministry ceased to produce. We have now updated it for 2019 following a request and the 2020 update will follow the briefing to you on the 2020 school leaver attainment update scheduled for later in June.
- b. Overall, there was a 1.4 percentage point decline in the 18-year-olds with a minimum of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent (from 85.1% of 18-year-olds in 2018 to 83.7% in 2019).
- c. The attainment gaps between all 18-year-olds and Māori students or Pacific students are smaller than they were in 2011.
- d. From 2011 to 2019 attainment of a minimum of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent by 18-years-old has increased 16.8 percentage points for Māori, 12.6 percentage points for Pacific and 9.4 percentage points for all 18-year-olds.
- e. The decline in attainment was larger for Māori learners, down 2.2 percentage points (from 76.1% of Māori 18-year-olds in 2018 to 73.9% in 2019) and Pacific learners, down 1.7 percentage points (from 79.8% of Pacific 18-year-olds in 2018 to 78.1% in 2019).
- f. The Tai Tokerau Education Region has the lowest proportion of 18-year-olds with a minimum of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent (79.2%) which was 4.5 percentage points lower than the national rate in 2019 (83.7%).



Alexander Brunt

Deputy Secretary

Evidence, Data and Knowledge

7 / 5 / 2021



Hon Jan Tinetti

Associate Minister of Education

11 / 05 / 2021

Background

1. The Ministry currently has reports on and publishes three measures of student/ākonga achievement of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent:
 - i. 18-year-olds with a minimum of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent which includes attainment of tertiary qualifications at Level 2 or above attained in or before the year learners turn 18.

This was a Better Public Services target measure. Release of this data is late because the Ministry had planned to cease reporting on this measure and replace it with the OECD measure: "Who is expected to complete an upper secondary education?". However, there were internal requests for this data as it gives a breakdown of how many students attain their Level 2 qualifications in vocational and tertiary settings, rather than at school.

- ii. The OECD measure "Who is expected to complete upper secondary education" is updated every three years and the 2018 update was published in Education at a Glance 2020. This measure follows a cohort from its entry into senior secondary education (Year 11) for 5 years. We report on students gaining NCEA Level 2 or equivalent at two intervals, 3 years after students start Year 11, and again after 2 additional years. As for the 18-year-old measure achievement from school, tertiary and vocational settings is included and reported to show where learners attain their first Level 2 qualification.
 - iii. School Leavers is a snapshot of students' highest attainment when they leave school.

Each year, on Education Counts, we publish school leavers' NCEA attainment (at levels 1, 2 and 3) and attainment of University Entrance standard, the proportion of students who have remained in school to at least 17-years of age, and those students who have attained a vocational pathway.

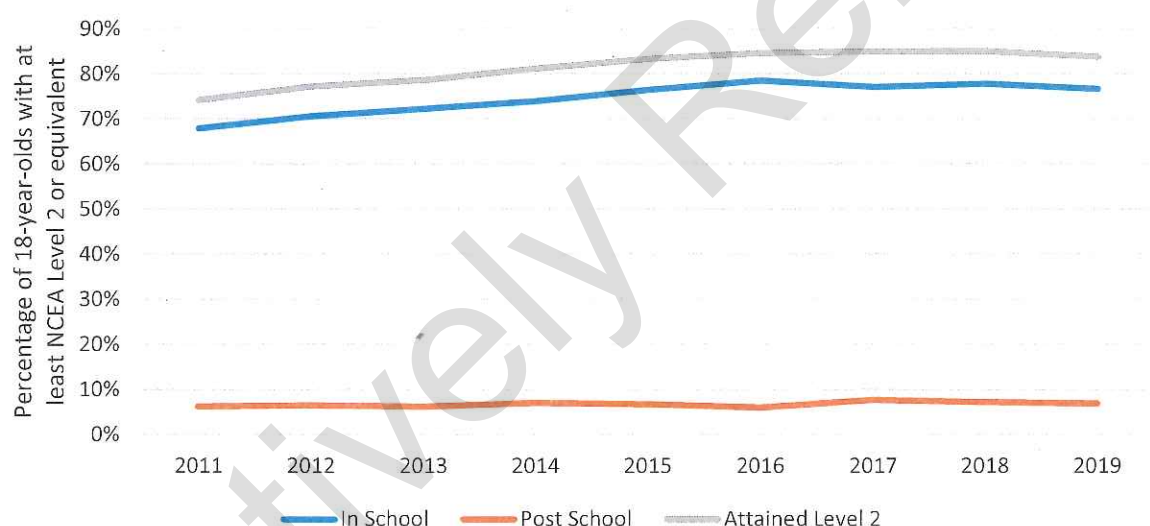
2. The 18-year-olds with a minimum of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent measure is not used for school level reporting. However, it is used within the Ministry to understand where learners are attaining their Level 2 qualifications in vocational and tertiary settings rather than schools.
3. The data for Māori medium students is being collated and will be presented as soon as it is available with the 2020 data release.

Key points for 2019

Nation-wide

4. In 2019 there has been a 1.4 percentage point decline in 18-year-olds with a minimum of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent since 2018. Attainment of Level 2 had increased 10.8 percentage points from 2009 to 2018. The strongest increases were seen from 2011 to 2016 with smaller increases in 2017-2018.
5. Improvement in attainment of NCEA Level 2 and other qualifications at Level 2 or above was mainly in school, but around 7% of learners in the 18-year-old cohorts completed their first Level 2 qualification after leaving school.
6. The first qualification at Level 2 or above completed post-school is usually NCEA Level 2 or another NZQF Level 2 qualification (5.8% of cohort in 2019). Tertiary Certificates and Diplomas at Levels 2-4 (1.1% of cohort in 2019) and Level 5 or higher (0.1% of cohort in 2019) are also attained.

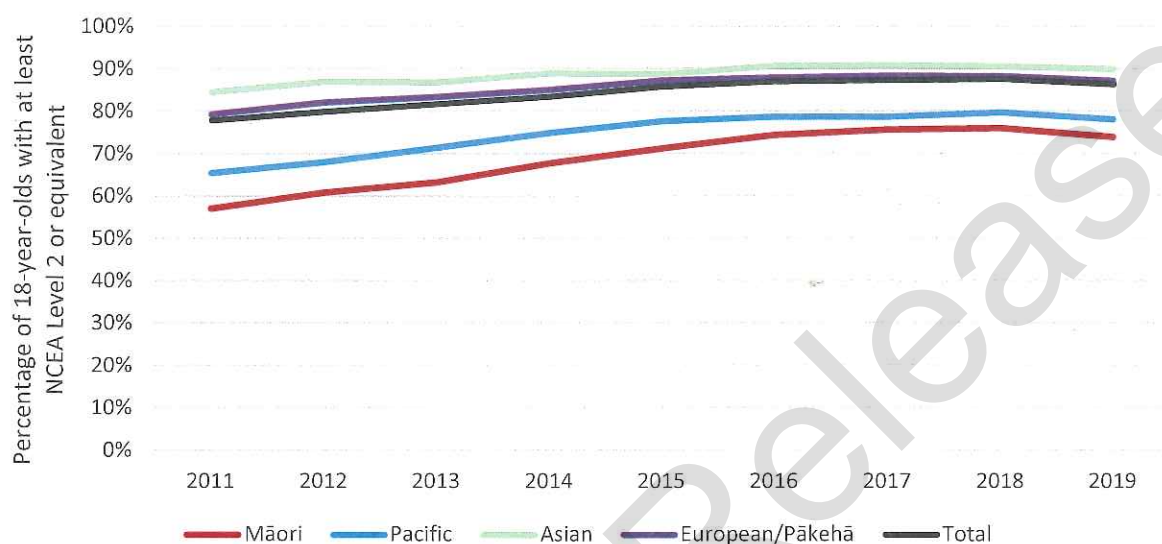
Figure 1: Improvement in attainment has slowed from 2017



Ethnicity

7. Eighteen year old students in all ethnic groups have followed the national trend with stronger attainment of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent from 2011 to 2018 and a small decline in the attainment of the 2019 cohort.

Figure 2: 18-year-olds with a minimum of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent, by ethnicity



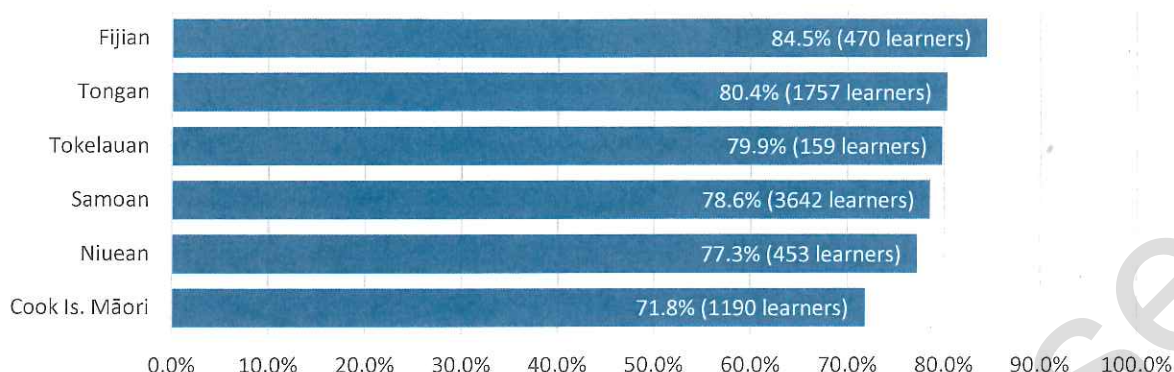
Māori 18-year-olds

8. Since 2011, Māori 18-year-olds have had the largest growth in attainment of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent, increasing 16.8 percentage points from 2011 to 2019 (compared to 9.4 percentage points in total cohort). Almost 10% of Māori 18-year-olds gained their first Level 2 qualification after leaving school in the 2019 cohort, down from a peak of 13% of the cohort in 2014.
9. There are 14,877 18-year-olds who identify as Māori in the 18-year-old measure in 2019.
10. In 2019 attainment of Maori 18-year-olds was down 2.2 percentage points, from 76.1% of Māori 18-year-olds in 2018 to 73.9% in 2019.
11. Māori medium learners are not currently identified in the 18-year-old measure. However they will be identified in all cohorts when the 2020 cohort is added.

Pacific 18-year-olds

12. Pacific 18-year-olds also had strong growth in attainment of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent; increasing 12.6 percentage points from 2011 to 2019 (compared to 9.4 percentage points in total cohort).
13. In 2019, Pacific 18-year-olds attainment decreased 1.7 percentage points (from 79.8% of Pacific 18-year-olds in 2018 to 78.1% in 2019).
14. There are 7,503 18-year-olds in the 2019 cohort who identify with Pacific heritage. These learners come from 6 Pacific countries, attainment in each is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: 18-year-olds with NCEA level 2 or equivalent by Pacific heritage in 2019



By Education Area

15. Across the education regions 79.2 to 88.4% of 18-year-olds attained a minimum of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent in 2019.
16. In 2019 attainment of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent dropped in all areas except Nelson/Marlborough/West Coast.
17. The Tai Tokerau region had the lowest attainment of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent, and also the largest decline from 2018 (down 3.6 percentage points from 82.7% in 2018 to 79.2% in 2019).
18. The highest attainment was in the Wellington and Otago/Southland regions where 88.4% of 18-year-olds attained NCEA Level 2 or equivalent in 2019.

Figure 4 18-year-olds with a minimum of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent by education area



Communications and attendance data requests

19. As this data is for 2019, we do not expect media interest. However a summary of action being taken to support Maori and Pacific learners is included and questions and answers are attached to assist any communications required.

Next Steps

20. We propose to release 2019 18-year-olds with a minimum of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent on Education Counts website on 19 May 2021.
21. We plan to update this measure for the 2020 cohort following our briefing to you on the 2020 School Leavers update which is scheduled for June 2021.

Proactive Release

22. We recommend that this Briefing is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Annexes

Annex 1: Communications Plan - Questions and answers

Proactively Released

Annex 1: Communications Plan

How we are supporting Māori and Pacific learners

Through the NCEA Change Programme, we are implementing a package of seven changes to strengthen NCEA and ensure the national qualification meets these five principles - coherence, credibility, equity and inclusion, pathways and well-being.

We have also been working to ensure learners are able to see their culture, identity and language reflected in their learning. We believe that providing learners the opportunity to learn the histories, culture and language of their heritage and to have that learning recognised in a national qualification would be a significant step towards demonstrating the 'inclusion and equity' principle of the NCEA Change Programme.

- In line with this, we intend to develop five Pacific language subjects as Achievement Standards-based NCEA subjects. Three of these – Cook Islands Māori, Lea Faka Tonga, and Gagana Sāmoa – will be redevelopments of existing subjects.
- One of the key changes we are delivering is to ensure that mātauranga Māori is explicitly and equitably valued in NCEA. We are also seeking to ensure te ao Māori pathways are acknowledged and supported in NCEA. This will involve changes to the way ALL subjects are developed so that regardless of whether students/ākonga learn in Māori-medium or English-medium settings, the content of NCEA will demonstrate parity for te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori, ākonga Māori can see themselves reflected in the learning and assessment in the new NCEA, and all ākonga are aware of mātauranga Māori alongside other bodies of knowledge.
- In the Review of Achievement Standards (a large project to rebuild all NCEA Achievement Standards over the next three years):
 - a) we have recently developed NCEA Level 1 material for seven subjects aligned to Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (TMOA), the Māori-medium curriculum. These subjects include Hangarau, Pūtaiao, Ngā Toi, Tikanga-ā-iwi, Hauora, Pāngarau and Te Reo Rangatira. These subjects will be piloted in schools next year.
 - b) we have developed draft NCEA Level 1 material for Te Reo Māori, which is aligned to *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) and delivered across English- and Māori-medium settings). This subject will be piloted in schools and kura next year.
 - c) draft learning material for all other Level 1 subjects aligned to NZC have been written by Subject Expert Groups which explicitly include mātauranga Māori in this content. Public feedback on this material is now being incorporated and assessment material is under development.
 - d) we are exploring opportunities to reflect mana ōrite (parity or equity) through the introduction of new mātauranga Māori subjects.
- We are currently piloting Te Ao Haka, a new Māori Performing Arts subject aligned to NZC, in 36 schools and kura, across all three NCEA levels and including recognition for University Entrance. Introducing Te Ao Haka as an NCEA subject with Achievement Standards is a significant step towards achieving equity (mana ōrite) for ākonga Māori and ensuring parity for Māori knowledge in our education system. *[Note: Previously Māori Performing Arts was not recognised as a subject in its own right, with a set of achievement standards which contribute to University Entrance. This means it has often been treated as an extra-curricular activity, rather than a valued school subject.]*
- Fees for NCEA and New Zealand Scholarship, which were a barrier for students in low decile schools, were removed in 2019.

Q&A's for 2019 release of 18-year-olds with a minimum of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent

Q Why has attainment of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent decreased?

A. The proportion of 18-year-olds with a minimum of NCEA Level 2 or equivalent by has decreased 1.4 percentage points in 2019 compared to 2018. The drop is partially due to an 0.7 decrease in the retention of students in school to age 17. Students who are retained in school past their 17th birthday are almost twice as likely to attain a Level 2 qualification (90.7% in 2019) by age 18 as students who leave when they are 15 or 16-years old (48.7% in 2019).

Q. Why is the measure for 18-year-old attainment being released so late?

A. Release of this data is late because the Ministry had planned to cease reporting on this measure, since the public service target it was created to support is no longer active. However, there were internal requests for this data as it gives a breakdown of how many students attain their Level 2 qualifications in school, vocational and tertiary settings.

Q. When will we release data for 2020.

A. The update for 2020 is currently being prepared and will be released after school leaver data in June 2021.