



26 March 2021



Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your email of 26 February 2021 to the Ministry of Education requesting the following information:

- Any internal or external reviews or reports commissioned or received about the gender gap in education (i.e. boys underperforming girls, or girls outperforming boys etc) in the past five years, and so far this year.
- What work has the Ministry done into solving this issue? Please detail.

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

In regard to the first part of your request, internal and external studies commissioned by the Ministry into this issue are publicly available on Education Counts, and from the University of Otago website. The table below provides findings from a number of international studies, showing the difference in performance between boys and girls in New Zealand schools across different subjects:

Report Title	Findings
<a href="#">PISA 2018: Summary Report - System performance and equity</a>	Girls significantly outperformed boys for <b>reading literacy</b> but there were no significant gender differences in terms of <b>mathematics</b> and <b>science</b> .
<a href="#">PIRLS 2016: New Zealand's Achievement</a>	Internationally and in New Zealand, girls tended to have higher <b>reading</b> achievement than boys. The difference between boys and girls is larger in New Zealand than many other countries.
<a href="#">TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) 2018/19</a>	At both Year 5 and Year 9, boys and girls had similar average <b>mathematics</b> and <b>science</b> achievement, but boys had a wider range of scores.
<a href="#">Wānangatia te Putanga Tauria National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement: English 2019</a>	At Year 4 and Year 8, girls scored higher than boys, on average, in all <b>English</b> language modes. When interpreted in terms of annual progress, the differences in the average scores of girls and boys were least in <b>reading</b> (less than one year of progress), roughly equivalent to one year of progress in <b>speaking, presenting and viewing</b> ; and about one and a half years in <b>writing</b> .

Report Title	Findings
<a href="#">Wānangatia te Putanga Tauria National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement: Mathematics and Statistics 2018 - Key Findings</a>	Boys scored higher, on average, than girls by 3 <b>mathematics</b> scale score units at Year 4 and 2 units at Year 8.
<a href="#">Wānangatia te Putanga Tauria National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement: Social Studies 2018 - Key Findings</a>	Girls scored higher, on average, than boys on the <b>social studies</b> assessment by 4 scale score points at Year 4 and 8 scale score points at Year 8.
<a href="#">Wānangatia te Putanga Tauria National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement: Science 2017 - Key Findings</a>	Girls scored higher, on average, than boys in <b>science</b> at Year 4 and Year 8 (by 4 units at both year levels).

As these studies are publicly available, I must refuse this part of your request under section 18(d) of the Act.

Regarding the second part of your request, the Ministry of Education is focused on lifting the engagement and achievement of all young people.

We have a range of national and international evidence available that adds to our understanding of student progress and achievement in New Zealand, and in particular, different cohorts of students. These studies also help us to understand whether the programmes and initiatives we have in place are having a positive impact on student outcomes. They include the National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA), the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). This information helps us to focus attention on where there is limited progress or barriers to achievement and contributes to the increasingly detailed view we have of the performance of our education system as a whole.

A number of these studies, which I have linked above, identify the gap in achievement between genders, with international studies showing similar patterns to our national studies.

We know that children and young people learn in a variety of ways. *Quality Teaching for Diverse Learners in Schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration* (BES) supports teachers to understand the characteristics of effective teaching for our diverse learners. You can find the resource at <https://www.educationcounts.gov.nz/publications/series/2515/5959>.

In addition, the Ministry has developed the Success for Boys website, which is about taking steps to ensure all boys are engaged and achieving in their learning. This site is designed to help school leaders and teachers look at the teaching-learning relationships with boys in their classrooms, create supportive learning environments for boys, and access a range of approaches and tools to address the diverse learning needs of boys so they achieve to their full potential. You can find out more at <http://success-for-boys.tki.org.nz/>.

We are aware that it can be difficult for teachers and leaders to locate appropriate resources and guidance on the Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) website. We know that while most teachers and leaders like and trust the wide range of content on TKI, its size and age of its varying technologies mean that they can often struggle to find what they need. We are working towards replacing TKI with a technology solution that will contribute to, and enhance, the reform of curriculum and pedagogy across learners' pathways. The shift will see technologies

supporting curriculum reform to achieve inclusive, equitable, connected and future-focused learning for every student.

We have a significant curriculum work programme currently under way, which includes refreshing the national curriculum for schooling over the next four years to be more explicit about what all learners need to understand, know and do to be successful in school, work and life. This is critical for each learner's educational success and wellbeing, and the wellbeing of their families, wider communities, and Aotearoa New Zealand. This work aims to provide greater clarity about progress across the curriculum to ensure all learners are reaching the milestones they need to.

Our curriculum work programme also includes developing digital Records of Learning which will travel with each student throughout their schooling. They will show students' progress so that they, their parents, whānau and teachers can see, understand, and support their progress.

Records of Learning will show strengths and progress across a range of knowledge, skills, and capabilities – including cultural, social and emotional learning, literacy and numeracy. Importantly, they'll identify any need for additional support or extension in an individual student's learning, development, and wellbeing. Engagement with the sector is currently under way, and we expect these will be ready for use in schools and kura in 2022.

Throughout 2018, the NCEA Review engaged extensively with New Zealanders, asking them what worked, and what did not, in their experience of NCEA. The findings of that engagement are captured in the NZCER report, which can be found here: [NCEA Review: Findings from the public engagement on the future of NCEA](#).

We heard anecdotally that the experience of boys and girls sometimes differed, especially around their attitudes toward external assessment. Boys show a preference for internal assessment and tend to under-achieve compared with girls in examinations, so had a higher rate than girls of opting out from external examinations.

The [NCEA Change Package](#) was developed in response to the wider findings in the NZCER report. The changes to NCEA being implemented through the current Review of Achievement Standards (RAS) include fewer, larger standards and a drive for more coherent learning and assessment programmes. We believe (and our professional Advisory Group agrees) this makes it clearer to teachers, whānau, and students just what the significant learning is, that should not be left to change. That learning is reflected in the Learning Matrix, Assessment Matrix and Achievement Standards being developed currently for NCEA level 1.

Through RAS, we are moving away from an assessment focus, to a learning focus and we want to be more explicit about what we expect students to have the opportunity to learn. We are also, in our assessment work, exploring different approaches to internal and external assessment, which recognises that students learn in different ways and respond differently to assessment. We are trying to make assessment more accessible for both boys and girls, and Māori and Pacific learners, by applying inclusive design elements throughout RAS so that gender (or different world views) is no longer a factor in success or accessibility to NCEA.

Under the new NCEA, each subject matrix will consist of two internally assessed and two externally assessed standards. This shift to half external assessments does not necessarily mean exams, however. We know boys do not always respond as well as girls to exams (possibly due to different development of their literacy skills). When we look at external assessment in RAS we will go broader – modes and methods of external assessment will not be as constrained as in the past and will move away from traditional time-limited examinations as the norm.

If you would like further information on these issues, please consult the reading list I have attached to this response as **Appendix A**. This list contains links to documents and studies around this issue that may be of interest to you.

Please note, the Ministry now proactively publishes OIA responses on our website. As such, we may publish this response on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed.

Thank you again for your email. If you have further questions please feel free to contact our media team in the first instance at [media.team@education.govt.nz](mailto:media.team@education.govt.nz). If you are unsatisfied with my response, you have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review it. You can do this by writing to [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Nāku noa, nā



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