Creatives in Schools Programme Evaluation Report
Round 4, 2023

June 2024

Pragmatica

Report information

Acknowledgements

Evaluation team

Pragmatica Limited held the contract for this evaluation. Judy Oakden and Kellie Spee
undertook the evaluation in consultation with the Ministry of Education project
management team.

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Cover photo: Students from Selwyn College performing 'River'. Photo supplied by
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Contents

Key takeouts

Introduction

The Creatives in Schools programme funds professional artists and creative practitioners to partner with kura and schools to share specialist artistic knowledge and creative practice with ākonga and students. It is run by Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga – Ministry of Education (MOE). The programme design includes a minimum 80 hours of student contact time with a creative practitioner to extend ākonga and students in a range of creative practices.

The programme has run for the past four years and been independently evaluated each year. The programme is consistently well implemented, with on average 96% of the contracted projects successfully delivered each year. In 2023, the project transitioned from early implementation to business as usual (BAU) within the MOE.

Over the past four years the programme has reached an estimated 63,730 ākonga and students from primary to secondary schools, nationwide. While evaluation of programme occurred every year, 2023 was the first year the evaluators managed to speak with a wide range of students from eight schools between September and December 2023.

Creatives in Schools is:
- well implemented
- reached an estimated 63,760 ākonga and students over four years
- makes a valuable contribution and should continue.

Key learnings

The Creatives in Schools programme is highly beneficial for ākonga and students. Benefits extend beyond the original scope of offering students a chance to engage in the Arts. The programme clearly meets the stated learning and wellbeing objectives. In addition, the evaluators found that Creatives in Schools projects contribute to supporting student attendance and engagement in learning.

For the first three years we heard from teachers about how students found talents and interests that had not surfaced before, and this year we also heard this from ākonga and students taking part in the programme. **We heard how ākonga and students engaged in learning in ways teachers had not seen before. At times, the projects were the reason ākonga and students kept coming to school**.

The teachers and students noticed schools regularly recognise ākonga and students' academic and high-performing sports achievement. The Creatives in Schools programme fills an important gap in schools by providing a platform for also identifying and recognising ākonga and students' creative talents.

Previous years' findings confirm that the programme supports kaiako and teachers' confidence to design and deliver creative projects to ākonga and students. Creatives in Schools also provides opportunities for creative practitioners to extend their practice and develop or extend their *portfolio careers*. Examples exist of whānau and parents' involvement in the learning experiences of some ākonga and students. At times this engagement helps foster home-school relationships or helps schools make stronger links into the community.

Conclusion

We now have consistent findings from the projects over the four years. We conclude that **Creatives in Schools makes a worthwhile and valuable contribution** to the ākonga and students, supporting them to attend and thrive at kura and school. This is a well-researched programme with well-developed and sound implementation processes. **It is worth continuing to invest in this programme.**

Executive summary

This executive summary addresses the evaluators' findings in relation to three key evaluation questions:

- KEQ 1: Overall, how worthwhile is the Creatives in Schools programme?
- KEQ 2: How well was the Creatives in Schools programme implemented and delivered?
- KEQ 3: What are the learnings to apply going forward?

KEQ 1: Positive ākonga/student outcomes

Creatives in Schools is rated very good overall

Overall, Creatives in Schools is a programme that supports ākonga and student learning and wellbeing, attendance and engagement. Therefore, the evaluators rated the programme very good overall for the outcomes it provides.

Evaluative ratings for ākonga and students	Performance rating[1]	
Learning: Ākonga and students developed key competencies such as thinking, using language, symbols, and texts	Very good	●●●●●
Ākonga and students experienced opportunities to self-manage, relate to others, and to participate and contribute	Very good	●●●●●
Wellbeing The mental wellbeing of ākonga and students was supported through the opportunity to express themselves creatively	Very good	●●●●●
Ākonga and students felt a sense of personal achievement and fulfilment from their creative experience	Very good	●●●●●
Attendance and engagement The programme includes many aspects important to improving ākonga and student attendance	Very good	●●●●●
The programme supports making learning more engaging for ākonga and students	Very good	●●●●●

- **Learning:** Evidence showed that ākonga and students developed key competencies such as thinking and using language, symbols, and texts. They also experienced opportunities to self-manage, relate to others, participate and contribute. Therefore, the evaluators rated this aspect very good.

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1 The performance rating is based on generic rubric, with the following performance levels: Excellent: (Always), Very good: (Almost Always), Good: (Mostly, with some exceptions), Emerging: (Sometimes, with quite a few exceptions), Poor: Never (or occasionally with clear weaknesses evident). It is described in more detail on page 81.

- **Wellbeing:** Ākonga and students had the opportunity to express themselves creatively. Many ākonga and students also felt a sense of personal achievement and fulfilment from their creative experience. Ratings for this aspect were mainly excellent, but the evaluators heard that some ākonga and students dropped out and therefore rated this aspect very good.

- **Attendance and engagement:** It was clear to the evaluators that the programme includes many aspects important to improving ākonga and student school attendance and making learning more engaging; therefore, this aspect was rated very good.

KEQ 2: Creatives in Schools programme is well implemented and delivered to ākonga and students

Creatives in Schools rated very good for implementation and delivery

Our rating is based on the ākonga and students' perspectives, as well as the number of projects delivered and their potential reach. Schools completed 99% (213/216) of the contracted Creatives in Schools projects in 2023 with an estimated reach of up to 28,176 ākonga and students.

Creatives in Schools makes a meaningful difference for ākonga and students

The Creatives in Schools projects made a meaningful difference for ākonga and students. The chart below shows a positive impact on many students for a range of attitudes and behaviours. Technically speaking, the changes in attitudes and behaviours observed are all statistically significant, and clearly so. (See pages 63-66 for more analysis).

Many ākonga and students gave higher ratings after taking part in the projects

	Gave a lower rating	Same rating	Gave a higher rating
Comfortable to try things out, even if they might not work (n=152)		49%	47%
Confident to work alongside other students (n=152)		54%	44%
Comfortable to voice your ideas and feelings to other students (n=152)		57%	40%
Feel you can ask a teacher for help (n=153)		61%	33%
Know of different ways to solve problems (n=151)		63%	33%
Confident to ask questions at school (n=153)		67%	31%
Feel you can belong at school (n=151)		71%	25%
Feel valued and respected by the teachers (n=153)		72%	25%

Base: All student survey responses

KEQ 3: Learnings going forward

In the 2022 Round 3 Creatives in Schools evaluation report (Oakden & Spee, 2023) we observed that Creatives in Schools provided a powerful example of how to deliver to the school arts curriculum in the 21st century. We found the programme delivered important benefits to ākonga and students, kaiako and teachers, schools, creative practitioners and communities.

Learnings from ākonga and students from Round 4

Creatives in Schools is a powerful programme that helps ākonga and students want to come to school and engage in learning more. We expected to see ākonga and students performing well in the arts. But improvements for ākonga and students extend well beyond this into other aspects of skill development such as writing, speaking, and problem solving. Some ākonga and students described how the projects will have long-lasting impact and were powerful learning opportunities for them. They described improvements in confidence-building in learning, engaging with others, and developing cultural competence and knowledge.

What didn't work so well for ākonga and students? A few students didn't find the projects particularly beneficial, but most of them still had positive things to say about some aspects. There were also a few instances of challenges: these mostly related to project design or processes, signaling the importance of good project planning.

Drawing together the learnings collected over the years

- **Kaiako and teachers' perspectives:** As a result of this programme, kaiako and teachers were more confident in designing and delivering teaching and learning projects that engage ākonga and students' creativity. There was a good buy-in to the programme, with many schools saying they would recommend the project to others.

- **Creative practitioner perspectives:** Creatives in Schools provided opportunities for creative practitioners to undertake relevant work and develop professionally and personally. While many were already well-established, there were signs that involvement in Creatives in Schools enabled some creative practitioners to develop more sustainable *portfolio careers*.

- **Views on strengthening home–school partnerships:** There were many examples of whānau and parents' involvement in the learning experiences of ākonga and students. At times this helped foster home–school relationships or assisted schools to make stronger links into the community, according to teachers and creatives and observations from the regional coordinators.

- **Project administration:** The administrative processes are sound but could be reduced to make it easier for English-medium and Māori-medium schools[2] to apply to the fund and report on project progress. At the same time, if adjustments were made to the programme application and reporting processes, it would be advisable to retain some of the safeguards of the current planning and accountability procedures.

Overall conclusion: Drawing on the findings from projects over a four-year period (Oakden & Spee, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024), we conclude that **Creatives in Schools makes a worthwhile and valuable contribution** to ākonga and students, supporting them to attend and thrive at kura and school. The programme is well-researched. The implementation processes are well-developed and sound. **It is worth continuing to invest in the programme.**

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[2] We note another tranche of work is planned in 2024 to support adaptations to suit Māori Medium better.

Background and methodology

Introduction

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga – Ministry of Education (MOE) commissioned an evaluation of the Creatives in Schools programme for Round 4 which ran in 2023. A cross-agency working group have an interest in this programme, including MOE, Manatū Taonga – Ministry for Culture and Heritage and Creative New Zealand – Toi Aotearoa.

The Creatives in Schools programme funds professional artists and creative practitioners to partner with kura and schools and share specialist artistic knowledge and creative practice with ākonga and students. In 2023 216 projects ran across the country, in a mix of primary, intermediate and secondary schools. The projects included a minimum of 80 hours of contact time from a creative practitioner and were designed to meet the needs of ākonga and students.

Commencing in 2020, the programme has been evaluated each year:

- **Round 1**: The evaluation assessed implementation in 34 schools (Oakden & Spee, 2021) and included two case studies with whānau, families, ākonga and students (Spee & Oakden, 2021a, 2021b).

- **For Round 2 and 3:** The evaluation assessed the implementation and outcomes for kaiako, teachers and creative practitioners (Oakden & Spee, 2022, 2023). (We had intended to contact ākonga and students, but this was not possible due to COVID-19.)

- **Round 4**: This year's evaluation focused on collecting ākonga and student voice across 8 schools and 153 learners to better understand the impact of the programme for them. A key area of focus was exploring the extent the programme showed sustained impact for all ākonga and students, including Māori, Pacific, and learning support.

An evaluation-specific methodology (Davidson, 2005) provided robust findings of practical value to the cross-agency working group. This approach included using Key Evaluation Questions and performance criteria to help focus the evaluation and judge the quality and value of the programme. The evaluation design was strengths-based. The findings in this summary draw mainly on the data collected for Round 4 between 12 September and 28 November 2023. For more information, please see page 75 onwards.

Key evaluation questions

The Key Evaluation Questions for this evaluation were:

- KEQ 1: Overall, how worthwhile is the Creatives in Schools programme?

- KEQ 2: How well was the Creatives in Schools programme implemented and delivered?

- KEQ 3: What are the learnings to apply going forward?

Evaluative criteria

The first two evaluative criteria that frame the evaluation around learning and wellbeing are the same as previously developed for ākonga and students for learning and wellbeing. In addition, the cross-agency team recently asked the evaluators to explore the ways the programme

supports ākonga and students attending and engaging in school. For information on how these new criteria were developed please refer to pages 79-80.

Criteria for assessing ākonga and student outcomes:
Learning • Ākonga and students develop key competencies such as thinking, and using language, symbols, and texts • Ākonga and students experience opportunities to self-manage, relate to others, and to participate and contribute
Wellbeing • The mental wellbeing of ākonga and students is supported through the opportunity to express themselves creatively • Ākonga and students feel a sense of personal achievement and fulfilment from their creative experience
Factors that support ākonga and student attendance and engagement (supplementary analysis): • The programme includes many aspects important to improving ākonga and student attendance • The programme supports making learning more engaging for ākonga and students.

Limitations of this report

The data collection for Round 4 represents the views of ākonga and students aged 11 to 17 years. A key area of focus was exploring the extent to which the programme showed sustained impact for learners, including Māori, Pacific, and learning support. We also collected data from teachers, a deputy principal, and a music therapist from a school supporting students with high and complex needs where many of the students are non-verbal.

In terms of ākonga and student representation, the survey sample includes more females than males. This is due to including two all-girls schools and one all-boys school in the sample. There are also fewer respondents from Auckland than planned, as two schools that would have given us higher numbers of ākonga and students in Auckland did not participate. As fieldwork occurred late in Term 3 and Term 4, and there were few intermediate or secondary schools to approach, we were unable to replace these schools. For more information on the sample profile, please see pages 75-77.

Work with Māori medium schools to obtain feedback on developing the programme to better suit their needs were out of scope for this evaluation. There are plans to contract this work separately.

In the learnings section we also draw in key findings from the earlier evaluation reporting (Oakden & Spee, 2021, 2022, 2023; Spee & Oakden 2021a, 2021b) to present an overview of findings across all target audiences.

KEQ 1: Positive ākonga and student outcomes

This section explores ākonga and student outcomes as they align with the Creative in Schools criteria.

Overview: Creatives in Schools is rated very good overall for ākonga and student outcomes

Overall, Creatives in Schools is a programme that supports ākonga and student learning, wellbeing, attendance, and engagement. Therefore, the evaluators rated the programme very good overall. Next, we describe the kinds of evidence that underpin our performance ratings.

Overall: Creatives in Schools is a programme that supports ākonga and student learning, wellbeing, attendance, and engagement.

Learning: Evidence showed that ākonga and students developed key competencies such as thinking and using language, symbols, and texts. They also experienced opportunities to self-manage, relate to others, participate and contribute. Therefore, the evaluators rated this aspect very good.

> *"Before, I'd have to ask everybody for help. I was nervous when I first came here. I didn't really want to get picked for like a position that did a lot of work… but now, I can get picked for anything and know that I should be able to do it with no problems.*" (Student comment*)*

Wellbeing: Ākonga and students had the opportunity to express themselves creatively. Many ākonga and students also felt a sense of personal achievement and fulfilment from their creative experience. Ratings for this aspect were mainly excellent, but the evaluators heard that some ākonga and students dropped out and therefore rated this aspect very good.

> *"I think a big part of that was just learning to trust myself and trust that I can do good things, because, of course …when you do something for the first time especially is just getting it wrong and over and over and over again until you get it right, which is totally natural. There's stuff that goes on in your trust of yourself with that. I think everyone who was happy with what they did at the end of the project kind of went through that. In some sense, they kind of learned to trust their writing a little bit more and trust their performance a little bit more, which was really lovely."* (Student comment*)*

Attendance and engagement: It was clear to the evaluators that the programme includes many aspects important to improving ākonga and student attendance and making learning more engaging; therefore this aspect was rated very good.

> *"And it's fun. Who doesn't want to be doing what they love and having the chance to improve at school? Learning from each other as well. That's good."* (Student comment)

"I reckon that if I come into music it like lifts my feeling, like I feel happy. And then for the rest of the day I'm just buzzing because I'm happy. So it makes other classes more enjoyable." (Student comment)

The following table summarises the ratings for each of the key attributes related to student outcomes.

Evaluative ratings for ākonga and students outcomes	Performance rating[3]	
Learning: Ākonga and students developed key competencies such as thinking and using language, symbols, and texts	Very good	●●●●●
Ākonga and students experienced opportunities to self-manage, relate to others, and to participate and contribute	Very good	●●●●●
Wellbeing The mental wellbeing of ākonga and students was supported through the opportunity to express themselves creatively	Very good	●●●●●
Ākonga and students felt a sense of personal achievement and fulfilment from their creative experience	Very good	●●●●●
Attendance and engagement The programme includes many aspects important to improving ākonga and student attendance	Very good	●●●●●
The programme supports making learning more engaging for ākonga and students	Very good	●●●●●

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3 The performance rating is based on a generic rubric, with the following performance levels: Excellent: (Always), Very good: (Almost Always), Good: (Mostly, with some exceptions), Emerging: (Sometimes, with quite a few exceptions), Poor: Never (or occasionally with clear weaknesses evident). It is described in more detail on page 81.

Ākonga and student learning

Developing key competencies: Most ākonga and students were highly engaged in the creative process, and 91% valued the opportunity to participate in a Creatives in Schools project – as shown in the table overleaf. More than two in five enjoyed the creative process, while three quarters mentioned enjoying learning or relational aspects of the project. Very few ākonga and students did not give a response.

What ākonga and students most enjoyed about the project

The creative process	44%
Learning particular skills	24%
Relationships on the project	13%
Seeing the final production come to fruition	12%
Exploring Māori/Pacific culture	9%
Better understand professional approach to artform	5%
Support from creative/teacher/other students	1%
Other	3%
Negative	1%
Don't know	1%
Nothing	1%
No response	6%

Learning or relational aspects

Base: All student survey responses n=153

Ākonga and students enjoyed the creative freedom to try new things and take risks. To do, this ākonga and students often were challenged and vulnerable during the projects. There were many examples of ākonga and students getting out of their comfort zones and putting forward personal expressions to be critiqued and built on. Many ākonga and students (67%) noticed positive changes in themselves from taking part in their Creative in Schools project, as shown in the table on page 13 overleaf, while a third did not respond, said there were no changes or did not know.

Kind of changes mentioned by ākonga and students from taking part in the project

Category	Value
Learning new skills	30%
Improved confidence	17%
Increased self awareness	8%
Created friendships/closer to peers	8%
Feel closer to my culture and identity	7%
Improved communication	3%
Career steps	5%
Other	1%
Negative impacts	2%
Don't know	1%
Nothing	14%
No reponse	16%

Changes in attitudes and behaviours

Base: All responding to the student survey n=153
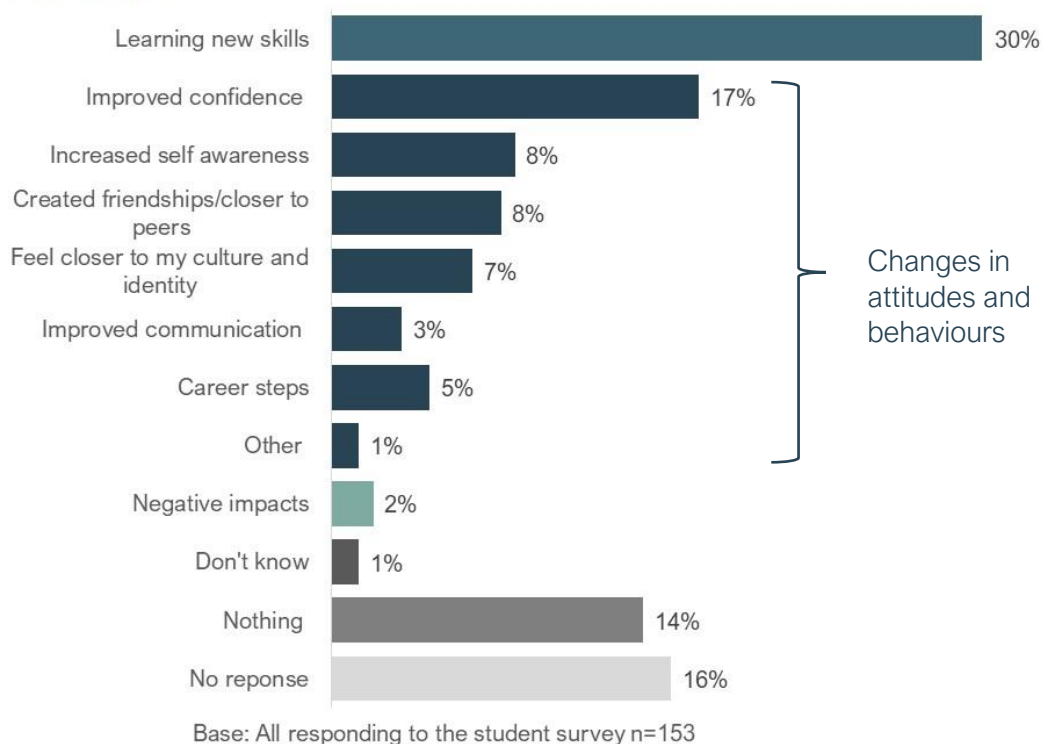
Opportunities to self-manage, relate to others, and to participate and contribute. Ākonga and students gained a sense of control and autonomy from the projects. The experience instilled a sense of personal responsibility for progress, creative work, and self-management. Ākonga and students learned to work in partnership with professionals, to take advice, be critiqued, and to trial, test and trust themselves and others. Peer learning and support was also present and positive. Importantly there were many examples where ākonga and students described having fun and experiencing joyful learning.

The creative process supported key learning competencies such as thinking and using language, symbols and texts

Ākonga and students valued having the creative freedom to express themselves, which improved their listening and speaking skills. In many cases, the projects also helped them get a better understanding of possible jobs as a creative.

	No response / Not at all	A little bit	Quite a lot	A lot
Allowed you more freedom to be creative in class	12%	22%	27%	39%
Gave you a better understanding of possible jobs as a creative	8%	27%	33%	31%
Helped you improve your listening and speaking skills	12%	29%	39%	20%

■ No response ■ Not at all ■ A little bit □ Quite a lot ■ A lot
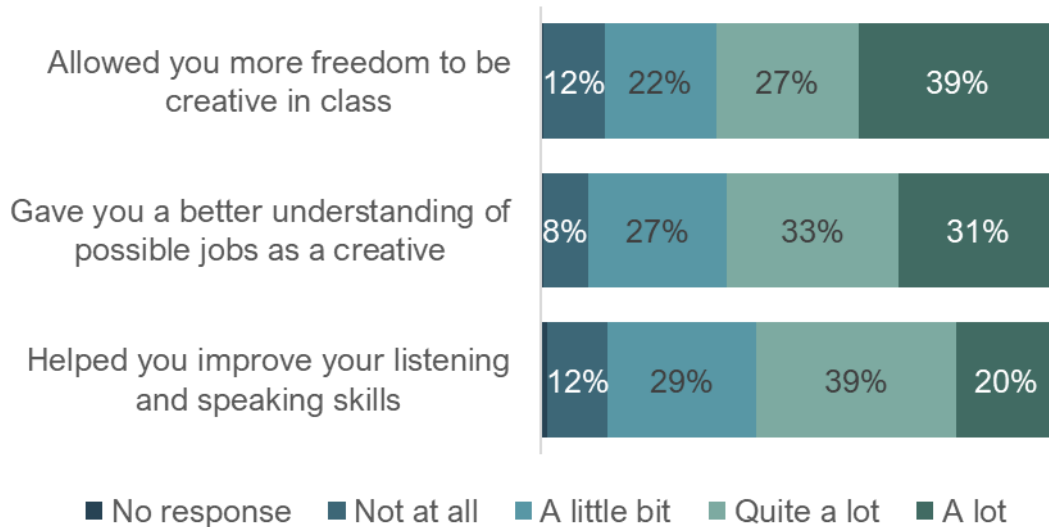
Base: All responding to the student survey n=153

Valuing creative freedom of the creative process: Ākonga and students valued new ways of being creative and having creative freedom in their learning.

> *"It was a fresh and new way to be creative, and work with new people. Most of our drama class has been through the same classes and assessments together for the past couple years and this was unlike anything we had done before. Getting to collaborate/be directed with/by other creatives and problem solve in ways we haven't had to before was a valuable opportunity. It became a really unique project that remains special to us."* (Student comment)

> *"Expressing my writing abilities and imagination in a class that is usually a practical expression of someone else's creativity."* (Student comment)

> *"I really enjoyed being creative with my work and being able to express myself."* (Student comment)

Gaining a better understanding of possible jobs as a creative: Ākonga and students appreciated the external insight they gained from the creatives.

> *"I also enjoyed having the opportunity to work with [creative's name] an experienced actor. Having an outside insight was helpful in developing a good project."* (Student comment)

"But I think my overall favourite part was how willing our director was to let us be creatively in charge of our performances and welcoming of ideas from each of us to make the show better." (Student comment)

They also appreciated the **real-world experience** that creative practitioners brought to the projects in the way they applied the creative process.

"I enjoyed going into the studio to record with [creative's name] using his professional equipment. Just playing music. Experiencing the chance to record like a real musician. Sharing what I've created." (Student comment)

"I enjoyed the process and seeing how my script developed. I loved working alongside [creative's name] as I got to hear a lot of her feedback knowledge and gain better skills as a writer and actor." (Student comment)

"I enjoyed having a 'real world' experience by having [creative's name] come in and then being able to perform on a stage. See the project come together." (Student comment)

For some ākonga and students the projects helped them understand the different creative sectors and make and build connections.

The [project] immersed me more into the creative experience that [school] has to offer and also gave me insight into more of the niche industry behind the scenes."

"Being able to be so involved with the technical design of the show was a really valuable experience for me, and I'm so proud of what we were able to achieve in such a limited time." (Student comment)

"The subsequent opportunity to perform [in public] and make additional connections in the music industry." (Student comment)

The experience improved listening and speaking skills. Ākonga and students gave specific examples of where they learned more about listening and speaking.

"I enjoyed interviewing many groups and facing my fears in front of cameras. I am happy that I can now confidently host and interview with no fears at all. I'm so happy I got put into this E&E group." (Student comment)

*"[There are] techniques I've had to use, like my voice projection."* (Student comment)

"I feel more confident when speaking in front of people." (Student comment)

"I loved being the presenter and the switcher, because for the presenter I could express my feelings." (Student comment)

"Seeing my script come to life! I enjoyed trying to find ways to solve issues I had in my script." (Student comment)

The creative process supported learning competencies such as thinking and trying out new approaches

Ākonga and student responses showed a meaningful shift in being comfortable trying things out even when they might not work. After the project 4 out of 5 (79%) said they were comfortable (a lot or quite a lot) trying new things, even if they might not work, compared to just over half (53%) before the project.
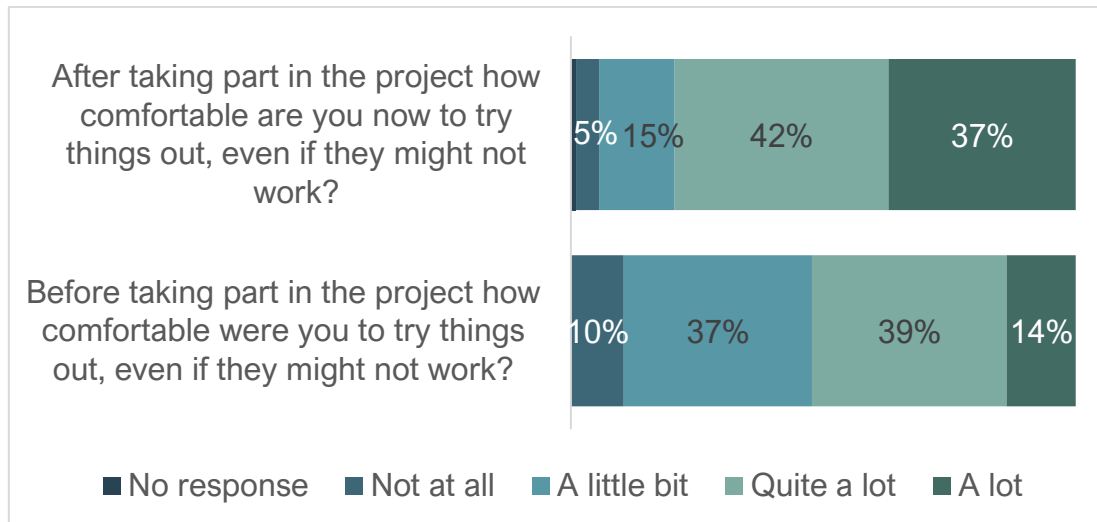
Base: All student survey responses n=153

Ākonga and students commented on being more open and better understanding their capabilities.

> *"I'm more open to these kinds of opportunities and playing with others."* (Student comment)

> *Having another person that you can trust with your ideas is so important… If you put it in front of another person who you can trust with your work, it becomes collaborative and it becomes relatable which I think is the most important thing.* (Student comment)

Ākonga and students learned different ways to solve problems

Ākonga and student responses also showed a meaningful shift in knowing different ways to solve problems. Around 4 out of 5 said they knew of other ways to solve problems (a lot or quite a lot) as shown in the chart on the following page 17, compared with two-thirds (66%) before the project.

> *"As a sound technician, I got more practiced and experienced in operating shows and gained confidence in my ability to run the sound for shows like [this one] under the pressure of a live performance. I got slightly more confident in my ability to work with performers and teachers in a show environment."* (Student comment)

> *"More confident in playing covers. [You] don't have to be precise, you can change things and make it your own."* (Student comment)

For some ākonga and students, the learning represented a greater understanding of ways to deal with and manage behaviour in situations.

> *"[I learned to] not care so deeply about tech stuff… When a director asks for something [just provide it] … I've noticed on tech stuff that I've done since it's been a lot more enjoyable… Since then it's been so much easier to deal with just in my head….[In future] if whoever's paying me wants to do something in a way that I think is not so great… I can tell them that, but if they still want to do it then it's their money."* (Student comment)

After taking part in the project, do you now know of different ways to solve problems?
3% | 16% | 49% | 31%

Before taking part in the project did you know of different ways to solve problems?
5% | 29% | 52% | 14%

■ No response ■ Not at all ■ A little bit ■ Quite a lot ■ A lot

Base: All student survey responses n=153
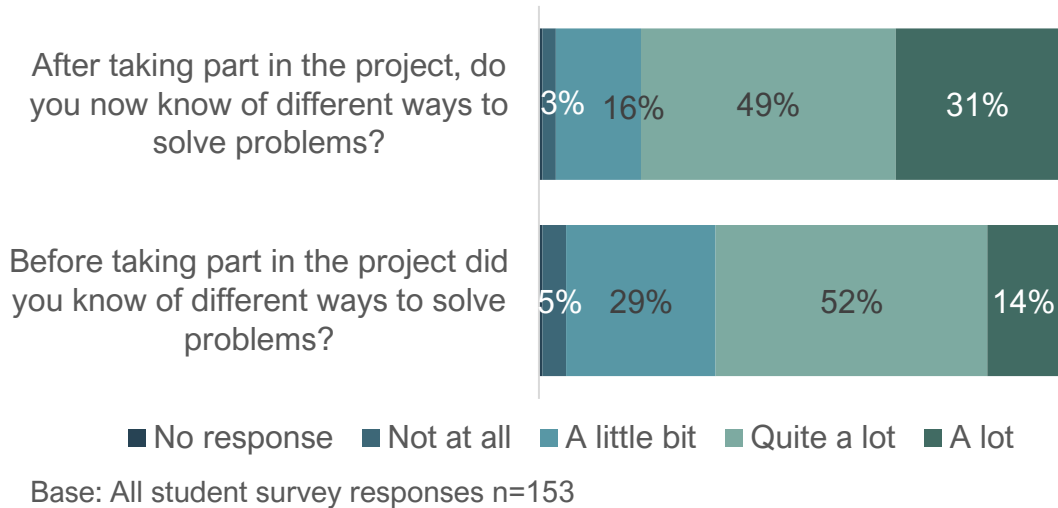
Ākonga and students learned a range of specific skills from taking part in the projects

Feedback from ākonga and students illustrated a range of specific skills they learned from taking part in Creatives in Schools projects. The following comments represent student feedback about learning to write, 3D modelling, carving, and using a camera.

Ākonga and students described learning how to write better.

> *"My confidence in my ability to produce structured and entertaining writing has grown, as I found the process of writing the script after clearly planning characters, settings and relationships etc. easy."* (Student comment)

Ākonga and students who had access to 3D modelling appreciated the opportunity to explore this medium.

> *"I understood and learnt more things about 3D modelling."* (Student comment)

> *"I enjoyed being able to experience the computer modelling program."* (Student comment)

While ākonga and students described finding carving challenging, they persevered with the process.

> *"Learning how to carve, even though it was difficult."* (Student comment)

> *"I enjoyed painting the board and carving it."* (Student comment)

Several students appreciated the opportunity to access and use a camera.

> *"The most interesting thing I have learned is how to use a camera. As a skill I have never learnt [it] before; it was nice to learn about it. The thing that has changed for me is my confidence on camera."* (Student comment)

> *"I enjoyed writing the scripts and learning about how cameras worked."* (Student comment)

Ākonga and students also mentioned other learnings, such as enjoying being a floor manager for a TV live show and learning about how a key qualification applies in the arts.

> *"I enjoyed doing floor manager."* (Student comment)

> *"I think that I have learnt a lot about how NCEA functions for the arts."* (Student comment)

Short examples that demonstrate learning opportunities in different settings

Example 1: Music for neurodiverse children at Somerville School: This example shows how Creatives in Schools supports learners with the most significant physical, cognitive, and behavioural challenges to access high-quality musical experiences. The school found music therapy an excellent way to "help support work in class with regards to communication, self-management/regulation of emotions, making choices, and following instructions."

Example 2: Active TV at Breens Intermediate: Active Kids TV was an elective class offered at Breen's Intermediate. A creative professional brought in a dedicated multimedia learning platform and supported ākonga and students to learn about and use the different digital technologies needed for live broadcast.

Example 3: Virtual Culture with 3D Modelling, Animation, and Virtual Reality project at Hornby High School. This example shows how Creatives in Schools engaging students who were disengaged from school using 3D Modelling, Animation, and Virtual Reality technologies.

Example 1: Music for neurodiverse children at Somerville School

Introduction to the project

> *"This programme means that even students with the most significant physical, cognitive and behavioural challenges can access high-quality musical experiences."* (Milestone report)

A music therapist worked on-site with groups of high-needs students once a week for five weeks. It was the first time Somerville School tried this approach. The project ran over two terms. In total 150 ākonga and students took part in the sessions, which was originally planned to reach 50.

> *"We wanted [to give] as many …[of] our really high-need students this opportunity to have the music therapy."* [Deputy Principal]

The school learned that the programme benefited ākonga and students of all ages. While improvements were evident even after five weeks of sessions, the team decided that 10 weeks of sessions with fewer students would be best in the future.

Why was the project developed?

Funding was available for a music therapist to run sessions with ākonga and students aged 5 to 14. The music therapist integrated classroom teachers and teacher aides into the sessions, building their confidence to use music therapeutically in other classes and after the project ends. The music therapist ran the sessions and tracked each child's progress:

Student choosing an instrument from a range offered by the music therapist. (Photo supplied by Somerville School)

- collecting data on their individual goals and objectives
- producing narratives describing the key outcomes of each session
- reflecting on progress with the teachers.

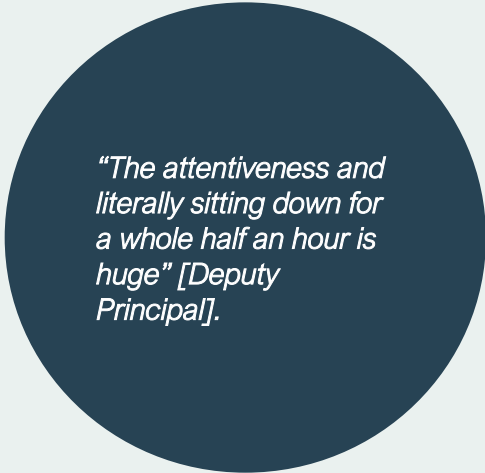The project built the capacity and capability of teachers and teacher aides to use music therapeutically.

> *"We have expanded our thinking about the therapeutic value of music [therapy] within schools considering not only the development developmental aspects …but also it can be used as a counselling medium to process trauma and personal challenges… The registered music therapist working within schools and engaging with school staff [helped] to ensure that music can be used as a motivating tool for student learning and expression."* (Milestone report)

What happened through the project?

The activities run by the music therapist were joyful, calm and engaging for ākonga and students. Ākonga and students sat in a circle, focussing on the music therapist. Most responded to the therapist's prompts by giving actions for songs, choosing an instrument, or playing their instruments to the beat with others. Teachers reflected that ākonga and students taking part in Creatives in Schools-funded music therapy:

- quickly settled into the sessions
- were highly engaged
- increased their joint attention, communication and social interaction
- experienced reduced anxiety and increased independence.

Ākonga and students who struggled with overload left the classroom, recomposed and came back of their own accord. Thus, there was evidence that ākonga and students developed self-regulation. Teachers reported the ākonga and students also displayed reduced stress and anxiety during these sessions.

"The attentiveness and literally sitting down for a whole half an hour is huge" [Deputy Principal].

> *"The attentiveness and literally sitting down for a whole half an hour is huge."* (Deputy Principal)

What were the outcomes for ākonga and students?

Overall, ākonga and students were settled, on-task and participating in the group. Almost all children engaged and focussed, experiencing an enjoyable group session. Ākonga and students who did not usually engage did so and appeared happy. Even after very few sessions, teachers could see positive shifts in social functioning, such as choosing turn-taking, shared attention and improved self-regulation among students who may not regularly show these behaviours.

> *"Music therapy has been an excellent way for our students to explore emotions, express feelings and engage in 1:1 communication. It has helped support work in class with regards to communication, self-management/regulation of emotions, making choices and following instructions."* (Teacher feedback, Milestone report)

> *"This programme provides an opportunity to be creative, practice turn-taking, listening, responding and sharing in a safe and accepting environment*." (Teacher feedback, Milestone report)

Ākonga and student voice

Ākonga and students taking part in the music therapy sessions were barely verbal or non-verbal. Therefore, an evaluator attended two sessions and spoke with the music therapist and teachers to better understand the project's achievements.

We saw ākonga and students sitting calmly, paying attention to the music therapist, taking part in the activities offered, engaging in joint attention with both the music therapist and with their teacher and teacher aides. We also saw them responding to the music therapist's prompts: taking turns to beat out rhythms, choosing instruments, and taking part in group activities. They appeared happy, engaged and having fun.

> *Students clearly made choices: When the girl next to her, chose [an instrument she wanted] she was like … "No, not for her." She wanted to have that for herself.* (Teacher feedback)

> *"The group seemed open to participation from the onset and were observed singing along to welcome songs. An action song was offered and as this developed there seemed to be a strong sense of unity, with participants responding physically. Group improvisation seemed reflective and sensitive in quality. A participant offered strong rhythmic pulse to connect with. Another was heard humming along to the flute as I played at the close of session."* (Music Therapist's reflection at the end of the fifth session).

Student enjoying taking turns beating out rhythms with the music therapist. {Photo supplied by Somerville School).

Example 2: Active Kids TV at Breens Intermediate

> *"There are similar things going on around this school that you still learn from, but I don't think anything else is better than this."* (Student comment)

Student filming during Active Kids TV. (Photo from video posted by Breens Intermediate.)

Introduction to the project

Active Kids TV was an elective class offered at Breen's Intermediate. A creative professional brought in a dedicated multimedia learning platform and supported ākonga and students to learn about and use the different digital technologies needed for live broadcast. A wide range of students gained confidence to use live streaming tools, create a programme to film, and to record and share multimedia communications into the wider school community.

Why was the project developed?

The project was an elective offering that aimed to help students discover their potential as broadcasters. The aim was to teach students:

- to learn and develop skills to manage industry-quality broadcasting equipment, including the technical aspects of cameras, lighting and sound

- how to operate as an effective team to run the live broadcast processes

- how to communicate better including learning to interview and to be interviewed

- how to keep a positive mindset to overcome challenges when working with others.

What happened through the project?

The project ran over Terms Two and Three. Students were split into two groups. Each Friday over the two terms the creative introduced new knowledge and skills to students. This included showing ākonga and students how to use the professional tools and equipment, and modules on planning, teamwork and working towards live broadcast, producing content relevant to the school.

Learning aligned with the digital curriculum. Akonga and students also developed the confidence and ability as a team to plan, evaluate and run a live-streamed programme. Students also had the opportunity to produce creative writing.

The project helped students adopt a positive mindset when it came to challenges of working with others. The visiting evaluator visited ākonga and students at end of Term 3. The evaluator observed ākonga and students could:

- choose the roles they wanted for the live broadcast
- ask questions and be interviewed
- work together as a highly engaged team to run the live broadcast.

Students working as a team with the creative practitioner on the Active TV broadcast. (Photo from video posted by Breens Intermediate.)

What were the outcomes for ākonga and students?

Ākonga and students had access to the tools and equipment necessary to carry out high-quality broadcasting. The students valued having an industry professional sharing the expertise to live-stream a programme. The ākonga and students worked as a team to meet deadlines, and by the end of the project the teacher reports they became more efficient and capable of running a live sequence independently. They liked having a voice and outlet to communicate with the school and the wider community. Many said they were much more confident after taking part in the project and were more willing to try things out even if they might not work.

Ākonga and student voice

> *"Well, a usual classroom activity wouldn't have as much camera work and usually, classroom activity doesn't really teach you this much stuff. This one's [great] – jump ahead a few years, [from] learn[ing] all this [and] we're ready for high school."* (Student comment)

> *"Before, I'd have to ask everybody for help. I was nervous when I first came here. I didn't really want to get picked for like a position that did a lot of work. I wanted to do something nice and simple but now, I can get picked for anything and know that I should be able to do it with no problems."* (Student comment)

> *"I've been more confident talking to people now because you have to work as a team here."* (Student comment)

Students interviewing Sarah Pallett, a local politician on the Active TV broadcast. (Photo from video posted by Breens Intermediate.)

Example 3: Virtual Culture with 3D Modelling, Animation, & Virtual Reality project at Hornby High School

Students adding the final touches to their 3D virtual model creations. (Photos supplied by Hornby School).

Introduction to the project

The "Virtual Culture with 3D Modelling, Animation, and Virtual Reality" project was an extension of a Creative in Schools project run in 2022, which focused on engaging students who were disengaged from school through Virtual Reality. The project design supported the school's vision to be a centre of creative excellence.

The project was a collaboration between three schools, with Hornby High School as the host school. It was proposed that students could explore their culture and personal interests within a hybrid learning model (comprised of online and in-person sessions) and using cutting-edge technology.

Why was the project developed?

Given the success of the 2022 project, the overarching goal was to embed and create a sustainable technology programme within the school curriculum. The project also provided an opportunity to:

- Motivate students and engage them in authentic and meaningful learning based on their interest in "cutting-edge" technology

- Provide insight into viable career pathways for students

- Increase student outcomes and engagement through media and digital technologies
- Support digital citizenship and the underlying pedagogy, Learn, Create, Share.

What happened through the project?

The project started with a hui for all participants across the three schools, with whānau and kaiako also attending. Hornby High School Principal provided a mihimihi and the creative presented information on the project. Whānau had a chance to see similar works displayed, a 3D printer printing a model and try the Virtual Reality headsets.

The project ran online through Google Meet, with the three schools participating over Terms 2 and 3. In total, 60 students participated including from NZ European, Māori, Pacifica, Filipino, Indian, Nepalese, Pakistani, Chinese, Thai and other Asian backgrounds. Students came together and connected with the creative through Google Meet in their own school settings. They also joined online sessions with students from other participating schools to share designs and ideas. Six students plus the creative were online together at any one time.

The initial sessions involved learning how to operate the 3D modelling programme Sculptris and navigate 3D spaces. Students then made their own 3D models based on culture, identity, and interests. They were free to create any image and have fun with design. Students then printed their models via a 3D printer and painted them. Students also downloaded animations for their own models and received a video of the animation, which they could view in the Virtual Reality headset. Finally, students received a certificate of completion.

What were the outcomes for students?

Students gained an increased ability and understanding of 3D modelling and Virtual Reality technology, as well as general computing and designing skills. They were proud of their accomplishment and the fact that they had tried something new, which resulted in more confidence in themselves. The students embraced the opportunity and became more comfortable over time with trial and error, learning through experimenting, not succeeding the first time, and trying again.

The students appreciated the freedom to create, express themselves, and develop something unique. They were only limited by their imaginations, and they made models with wings, antlers, funny feet, claws, clothes, hats, and much more.

Getting to meet students from other schools was also seen positively by the students. Although shy at first, most students were able to share their ideas and thoughts with confidence once they understood the technology better and got to know the other students. The online sessions with students were a safe space, and students felt supported by their peers.

The students showed both resilience and perseverance. For some students, online learning was challenging. Students shared that learning the technology and navigating in the 3D space was difficult, and they also had to work around challenges such as computer failure and software glitches. However, they stayed committed and worked

hard towards developing their model. Students spoke about "learning to keep going" even though they were "not always happy" with their model's appearance.

Ākonga and student voice

> *"Yeah it was really fun. You got to socialise with kids from like other schools and see what they've been making."* (Student comment)

> *"Yeah it was good. I got to learn like 3D modelling and stuff. It was difficult getting the control like to understand all the controls and that."* (Student comment)

> *"It's really annoying when like you're trying to make something and then it turns out the exact opposite of what you tried to make. And then sometimes you'd have to restart and sometimes you just have to live with it."* (Student comment)

> *"I learnt how to talk to people I don't really know and not freak out. I learnt how to share my ideas to other people."* (Student comment)

Ākonga and student wellbeing

Overview

The mental wellbeing of ākonga and students is supported through the opportunity to express themselves creatively: Ākonga and students appreciated having the permission to be creative and express themselves. They quickly realised that the creative process was not about success or failure but about learning, experimenting, and testing ideas.

The importance of relational elements was strong amongst ākonga and students, including the opportunity to engage with other students and kaiako, making new bonds and strengthening others. Having common goals and a safe environment helped ākonga and students to whanaungatanga. The projects often acted as a bridge or conduit for ākonga and students developing new peer relationships.

Ākonga and students felt a sense of personal achievement and fulfilment from their creative experience: Ākonga and students mentioned opportunities from taking part in the projects that extended beyond finishing the project. There were examples of ākonga and students broadening their horizons with real-life opportunities such as exhibiting in town, performing in public spaces, and being part of real gigs. Ākonga and students at times became more involved in arts happening in their communities. They also became more aware of who and what makes up their communities.

Even for ākonga and students not planning to pursue a creative career, the experience allowed them to make considered, informed decisions about their future pathways. Ākonga and students showed evidence of deliberately thinking about and considering the pros and cons of what might be important for their futures.

Ākonga and students learned about themselves from taking part in the projects in ways that benefited their wellbeing

There were a range of skills ākonga and students learned that could be transferable to other learning at school or into the workforce such as…

> *"I feel more confident performing in front of others."* (Student comment)

> *"The most obvious thing that really changed for me would probably be my confidence to go on stage to perform."* (Student comment)

Many ākonga and students expressed having better self-awareness from taking part in the projects.

> *"I found out how to be more like myself :)."* (Student comment)

> *"I learned how to use feedback effectively."* (Student comment)

> *"My ability to take on feedback and adapt to improve has changed positively."* (Student comment)

> *"I've learned to work better with direction and develop characters.* (Student comment)

Other ākonga and students reflected that their ability to work with others in general had grown and they saw potential pathways into the future for themselves.

> *"I feel more confident working with people I'm not as close with."* (Student comment)

> *"I got to see about different jobs and stuff."* (Student comment)

> *"Highlighted a different path I could take in the arts."* (Student comment)

> *"I know [sic] feel like I could maybe go into writing in the entertainment industry cause I did well on the assessment."* (Student comment)

The projects sparked a strong interest and commitment in some ākonga and students, and learning carried over from school to home or other settings.

> *"I am able to express my ideas more freely through music, and I'm now producing my own at home."* (Student comment)

In some instances, ākonga and students learned that a particular creative path was not for them. This was not seen necessarily as a bad thing and did help them find pathways.

> *"I know I shouldn't be a script writer."* (Student comment)

And for a few ākonga and students, nothing much changed from taking part in the projects. But at times this was because they felt good to start with.

> *"Not much changed, I feel like things were already good before we started."* (Student comment)

Māori and Pacific ākonga also felt supported to learn about their identity, language and culture, thereby enhancing their wellbeing

For Māori and Pacific ākonga the greatest value of the projects was both learning about their culture and their culture being a medium through which to learn. Two Creatives in Schools projects the evaluators visited offered the opportunity for ākonga Māori and Pacific to:

- express themselves freely as Māori and Pacific

- embrace aspects of their culture

- gain confidence through engaging in what is important to them

- feel their voices, knowledge, and experiences matter.

Projects were planned to support developing and strengthening the culture, language and identity of Māori and Pacific ākonga. Both schools planned wider outcomes than ākonga achievement and involvement. For example, in these schools the projects:

- gave equal value to mātauranga Māori in the curriculum

- developed a space for Pacific ākonga to be Pacific.

Ākonga shared how affirming it was to be themselves, supporting positive feelings towards school. In a safe and comfortable space ākonga Māori and Pacific explored their identity through culture and language in ways that resonated with them. They reported that in an environment that acknowledges who they are, affirms their experiences, and lets them explore (as opposed to following) they are more likely to give things a go and are less afraid of not getting it right.

> *"Like in my normal classes it's more like we just sit there and listen to, like, what the teacher's perspective [is] on things, and like, how they view things. Everyone else is, like, quiet. But it's like [we] have too much energy... [so] being able to be with, like you know, our group of people, where, like, we don't have to like, be quiet. [Instead] we can, like, express ourselves."* (Pacific student)

Several Pacific ākonga observed that there are not many spaces for their culture in the general curriculum at school. This leaves a gap in their learning.

> *"When we go to like classes like social studies we'll learn about like Māori backgrounds, and… Pākehā how they came here… every single year. But it never comes to Pasifika stuff."* (Pacific student)

> *"Yeah learn about our culture more because we don't really have, like we have Māori class and we have you know French and all that, but nothing like really Pasifika. And so it was quite interesting to… see these designs but [before this] you never really know, like, what it means."* (Pacific student)

From being part of this process, ākonga said they felt more connected to peers, teachers, and school. They looked forward to the time where they came together for the project. They said they developed closer bonds with each other (as Māori and Pacific) through the projects.

> *"Felt more connected."* (Māori student)

> *"I know more about my culture and meet some really nice people while doing it."* (Pacific student)

They said the 'as Māori' or 'as Pacific' learning environment supported them finding their strengths. A few Pacific ākonga spoke of renewed interest in art and of realising they had talents. Ākonga appreciated the schools using Māori wānanga and Pacific talanoa styles of learning as important ways to learn about themselves.

> *"I better understand taonga pūoro."* (Māori student)

> *"Just really learning how to play the taonga [pūoro]. Because we see them, you look at them and wonder what it does or what it is, and now I can just say, "Oh*

yeah that's a kōauau you do this with it. That's one of the cool things about it."
(Māori student)

In general, the implementation of the projects reflected values and practices of:

- Whanaungatanga – building and maintaining positive, respectful relationships

- Kotahitanga – collaboration and working together with shared goals and aspirations

- Whakamana – empowering ākonga in their identity and culture

- Rangatahi ki te rangatira – promoting opportunities for ākonga to act with agency and authority and express themselves in traditional art forms.

There was also a strong theme of connecting Māori and Pacific ākonga with whānau and their community, including the creative community and wider community as an audience. Ākonga came away from the projects feeling positive about their communities and their place in them.

> *"I have more understanding of te ao Māori and just knowing the whakapapa and where those taonga came from. Know how they're made, all those cool stories. And just knowing how to identify a few different taonga [and] play some of them. Yeah it's pretty cool."* (Māori student)

Ākonga noted that whānau felt happy that they were learning about their culture at school. The projects had a positive impact on whānau, both Māori and Pacific. Ākonga said their whānau and aiga had feelings of pride and happiness when the school incorporated and taught parts of their culture. Also, there was an intergenerational theme of ākonga having parents interested in music, art and so on. The ākonga were proud to be carrying that on.

> *"The stories of them being able to understand the taonga better. Not just that it's the way to play it but you understand what built into it, how it was created and the stories created about the taonga."* (Māori student)

Short examples that demonstrate learning opportunities supporting identity, language and culture for Māori and Pacific ākonga

On the following pages we describe in more detail the Creatives in Schools projects run by Tauranga Boys College and Queens High School which show in more detail how Māori and Pacific ākonga were supported to learn about their identity, language and culture enhancing wellbeing.

Example 4: Taonga Pūoro Project at Tauranga Boys College

> *"Ina aro atu ana te oranga ki ngā mea pai, ka rere te wairua, ka taea ngā mea katoa"*
> *"When our lives and hearts are attuned to good things, life is clear, the spirit flows freely. Everything is possible."* Maharaia Winiata

Ākonga learning about the whakapapa of Taonga Pūoro, while on noho marae at the schools wharenui, Te Aronui. (Photo source: Tauranga Boys High School).

Introduction to the project

The Taonga Pūoro Project brought together carving, musical performance, te reo Māori me ona tikanga and mātauranga Māori. Through a series of wānanga, students worked collaboratively to create original music featuring taonga pūoro that told a story of significance to Tauranga Moana. The students came to understand the taonga pūoro (traditional Māori musical instruments) and their whakapapa. They learned that all instruments are seen as individuals with their unique voices and decorations, and they are grouped into families according to how they were created in the ancestral past. These stories were shared through the sounds of the taonga pūoro and the carvings on them.

Why was the project developed?

The project design supported the school's value of turangawaewae – students understanding their local area and history. It provided an opportunity for ākonga to embody the school whakataukī, "Tama tū, tama ora", students standing upon their Māori identity to express themselves creatively. The project's purposes were to:

- support the revival and survival of taonga pūoro

- implement mātauranga Māori into a programme of learning with authenticity

- connect the boys to te ao Māori, strengthening identity through mātauranga and tikanga-a-taonga pūoro

- raise awareness of te ao Māori and the importance of culture and tikanga within the school community

- extend opportunities within the music department to incorporate taonga pūoro in pieces of work and performances.

What happened through the project?

Throughout the project, extended wānanga and weekend noho took place. The boys and staff stayed overnight in the College's wharenui, Aronui. Several whānau attended and helped; many stayed at pick-ups or drop-offs to kōrero.

Wānanga involved intense practice sessions, carving taonga pūoro, learning about and connecting with atua and the significance of the stories of local iwi and whenua. A critical component of the creative process was exploring oral histories and whakapapa associated with the various whānau of instruments, creating a deep connection with the taonga pūoro. Te reo Māori me ona tikanga provided the foundation for the creative process. Through te reo Māori, karakia, whanaungatanga, the boys had opportunities to express themselves.

After weeks of serious practice and getting to know the taonga pūoro, a final performance occurred.

Ākonga learning about Taonga Pūoro. (Photo source: Tauranga Boys High School).

What were the outcomes for ākonga and students?

Through making and playing taonga pūoro, the students could express themselves as Māori and embrace their culture, language, and identity. The students made cultural and spiritual connections throughout the project. They grew in confidence. In the final performance, the boys shared how they connected with the wairua of the taonga pūoro and how "we were all at the moment", working together, improvising, and extending the performance.

The project's timing meant that there were many weeks when the boys were at school for 7 days in a row. Although this was challenging at times, they persevered and remained committed. The boys felt positive and proud of their involvement. Throughout the project, bonds developed between boys who may not have crossed paths at school, and relationships deepened between boys who already knew each other. They now have a kaupapa motuhake to reminisce about and keep them connected. New relationships also developed between kaiako and whānau, kaiako and ākonga.

The project helped to broaden the reach of mātauranga Māori in the music department, with some music students using taonga pūoro in their compositions. Before the project, they would not have considered this option.

Ākonga learning about Taonga Pūoro. (Photo source: Tauranga Boys High School).

In ākonga and students' own words

> *"What I enjoyed was just really learning how to play the taonga. Because we see them, [and] you look at them and wonder what it does or what it is, and now I can just say, 'Oh yeah that's a koauau ponga ihu[4] [and] you do this with it.' That's one of the cool things about it."* (Ākonga comment)

> *"It's not just the way to play it but you understand what is built into it, how it was created and the stories created about the taonga. Their stories and how they came to be. [And] you learn karakia [prayer] to start and tikanga [protocol] around them."* (Ākonga comment)

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4 globular flute played with the nose

Example 5: Finding our Pasifika Niche at Queens High School

*Queens High School students proudly displaying their completed Pasifika artwork.
(Photo source: Queens High School)*

Introduction to the project

'Finding our Pasifika Niche' was created to provide an authentic, culturally grounded learning experience for all Pasifika girls attending Queens High School. As a Queens High School alumni, the creative brought a wealth of school knowledge and a deep understanding of being a young Pasifika woman in a predominantly non-Pasifika school.

For Pasifika growing up in South Dunedin, there are limited opportunities to connect with Pasifika culture, so the project was about wellbeing as much as it was about art. It was an opportunity for young Pasifika women to work in a safe and welcoming space alongside a Pasifika artist and mentor.

Why was the project developed?

The overarching purposes of the project were to provide an opportunity for the students to connect with their cultures and backgrounds through art and support the growth of Pasifika culture within the school. The project also aimed to:

- create a safe space for the students to be creative and express themselves as young Pasifika women through personal journeys and cultural backgrounds

- guide students through the learning and background of Pasifika art motif styles and techniques

- inspire the students to explore art as a viable career pathway and ways to pursue a career in art if interested

- enhance student wellbeing and creative thinking through personal achievement of creating their own art pieces

- provide opportunities to showcase their art in a professional art gallery and celebrate success with their aiga, kaiako and wider community.

What happened through the project?

Many (32 out of 50) of the Queen's Pasifika student population took part. Students were split into two groups; seniors who participated in Term 2 and juniors in Term 3. Aiga were told of the project at the Pasifika Fono (meeting) at the beginning of each term. A weekend session in the middle of each term was also held for whānau to attend.

Every Friday afternoon for two hours, the students came together to learn, laugh and create. The first lessons were spent learning Pasifika art motif styles and techniques. The students were asked to talk with their aiga and research their cultures and backgrounds. The creative encouraged them to embed their knowledge into the design work.

The next stage was carving motifs and patterns into a painted board and embellishing the work with painted glue dots and varnish.

Examples of the Pasifika motifs and patterns carved by the students. (Photo source: Queens High School).

In Term Three, junior and senior girls came together to prepare for the exhibition, supporting each other in finishing and finessing their artwork.

What were the outcomes for ākonga and students?

The students showed an increased interest in learning about their culture, embracing who they are, and expressing this in their artwork. Through research, they learned more about where their aiga had come from and the stories that were important to them. Attendance increased, and many of the students felt more positive about school.

Students shared how Friday afternoons were a time to be together in a safe and welcoming space, a dedicated time where they felt comfortable and confident in their own skin.

They were grateful for the project and recognised it as one of the rare opportunities within the school for them as Pasifika students to participate in their culture. They felt pride and accomplishment as they completed artwork that reflected their aiga, culture, and self.

During the project, students gained confidence to share ideas with each other, the kaiako, and the creative. They shared with the evaluators that they were "happier and more engaged." They reported the project was affirming and that they were starting to see the value of their contribution and participation. For some students, there was a renewed interest in art, and with emerging self-belief in their abilities, they were considering art as a subject choice.

Aiga and community celebrate the success of the students during the exhibition at local art gallery. (Photo source: Queens High School)

In the ākonga and students' own words

> *"Yeah to learn about our culture because we don't really have anything like really Pasifika [on school] and so it was quite interesting to see what the designs mean and use them."* (Student comment)

> *"In my normal classes it's more like we just sit there and listen to the teachers perspective on things, and how they view things it's not really how we do. [But] being able to be with like you know our group of people, where we don't have to be quiet, we can express ourselves. In this class we get the perspective and we say what we feel."* (Student comment)

> *"I look forward to doing this all week. If we could have this in Year 13, all of Year 13, then I would come to school and take art."* (Student comment)

Ākonga and students can now work better beside other learners and voice their ideas better

A strong theme through the evaluation was the meaningful shifts for ākonga and students because of taking part in Creatives in Schools projects in:

- being confident to work alongside other students
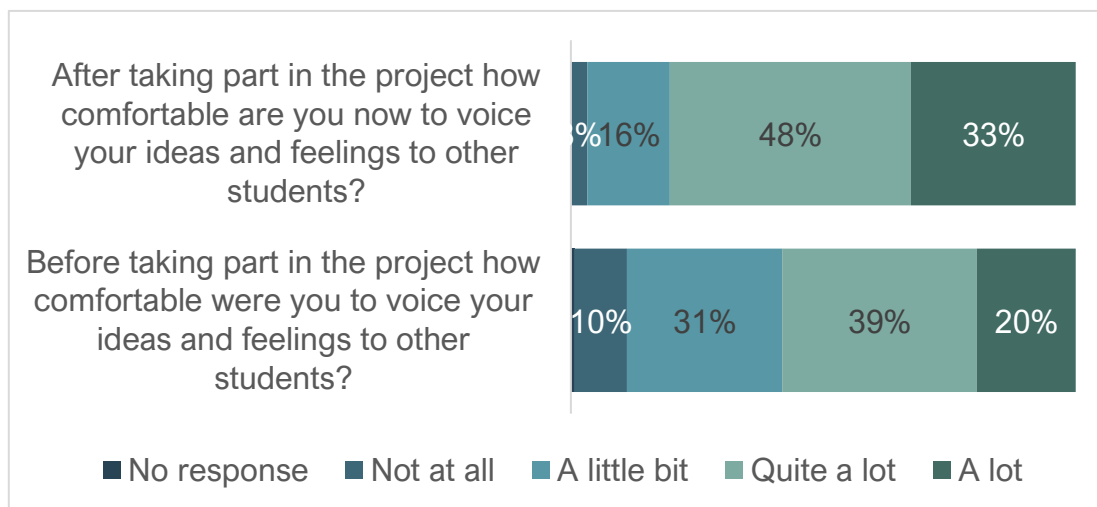- being comfortable to voice their ideas and feelings to other students.

After taking part in the project how confident are you now to work alongside other students? 1% 2% 36% 50%

Before taking part in the project how confident were you to work alongside other students? 0% 6% 24% 43% 27%

■ No response ■ Not at all ■ A little bit ■ Quite a lot ■ A lot

Base: All student survey responses n=153

After taking part in the project how comfortable are you now to voice your ideas and feelings to other students? % 16% 48% 33%

Before taking part in the project how comfortable were you to voice your ideas and feelings to other students? 10% 31% 39% 20%

■ No response ■ Not at all ■ A little bit ■ Quite a lot ■ A lot

Base: All student survey responses n=153

Here are the typical kinds of comments ākonga and students made about the difference the projects made in their ability to relate with and be heard by other learners:

> *"My confidence. I found it scary to talk to others, let alone sing a whole song and interact with people who I didn't know well/at all. It took me out of my comfort zone in several ways."* (Student comment)
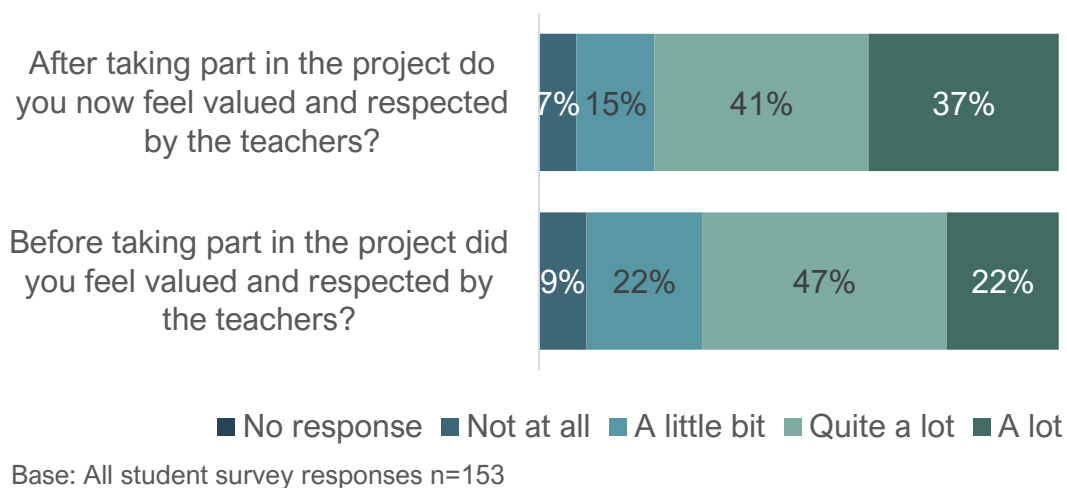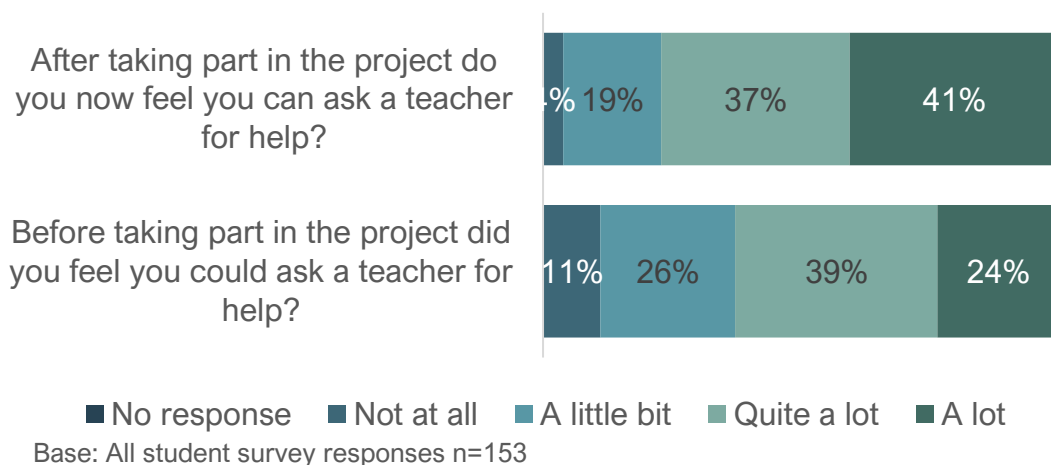
> *"I felt that it united our creative community a lot, and afterwards I felt more comfortable and bonded with the others around me."* (Student comment)

Ākonga and students reported improved teacher relations

Many ākonga and students reported they already had good relationships with their teachers. However, before the projects less than a quarter of ākonga and students agreed a lot they could:

- ask a teacher for help

- felt valued and respected by a teacher.

After taking part in the projects, ākonga and student responses pointed to meaningful shifts how likely there were to ask teachers for help and feel more valued by teachers.

	No response	Not at all	A little bit	Quite a lot	A lot
After taking part in the project do you now feel you can ask a teacher for help?		%	19%	37%	41%
Before taking part in the project did you feel you could ask a teacher for help?		11%	26%	39%	24%

Base: All student survey responses n=153

	No response	Not at all	A little bit	Quite a lot	A lot
After taking part in the project do you now feel valued and respected by the teachers?		7%	15%	41%	37%
Before taking part in the project did you feel valued and respected by the teachers?		9%	22%	47%	22%

Base: All student survey responses n=153

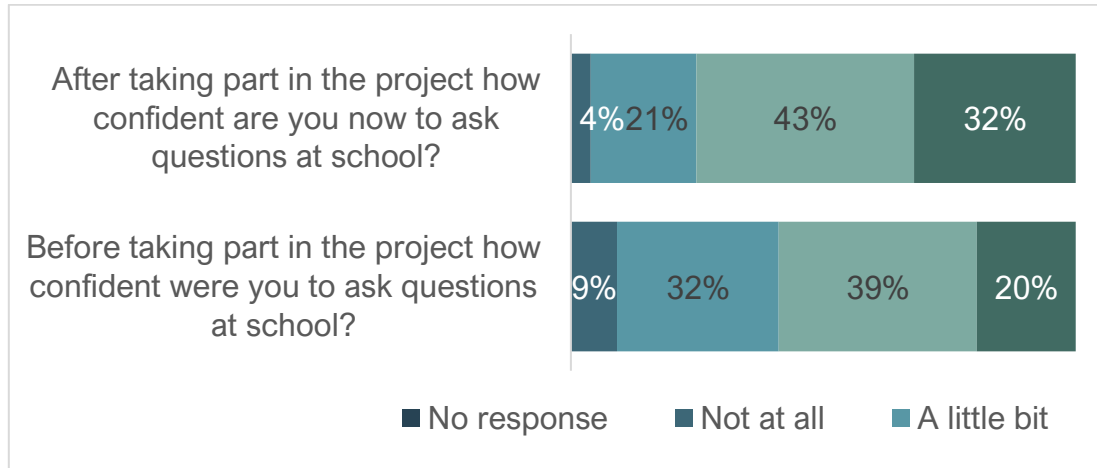Here are examples of ākonga and student comments.

> *"My ability to work with others and be comfortable with my peers and teacher [changed]."* (Student comment)

> *"[I enjoyed] having supportive staff and knowing that there are staff that want to learn about our culture even though they aren't part of our culture." (Student comment)* (Pacific student)
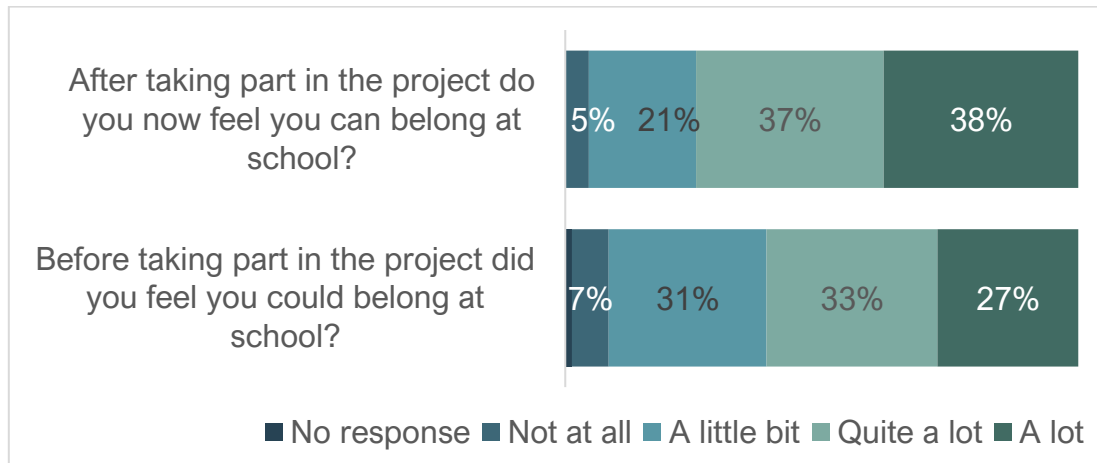
The projects supported ākonga and students to ask questions and feel they belonged at school

Many ākonga and students reported they already could ask questions or felt they belonged at school. Nevertheless, ākonga and student responses pointed to meaningful shifts in them being more able to ask questions at school. As ākonga and students engaged more by asking questions, some also felt more connected with school and had a better sense of belonging there.

We know that a willingness to engage and question is an important precursor to wider success at school (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2021a , 2021b; Oakden & Spee, 2022).


	No response	Not at all	A little bit	Quite a lot	A lot
After taking part in the project how confident are you now to ask questions at school?		4%	21%	43%	32%
Before taking part in the project how confident were you to ask questions at school?		9%	32%	39%	20%

Base: All student survey responses n=153

	No response	Not at all	A little bit	Quite a lot	A lot
After taking part in the project do you now feel you can belong at school?		5%	21%	37%	38%
Before taking part in the project did you feel you could belong at school?		7%	31%	33%	27%

Base: All student survey responses n=153

The opportunity to express themselves creatively supported ākonga and students' mental wellbeing

Having better relationships in the classroom left ākonga and students feeling **happier and getting on better with others**. In some instances, this widened possible learning pathways, and for some, made them want to come to school more.
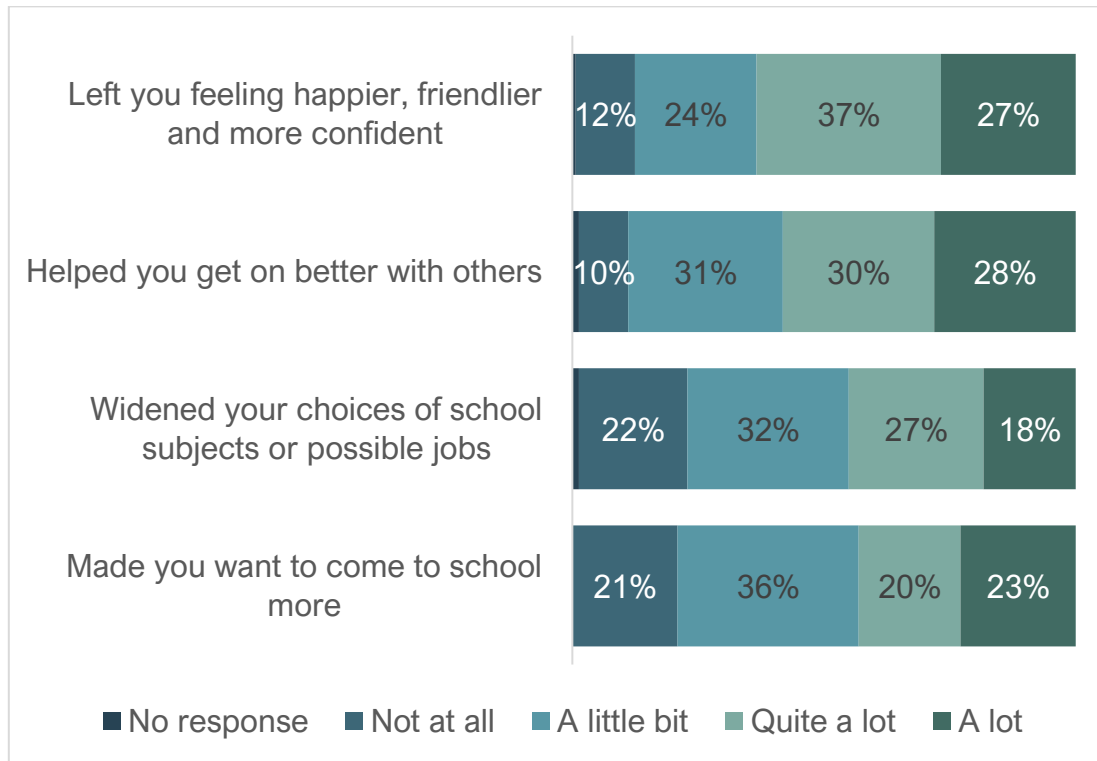
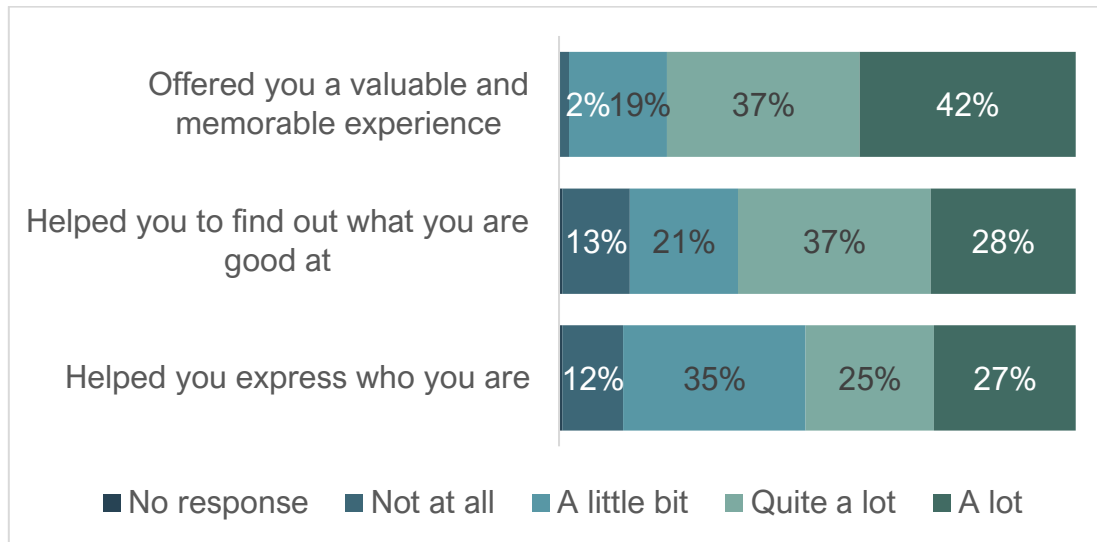Base: All student survey responses n=153

These are the kinds of comments ākonga and students made…

> *"I enjoyed being able to integrate what I love most into the performance, which is singing and music, so I felt as though I could be myself more."* (Student comment)

> *"Getting an opportunity to do something I've never done before - script writing is something I've never touched but I loved it."* (Student comment)

Ākonga and students gained a sense of personal achievement and fulfilment from their creative experience

Overall, many ākonga and students believed the programme offered a valuable and memorable experience that helped them find out what they are good at and better express who they are.

Base: All student survey responses n=153

> *"Being able to be so involved with the technical design of the show was a really valuable experience for me, and I'm so proud of what we were able to achieve in such a limited time."* (Student comment)

> *"I really enjoyed trying lots of new ways to approach a show and experimenting with ideas."* (Student comment)

> *"Getting to collaborate/be directed with/by other creatives and problem-solve in ways we haven't had to before was a valuable opportunity."* (Student comment)

Attendance and engagement

Introduction

This supplementary analysis provides evidence of how the Creatives in Schools programme contributes to improved ākonga and student attendance and engagement at school. The evaluators drew on two research reports from the Education Review Office, *Missing out: Why aren't our children going to school?* (Education Review Office, 2022) and *Attendance: Getting back to school* (Education Review Office, 2023). These substantial reports describe, firstly, how to improve ākonga and students' attendance, and secondly, how to make learning more engaging for ākonga and students. For information on how we used findings from the reports to develop the evaluative criteria please see page 79-80. Note, for this section of the report, as well as the Round 4 feedback, we also drew on data from Round 1, 2 and 3 (Oakden & Spee, 2021, 2022, 2023; Spee & Oakden 2021a, 2021b).

Project designs include many aspects that are important to improving learner attendance

The evaluators rated the Creatives in Schools programme **very good overall** in that the project designs includes many aspects that are important to **improving learner attendance**. As the programme is well-implemented, many ākonga and students benefit from these different aspects.

Extent to which the Creatives in Schools programme help ākonga and students:	Performance rating[5]	
• see school and education as useful for the present and future	Good	●●●○○
• experience learning success	Very good	●●●●◐
• engage in meaningful learning	Very good	●●●●◐
• develop quality relationships with peers	Excellent	●●●●●
• develop quality relationships with kaiako and teachers and creative practitioners	Very good	●●●●◐
• access relevant and interesting curriculum	Very good	●●●●◐
Overall rating	Very good	●●●●◐

In this following section we describe the kinds of evidence that underpin our performance ratings.

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[5] The performance rating is based on generic rubric, with the following performance levels: Excellent: (Always), Very good: (Almost Always), Good: (Mostly, with some exceptions), Emerging: (Sometimes, with quite a few exceptions), Poor: Never (or occasionally with clear weaknesses evident). It is described in more detail on page 20.

Ākonga and students see school and education as useful for the present and future: Some previously unengaged ākonga and students became highly engaged, producing excellent work, showing leadership in class, and being more visible in school. They gained a renewed interest in school and see it more as a positive and meaningful space.

> *"More people acknowledging [us] after our performances. People were like, 'Oh I saw you in the performance'. People I'd never seen in my life, you know. And you're like 'Oh, thanks'."* (Māori student Round 3)[6]

> *"I came into this project having never [carved] anything before in my life and not knowing the meaning behind most of my cultural patterns. Now I'm going out of it being fairly confident and knowing more about my culture and myself."* (Pacific student)

Some ākonga and students also found the projects supported them to make decisions about their future career and learning pathways.

> *"Next year I'm doing a diploma in musical theatre, so I'm carrying on this kind of work into the real world."* (Student comment)

While some students elected to take up creative careers; others realised a creative pathway was not for them. But even those who did not choose a creative pathway received other benefits from the projects such as learning more about themselves, building relationships with peers, teachers and creatives and learning self-management skills.

Engaging in meaningful learning: Most ākonga and students (91%) valued the opportunity to take part in a creative process that was relevant to them.

> *"I really enjoyed the creative freedom of creating for the album. I think the best part was creating something that could be viewed by everyone and that will last forever. This was great because not many other parts of school can create something so permanent."* (Student comment)

Many ākonga and students (80%) said that after taking part in the project they knew of different ways to solve problems – and of these 31% knew this a lot, compared with 14% before they took part in the project.

> *"I feel I'm able to be much more open-minded after the experience."* (Student comment)

Ākonga and students appreciated having the creative freedom to express themselves and engage in meaningful learning.

> *"I enjoyed the experimentation, and how we as students were really involved with the creative process not only as actors but as partial directors. It was also great to see that the teachers and administrators involved wanted to play to our strengths as individuals and enhanced the quality of the show in the process."* (Student comment)

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[6] Note, where material was drawn from earlier reports, the Round is noted. Where the Round is not noted, the quotes are drawn from the Round 4 data.

Ākonga and students experiencing learning success: There was evidence in the feedback of ākonga and students experiencing learning success. Two-thirds of ākonga and students could describe positive changes in themselves from taking part in the projects, with 30% mentioning specific skills learned and nearly half mentioning other benefits from taking part.

> *"They were quite surprised when I said that I was like producing stuff, because I don't really say much about what I do. But now I can't shut up about it. Like it's a big accomplishment I never thought I'd, like, see myself here. So, they were all quite surprised and my Mum especially was really supportive about it."* (Student comment*)*

Parents could also see their children maturing and learning transferable skills such as commitment, working hard, and self-management.

> *"We spoke to [him], and we said that we hope that it doesn't change, "That you are not going to slide down, like in maths or whatever." And he didn't, and it's great. And what he gained on the other side, I think, is worth a lot as well and probably as much as maths or English; I see it equally."* (Parent comment Round 1)

Ākonga and students became more resilient using the creative process of trial and error. After taking part in the project, many ākonga and students (79%) said they were now comfortable (quite a lot or a lot) to try things out even if they might not work, compared with around half (55%) beforehand.

> *"Sharing things that aren't fully ready and that can encourage other people to know that it doesn't have to be perfect. It can also just give people ideas for their own monologues. If they hear something and pick it up and then they think, "Oh, maybe I'll think about that and explore that and write about that."* (Student comment*)*

Most ākonga and students were highly engaged in the projects, and 77% would like more to be available in the future. The biggest positive shifts[7] between pre and post ratings in the 2023 student survey were for:

- trying new things out - 47% shifted
- working alongside others - 44% shifted
- voicing ideas to other ākonga and students - 40% shifted.

Ākonga and students were proud of the high-quality performances they were part of, and whānau and families enjoyed seeing their children's success. At times they were pleasantly surprised to see what their children could achieve.

> "*The freedom to create what you want. It allowed our brains to roam and discover exactly what we urged to create with the help and guidance of the songs. I loved seeing what came out of everyone's brains and how they interpreted their song. I loved the support I was given and how invested everyone was in helping me make my performance the best it can be."* (Student comment)

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[7] For more information on the shifts observed in ākonga and students see pages 63-65.

Ākonga and students develop quality relationships with other learners: Ākonga and students talked of feeling more comfortable to express their views to classmates and seek feedback. They also learned to critique others' ideas supportively.

> *"More confident, closer to my classmates, and getting to explore more ideas and emotions."* (Student comment)
> *"I know that drama class and belonging to this group made him belong more to the school, because he feels so safe and so happy with that group and being a part of that."* (Parent comment Round 1)

Ākonga and students develop quality relationships with kaiako and teachers and creatives: More ākonga and students said they could now talk with kaiako and teachers and creatives, exploring both project ideas, and possible pathways for learning and careers. Ākonga and students appreciated creatives' high expectations of them which led to them extending themselves in the sessions.

> *It's really helped because when I was at the start of the year, I was the one kid who just never socialised, never did anything with a team, and I really struggled, but [the creative practitioner] helped me realise that you can't do everything alone. And that's kind of built my confidence to socialise and perform in front of others.* (Student comment Round 1)

Ākonga and students access relevant and interesting curriculum: Ākonga and students engaged deeply in the projects because they said they were interesting and relevant to them. Kaiako and teachers and creatives reported that with ākonga and students being highly focussed and engaged, at times it changed other teachers' perceptions of the ākonga and students.

> *A couple of teachers have mentioned… 'I never saw that student in that light before.' And it's made them really think about that student a little bit more… So [they are] seeing [the student] in a different genre where they are putting themselves out there. Where in class, they always saw them as a shy, little, reserved person. [It] is making them really think about in actual fact they do have a hidden confidence there, it's really just giving them the avenue to show it.* (Creative practitioner Round 1)

Projects support schools to make learning more engaging

The evaluators rated Creatives in Schools programme very good overall because the project designs included many aspects that are important to making learning more engaging for ākonga and students.

Extent to which the Creatives in Schools programme helps ākonga and students:	Performance rating	
• have an interest in what they are learning	Very good	●●●●○
• spend time with friends and make new friends	Very good	●●●●○
• experience a variety of teaching approaches that suit their different learning styles	Very good	●●●●○
• better engage in school	Very good	●●●●○
• experience a welcoming environment	Very good	●●●●○
• enjoy a safe and positive social environment	Very good	●●●●○
• enjoy activities that support their mental health and wellbeing	Very good	●●●●○
• enjoy activities that are inclusive and affirming of their culture	Excellent	●●●●●
Overall rating	Very good	●●●●○

Ākonga and students have an interest in what they are learning: Ākonga and students often found they benefited from projects more than they were expecting. Some found talents and skills they didn't know they had, surprising both themselves, their whānau and their Kaiako, and teachers.

> *"Getting an opportunity to do something I've never done before - script writing is something I've never touched but I loved it."* (Student comment)

> *So, I just noticed that with the Pasifika group, his leadership and his confidence just heightened. And he didn't talk a lot about it either… It was kind of like his own private thing that he was doing… Other parents [noticed and] said things about how good he is… He's really stepped up because they have known him before that. Yeah, and then … he's really stepped up and just wow! He's so proud.* (Pacific parent Round 1)

> *With this opportunity now, he met a lot of other children across the other learning groups and his circle of friends just got a lot wider. And he is actually blooming*

and thriving from our point of view from that production, yeah. It's unbelievable.
(Parent comment Round 1)

Ākonga and students spend time with friends and make new friends: The projects provided an opportunity for ākonga and students to spend positive time with existing friendships and to forge new friends. Ākonga and students enjoyed working with other learners. This was particularly the case for Māori and Pacific ākonga and students, where working with their friend group was very affirming.

"I know more about my culture and meet some really nice people while doing it." (Pacific student)

"How we came together every last period on Friday was a good last period and I love how fun it gets, and I love learning about the culture and learning new things about art." (Pacific student)

Ākonga and students experience a variety of teaching approaches that suit their different learning styles: Using creative practices allowed ākonga and students to try different ways of thinking.

"I am able to express my ideas more freely through music, and I'm now producing my own at home". (Student comment)

We were able to gain an understanding of collaboration: working together in a big group to achieve something really big and beautiful. I was also able to gain more of an outside perspective and outside ideas, seeing how different people from the outside see our potential and stuff like that. (Student comment Round 2)

Some ākonga and students, who thought they were not talented, found they had talents either in the arts or in other learning areas.

"I lost my interest in art and then coming back to this, like being able to do our own culture and things like that." (Pacific student)

They appreciated a learner-focussed approach where they could try things out for themselves.

"I really enjoyed trying lots of new ways to approach a show and experimenting with ideas." (Student comment)

Ākonga and students better engage in school: Ākonga and students reported being more confident to talk to others, to express their ideas, and to enjoy the creative process. Some said this had spread into other areas of their schooling, which parents also observed.

"I reckon that if I come into music, it like lifts my feeling, like I feel happy. And then for the rest of the day I'm just buzzing because I'm happy. So, it makes other classes more enjoyable." (Student comment)

"I gained a closer bond with the people involved in the project and also put myself in the sights of any further school initiatives. I also feel like I am confident to join any future events similar to [project]." (Student comment)

"It's another level of learning, and like I said, in my opinion, it's as important as the other subjects as well. You just grow in a different area – which I believe positively influence[s] their learning in the other subjects as well… When you gain more confidence, and you feel better about yourself and stuff… then that reflects definitely on your learning." (Parent comment Round 1)

Ākonga and students experience a welcoming environment: The learning environment of Creatives in Schools projects was often student-led. This supported a youth culture and a place to explore issues that are relevant to young people. Ākonga and students enjoyed a convivial exploratory environment, that affirmed their culture and identity.

"I feel as if we have created friendships, and we now have more confidence in being independent." (Pacific student)

"What I like about being in the Pacifica group is we learn about other cultures not just Tonga and Samoa…and we get to mix up with people from different cultures." (Pacific student Round 2)

Ākonga and students enjoy a safe and positive social environment: There is much evidence ākonga and students felt safe to express their ideas and opinions. They built confidence to engage in class, ask more questions, and participate more. This built a positive social environment in the projects that was visible beyond the classroom.

"What changed for me was being able to feel comfortable in asking and answering questions" (Student comment)

"The [other] teachers acknowledge it. Like I'll walk past teachers, and they'll say, "Good job the other night, you did so well. I've listened to your songs on Spotify". So, I reckon it's pretty good actually". (Student comment)

In some schools, the projects helped ākonga and students deal with unconscious bias and racism they experienced in other classes.

"At school a lot of our relationships with the teachers are somewhat strained. But I think with this class most of us have learned that at the end of the day who really cares. Not in the sense of like, like who cares it's more of 'I'm coming to learn [and] if you don't like me you don't like me' type of thing." (Student comment Round 3)

"It makes us feel we can express ourselves anywhere we want, and you can show our culture to others." (Pacific student Round 2)

Parents also noticed how the projects made their children feel safe.

I know that drama class and belonging to this group made him belong more to the school because he feels so safe and so happy with that group and being a part of that." (Parent comment Round 1)

Ākonga and students enjoy activities that are inclusive and affirming of their culture: This was particularly the case for Māori and Pacific ākonga and students, where working with others of their ethnic group offered the opportunity to:

- express themselves freely as Māori and Pacific

- embrace aspects of their culture and learn their meaning

- gain confidence through engaging in what is important to them

- feel their voices, knowledge and experiences matter.

> *Like in my normal classes it's more like we just sit there and listen to like what the teachers perspective on things, and like how they view things. Everyone else is like quiet but it's like [we] have too much energy... [so] being able to be with like you know our group of people, where like we don't have to like be quiet, we can like express ourselves.* (Pacific student)

> *I have more understanding of te ao Māori and just knowing the whakapapa and where those taonga came from. Know how they're made, all those cool stories. And just knowing how to identify a few different taonga [and] play some of them. Yeah it's pretty cool.* (Māori student)

> *"Yeah learn about our culture more because we don't really have… [anything] really Pasifika and so it was quite interesting to see what, because you know you see these designs but you never really know like what it means."* (Pacific student)

The projects specifically tailored for Māori and Pacific ākonga and students were deeply appreciated by them.

> *"The stories of them being able to understand the taonga better. Not just that it's the way to play it but you understand what built into it, how it was created and the stories created about the taonga."* (Māori student)

> *"Just really learning how to play the taonga. Because we see them, you look at them and wonder what it does or what it is, and now I can just say, 'Oh yeah that's a kōauau, you do this with it'. That's one of the cool things about it."* (Māori student)

Ākonga and students enjoy activities that support their mental wellbeing: Ākonga and students reported that some of the projects got them to think deeply about themselves.

> *"[I enjoyed] having supportive staff and knowing that there are staff that want to learn about our culture even though they aren't part of our culture."* (Pacific student)

> *In college, I thought in my head, "I need to change this or else I'm not going to get anywhere". And [Creative] really helped me with that actually, like raise my hand, opt into things not opt out.* (Student comment Round 1*)*

Short examples that show how schools used the creative process to engage and extend ākonga and student's learning

The following three examples show how schools used the creative process to engage and extend ākonga and students learning.

The Mercury Bay School project "Creating an Album" allowed senior music students to create and learn all aspects of the recording process, from composition tools to production techniques.

"Page to Stage" at Wellington Girls College offered senior drama students a chance to better understand the theatre production process from idea to script to stage.

"Selwyn Plays it Strange" at Selwyn College offer senior drama students an opportunity to devise and create a new musical production. It was based on a provocation from winning songs from the *Play it Strange* songwriting competition.

Example 6: Creating an Album at Mercury Bay Area School

The creators of Saltwater Frequency 24 – Mercury Bay Area School students, Lead Teacher and Creative. (Photo supplied by Mercury Bay Area School).

Introduction to the project

The Mercury Bay Area School project "Creating an Album" allowed senior music students to create and learn all aspects of the recording process, from composition tools to production techniques. Through hands-on experience, classroom learning and support from an industry professional, students produced 'Saltwater Frequency 24', an album compilation of original music written and performed by the students.

Why was the project developed?

The project design was based on feedback from students involved in the Creative in Schools project 2023. The project needed to support the students' expression of their culture, lives, and experiences. To enhance the experience for students, the project aimed to:

- provide a real-world experience in music production so students gained an in-depth understanding and experience in how recording and production work

- build on and develop student knowledge, experience, and interest in songwriting, performing, and production, opening up ideas about future pathways in music
- create a safe space for collaboration, sharing of ideas and problem-solving
- integrate with the broader goals and curriculum of the music programme, including Rock Quest and School Charity concert events.

What happened through the project?

The project ran over Terms Two and Three during music class, and senior study time. The Creative attended up to 4 classes per week.

To prepare for the project, students started working on their compositions in Term One so they would have something ready for when the project began in Term Two.

The first set of lessons focused on developing their compositions and pre-production elements, including mic techniques, software and timelines. Outside of the project, students spent time refining and writing songs.

The students then moved into the recording stages and learned technical aspects, including recording individual

Students collaborating and performing at the Saltwater Frequency 24 Album launch. (Photo supplied by Mercury Bay School.)

instruments like drums, bass, guitars, brass, and vocals. They worked in groups and took turns producing, engineering and performing in the recording sessions. The project's final phase involved the students planning and organising the album launch evening for the community. Students performed songs from their Saltwater Frequency 24 album at this event.

What were the outcomes for ākonga and students?

The students felt proud as they reflected on their hard work. They were thankful for the experience and discussed how the album was a long-term "forever" achievement that would always be there for others to enjoy. Students felt valued and good about themselves as whānau, the school, and the wider community embraced the album and live performances. As students walked through the school and entered local shops and cafes, they received praise and acknowledgement from people.

The project has helped build the music programme's status, and there is growing interest from students in it. The local radio station plays their songs, and there have been multiple opportunities to perform at local school and community events, including performances at a whole-school assembly, two nights at a charity concert, community quiz night, Rockquest, an art showcase and shows out of Luke's Kitchen. There has also been positive press including through local newspaper articles and Stuff.

The project provided a safe space where students could test their ideas, express what was important to them and who they were as young people. The students build strong positive relationships while collaborating on the music. Students shared that they now have more confidence in their potential and know they can achieve what they put their minds to. A few students commented that they are "enjoying school much more because of music". Music "lifts their mood," they feel happy, and it "makes other classes more enjoyable."

Students perform live in front of whānau, friends and community at the launch of Saltwater Frequency 24. (Photo supplied by Mercury Bay School).

In ākonga and students own words

> *"Heaps of people from the community came to listen to us, so what we did is we performed our songs live. In front of all the parents and in between performances Dave Rose the producer would play the real, like the recording version through the speakers so that they could listen to it."* (Student comment)

> *"And it's fun. Who doesn't want to be doing what they love and having the chance to improve at school. Learning from each other as well. That's good."* (Student comment)

> *"I do reckon that the teachers acknowledge it, like I'll walk past teachers and they'll say 'Good job the other night, you did so well.' [or] ' I've listened to your songs on Spotify'. So I reckon it's pretty good actually."* (Student comment)

> *"Like it's a big accomplishment. I never thought I'd like see myself here."* (Student comment)

Example 7: Page to Stage at Wellington Girls' College

> *"An experienced and creative view from a professional helped me to understand what's important in a script and what's important in the industry"* (Student comment)

Introduction to the project

Page to Stage was created to offer senior drama students at Wellington Girls' College a chance to better understand the theatre production process from idea to script to stage. The creative had a proven record of working with students at the school and brought a breadth and depth of theatre industry knowledge.

Ākonga and students created their own work during timetabled classes, to support NCEA standards on scriptwriting and/or production. The creative helped to widen ākonga and students' perspectives and lift their standard of their work. As well, teachers drew on the creative's teaching experience to extend their skills and knowledge to teach theatre production processes at NCEA level.

Why was the project developed?

The overarching purpose of the project was to provide an opportunity for ākonga and students to work through the theatre production process. The school wanted to offer ākonga and students:

- a strong creative premise from which to build their work

- practical ways of developing creative work

- working with script, rather than with lines

- workshopping the world of the play

- developing relationships and tension in writing and in performance

- working with compilation including physical theatre and transition work.
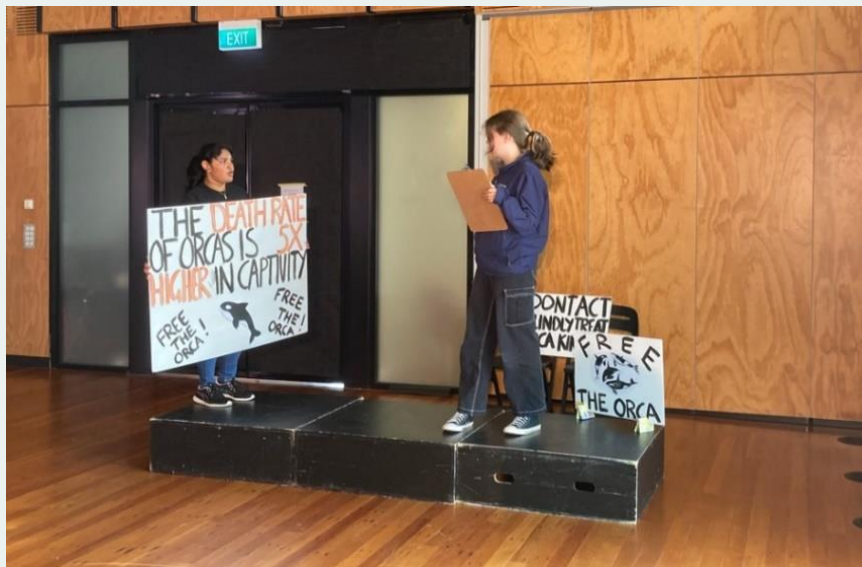
Students during the final performance. (Photo supplied by Wellington Girls' College)

Wellington Girls' College is undergoing major building work and does not have a school auditorium in which to perform. Therefore, teachers also used funding from the project to hire spaces for workshops and a theatre space. Students appreciated a chance to perform in a larger performance space than their classroom.

What happened through the project?

Sixty students took part in the project. The Year 12's took part for 10 weeks in Term 2 and Year 11's for 10 weeks in Term 4. Students worked on their projects in their scheduled NCEA classes as timetabled. The project had two strands:

- **Script writing for Year 12's:** included engaging students to create a 2-hander script and teaching script-writing skills. The project created space for students to collect material, workshop their ideas and then submit a final script.

- **Production processes for year 11's:** used the Year 12s scripts, created a performance piece and performed the work to the school community and whānau.

The Year 12 students successfully developed the scripts drawing on themes important to their age group such as sexism, LGBTQ+ representation and breaking stereotypes. The Year 11 students created new, relevant theatre using these scripts, interpreting them to make them germane and realistic for stage.

The final performance gave ākonga and students a chance to perform to a live audience on stage. (Photo supplied by Wellington Girl's College)

What are the outcomes for ākonga and students?

Feedback from ākonga and students indicates that there was important learning related to the curriculum. Ākonga and students learned to work with scripts, and to bring them to life.

Ākonga and students also reported a general improved confidence. Many were more willing to "try things out even if they may not work". Through the project they learned of different ways to solve problems and were applying them. They also became more comfortable "voicing their ideas and feelings to other students".

During the project, many ākonga and students learned to give and receive feedback. A key learning was that feedback can be helpful, but they also have a choice of whether to take it up or not. Ākonga and students realised being able to give and receive feedback was a transferable skill not only in the project, but in life in general.

Ākonga and students shared with the evaluators that they were grateful the project enabled them to perform on stage, learn skills related to larger auditorium performances such as voice projection and moving in a large space to create presence. For some ākonga and students the project confirmed they want a pathway into the Arts, for others their career choices were not clear yet.

Ākonga and students a chance to perform about themes that matter to them – this one was about self-image. (Photo supplied by Wellington Girl's College)

Ākonga and student voice

> *"I made a bunch of new friends. Going forward, I'll have those people and probably [will be] more confident to talk to more people."* (Year 11 student Comment)

> *"I found myself being more open to other teachers. Like being more confident to ask questions and stuff."* (Year 11 student comment)

> *"The feedback process really helped me to learn about how to take criticism. It also helped me figure out deeper meaning about my script that I hadn't intended from the start, about empathy and human connection and differences. My original idea had just been to make two different characters, put them in a relationship and see how it turned out, so it really helped me to develop an idea."* (Year 12 student comment)

> *"I enjoyed writing a piece of my own work and imagining that one day I could write something that actors could perform on stage. It felt very professional, and I liked mixing the academic and performance sides of drama. It made me appreciate scripts more from my actress point of view."* (Year 12 student comment)

Example 8: Selwyn Plays it Strange at Selwyn College

Students performing the 'River'. (Photo supplied by Selwyn College.)

Introduction to the project

Selwyn Plays it Strange was created to offer senior drama students at Selwyn College an authentic learning experience by devising and creating a new musical production based on a provocation from winning songs from the *Play it Strange songwriting competition*. The creative, a professional theatre director, provided expertise in script writing and theatre production. The creative partnership also drew on one of Aotearoa's music industry leaders.

Ākonga and students selected songs as stimulus material and created monologues reflecting on their themes. The creative helped to widen ākonga and students' perspectives and lifted their standard of their work as the monologue was then coupled with music and choreography.

The musical, known as "River" was first performed at school. Later a leader from the music industry made it possible for some ākonga and students to perform one of the monologues at a public performance in Auckland to celebrate 20 years of Play it Strange.

Why was the project developed?

The project was designed to provide a platform to extend senior ākonga and students' creative boundaries, amplify personal voices and cultivate confidence by creating a new work that authentically reflected rangatahi experiences and perspectives. The project design had multiple aims:

- encourage ākonga and student participation in exercises, provocations and stimuli, drawing inspiration from established methods employed by devising theatre companies in Aotearoa

- facilitate ākonga and students to delve into language, enabling them to bring their ideas and concepts to life

- support ākonga and students to engage with the art of experimentation, exploration and of receiving and responding to feedback

- create a space for ākonga and students to manage, organise and discipline themselves to meet production deadlines

- extend ākonga and students' capacity to navigate the demands and rigour of rehearsals and to collaborate on a script and songbook that underwent continuous shaping and editing.

Students performing the 'River'. (Photo supplied by Selwyn College.)

What happened through the project?

The project was originally envisioned as a Year 11 project, but eventually became a Year 13 project, which was presented in Term 2, 2023. The Year 13 ākonga and students selected songs from the *Play it Strange* songwriting competition. They each developed a monologue that personally reflected on their chosen song. The final production was made up of 10 monologues that were approximately three to four minutes long. All students participated in the final performance, which segued between the monologues, songs with a live band playing on stage, and choreography that brought the performance together as a complete piece. In all, about 50 ākonga and students were involved in the performance.

What are the outcomes for ākonga and students?

The Year 13 ākonga and students reported the project took them out of their comfort zone and gave them a valuable experience, especially for those intending to continue with careers in the Arts. The performance was well-received in the community, and one of the monologues was performed at the 20th Anniversary of *Play it Strange* in Auckland, providing some ākonga and students with the added opportunity to work with professional musicians in a public performance.

> *"The passion and emotion of movement and words were so well presented that I was mesmerised. I was blown away by the articulation of these students. To be given a glimpse of insight into these teenagers' minds, of the way they think and see their world, gave me a real sense of aspiration for what their futures hold.* (Whānau comment)

Students performing the 'River'. (Photo supplied by Selwyn College.)

Ākonga and students' voice

> *[This project] gave me a new experience of working with some professional creatives which gave me insight into the industry that I didn't have before. It also helped develop my interpersonal, collaborative and problem-solving skills.* (Student comment)

> *I enjoyed the experimentation, and how we as students were really involved with the creative process not only as actors but as partial directors. It was also great to see that the teachers and administrators involved wanted to play to our strengths as individuals and enhanced the quality of the show in the process.* (Student comment)

KEQ 2: Creatives in Schools programme implemented and delivered well to ākonga and students

Overview: Creatives in Schools rated very good for implementation and delivery

Resources allocated: The Government Budgets 2019 and 2020 provided $7.16 and $4 million respectively to fund Creatives in Schools programme over four years up to 2023, to be delivered in 510 schools and kura. In total 552 projects (96% of those contracted) were delivered over the four years reaching an estimated 63,730 ākonga and students.

	Projects contracted	Projects Delivered	Proportion of projects delivered	Estimated number of students reached
Round 1	34	33	97%	N/A
Round 2	143	133	93%	14,077
Round 3	180	173	96%	21,477
Round 4	216	213	99%	28,176
Total	573	552	96%	63,730

Implementation context: Implementation of Creatives in Schools occurred in the context of the ongoing reach of COVID-19 disrupting learning in 2020, 2021 and 2022. In addition, in 2023 there was industrial unrest in schools for the first half of the year, and regional floods affected Auckland, Northland, Tairawhiti and the Coromandel. Despite those challenges Creatives in Schools is now well-established and transferred from being run by a policy team in set up to an operations team on a business-as-usual basis in 2023. The programme continues to be a high-performing, well-run programme.
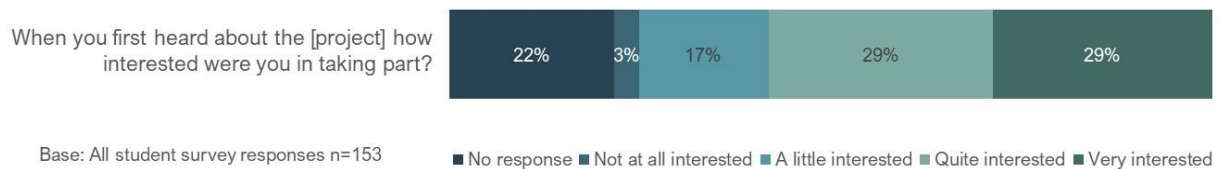
Reach in 2024: In total the Creatives in Schools programme contracted for 216 projects in Round 4. Schools completed 99% (213/216) of the projects in 2023. For Round 4 we estimate the programme potentially reached up to 28,176 ākonga and students.

Quality of the implementation: The programme continues to be high-performing and well-run. There is clearly some excellent work being undertaken across many projects
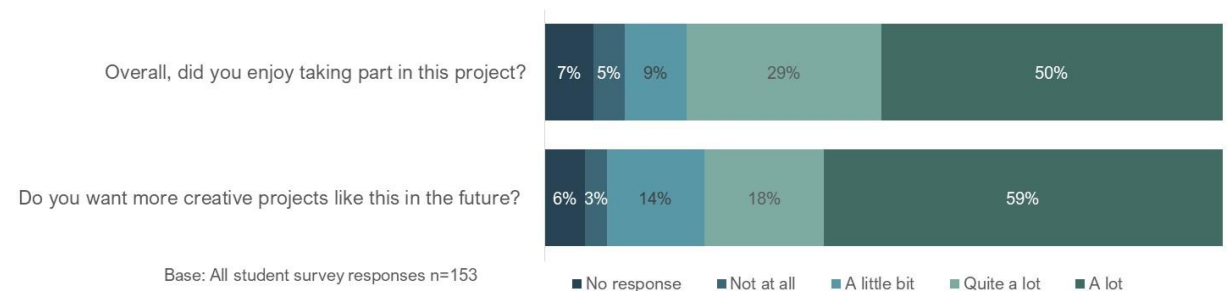
as seen in the Milestone reporting. The quality was also evident in each of the seven schools the evaluators visited as part of the Round 4 evaluation. Three-quarters of ākonga and students surveyed would like more projects like these. While most of the projects ran well, there were a few challenges identified that suggest there is room for fine-tuning in some instances. Therefore, the evaluators rated **Creatives in Schools very good for implementation and delivery**, based on the ākonga and students' perspectives, the number of projects delivered and their potential reach.

Evidence of strong delivery of the projects from ākonga and students

The Creatives in Schools projects exceeded ākonga and students' expectations. At the start of the projects, ākonga and students were moderately interested in them, with 58% saying they were quite or very interested. A sizeable group did not know, and 22% gave no response.
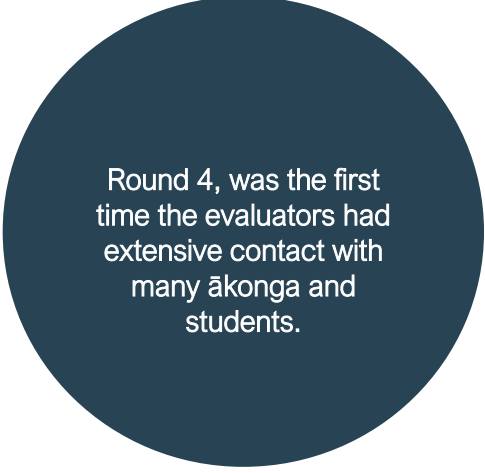
When you first heard about the [project] how interested were you in taking part?

| 22% | 3% | 17% | 29% | 29% |

Base: All student survey responses n=153

■ No response ■ Not at all interested ■ A little interested ■ Quite interested ■ Very interested

But after taking part in the projects, 50% of ākonga and students said they enjoyed their project a lot, with a further 29% enjoying it quite a lot (nearly four in five ākonga and students overall). Furthermore, nearly two in three ākonga and student agree a lot that they want more creative projects in future, with another 18% wanting them quite a lot – (just over three quarters of ākonga and students overall).

Overall, did you enjoy taking part in this project?

| 7% | 5% | 9% | 29% | 50% |

Do you want more creative projects like this in the future?

| 6% | 3% | 14% | 18% | 59% |

Base: All student survey responses n=153

■ No response ■ Not at all ■ A little bit ■ Quite a lot ■ A lot

Creatives in Schools makes a meaningful difference for ākonga and students

This section of the report explores the difference the Creatives in Schools project made to ākonga and students.

In Round 1 we were able to develop case studies in two schools with limited contact with ākonga and students (Spee & Oakden, 2021a, 2021b). But Round 4, was the first time the evaluators were able to have extensive contact with many ākonga and students. As part of the survey design, we included a series of retrospective pretest-posttest questions rating their perspective before and after participation to generate paired t-test data for the 153 ākonga and students surveyed. We did this to have more precision in assessing whether there were any demonstrable and meaningful changes in ākonga and students' attitudes and beliefs before and after taking part in their Creatives in Schools project.

Round 4, was the first time the evaluators had extensive contact with many ākonga and students.

Analysis of the extent of the change before and after taking part in the projects shows that real, meaningful shifts occurred for students across the different aspects.

- In summary, the biggest shifts for the pre and post rating questions were for *trying new things out, working alongside others, and voicing ideas to other students.*
- A third of ākonga and students had improved ratings aspects of engagement for asking a teacher for help, *asking questions at school, and knowing different ways to solve problems.*
- For some the programme also *helped with a sense of belonging:* a quarter felt they *could belong more at school* and were *valued and respected more* by the teachers.
- Some ākonga and students said that if there were more projects like these, they would consider coming back to school rather than leaving.

> *"If we could have [a project like we had this year] like Year 13, all of Year 13 then I would come to school."* (Pacific student)

> *"Then I would take art because then I would come to school."* (Pacific student)
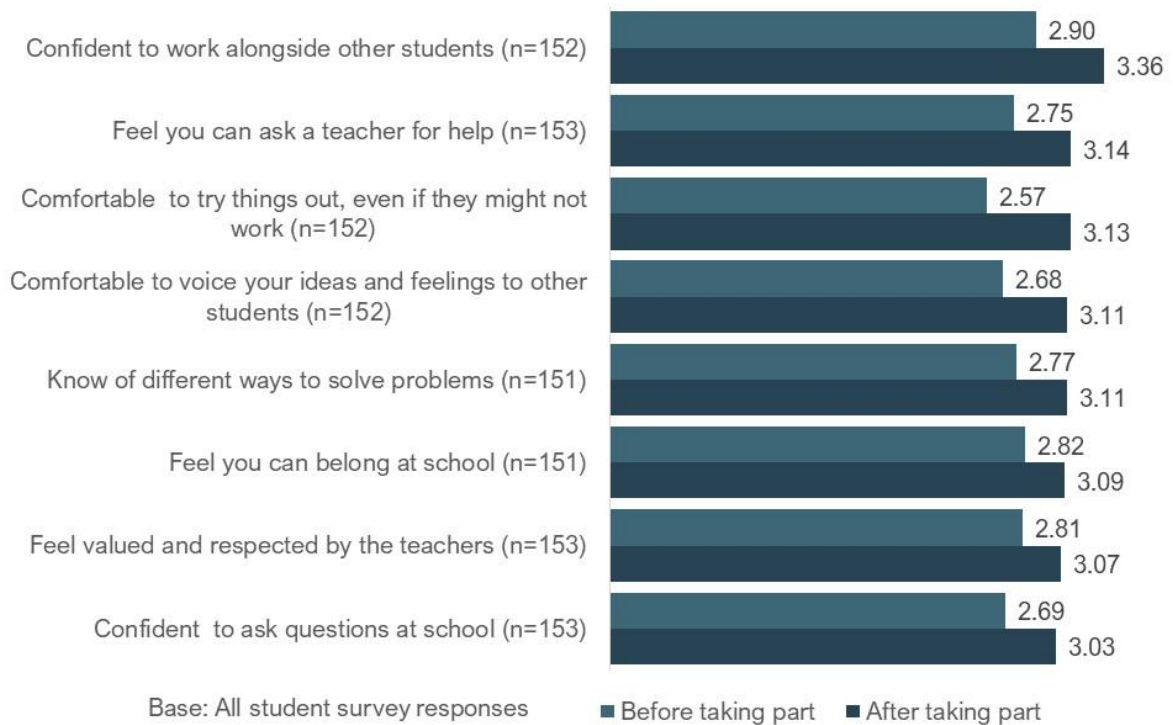
Exploring the level of change apparent from taking part in Creatives in Schools

In this section of the report, we show the different ways we looked at ākonga and student attitudes and beliefs.

Comparing mean scores for ratings before and after taking part in the projects

The chart below shows the mean scores for a range of ratings from 1 – 4[8] before and after ākonga and students took part in Creatives in Schools. What is clear is that ākonga and students gave more positive ratings on all aspects after taking part in the programme.

Mean scores for ratings before and after taking part in Creatives in Schools[9]

	Before taking part	After taking part
Confident to work alongside other students (n=152)	2.90	3.36
Feel you can ask a teacher for help (n=153)	2.75	3.14
Comfortable to try things out, even if they might not work (n=152)	2.57	3.13
Comfortable to voice your ideas and feelings to other students (n=152)	2.68	3.11
Know of different ways to solve problems (n=151)	2.77	3.11
Feel you can belong at school (n=151)	2.82	3.09
Feel valued and respected by the teachers (n=153)	2.81	3.07
Confident to ask questions at school (n=153)	2.69	3.03

Base: All student survey responses   ■ Before taking part   ■ After taking part

Extent of improvements in ratings from before to after

Next, we reviewed all the ratings given to see where ākonga and students gave a higher after than before rating. Noting of course that some ākonga could not give a higher rating as they had given the highest rating for the before rating.

The biggest shifts where ākonga and students have higher afterwards were for *trying new things out, working alongside others,* and *voicing ideas to other ākonga and students.*

A third of ākonga and students gave improved ratings for aspects of engagement such as *asking a teacher for help, asking questions at school* and *knowing different ways to solve problems.*

For some, the programme also helped with a sense of belonging: a quarter improved their ratings for feeling they *could belong more at school* and *were valued and respected more by the teachers*. For this last statement many ākonga and students

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[8] The mean sores are from survey ratings where: Not at all =1, A little bit =2, Quite a lite =3 and A lot = 4,

commented that they already had a good relationship with their teachers, but even after the project there were still 22% who only rated this aspect not at all or a little bit.

Those giving higher and lower ratings after taking part in the projects
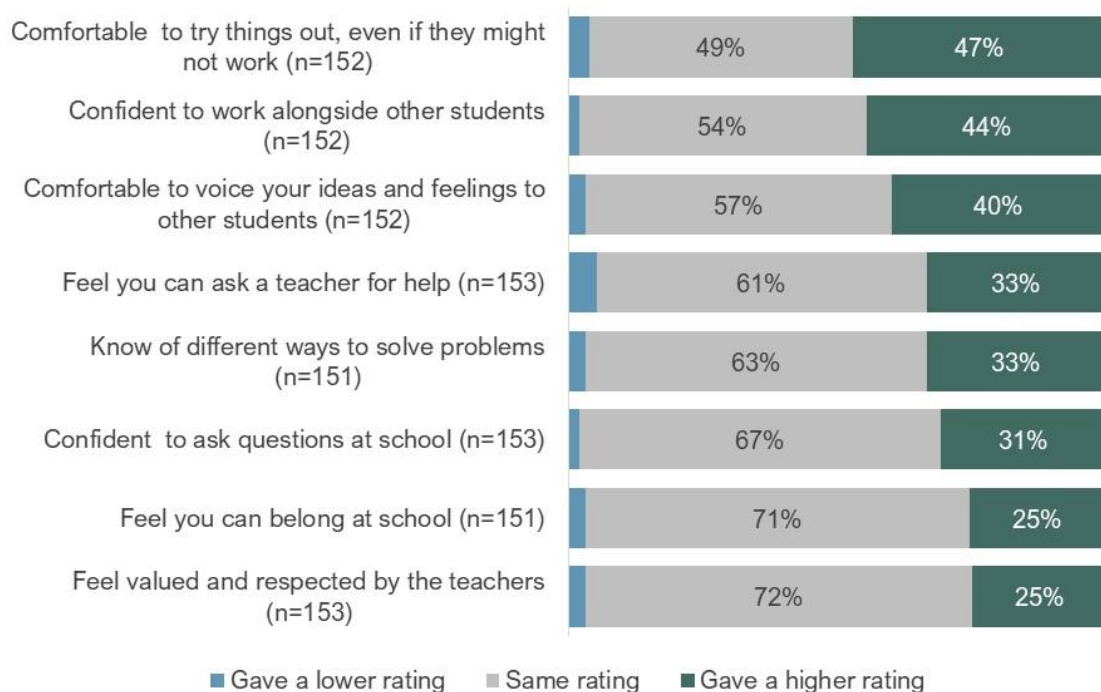
Base: All student survey responses

The shifts are meaningful in a statistical sense

We also checked if the changes observed were meaningful in a statistical sense. We calculated the mean score of the change between the before and after measures. We also calculated the confidence intervals. (See the chart overleaf). For a result to be meaningful, the blue dots representing the means and the grey bars that show the confidence intervals need to be above 0.

For all statements, as is clear in the chart, there were meaningful changes in ākonga and students rating after taking part in the programme. As well the confidence intervals were similar for all statements. These results clearly signal ākonga and students had improved attitudes and behaviours after taking part in a Creatives in Schools project.

The biggest shifts were for *trying new things out, working alongside others,* and *voicing ideas to other ākonga and students.*

Next were improved ratings for aspects of engagement such as *asking a teacher for help, asking questions at school*, and *knowing different ways to solve problems.*

However, there were also meaningful shifts for the programme also helped with a sense of belonging: a quarter improved their ratings for feeling they *could belong more at school* and *were valued and respected more by the teachers*.

Mean score and confidence intervals of the change between before and after taking part in the projects
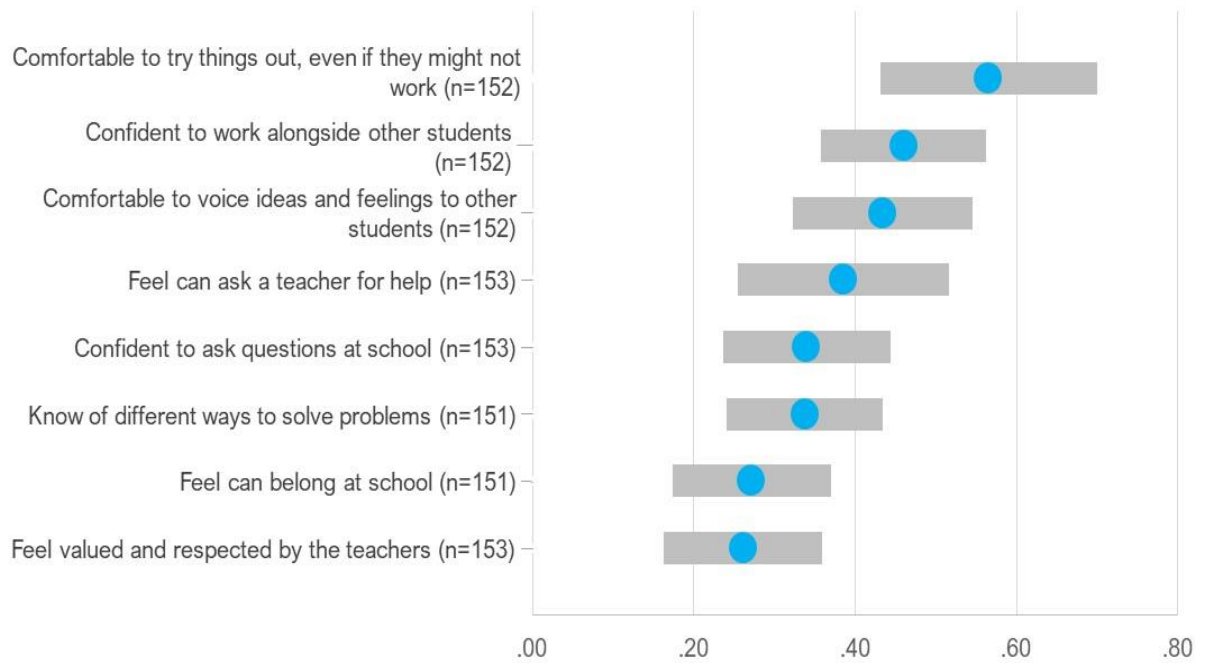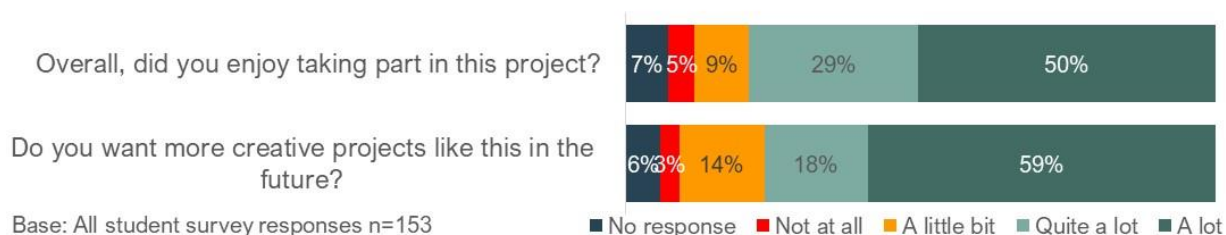

These shifts were also confirmed in the analysis of qualitative comments where the following key themes were evident. Ākonga and students said that they:

- enjoyed being an active participant in class

- valued the ability to explore their identity, language, and culture, and they felt valued and respected

- told their stories and shared their experiences in ways that resonated with them

- wanted to come to school

- gained a sense of achievement as they learned and mastered new things

- experienced improved relationships and related better to others.

Aspects that didn't work so well

This section of the report focuses on the few aspects of the implementation and delivery of the projects that did not work so well for ākonga and students. In this section we first present feedback from ākonga and students who gave ratings of *not at all or a little bit* for:

- enjoyed taking part in the projects
- want more creative projects like this.

Overall, did you enjoy taking part in this project? | 7% | 5% | 9% | 29% | 50%

Do you want more creative projects like this in the future? | 6% | 3% | 14% | 18% | 59%

Base: All student survey responses n=153

■ No response ■ Not at all ■ A little bit ■ Quite a lot ■ A lot

Most ākonga and students who **only enjoyed the project a little bit** still made positive comments about specific things they enjoyed about the projects.

> *"Felt more connected."* (Student comment)

> *"I learnt how to do things I didn't know."* (Student comment)

The few other comments were:

> *"Not a lot has changed personally. I think that I have learnt a lot about how NCEA functions for the arts."* (Student comment)

> *"Not much has changed."* (Student comment)

Some of the sessions were fast-paced, busy, and noisy places. At times this was unsettling as these two examples show:

> *"[I'm] having more social anxiety than ever."* (Student comment)

> *"I don't know, I didn't really like it because of all of the yelling, and it made me feel like I couldn't ask the teacher for help."* (Student comment)

Those who **did not enjoy the projects at all** still got benefits from the project in some cases:

> *"My confidence in my ability to produce structured and entertaining writing has grown as I found the process of writing the script after clearly planning characters, settings and relationships etc. easy."* (Student comment)

> *"I know I shouldn't be a script writer."* (Student comment)

However, a few ākonga and students didn't feel they got a lot of benefit from the projects.

> *"I dislike Fridays more [because that is when we do this project]."* (Student comment)

> *"I kinda like [project] but not a lot – its kinda boring."* (Student comment)

> *"Nothing has changed."* (Student comment)

Other challenges for the projects observed by the evaluators

During discussions with ākonga and students it was clear that there was some attrition on a few projects, with some ākonga and students pulling out.

Prioritising contracting probity over ākonga access to a project: In one instance the person offering the creative practice worked for the school. MOE considered it 'double dipping' to fund them to run the project inside school hours. This was despite them drawing on specialist knowledge not normally used in their day job. Therefore, MOE required the school to run the project outside the normal classroom hours in the weekends. In this instance contractual probity requirements were prioritised over ākonga need. The upshot was that about half of the ākonga withdrew from the project as it clashed with weekend sporting commitments. Here is a comment from one of the ākonga who took part in this project.

> *Some of the noho [for the] ones who stayed it was like straight after school, [we had to] come here and it's like we didn't leave school for like the whole week basically. We were here for the whole weekend and the next day straight back at school. It's kind of hard.* (Māori student)

Intensity of projects: In some instances, projects were linked to NCEA, and had a heavy workload. At times the projects asked ākonga and students to dig deep within themselves. Theatre practitioners reflected they also experience the need to dig deep quite regularly. Therefore, the evaluators viewed the student's own 'heroes journey', digging deep and experiencing benefits from doing so as a positive outcome.

> *"It was voluntary, but we didn't really know what we were getting into… everybody that was in the class was in it apart from I think if I'm remembering correctly two people ended up not doing it just because it was stressful, and they weren't managing it… It was very stressful and a lot of us were actually doubtful that it was going to be a fulfilling piece of theatre… up until the last couple of days before we were on stage. Then we were starting to realise that, 'Yeah, this is actually quite good.'"* (Student comment)

As noted above, some ākonga and students are experiencing social anxiety and while the projects worked well for many, there were some who found them challenging. This indicates that careful project planning and management is needed to ensure that projects are well thought-out for the range of ākonga and students.

KEQ 3: Learnings going forward

Learnings from ākonga and students from Round 4

In 2023, for Round 4 we collected survey feedback from 153 ākonga and students and spoke in groups face-to-face with 57 ākonga and students. From our contact with ākonga and students we can confirm that the Creatives in School programme is delivering the benefits to ākonga and students that we had heard about from kaiako, teachers and creative practitioners in previous years. But we also noticed something more in the data that we had suspected for some time but could not confirm until now.

> Creatives in Schools is a powerful programme that helps ākonga and students want to come to school and engage in learning more.

We noticed that Creatives in Schools is a powerful programme that helps ākonga and students want to come to school and engage in learning more. Furthermore, we found similarities in what the ākonga and student told us in our surveys and interviews to findings reported in two rigorous research projects undertaken by the Education Review Office *Missing out: Why aren't our children going to school?* (2022) and *Attendance: Getting back to school* (2023).

In *Attendance: Getting back to school* (2023) the Education Review Office found that **learner experience at school impacts on attendance** in the following ways:

"For learners the most important attitudes are:

- *if they think going to school every day is important*

- *if they see school as helpful for their future.*

What happens in school matters as well. For learners the most important school-based factors are:

- *how hard they find their schoolwork*

- *if they can participate in activities*

- *if they like or don't like the people in their class*

- *if they like or don't like their teacher(s)*

- *if they like or are interested in what they are being taught." (Education Review Office, 2023, p. 4)*

In *Missing out: Why aren't our children going to school?* (2022), the Education Review Office identified five critical **areas in which to increase attendance**. The two that are the most applicable to Creatives in Schools are: (Area 3) *making learning more engaging*, and (Area 4) *making school a great place to be*.

For "make learning more engaging" the Education Review Office suggested the following areas of focus.

- *"Understand learners' interests and what at school they find engaging or disengaging*
- *Review the way in which teaching and learning is organised, drawing on learner's perspectives*
- *Help learners to see how subjects are relevant and valuable to them*
- *Take early action when learners are disengaging from learning and support them to re-engage and catch up." (Education Review Office, 2022, p. 5)*

For "make school a great place to be" the Education Review Office described the following actions.

- *"Understand how learners find the school environment and identify issues early*
- *Use proven tools to tackle bullying, racism, and discrimination*
- *Provide access to mental health support for those learners who need it" (Education Review Office, 2022, p. 6)*

We developed some attendance and engagement criteria based on these findings and reanalysed some of the key themes emerging from our data against them. **We found that Creatives in Schools is a powerful programme that supports ākonga and students to want to come to school and for schools to make learning more engaging**, as outlined on pages 43-50.

We were expecting to see ākonga and students performing well in the arts. But improvements for ākonga and students extend well beyond this into other aspects of learning: in skill development such as writing, speaking, and problem-solving. Some ākonga and students described how the projects will have long-lasting impact and were powerful learning opportunities for them. They described improvements in confidence building towards learning, engaging with others, and cultural competence and knowledge.

For some, the project experience was intense and therefore projects need to be well thought-through, planned, and managed. The current application process ensures kaiako teachers and creative practitioners plan carefully to ensure the engagement is manageable for ākonga and students or a few may withdraw from the class. It should be noted that the evaluators did not find a lot of instances of ākonga and student withdrawal – maybe one or two per project. The exception to this was the project run over several weekends, where they started with 35 ākonga and only 17 finished the project because the sessions clashed with sport.

Drawing together the learnings collected over the years

Sound governance has kept the programme on track

An important aspect of the Creatives in Schools programme was the cross-agency working group, a collaboration between MOE, Manatū Taonga – Ministry for Culture and Heritage and Creative New Zealand – Toi Aotearoa. This programme was enriched by having input from the different sectors. A joint perspective on the programme offered guidance for the needs of a range of priority groups – ākonga and students (as already documented), kaiako, teachers and schools, creative practitioners, and whānau and parents.

In the 2022 Round 3 Creatives in Schools evaluation report (Oakden & Spee, 2023) we observed that Creatives in Schools provided a powerful example of how to deliver to the school arts curriculum in the 21st century. We found the programme delivered important benefits to ākonga and students, kaiako and teachers, schools, creative practitioners, and communities.

In this section we focus on what we learned from the kaiako, teachers, schools, and the creative practitioners in the earlier reporting, specifically:

- kaiako and teacher perspectives on how they embedded learnings
- the ways the programme supported portfolio career development for many creative practitioners
- how home–school partnerships were strengthened.

We also draw on an internal report developed in December 2023 (Oakden, 2023) which provided detailed feedback to MOE on the extent to which the current administrative processes are clear, easy-to-understand and complete, quick to complete, and easy to upload. For this report we obtained feedback from 119 lead teachers taking part in Round 4 of the Creatives in Schools programme.

Kaiako and teachers' perspectives

Kaiako and teachers reported being more confident in designing and delivering teaching and learning projects that engage the creativity of ākonga and students. In 2022, around two-thirds of lead teachers surveyed said they were now more able to design teaching and learning projects that engage the creativity of ākonga and students across the learning areas of the curriculum.

Kaiako and teachers valued the programme to a high or very high degree for

- providing a valuable learning experience (86%)
- providing other teachers with a valuable learning experience (62%).

Some schools were embedding learnings and planning to build on them in curriculum development and programme offerings and said to a high or very high degree:

- extent the school likely to reuse or build on some of the learnings from earlier Creatives in Schools projects (78%)

- extent personally likely to reuse or build on some of the learnings from earlier Creatives in Schools projects (75%)
- extent to which the school has a plan to embed the learnings going forward (61%)

Here is an example of how one teacher was reusing what they learned from the creative practitioner.

> *"Working alongside our creative [name] was a really valuable experience for me. I have gained a range of technical skills. I have gained confidence and ideas about ways of engaging with community. Since starting this project I have used the skills and experiences to run community engagements alongside other teachers. We have had a whānau Friday with poi making and kai. We are planning a Diwali art afternoon this week. The project has given me the confidence to start a sculpture garden with a Matariki theme."* (Lead teacher)

There was a good buy-in to the programme, with many schools saying they would recommend the project to others, and 85% of lead teachers surveyed said they would reapply for funding. Therefore, the evaluators rated the kaiako and teacher outcomes in schools very good overall.

Creative practitioner perspectives

Creatives in Schools also successfully provided opportunities for creative practitioners to have relevant work and develop personally and professionally. While many were already well-established, there were encouraging signs that through Creatives in Schools, some creative practitioners were developing more sustainable portfolio-careers. Creative practitioners in 2022 said to a high or very high degree that Creatives in Schools:

- provided valuable creative work experience (71%)
- fitted in well with other creative work commitments (59%)
- provided income that was a fair reward for the time spent (50%)
- created other creative employment opportunities in schools (48%)
- contributed to building a sustainable creative career (46%)
- created other creative employment opportunities outside of schools (27%).

Here are the kinds of comments made by established creatives, ones becoming established and creatives starting out.

> *"It was just a hugely beneficial project to be a part of, and it helped me continue to build the education side of my portfolio which I'm really interested in continuing to build. I want to provide a professional experience for the students to be a part of in a school setting. This project helped be do that."* (Established creative)

> *"I received a huge amount of positive support, and it gave me confidence as a practitioner to apply myself into other areas, to build on my portfolio and extend from this into further work projects.*" (Creative becoming established)

> *"There have been so many positive learning opportunities for me this year through the Creatives programme. Working with each school to produce a work of art that we are all proud of has been extremely rewarding."*
> (Creative starting out)

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Creatives in Schools supported some creatives to have a sustainable *portfolio career* that rewards their specialist creative expertise. *Portfolio careers* are where creative practitioners use their creative skills in a range of different ways to earn a living, including creating original art, teaching or mentoring and collaborating with others.

A Creatives in Schools project was an important anchor point setting up a workstream for the year for some creatives whose careers are emerging (4%) or becoming established (26%). Some established creatives found the programme also helped sustain their *portfolio careers*, while others ran the projects for other reasons:

- to mentor younger creatives
- to give back to the community because they love what they do and want to get their art out to the community
- for some full-time artists, Creatives in Schools provided a research and development opportunity – to be creative and explore new ideas
- some experienced creatives designed projects that are more expensive to run, and Creatives in Schools helped resource this.

There were some excellent examples of career development, with only isolated instances of projects going differently from what was intended. Therefore, the evaluators rated creative practitioner outcomes very good overall.

Views on strengthening home-school partnerships

In the Round 3 Creatives in Schools evaluation report, we observed the programme has successfully provided some opportunities to create and strengthen home–school partnerships. There was very good evidence of some active participation from whānau and parents in the learning experiences of some ākonga and students. However, this evidence came from teachers, creatives and observations from the regional coordinators. Therefore, the evaluators gave a good rating overall based on the evidence to hand.

We saw where whānau and parents benefitted from involvement with Creatives in Schools in a range of different ways. Their participation might not be considered "active participation and planning" in creative learning experiences of ākonga and students but was valuable none-the-less. We did not obtain any direct feedback from whānau and parents in that round of interviews.

- Teachers told us they are reaching out to whānau and parents.
- We heard stories about involvement, engagement, and changes in relationships between home and school.
- In some cases, whānau and parents worked alongside ākonga and students on projects.

- Creative practitioners and lead teachers reflected that it was important to involve whānau in a way appropriate to the project – either side by side or watching practice. In some instances, whānau had never done these activities before. Thus, the projects provided opportunities for whānau and parents to see their children taking part in positive, pro-social activities.

- The age of the ākonga and student also impacted on whānau and parent involvement – whānau were not as involved at secondary school level as they were at primary school level.

Adjusting project administration for a business-as-usual programme

Creatives in Schools projects are large creative projects run in kura and schools that typically take up to 80 hours of creative contact time with ākonga and students over one or two terms. A good alignment between the lead teacher and the creative must exist to run the project well. Projects also need to be well-planned to help keep them on track. Planning includes a having clear shared vision and outcomes, appropriate scoping, developing accurate budgets and timetabling to fit with other school commitments.

While Creatives in Schools set up strong administrative processes, feedback from earlier evaluation reports suggested that the application and milestone reporting processes were quite time and effort-intensive for schools. A separate research project in 2023 checked on the extent of these views. We found that overall, the administrative processes for Creatives in Schools support schools delivering high-quality projects. However, the processes are time-intensive, and can be complicated and challenging for around one in five lead teachers.

We suggest reducing the administrative processes may make it easier for English medium and Māori medium schools[10] to apply to the fund and report on project progress. However, in adjusting the programme application and reporting processes, it is advisable to retain some of the safeguards of the current procedures in planning and accountability and making changes is likely to need a delicate balance. Still, seeking to minimise unnecessary time spent on reporting activity by both lead teachers, creatives, and MOE is worthwhile.

Conclusion

Drawing on the findings from the projects over the four years, we conclude that Creatives in Schools makes a worthwhile and valuable contribution to the ākonga and students in supporting them to attend, engage, learn and experience wellbeing at kura and school. The programme is well researched. The implementation processes are well developed and sound. It is worth continuing to invest in the programme.

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[10] We note another tranche of work is planned early in 2024 to better support adaptations to suit Māori Medium schools.

Appendix A: Detailed evaluation approach

Introduction

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga – Ministry of Education commissioned this evaluation for the Creatives in Schools project for Round 4. A cross-agency working group had an interest in this programme including MOE, Manatū Taonga – Ministry for Culture and Heritage and Creative New Zealand –Toi Aotearoa.
The Creatives in Schools programme funds professional artists and creative practitioners to partner with kura and schools to share specialist artistic knowledge and creative practice with ākonga and students.

The programme has undertaken evaluations each year of implementation:

- **For Round 1**, the focus was on assessing the implementation in 34 schools and included two case studies with whānau and ākonga

- **For Round 2 and 3**, the focus was on assessing the implementation and outcomes for kaiako and teachers and creative practitioners. There was an intention to contact ākonga and students, but this was not possible at the time.

- **In this Round 4**, the evaluation focused on collecting ākonga and student voice across 8 schools from 153 ākonga and students to better understand the impact of the programme for them. A key area of focus included exploring the extent the programme showed sustained impact for ākonga and students, including Māori, Pacific and learning support.

We used an evaluation-specific methodology to provide robust findings of practical value to MOE. This approach included using Key Evaluation Questions and performance criteria to help focus the evaluation and judge the quality and value of the programme. The evaluation design was strengths-based. The findings in this summary draw mainly on the data collected for Round 4 between 12 September and 28 November 2023. Where we draw on data from earlier Creatives in Schools reports the Round drawn from is cited in the text

Summary of data collected

Target audience	Data collection approach
Ākonga and student survey – 153 responses	• 123 pen and paper completion • 30 online completions
Ākonga and student interviews – 57 interviews	• 14 individual interviews • 7 group interviews

Teachers or school staff and creative practitioners' interviews	• 8 Interviews with 15 lead teachers, classroom teachers or creatives-
Milestone reports	• Final milestone reports from 8 schools.

Research method

We approached 12 schools to take part in the Round 4 evaluation. We purposefully selected a sample of schools to:

- provide a national spread
- showcase different creative practices
- include Māori, Pacific and high and complex needs ākonga and students
- include schools that were finishing projects in Terms 3 or 4.

Ten out of 12 schools originally approached agreed to take part, but fieldwork finally took place in 8 schools - a 67% response rate.
School visits by the evaluators to seven schools took between one-and-a-half-hours and half a day. During the visit we:

- ran a student survey to the ākonga and students present in 7 schools
- conducted either short individual or group interviews with the students in the classroom
- viewed part of the creative activity in 4 out of 7 schools.

Ākonga and student survey

We used a retrospective pretest-posttest survey design, where ākonga and students were asked after they took part in their project how they felt before and afterwards for certain aspects. We piloted the survey with five students and made changes to the design based on student feedback. Ākonga and students of intermediate and secondary school age filled in the survey.

The evaluators mostly administered the surveys face-to-face. Ākonga and students mostly filled in paper-based surveys. Data collection took place between 12 September and 28 November 2023.
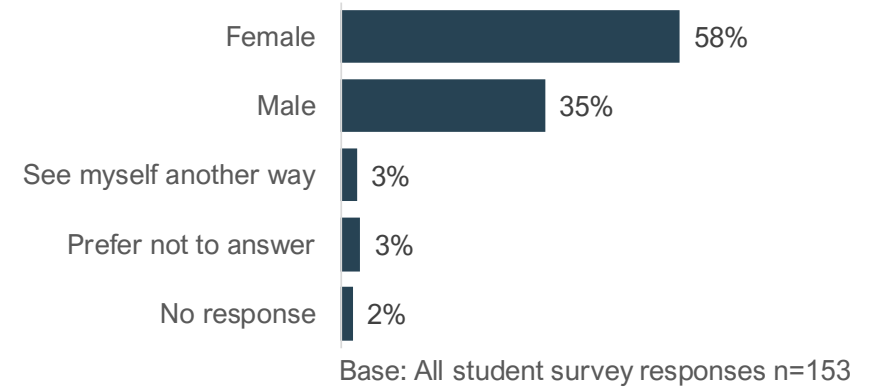
We then entered the results into SurveyMonkey for quick data entry. Some schools also opted to use the SurveyMonkey online version of the survey so students who were not present on the day we visited could also give their feedback.

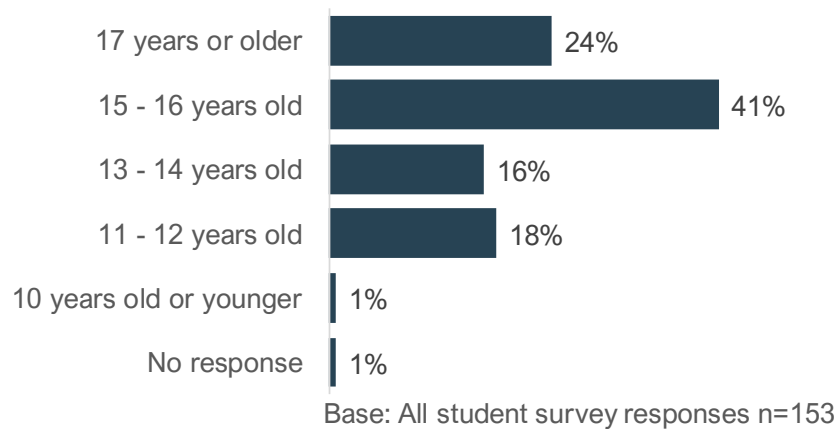# Profile of ākonga and students taking part in the survey
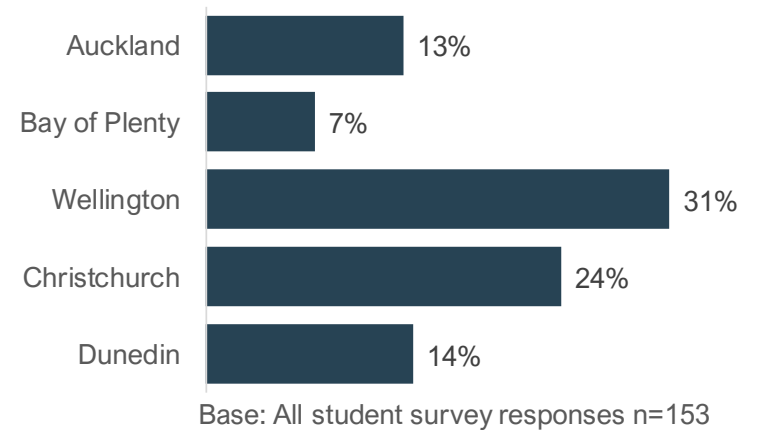
Good range of ākonga and student ethnicities

Ethnicity	Percentage
NZ European /Pākehā	62%
Māori	20%
All Pacific	16%
Chinese	2%
Indian	1%
Other Asian	6%
Other European	13%
Other	2%
Prefer not to say	3%
No response	3%

Base: All student survey responses n=153

Most students of secondary school age

Age	Percentage
17 years or older	24%
15 - 16 years old	41%
13 - 14 years old	16%
11 - 12 years old	18%
10 years old or younger	1%
No response	1%

Base: All student survey responses n=153

More females than males responding (due to sample of more girls only schools)

Gender	Percentage
Female	58%
Male	35%
See myself another way	3%
Prefer not to answer	3%
No response	2%

Base: All student survey responses n=153

Regions ākonga and students come from

Region	Percentage
Auckland	13%
Bay of Plenty	7%
Wellington	31%
Christchurch	24%
Dunedin	14%

Base: All student survey responses n=153

10

Data analysis

We used Excel for the more detailed data analysis as follows.

- Traditional descriptive statistics show the general shape of the responses.

- For the retrospective pre-test post-test analysis, we first focused on the mean shifts (changes). We used a paired t-test.

- Analysis focused on confidence intervals (rather than hypothesis tests and p values) to help communicate the size of the shifts and the uncertainty around the estimates of means.

- We also coded the open-ended survey responses to identify key themes.

Qualitative interviews

Qualitative interviews with ākonga and students mostly occurred during the school visits. In total we spoke with 57 students either in individual interviews or in group discussions.

Interviews with ākonga and students varied in length and ranged from 5 minutes to an hour in length. Some interviews were with individuals while others were with groups of students. We conducted two student interviews on Zoom.
Interviews at the school catering for students with high and complex needs were with the deputy principal, three classroom teachers, and the creative practitioner.
We audio recorded and later transcribed all qualitative interviews. We analysed the qualitative data in Dedoose to extract and allow for quick identification of key themes for reporting.

Other data

The final milestone reports from each of the schools is an extra source of data for this report.

Limitations of the evaluation data collection

For the Round 4 data which most of this analysis is based on, there are more females than males in the sample, due to including two all-girls schools in the sample and one all-boys school. There are also fewer respondents from Auckland than planned. Two schools that would have given us higher numbers of ākonga and students in Auckland did not participate. As fieldwork occurred late in Term 3 and in Term 4, and there was limited sample, and we were unable to replace these schools.

Appendix B: Evaluative criteria for attendance and engagement drawn from ERO literature

Improving attendance criteria

In the following table, on the left we outline the aspects of learner experience at school that impact on attendance according to ERO (2023) reporting. On the right-hand side, we translate these findings into evaluative criteria. We then use these criteria to review the evidence we have at hand to assess how well the Creatives in Schools programme supports learner attendance.

In *Attendance: Getting back to school* (2023*)* ERO found *that learner experience at school impacts on attendance* in the following ways:	Criteria developed to assess how well Creatives in Schools supports learner attendance:
"*For learners the most important attitudes are:* • *if they think going to school every day is important* • *if they see school as helpful for their future.* *What happens in school matters as well. For learners the most important school-based factors are:* • *how hard they find their schoolwork* • *if they can participate in activities* • *if they like or don't like the people in their class* • *if they like or don't like their teacher(s)* • *if they like or are interested in what they are being taught.*" (Education Review Office, 2023, p. 4)	To what extent do the Creatives in Schools projects help ākonga and students: • see school and education as useful for the present and future • experience learning success • participate in the projects • develop quality relationships with peers • develop quality relationships with kaiako, teachers and creative practitioners • access relevant and interesting curriculum

Making learning more engaging criteria

Again, as previously, on the left we outline the aspects of learner experience at school that impact on *making learning more engaging* according to the ERO (2022) reporting. These are Area 3 *"make learning more engaging"* and Area 4 *"make school a great place to be".* On the right hand-side we translate these findings into evaluative criteria. We then use these criteria to review the available evidence to assess how well Creatives in Schools programme supports making learning more engaging.

In *Missing out: Why aren't our children going to school?* (2022), ERO identified five critical areas in which to increase attendance.	Criteria developed to assess how well Creatives in Schools supports learner attendance:
Area 3 was "make learning more engaging" which included focussing in the following areas: • *"Understand learners' interests and what at school they find engaging or disengaging* • *Review the way in which teaching and learning is organised, drawing on learner's perspectives* • *Help learners to see how subjects are relevant and valuable to them* • *Take early action when learners are disengaging from learning and support them to re-engage and catch up."* (Education Review Office, 2022, p. 5)	To what extent do the Creatives in Schools projects help ākonga and students: • have an interest in what they are learning • spend time with friends and make new friends • experience a variety of teaching approaches that suit their different learning styles • better engage in school
Area 4 was "make school a great place to be" which covered the following areas. • *"Understand how learners find the school environment and identify issues early* • *Use proven tools to tackle bullying, racism, and discrimination* • *Provide access to mental health support for those learners who need it"* (Education Review Office, 2022, p. 6)	• experience a welcoming environment • experience a safe and positive social environment • enjoy activities that are inclusive and affirming of their culture • enjoy activities that support their mental health and wellbeing

Appendix C: Generic grading rubric

Generic grading rubric used for assessing levels of performance

Levels of performance		Description
Excellent: (Always)	●●●●●	Clear example of exemplary performance of the programme or great practice: no weaknesses of any real consequence
Very good: (Almost Always)	●●●●○	Very good to excellent performance of the programme on almost all aspects; strong overall but not exemplary; no weaknesses of any real note.
Good: (Mostly, with some exceptions)	●●●○○	Reasonably good performance of the programme overall; might have a few slight weaknesses.
Emerging: (Sometimes, with quite a few exceptions)	●●○○○	Fair performance of the programme, some serious, but non-fatal weaknesses on a few aspects.
Poor: Never (or occasionally with clear weaknesses evident)	●○○○○	Clear evidence of unsatisfactory functioning; serious weaknesses across the board or on crucial aspects of the programme.

Source: Adapted from Oakden, J., & McKegg, K. (2011). *Waste Minimisation Act implementation: evaluation of stakeholder perceptions*. Wellington: Kinnect Group. (p.19).

Appendix D: Glossary

Māori concept	Explanation
ākonga	Māori student
atua	God
iwi	tribe
kaiako	teacher
karakia	prayer
kaupapa Motuhake	philosophy of self-determination, independence, sovereignty, authority
kōauau	flute
koauau ponga ihu	a nose flute made from a very small hue (gourd), sometimes intricately carved. Has a sweet, delicate tone likened to a seabird's call, or the sound of wind in treetops.
kōrero	speak
Kotahitanga	collaboration and working together with shared goals and aspirations
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge, Māori way of being and engaging in the world
noho marae	overnight marae stay
rangatahi ki te rangatira	promoting opportunities for ākonga to act with agency and authority and express themselves in traditional art forms.
taonga	treasure, anything prized or considered to be of value. Can include socially or culturally valuable objects, resources, phenomenon, ideas and techniques.
taonga pūoro	traditional Māori musical instruments
te ao Māori	emphasises the importance of relationships between nature and people. A holistic worldview. Focuses on interconnections and is grounded in tikanga customary values and lore and mātauranga knowledge.
te reo Māori me ona tikanga	The Māori language and Māori cultural practice
tikanga-a-taonga pūoro	protocols for using traditional Māori musical instruments
turangawaewae	domicile, home, home turf
wānanga	learning
whakamana	empowering ākonga in their identity and culture
whakapapa	genealogy, cultural identity, family tree
whakatauki	proverb, motto, slogan
whānau	family
whanaungatanga	building and maintaining positive, respectful relationships
wharenui	Māori meeting house
whenua	land, ground, country, region, afterbirth, placenta

Pacific concept	Explanation
Aiga	family
Fono	meeting
Pacific talanoa	Pacific ways of talking and learning

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Pragmatica

How Creatives in Schools supports ākonga and student attendance and engagement

Supplementary findings from the 2023 ākonga and student survey

Prepared by Judy Oakden and Kellie Spee

March 2024

Pragmatica

Report information

Prepared for   Te Mahau, Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga, The Ministry of Education; Manatū Taonga, The Ministry of Culture and Heritage; Creative New Zealand, Toi Aotearoa

Prepared by   Judy Oakden, Pragmatica Limited

Kellie Spee, Kellie Spee Consulting Limited.

Evaluation team

Pragmatica Limited held the contract for this evaluation. Judy Oakden and Kellie Spee undertook the evaluation in consultation with the Ministry of Education project management team.

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Disclaimer

Contents

Key takeouts

Creatives in Schools is a high performing, well run, programme that has consistently helped raise ākonga and student attendance and engagement over the past four years.

This supplementary analysis identifies that projects run as part of the Creatives in Schools programme help improve learner attendance and help schools make learning more engaging. We make this claim based on criteria drawn from the Education Review Office (ERO's) detailed research into raising student attendance and engagement (2022, 2023). That research identified the key factors that support ākonga and students wanting to come to school and staying in school.

This document is for policy makers who want to understand how *Creatives in Schools* contributes to learner attendance and engagement.

Creatives in Schools projects help ākonga and students **want to come to school** and the evaluators **rate this aspect very good**. There is evidence ākonga and students attending Creatives in Schools projects:

- see school and education as useful for the present and future

- experience learning success

- engage in meaningful learning

- develop quality relationships with peers

- develop quality relationships with kaiako, teachers and creative practitioners

- access relevant and interesting curriculum.

Creatives in Schools projects help schools offer an environment that **makes learning more engaging for ākonga and students** and the evaluators also **rate this aspect very good**. There is lots of evidence that Creatives in Schools projects help ākonga and students:

- have an interest in what they are learning

- spend positive time with friends and make new friends

- experience a variety of teaching approaches that suit their different learning styles

- better engage in school

- experience a welcoming environment

- experience a safe and positive social environment

- enjoy activities that support their mental health and wellbeing

- enjoy activities that are inclusive and affirming of their culture.

"It's fun. Who doesn't want to be doing what they love and having the chance to improve at school. Learning from each other as well. That's good." (Student comment)

We conclude that **Creatives in Schools makes a worthwhile and valuable contribution** to ākonga and students in supporting them to attend and thrive at kura and school. The **programme is well researched**. The implementation processes are well developed and sound. **The programme offers schools a useful and proven approach to engaging with and keeping ākonga and students in kura and school.**

Introduction

Overview

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga – Ministry of Education (MOE) commissioned this evaluation of the Creatives in Schools programme for Round 4. A cross-agency working group have an interest in this programme including Te Tāhuhu (MOE), Manatū Taonga – Ministry for Culture and Heritage (MCH) and Creative New Zealand – Toi Aotearoa (CNZ).

The Creatives in Schools programme funds professional artists and creative practitioners to partner with kura and schools to share specialist artistic knowledge and creative practice with ākonga and students. Projects include up to 100 hours of contact time from a creative practitioner and are designed to meet the needs of their ākonga and students.

Commencing in 2020, the programme has been evaluated each year:

- **Round 1**: assessed the implementation in 34 schools and included two case studies with whānau and families and ākonga and students

- **For Round 2 and 3:** assessed the implementation and outcomes for kaiako and teachers and creative practitioners. We intended to contact ākonga and students, but this was not possible due to COVID-19.

- **Round 4**: this year's evaluation focused on collecting ākonga and student voice across 8 schools from 153 learners to better understand the impact of the programme for them. A key area of focus included exploring the extent the programme showed sustained impact for all ākonga and students, including Māori, Pacific and learning support.

An evaluation-specific methodology (Davidson, 2005) provided robust findings of practical value to the cross-agency working group. This approach included using Key Evaluation Questions and performance criteria to help focus the evaluation and judge the quality and value of the programme. The evaluation design was strengths-based. The findings in this summary draw mainly on the data collected for Round 4 between 12 September and 28 November 2023. Where data from earlier Creatives in Schools reports is drawn on, this is cited in the text. For more information on the research approach please visit Appendix A.

Evaluative criteria

This supplementary analysis provides evidence of how the Creatives in Schools programme supports attendance and engagement. The evaluators drew on two research reports from the Education Review Office, *Missing out: Why aren't our children going to school? (ERO, 2022) Attendance: Getting back to school* (ERO, 2023). These substantial reports describe, first, how to improve ākonga and students' attendance, and second, how to make learning more engaging for ākonga and students. For information on how we used findings from the reports to develop the evaluative criteria please see Appendix B.

Findings

Creatives in Schools projects rated very good for supporting improved learner attendance

The evaluators rated the Creatives in Schools programme **very good overall** in that the project designs includes many aspects that are important to improving learner attendance. As the programme is well implemented, many ākonga and students benefit from these different aspects.

Extent to which the Creatives in Schools programme help ākonga and students:	Performance rating[1]	
• see school and education as useful for the present and future	Good	●●●○○
• experience learning success	Very good	●●●●○
• engage in meaningful learning	Very good	●●●●○
• develop quality relationships with peers	Excellent	●●●●●
• develop quality relationships with kaiako and teachers and creative practitioners	Very good	●●●●○
• access relevant and interesting curriculum	Very good	●●●●○
Overall rating	Very good	●●●●○

In this following section we describe the kinds of evidence observed that underpin our performance ratings.

Ākonga and students see school and education as useful for the present and future: Some previously unengaged ākonga and students became highly engaged, producing excellent work, showing leadership in class and being more visible in school. They gained a renewed interest in school and see it more as a positive and meaningful space.

> *"More people acknowledging [us] after our performances. People were like 'oh I saw you in the performance'. People I'd never seen in my life, you know. And you're like 'oh, thanks'."* (Māori student Round 3)

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[1] The performance rating is based on generic rubric, with the following performance levels: Excellent: (Always), Very good: (Almost Always), Good: (Mostly, with some exceptions), Emerging: (Sometimes, with quite a few exceptions), Poor: Never (or occasionally with clear weaknesses evident). It is described in more detail on page 20.

> *"I came into this project having never carried [sic] anything before in my life and not knowing the meaning behind most of my cultural patterns. Now I'm going out of it being fairly confident and knowing more about my culture and myself."* (Pacific student)

Some ākonga and students also found the projects supported them to make decisions about their future career and learning pathways. At times they elected to take up creative careers, at other times they realised a creative pathway was not for them. But even those who did not choose a creative pathway received other benefits from the projects as is evident below.

> *"Next year I'm doing a diploma in musical theatre, so I'm carrying on this kind of work into the real world."* (Student comment)

Engaging in meaningful learning:

Most ākonga and students (91%) valued the opportunity to take part in a creative process that was relevant to them, providing a useful experience.

> *"I really enjoyed the creative freedom of creating for the album. I think the best part was creating something that could be viewed by everyone, and that will last forever. This was great because not many other parts of school can create something so permanent."* (Student comment)

Many ākonga and students (80%) said that after taking part in the project they knew of different ways to solve problems – and of these 31% knew this a lot, compared with 14% before they took part in the project.

> *"I feel I'm able to be much more open minded after the experience."* (Student comment)

Ākonga and students appreciated having the creative freedom to express themselves and engage in meaningful learning.

> *"I enjoyed the experimentation, and how we as students were really involved with the creative process not only as actors but as partial directors. It was also great to see that the teachers and administrators involved wanted to play to our strengths as individuals and enhanced the quality of the show in the process."* (Student comment)

Ākonga and students experiencing learning success: There was evidence in the feedback of ākonga and students experiencing learning success. Two thirds of ākonga and students could describe positive changes in themselves from taking part in the projects with 30% mentioning specific skills learned and nearly half mentioning other benefits from taking part.

> *"They were quite surprised when I said that I was like producing stuff, because I don't really say much about what I do. But now I can't shut up about it. Like it's a big accomplishment I never thought I'd, like, see myself here. So, they were all quite surprised and my Mum especially was really supportive about it."* (Student comment)

Parents could also see their children maturing and learning transferable skills such as commitment, working hard and self-management.

> *"We spoke to [him], and we said that we hope that it doesn't change, "That you are not going to slide down, like in maths or whatever." And he didn't, and it's great. And what he*

gained on the other side, I think, is worth a lot as well and probably as much as maths or English; I see it equally. (Parent comment Round 1)

Ākonga and students became more resilient using the creative process of trial and error. After taking part in the project, many ākonga and students (79%) said they were now comfortable (quite a lot or a lot) to try things out even if they might not work, compared with around half (55%) beforehand.

"Sharing things that aren't fully ready and that can encourage other people to know that it doesn't have to be perfect. It can also just give people ideas for their own monologues. If they hear something and pick it up and then they think, oh, maybe I'll think about that and explore that and write about that." (Student comment)

Ākonga and students were proud of the high-quality performances they were part of, and whānau and families enjoyed and were sometimes surprised to see what their children could achieve.

"The freedom to create what you want. It allowed our brains to roam and discover exactly what we urged to create with the help and guidance of the songs. I loved seeing what came out of everyone's brains and how they interpreted their song. I loved the support I was given and how invested everyone was in helping me make my performance the best it can be." (Student comment)

Ākonga and students engage in meaningful learning: Most ākonga and students were highly engaged in the projects, and 77% would like more to be available in the future. The biggest positive shifts between pre and post ratings in the 2023 student survey were for:

- trying new things out - 47% shifted
- working alongside others - 44% shifted
- voicing ideas to other ākonga and students - 40% shifted.

Ākonga and students develop quality relationships with other learners: Ākonga and students talked of feeling more comfortable to express their views to classmates and seek feedback. They also learned to critique others' ideas supportively.

"More confident, closer to my classmates, and getting to explore more ideas and emotions." (Student comment)

"I know that drama class and belonging to this group made him belong more to the school because he feels so safe and so happy with that group and being a part of that." (Parent comment Round 1)

Ākonga and students develop quality relationships with kaiako and teachers and creatives: More ākonga and students said they could now talk with kaiako and teachers and creatives, exploring both project ideas, and possible pathways in learning and careers. Ākonga and students appreciated creatives' high expectations of them which led to them extending themselves in the sessions.

It's really helped because when I was at the start of the year, I was the one kid who just never socialised, never did anything with a team, and I really struggled, but [the creative practitioner] helped me realise that you can't do everything alone. And that's kind of built my confidence to socialise and perform in front of others. (Student comment Round 1)

Ākonga and students access relevant and interesting curriculum: Ākonga and students engaged deeply in the projects because they said they were interesting and relevant to them. Kaiako and teachers and creatives reported that with ākonga and students being highly focussed and engaged, at times it changed other teachers' perceptions of the ākonga and students.

> *A couple of teachers have mentioned… 'I never saw that student in that light before.' And it's made them really think about that student a little bit more… So [they are] seeing [the student] in a different genre where they are putting themselves out there. Where in class, they always saw them as a shy, little, reserved person. [It] is making them really think about in actual fact they do have a hidden confidence there, it's really just giving them the avenue to show it.* (Creative practitioner Round 1)

Creatives in Schools projects rated very good for supporting schools to make learning more engaging

The evaluators rated Creatives in Schools programme very good overall in that their project designs included many aspects that are important to making learning more engaging.

Extent to which the Creatives in Schools programme helps ākonga and students:	Performance rating	
• have an interest in what they are learning	Very good	●●●●○
• spend time with friends and make new friends	Very good	●●●●○
• experience a variety of teaching approaches that suit their different learning styles	Very good	●●●●○
• better engage in school	Very good	●●●●○
• experience a welcoming environment	Very good	●●●●○
• enjoy a safe and positive social environment	Very good	●●●●○
• enjoy activities that support their mental health and wellbeing	Very good	●●●●○
• enjoy activities that are inclusive and affirming of their culture	Excellent	●●●●●
Overall rating	Very good	●●●●○

Ākonga and students have an interest in what they are learning: Ākonga and students often found they benefited from projects more than they were expecting. Some found talents and skills they didn't have before, surprising both themselves, their whānau and their kaiako and teachers.

> *"Getting an opportunity to do something I've never done before - script writing is something I've never touched but I loved it."* (Student comment)

> *So, I just noticed that with the Pasifika group, his leadership and his confidence just heightened. And he didn't talk a lot about it either … It was kind of like his own private thing that he was doing… Other parents [noticed and] said things about how good he is…*

> *He's really stepped up because they have known him before that. Yeah, and then … he's really stepped up and just wow! He's so proud*. (Pacific parent Round 1)

> *With this opportunity now, he met a lot of other children across the other learning groups and his circle of friends just got a lot wider. And he is actually blooming and thriving from our point of view from that production, yeah. It's unbelievable*. (Parent comment Round 1)

Ākonga and students spend time with friends and make new friends: The projects provided an opportunity for ākonga and students to spend positive time with existing friendships and to forge new friends. Ākonga and students enjoyed working with other learners. This was particularly the case for Māori and Pacific ākonga and students, where working with their friend group was very affirming.

> *"I know more about my culture and meet some really nice people while doing it*." (Pacific student)

> *"How we came together every last period on Friday was a good last period and I love how fun it gets, and I love learning about the culture and learning new things about art."* (Pacific student).

Ākonga and students experience a variety of teaching approaches that suit their different learning styles: Using creative practices allowed ākonga and students to try different ways of thinking.

> *"I am able to express my ideas more freely through music, and I'm now producing my own at home".* (Student comment)

> *We were able to gain an understanding of collaboration: working together in a big group to achieve something really big and beautiful. I was also able to gain more of an outside perspective and outside ideas, seeing how different people from the outside see our potential and stuff like that.* (Student comment Round 2)

Some ākonga and students, who thought they were not talented, found they had talents either in the arts or in other learning areas.

> *"I lost my interest in art and then coming back to this, like being able to do our own culture and things like that."* (Pacific student)

They appreciated a learner focused approach where they could try things out for themselves.

> *"I really enjoyed trying lots of new ways to approach a show and experimenting with ideas."* (Student comment)

Ākonga and students better engage in school: Ākonga and students reported being more confident to talk to others, to express their ideas and to enjoy the creative process. Some said this had spread into other areas of their schooling, which parents also observed.

> *"I reckon that if I come into music, it like lifts my feeling, like I feel happy. And then for the rest of the day I'm just buzzing because I'm happy. So, it makes other classes more enjoyable." (Student comment)*

> *"I gained a closer bond with the people involved in the project and also put myself in the sights of any further school initiatives. I also feel like I am confident to join any future events similar to [project]."* (Student comment)

> *"It's another level of learning, and like I said, in my opinion, it's as important as the other subjects as well. You just grow in a different area – which I believe positively influence[s] their learning in the other subjects as well… When you gain more confidence, and you feel better about yourself and stuff… then that reflects definitely on your learning."* (Parent comment Round 1)

Ākonga and students experience a welcoming environment: The learning environment of Creatives in Schools projects was often student lead. This supported a youth culture and a place to explore issues that are relevant to young people.

Ākonga and students also enjoyed a convivial exploratory environment, that affirmed their culture and identity.

> *"I feel as if we have created friendships and we now have more confidence in being independent."* (Pacific student).

> *"What I like about being in the Pacifica group is we learn about other cultures not just Tonga and Samoa…and we get to mix up with people from different cultures."* (Pacific student Round 2)

Ākonga and students enjoy a safe and positive social environment: There is much evidence ākonga and students felt safe to express their ideas and opinions. They built confidence to engage in class, ask more questions and participate more. This built a positive social environment in the projects that was visible beyond the classroom.

> *"What changed for me was being able to feel comfortable in asking and answering questions"* (Student comment)

> *"The [other] teachers acknowledge it. Like I'll walk past teachers, and they'll say "good job the other night, you did so well. I've listened to your songs on Spotify". So, I reckon it's pretty good actually".* (Student comment)

In some schools, the projects helped ākonga and students deal with unconscious bias and racism they experienced in other classes.

> *"At school a lot of our relationships with the teachers are somewhat strained. But I think with this class most of us have learned that at the end of the day who really cares. Not in the sense of like, like who cares it's more of 'I'm coming to learn [and] if you don't like me you, don't like me' type of thing."* (Student comment Round 3)

> *"It makes us feel we can express ourselves anywhere we want, and you can show our culture to others."* (Pacific student Round 2)

Parents also noticed how the projects made their children feel safe.

> *I know that drama class and belonging to this group made him belong more to the school because he feels so safe and so happy with that group and being a part of that."* (Parent comment Round 1*)*

Ākonga and students enjoy activities that are inclusive and affirming of their culture: This was particularly the case for Māori and Pacific ākonga and students, where working with others of their ethnic group offered the opportunity to:

- express themselves freely as Māori and Pacific,
- embrace aspects of their culture and learn their meaning
- gain confidence through engaging in what is important to them
- feel their voices, knowledge and experiences matter.

> *Like in my normal classes it's more like we just sit there and listen to like what the teachers perspective on things, and like how they view things. Everyone else is like quiet but it's like [we] have too much energy... [so] being able to be with like you know our group of people, where like we don't have to like be quiet, we can like express ourselves.* (Pacific student)

> *I have more understanding of te ao Māori and just knowing the whakapapa and where those taonga came from. Know how they're made, all those cool stories. And just knowing how to identify a few different taonga [and] play some of them. Yeah it's pretty cool.* (Māori student)

> *"Yeah learn about our culture more because we don't really have, … [anything] really Pasifika and so it was quite interesting to see what, because you know you see these designs but you never really know like what it means."* (Pacific student)

The projects specifically tailored for Māori and Pacific ākonga and students were deeply appreciated by them.

> *"The stories of them being able to understand the taonga better. Not just that it's the way to play it but you understand what built into it, how it was created and the stories created about the taonga."* (Māori student)

> *"Just really learning how to play the taonga. Because we see them, you look at them and wonder what it does or what it is, and now I can just say oh yeah that's a kōauau you do this with it. That's one of the cool things about it."* (Māori student)

Ākonga and students enjoy activities that support their mental wellbeing: Ākonga and students reported that some of the projects got them to think deeply about themselves.

> *"[I enjoyed] having supportive staff and knowing that there are staff that want to learn about our culture even though they aren't part of our culture."* (Pacific student)

> *In college, I thought in my head, "I need to change this or else I'm not going to get anywhere". And [Creative] really helped me with that actually, like raise my hand, opt into things not opt out.* (Student comment Round 1)

Conclusion

This short document focusses on the factors within the Creatives in Schools programme that help ākonga and students attend school and those that support them to engage better in learning.

Creatives in Schools is a powerful programme that not only supports ākonga and students to experience creative learning. It also has many spillover benefits that the ERO research (2022, 2023) identifies as being necessary for ākonga and students to want to come to school. This includes ākonga and students needing to:

- see school and education as useful for the present and future
- experience learning success
- engage in meaningful learning
- develop quality relationships with peers
- develop quality relationships with kaiako, teachers and creative practitioners
- access relevant and interesting curriculum.

Creatives in Schools projects are **rated very good** by the evaluators for **providing an experience to help ākonga and students attend school** based on the criteria listed above.

For ākonga and students to stay in school the environment needs to make learning more engaging. There is lots of evidence that Creatives in Schools projects help ākonga and students:

- have interest in what they are learning
- spend time with friends and make new friends
- experience a variety of teaching approaches that suit their different learning styles
- better engage in school
- experience a welcoming environment
- experience a safe and positive social environment
- enjoy activities that support their mental health and wellbeing
- enjoy activities that are inclusive and affirming of their culture.

Therefore, we have also **rated Creatives in Schools very good** for helping kura and schools develop an environment that **makes learning more engaging**.

We conclude that **Creatives in Schools makes a worthwhile and valuable contribution** to the ākonga and students in supporting them to attend and thrive at kura and school. The programme is well researched. The implementation processes are well developed and sound. It is worth continuing to invest in the programme. **The programme offers schools a useful and proven approach to engaging with and keeping ākonga and students in kura and school.**

Appendix A: Evaluation approach

Introduction

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga – Ministry of Education (MOE) commissioned this evaluation for the Creatives in Schools project for Round 4. A cross-agency working group had an interest in this programme including Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga – the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage (MCH) and Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa (CNZ)

The Creatives in Schools programme funds professional artists and creative practitioners to partner with kura and schools to share specialist artistic knowledge and creative practice with ākonga and students.

The programme has undertaken evaluations each year of implementation:

- **For Round 1**, the focus was on assessing the implementation in 34 schools and included two case studies with whānau and ākonga

- **For Round 2 and 3**, the focus was on assessing the implementation and outcomes for kaiako and teachers and creative practitioners. There was an intention to contact ākonga and students but this was not possible at the time.

- **In this Round 4**, the evaluation focused on collecting ākonga and student voice across 8 schools from 153 ākonga and students to better understand the impact of the programme for them. A key area of focus included exploring the extent the programme showed sustained impact for ākonga and students, including Māori, Pacific and learning support.

We used an evaluation-specific methodology to provide robust findings of practical value to the Ministry. This approach included using Key Evaluation Questions and performance criteria to help focus the evaluation and judge the quality and value of the programme. The evaluation design was strengths-based. The findings in this summary draw mainly on the data collected for Round 4 between 12 September and 28 November 2023. Where we draw on data from earlier Creatives in Schools reports the Round drawn from is cited in the text

Summary of data collected

Target audience	Data collection approach
Akonga and student survey – 153 responses	• 123 pen and paper completion • 30 online completion
Akonga and student interviews – 57 interviews	• 14 individual interviews • 7 group interviews
Teachers or school staff and creative practitioners' interviews	• 8 Interviews with 15 lead teachers, classroom teachers or creatives-
Milestone reports	• Final milestone reports from 8 schools.

Research method

We approached 12 schools to take part in the R4 evaluation. We purposefully selected a sample of schools that aimed to:

- provide a national spread
- showcase different creative practices
- include Māori, Pacific and high and complex needs ākonga and students
- were finishing projects in Terms 3 or 4.

Ten out of 12 schools originally approached agreed to take part, but fieldwork finally took place in 8 schools a 67% response rate.

School visits by the evaluators to seven schools took between one and a half-hours and half a day. During the visit we:

- ran a student survey to the ākonga and students present in 7 schools
- conducted either short individual or group interviews with the students in the classroom
- viewed part of the creative activity in 4 out of 7 schools.

Ākonga and student survey

We used a retrospective pretest-posttest design. We piloted the survey with five students and made changes to the design based on student feedback. Ākonga and students of intermediate and secondary school age filled in the survey.

The evaluators mostly administered the surveys face-to-face. Ākonga and students mostly filled in paper-based surveys. Data collection took place between 12 September and 28 November 2023.

We then entered the results into SurveyMonkey for quick data entry. Some schools also opted to use the SurveyMonkey online version of the survey so students not present on the day we visited could also give their feedback.

Data analysis

We used Excel for the more detailed data analysis as follows.

- Traditional descriptive statistics show the general shape of the responses.
- For the retrospective pre-test post-test analysis we first focused on the mean shifts (changes). We used a paired t-test.
- Analysis focused on confidence intervals (rather than hypothesis tests and p values) to help communicate the size of the shifts and the uncertainty around the estimates of means.
- We also coded the open-ended survey responses to identify key themes.

Qualitative interviews

Qualitative interviews with ākonga and students mostly occurred during the school visits. In total we spoke with 57 students either in individual interviews or in group discussions.

Interviews with ākonga and students varied in length and ranged from 5 minutes to an hour in length. Some interviews were with individuals while others were with groups of students. We conducted two student interviews on Zoom.

Interviews at the school catering for students with high and complex needs were with the deputy principal, three classroom teachers, and the creative practitioner.

We audio recorded and later transcribed all qualitative interviews. We analysed the qualitative data in Dedoose to extract and allow for quick identification of key themes for reporting.

Other data

The final milestone reports from each of the schools is an extra source of data for this report.

Limitations of the evaluation data collection

For the Round 4 data which most of this analysis is based on, there are more females than males in the sample, due to including two all-girls schools in the sample and one all-boys school.

There are also fewer respondents from Auckland than planned. Two schools that would have given us higher numbers of ākonga and students in Auckland did not participate. As fieldwork occurred late in Term 3 and in Term 4, and there was limited sample, and we were unable to replace these schools.

More detail on the methodology for the Round 4 study can be found in the Main report for Round 4.

Appendix B: Identifying the evaluative criteria from the literature on attendance and engagement

Improving attendance

In the following table, on the left we outline the aspects of learner experience at school that impact on attendance according to ERO (2023) reporting. On the right-hand side, we translate these findings into evaluative criteria. We then use these criteria to review the evidence we have at hand to assess how well the Creatives in Schools programme supports learner attendance.

In *Attendance: Getting back to school* (2023) ERO found *that learner experience at school impacts on attendance* in the following ways:	Criteria developed to assess how well Creatives in Schools supports learner attendance:
"*For learners the most important attitudes are:* • *if they think going to school every day is important* • *if they see school as helpful for their future.* *What happens in school matters as well. For learners the most important school-based factors are:* • *how hard they find their schoolwork* • *if they can participate in activities* • *if they like or don't like the people in their class* • *if they like or don't like their teacher(s)* • *if they like or are interested in what they are being taught.*" (ERO, 2023, p. 4)	To what extent do the Creatives in Schools projects help ākonga and students: • see school and education as useful for the present and future • experience learning success • participate in the projects • develop quality relationships with peers • develop quality relationships with kaiako, teachers and creative practitioners • access relevant and interesting curriculum

Making learning more engaging

Again, as previously, on the left we outline the aspects of learner experience at school that impact on *making learning more engaging* according to the ERO (2022) reporting. These are Area 3 *"make learning more engaging"* and Area 4 *"make school a great place to be".* On the right hand-side we translate these findings into evaluative criteria. We then use these criteria to review the available evidence to assess how well Creatives in Schools programme supports making learning more engaging.

In *Missing out: Why aren't our children going to school?* (2022), ERO identified five critical areas in which to increase attendance.	Criteria developed to assess how well Creatives in Schools supports learner attendance:
Area 3 was "make learning more engaging" which included focussing in the following areas: • *"Understand learners' interests and what at school they find engaging or disengaging* • *Review the way in which teaching and learning is organised, drawing on learner's perspectives* • *Help learners to see how subjects are relevant and valuable to them* • *Take early action when learners are disengaging from learning and support them to re-engage and catch up."* (ERO, 2022, p. 5)	To what extent do the Creatives in Schools projects help ākonga and students: • have an interest in what they are learning • spend time with friends and make new friends • experience a variety of teaching approaches that suit their different learning styles • better engage in school
Area 4 was "make school a great place to be" which covered the following areas. • *"Understand how learners find the school environment and identify issues early* • *Use proven tools to tackle bullying, racism, and discrimination* • *Provide access to mental health support for those learners who need it"* (ERO, 2022, p. 6)	• experience a welcoming environment • experience a safe and positive social environment • enjoy activities that are inclusive and affirming of their culture • enjoy activities that support their mental health and wellbeing

Appendix C: Generic grading rubric

Generic grading rubric used for assessing levels of performance

Levels of performance		Description
Excellent: (Always)	●●●●●	Clear example of exemplary performance of the programme or great practice: no weaknesses of any real consequence
Very good: (Almost Always)	●●●●○	Very good to excellent performance of the programme on almost all aspects; strong overall but not exemplary; no weaknesses of any real note.
Good: (Mostly, with some exceptions)	●●●○○	Reasonably good performance of the programme overall; might have a few slight weaknesses.
Emerging: (Sometimes, with quite a few exceptions)	●●○○○	Fair performance of the programme, some serious, but non-fatal weaknesses on a few aspects.
Poor: Never (or occasionally with clear weaknesses evident)	●○○○○	Clear evidence of unsatisfactory functioning; serious weaknesses across the board or on crucial aspects of the programme.

Source: Adapted from Oakden, J., & McKegg, K. (2011). *Waste Minimisation Act implementation: evaluation of stakeholder perceptions*. Wellington: Kinnect Group. (p.19).

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