



# The School Leavers' Toolkit

## Phase I Engagement Report



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# What is the School Leaver's Toolkit?

The 'School Leavers' Toolkit' (Toolkit) is a Government commitment to provide school students with opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and capabilities they need to transition successfully into further education, training or employment. The Toolkit will ensure that students have access to foundational knowledge in civics education, financial literacy and key workplace competencies from years 7, before they begin more specialised programmes of study that are aligned to their personal pathway in senior secondary.

The objectives of the Toolkit are already embedded in the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa, and there are currently a wide range of content packages available to support teaching of civics, financial literacy and employability skills. The Ministry of Education aims to support schools to increase opportunities for young people to access these programmes and resources.

## The purpose of this document

This document outlines our co-design approach to designing the School Leavers' Toolkit and presents the key findings from the Phase I engagement. Development of the Toolkit framework has happened concurrently with the engagement process, and this document attempts to show how our decision making was guided and informed by what we heard from the students, teachers, career educators and employers who generously offered their time to kōrero with us.

The next stage of our engagement will focus on working with a small number of schools to document their existing programmes and change processes to inform a range of resources, guidelines and curriculum supports for schools to use when developing their own Toolkit programmes. We will also engage more widely with school leavers, parents, whānau, employers and tertiary education organisations.

# Designing our engagement approach

Our approach to engaging with students was inspired by Hamilton Girls High school (HGHS) year 13 students. The students chose the School Leavers' Toolkit from the Government's Education Manifesto commitments as the topic of their Year 13 social action project. The students developed and conducted a survey on the Toolkit in their school and wrote a letter to Minister Hipkins expressing their support for the Toolkit initiative. We invited four students and their teacher to attend the July NCEA CoLab event held at Te Papa in Wellington. As well as participating in the planned CoLab agenda, we held a Toolkit session where the students presented the findings from their project and helped us shape our schools engagement plan.

When planning our engagement, the HGHS students suggested that we talk to as wide a range of students, teachers, career advisors, parents and whānau as possible. They believed that our engagement activity should focus on understanding what skills and knowledge were most important to young people and how they wanted to engage with this learning. To ensure that all young people have the skills and knowledge they need to succeed, the design of the Toolkit is focussed on years 7 – 11, however, the HGHS students suggested that we talk to students in years 12 and 13, as it is at this point in their education that most students begin to seriously think about life after school and the skills they will need to successfully transition. They also suggested that the Toolkit should incorporate resources for senior students as this would ensure that all students, regardless of their subject choices, has access to the Toolkit.

We tested our workshop design by inviting five schools/kura to participate in an initial hui at HGHS. The HGHS students co-facilitated the event, taking students from the other schools through a range of workshop activities and presenting on the findings from their survey. During the engagement process we iterated and refined our workshop approach based on feedback from students and school staff.

## Key insight:

The HGHS students included in their survey a range of skills and knowledge that did not fit neatly into financial capability, workplace competencies or civics. We realised that we need to remain open to the idea that students would identify topics outside the three core components of the Toolkit, and that any Toolkit model we developed should be flexible enough to accommodate the needs of individual school communities.

# What we wanted to find out

As a result of our planning with HGHS we developed a series of questions that we hoped engagement would help us answer. Our initial engagement plan focused on students, educators and employers. We are planning to widen our engagement to parents, whanau and school leavers in 2019.



## From current year 12 and 13 students we wanted to know:

- What skills and knowledge do you think are most important to support your transition out of school?
- How do you currently find out about workplace competencies, how to manage your finances, your rights and responsibilities and how Government works?
- How would you like to access Toolkit learning?



## From teachers, school leaders and career and transition educators we wanted to know:

- What programmes and resources are you already using to deliver financial capability, workplace competencies, civics education and other 'life skills'?
- How do you see the Toolkit potentially being implemented in your school setting?
- What support would your school need to deliver a full Toolkit programme?



## From employers we wanted to know:

- In what ways are you already working with schools, what are the challenges and the opportunities?
- What ideas do you have for how employers/ industry and the education sector could work more closely together to improve young people's transition into the world of work?

## Who we heard from

**75**

### Students

Representing 13 schools,  
1 Kura and the  
Minister's Youth  
Advisory Group

**24**

### School Staff Members

Representing 14 schools,  
schools and 2 Kura

**30**

### Employers

Representing business,  
local government and  
peak bodies based in  
Auckland and Napier

**38**

### Career and Transition Educators

Who attended the 2018  
CATE conference



# What matters to students

## Student priorities for a School Leavers' Toolkit

Everyone we spoke to about the School Leavers' Toolkit thought it was a good idea and agreed that civics education, financial capability and workplace competencies need to be more explicitly included in local curriculum.

We asked students to rank a range of skills and knowledge from across the three core Toolkit areas and to add anything else they believed should be included in a School Leavers' Toolkit. All the schools we visited ranked the skills and knowledge in roughly the same way. Most important was mental health, self-management and interpersonal skills and basic financial literacy. Skills and knowledge that were more context specific tended to rank lower than those that could be applied in a range of situations.

Students identified key workplace competencies and financial literacy as crucial components of any School leavers' Toolkit. Civics education and being equipped with knowledge about how government and society functions and the role they can play in it, was seen as important but was not top of mind for them when thinking about transitioning out of school. Civics education was seen by students as fitting naturally into the Social Sciences and being delivered as part of subject learning over years 7 - 11, with refresher information available for senior students as needed.



### Top student generated response

Mental Health



### 10-11 'Must do' responses

- Self-management skills
- Communication skills
- How to make a budget and manage your money
- How to write a CV
- Problem solving



### 8-9 'Must do' responses

- How to set financial goals and make informed decisions about personal finances
- Teamwork skills
- How to apply for a job
- Borrowing and debt
- Decision making
- Learner Licence



### 6-7 'Must do' responses

- What you need to study for your chosen job/career
- How to read and understand financial documents
- Retirement savings and Kiwisaver
- Tax
- Tertiary study funding options (student loans)
- Interviewing skills
- Restricted Licence
- Personal rights and responsibilities



As well as providing students with a selection of skills and knowledge to rank, we asked them to add any others they believed were important. These can broadly be grouped into four categories:

### Hauora | Wellbeing

- Mental health
- Sexual health and consent education
- Drug and alcohol education
- Cooking and nutrition
- How to access health and disability services

### Housing

- How to find housing
- Independent living
- Renting and flatting- rights and responsibilities

### Education System Navigation

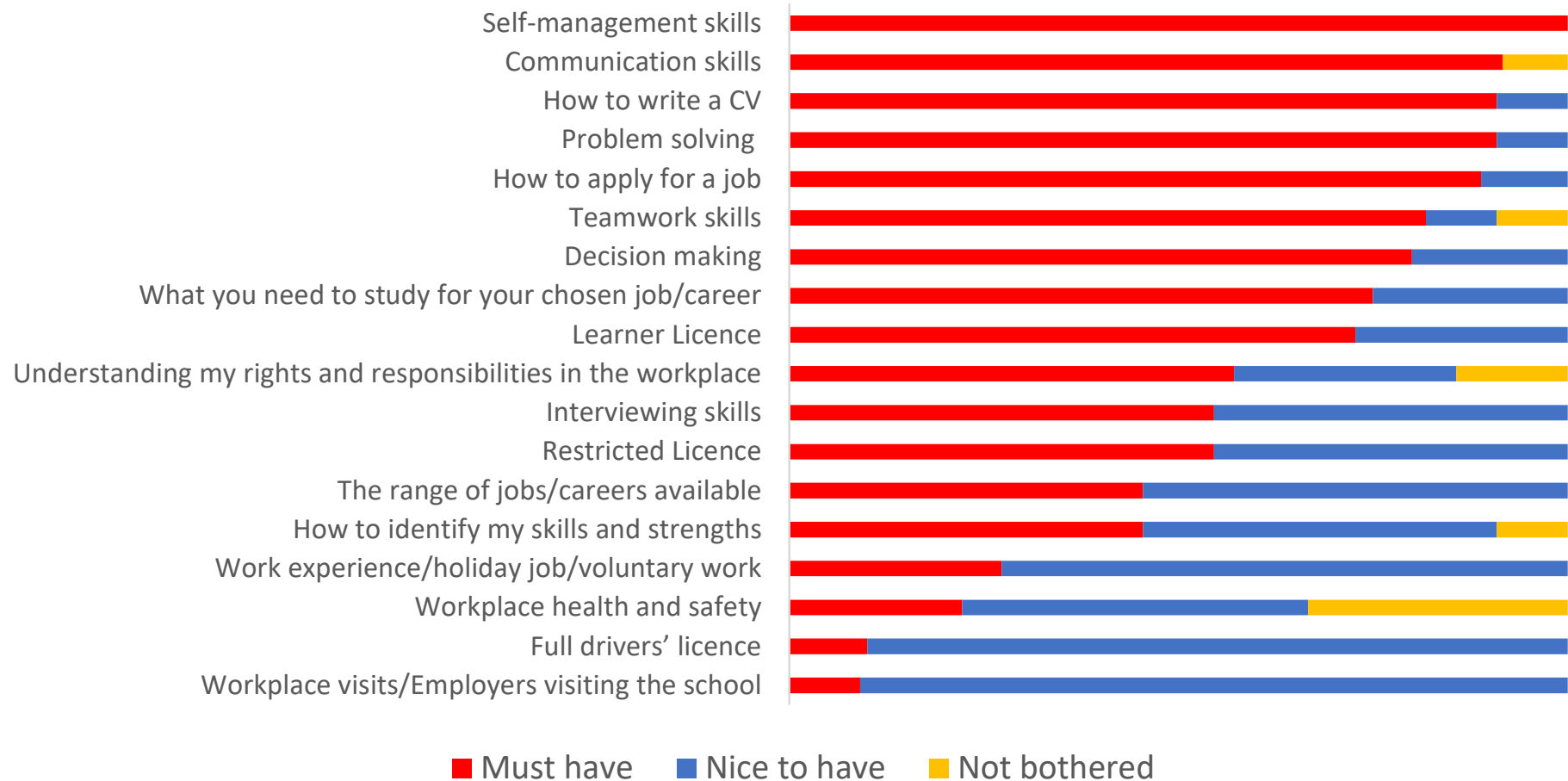
- How does NCEA work
- How does university work
- How to apply for university
- How to apply for scholarships
- Understanding what non-university pathways are available



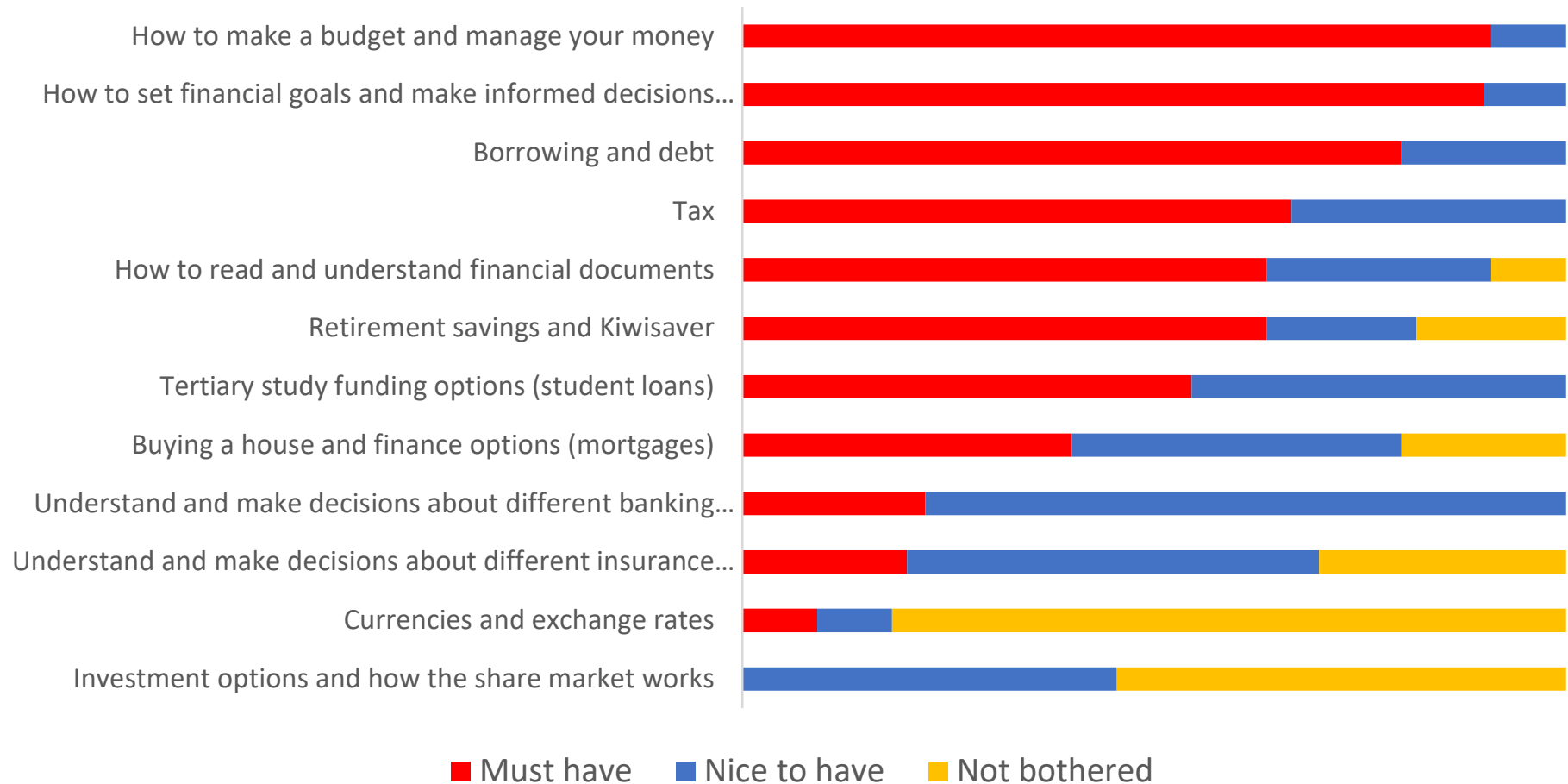
### Other

- Public speaking
- Defensive driving
- Resilience
- Second language
- Cultural competencies
- How to read and understand contracts
- Being a responsible digital citizen and the implications of social media
- How to apply for a passport/identification documents
- The role of Local Government

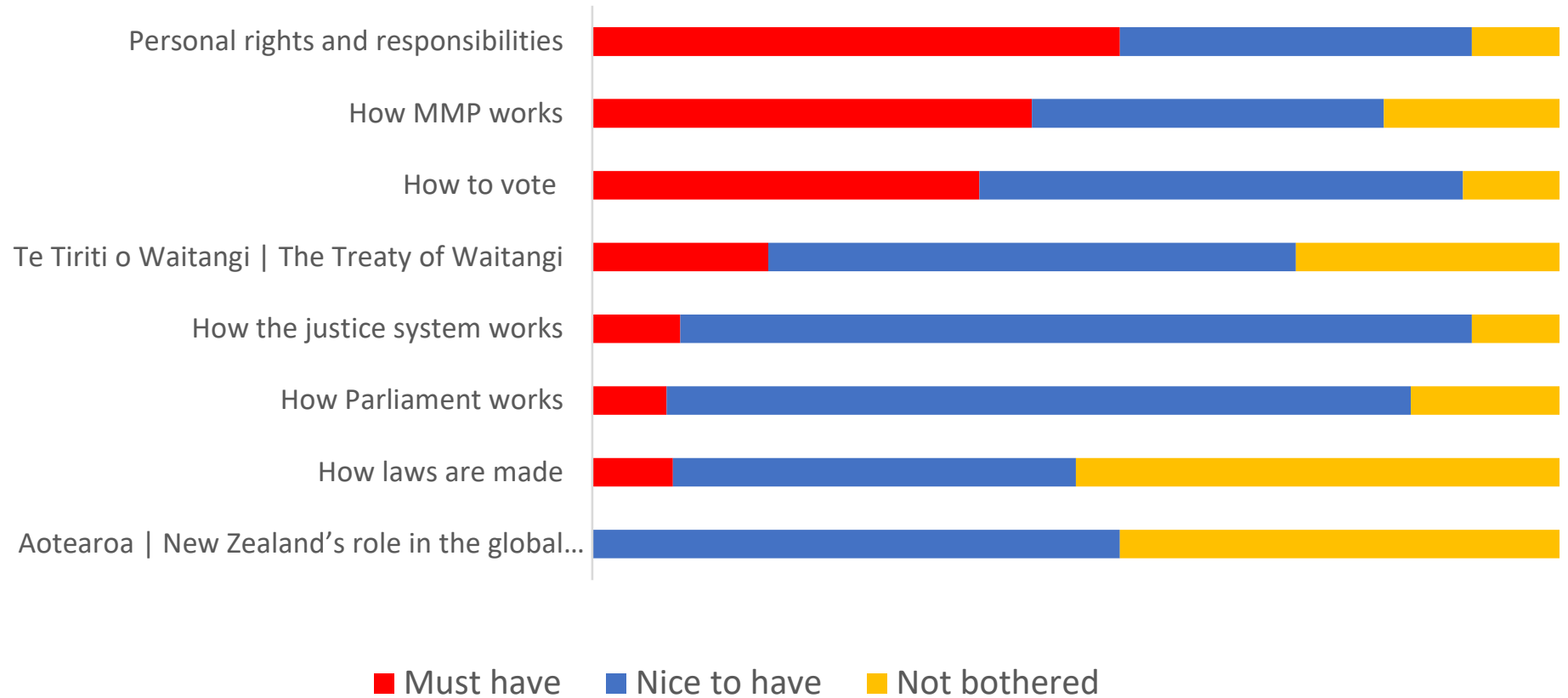
# Student rankings for key workplace competencies



# Student rankings for financial literacy



# Student rankings for civics education



# Understanding Student Responses

Students were asked to rank a range of knowledge and skills we provided them with for each component of the Toolkit. Students were asked to rank these specifically in relation to the School Leavers' Toolkit. A low ranking doesn't necessarily mean that students do not think this information is important, only that they don't think it is a priority for the Toolkit. For example, two schools placed knowledge of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the 'Nice to Have' or 'Not Bothered' category. When asked about this, students said that Te Tiriti did not need to be included as a discrete topic in their Toolkit as it was woven into all the learning they did at school.

The focus on the importance of mental health and wellbeing echoes the student feedback we have received through engagement in other parts of the Education Work Programme, in particular the NCEA review. The students we spoke to, while being confident and capable, expressed some anxiety about leaving school and becoming more independent. Students talked about how this added to the stress they already felt about NCEA.

Student perceptions of the three key components of the Toolkit may reflect the current state in many schools, where transition/career education is focused on building key workplace competencies and financial literacy skills in senior students to support their transition out of school. While students did not see civics education as a priority for their Toolkit (with the exception of one student who was passionate about civics and citizenship education) they indicated that they would like to be able to easily access information on civics as and when they needed it and were currently unsure how to do this.



## Key insight:

Our engagement validated the message that we heard from Hamilton Girls High School – while students and teachers agreed that there should be more emphasis on teaching and learning civics, financial capability and workplace competencies, they also believed that a School Leavers' toolkit should include additional learning identified as critical to successful transitions.

# The importance of mental health and wellbeing

During all engagements with students, mental health education was emphasised as the most important component of any School Leavers' Toolkit. Along with mental health, students also identified sexual health, consent education, drug and alcohol education and knowing how to access health and disability services, as very important.

***Ko te oranga te tino pūmanawa i homai ki a tāua ki te tangata. Kei a tāua te tino kawenga ki te manaaki, ki te tiaki i tēnei taonga tuku iho.***

*The most precious gift we are given is life itself.  
Our duty is to nurture and care for this.*

*- Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (2007)*

The Health and Physical Education (HPE) learning area in the New Zealand Curriculum and the Hauora learning area in Te Marautanga o Aotearoa cover a number of topics that are essential to student learning including:

Mental health, food & nutrition, sexuality education, body care & physical safety and physical activity. However, the students we spoke to pointed out that the

HPE learning area is only compulsory to year 10, and that many year 11 -13 students do not take HPE as a subject in senior school.

Additionally, The National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA) 2017 Health and Physical Education report shows an overall decrease in students achieving at or above curriculum expectations for health and physical education in years 4 and 8. The difference was not significant at year 4, but at year 8 the percentage of students performing at or above curriculum levels was down to 33 percent, compared to 46 percent in 2012.

Students spoke about not knowing where to go for help with mental health issues and about the importance of being able to access information independently, from a safe and reliable source. Some schools we spoke to used outside providers to deliver mental health, relationship and drug and alcohol education to students in years 11 - 13. Students at one school commented that hearing about sensitive topics like these from facilitators closer to their own age made the experience less awkward.

## Key insight:

Although all students have access to education about mental health and wellbeing/Hauora through the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa, many young people still don't feel they have the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in life after school. The Toolkit could provide additional support to students in years 11 - 13 to access relevant, high quality information to promote good mental health and wellbeing | Hauora.



# Ensuring all students have access to the School Leavers' Toolkit

Many schools already offer programmes to develop students' skills, knowledge and capabilities in civics education, financial literacy and key workplace competencies. However, this learning is usually offered only to a small group of students, the challenge lies in enabling access for all students.

## What's happening now?

The schools we visited all had some sort of careers or pathway programme, usually focussed on students in years 12 and 13. These programmes were offered as an optional course, led by the careers department. In some schools, these courses were targeted at students who were considered unlikely to transition directly into further education and were focussed on getting students work ready. This resulted in a stigma around these programmes in some schools and the perception that they were for low achievers or problem students. However, some of the students who were on academic pathways questioned why they had to choose between traditionally academic, University Entrance courses, and more practical learning which they identified as equally important for success beyond school.

**“I don't really know what a mortgage is, or how to do my taxes, but I do know what the derivative of  $y=2(3x^2-4x)^2$  is ”**

**- Student feedback, NCEA Review**

Two of the schools we visited had a whole of school approach to pathway and transition education. In these schools, career education was the responsibility of all school staff, and staff received professional development and mentoring on how to do this effectively. The two schools had different approaches to incorporating this learning into their timetable. One school had re-purposed form time, with each year level focussing on building age and pathway appropriate knowledge and skills, while the other school had their programme incorporated into the timetable as a subject line. Both schools had a student mentoring model, where mentors worked with the same group of students from year 9 through to the end of their schooling. The importance of forming trusting relationships and drawing on knowledge and expertise from across the school and the wider community was emphasised as a key to the success of these models. Our engagement showed us that there are already successful models we can share and build on when supporting schools to develop their Toolkits.



## Key insight:

Students are currently engaging with Toolkit learning in a wide range of contexts. The Toolkit learning students' access as part of their schooling varies greatly depending on the subjects they take and the teaching capability available. A School Leavers' Toolkit student website would provide a minimum basic provision of Toolkit learning.



# Transferring skills, knowledge and capabilities into contexts beyond school

Although students are already learning a lot about key workplace competencies, financial literacy and civics, they struggle to 'pick this out' of subject learning, make connections with how this learning can be applied to life after school, or articulate their knowledge, skills and experience to potential employers.

## What's happening now?

Working with their teacher or career advisor, we encouraged students to reflect on civics education, financial literacy and workplace competencies learning they did as part of subjects, projects and extra-curricular activities as well as information accessed online or through interactions with friends and whānau. Through this process we identified that a large percentage of the learning students identified as 'Must Have' for their Toolkit was already covered during a student's formal schooling, however, students often had trouble connecting this learning to contexts beyond school or describing how the different learning fitted together to form a 'Toolkit'.

The review of NCEA has also identified that connecting knowledge and skills across different learning areas can sometimes be a challenge in senior secondary where learning is divided into discrete subjects. The NCEA review is considering how the key competencies, values and attitudes of the National Curriculum can be more explicitly woven into senior secondary learning programmes and also exploring options for how cross-curricula learning can be better supported.

Quality career development support is can also play a critical role in helping students to identify their skills and knowledge and translate these into potential career pathways.

Schools told us that one of the challenges they face is capturing and recording the non-subject or learning that happens in a way that is meaningful and not burdensome for staff. Some schools used student logs, others used the school's student management system, while others were using a range of free and pay per use products to capture different aspects of students' learning. This issue of what learning and achievement should be recorded has also emerged as a theme during the Curriculum Progress and Achievement work and the review of NCEA. Big Opportunity 5, developed by the NCEA review Minister's Advisory Group, suggested that the Record of Achievement could be expanded to acknowledge and value of learning that occurred as part of employment, community work, extracurricular activities or cultural contributions. Regardless of how this is recorded, many students need support to package their learning together and be able to tell a 'story' about their skills and capabilities to employers, tertiary organisations, parents and whānau.

## Key insight:

Design of the Toolkit should include consideration of options to support students to identify and communicate their skills, knowledge and capabilities and to understand how these can be translated into different contexts.

# What matters to employers?

We met with employers to gain an insight into the ways in which they were working with schools and the challenges and opportunities they identified.

## *What qualities do you look for when hiring a school leaver?*

- *Mental strength and resilience – “grit”.*
- *Learning curious and the ability to understand and navigate the pathway options available.*
- *Self-management and awareness/ability to communicate and get on with others.*
- *Respect opportunities and nurture their own future.*

## **What’s happening now?**

Employers described the wide range of ways they work, both within schools and their businesses, to expose young people to different career options and provide opportunities to develop workplace competencies. They identified that for education to be successfully developed through community partnerships there needed to be a clear understanding of the value to all parties, realistic expectations and supporting resources.

It was noted that there were variations between schools’ attitudes to working with employers, and that for schools and community partnerships to be effective, there needed to be a system wide approach to the school – work pathway, including pastoral care and quality career education.

## **Key opportunities**

- Developing relationships across the community to increase visibility and awareness of local pathway opportunities.
- Quality career development and advice that exposes young people to the range of options available and provides opportunities to explore these through hands on experiences.
- Embedding work opportunities into local curriculum.

## **How could we make it work?**

- Break down the barriers around schools to encourage collaboration and work towards a collective vision.
- Integrate the Toolkit across the system to ensure a holistic approach that includes parents, whānau, iwi and government agencies.
- Ensure that the Toolkit is culturally responsive.

## **Key insight:**

The Toolkit should provide an organising framework for existing programmes and resources – “connecting the dots that are already there”, and breaking down barriers to access rather than developing something new.

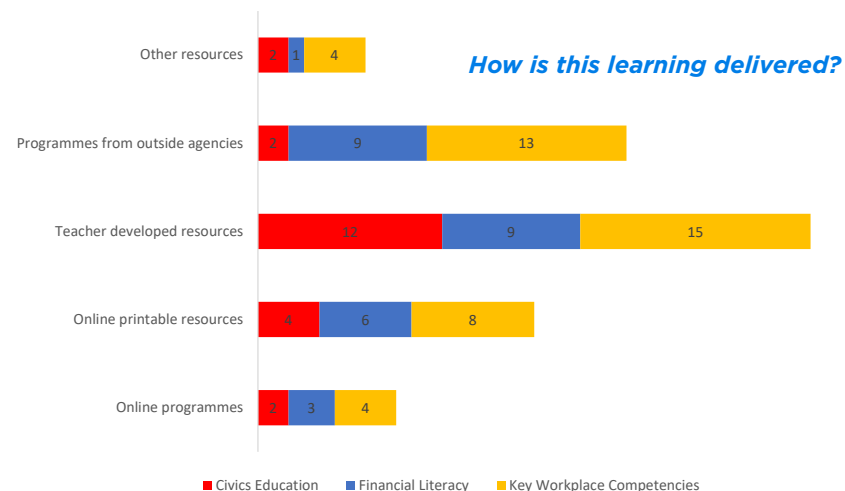
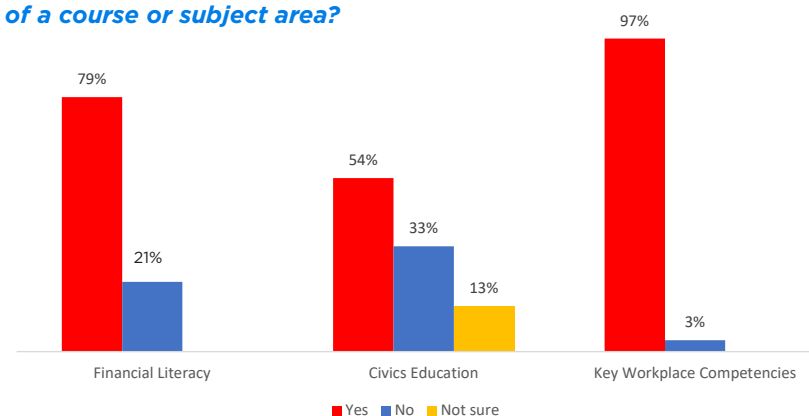
# How is career education contributing to the objectives of the Toolkit

We surveyed career advisors, who attended an information session on the School Leavers' Toolkit at the 2018 Career and Transition Educators conference, on whether their school currently offered learning on financial literacy, civics education or key workplace competencies. We wanted to find out what type of resources they used and how these programmes were integrated into their local curriculum. We asked them:

***What skills/resources/support do you think would be needed to design and implement a School Leavers' Toolkit model successfully in your school?***

- Resources being available, including an information web site, online materials and stand-alone units.
- Time to organise and teach the Toolkit.
- Having a clear framework for delivery.
- Ensuring senior management are on board.
- Support and education for all teaching staff to be able to implement the Toolkit.
- More financial support for programmes, resources and professional development and support.
- The ability to be able to personalise the Toolkit for students, schools and regions.

***Does your school currently offer programmes in these subjects or teach them as part of a course or subject area?***



## Key insight:

Many schools are already delivering programmes that align with the Toolkit content, especially in senior secondary. We can use this experience and expertise to inform the development of case studies and implementation guidelines and to understand the additional support needed to expand access to Toolkit learning from year 7.

# Key factors for a successful School Leavers' Toolkit

Our vision for a successful School Leavers' Toolkit is that all young people will leave school with the practical knowledge and skills that allow them to take their place in the adult world. To achieve this, schools, students, parents, whānau and the wider community need to understand the value and importance of this learning for all students, no matter what their pathway beyond school.

**During our engagement, schools identified some key factors for successful transition programmes, that we believe are also relevant to the development of School Leavers' Toolkit programmes.**



Successful whole of school approaches to transition education are championed by the school leadership team.



The school has close and trusting relationships with local business and employers, and there is a role within the school whose job it is to maintain these.



Staff are supported through time and resources to build their confidence and capability delivering the programmes and there is a high level of collaboration across all parts of the school.



Schools take a flexible approach to course design and timetabling focused, where possible, on meeting the pathway needs of individual students.



The definition of success at school is expanded and reinforced for students and whānau by celebrating a wide range of successes, vocational, academic, cultural and sporting.



Schools use innovative ways to involve parents and whānau in their young person's school journey and pathway decision making.

