Students' attitudes, interests and liking for a subject have a strong bearing on their achievement. The Social Studies Survey sought information from students about their curriculum preferences and perceptions of their own achievement. The questions were the same for year 4 and year 8 students. The survey was administered to the students in an independent session (four students working individually on tasks, supported by a teacher). The questions usually were read to year 4 students, and also to individual year 8 students who requested this help. Writing help was available if requested.

The survey included twenty-one items which asked students to record a rating response by circling their choice, and two items which invited students to write comments. The results of the latter two items are not reported here.

The students were first asked to select their three favourite school subjects from a list of twelve subjects. The results are shown below, together with the corresponding 1997 results.

PERCENTAGES OF STUDENTS	% responses	
RATING SUBJECTS AMONG THEIR		2001 ('97)
THREE FAVOURITES	year 4	year 8
Subject Art	64 (68)	52 (43)
Physical Education	49 (47)	62 (57)
Mathematics	42 (42)	26 (35)
Reading	33 (30)	18 (16)
Writing	31 (19)	13 (13)
Music	27 (27)	22 (25)
Science	20 (22)	25 (23)
Technology	9 (10)	46 (30)
Māori	8 (9)	6 (11)
Social Studies	4 (5)	13 (16)
Speaking	3 (4)	8 (9)
Health	1 (3)	4 (3)

Social Studies was the tenth most popular option for year 4 students and the eighth most popular option, tied with writing, for year 8 students. At both year 4 and year 8 level its popularity remained fairly constant between 1997 and 2001, while writing (for year 4 students) and technology and art (for year 8 students) gained substantially over the four year period. The social studies popularity may be misleadingly low because social studies is often embedded in theme work and not easily identified as social studies.

Five of the twenty-one rating items were previously used in the 1997 Social Studies survey. Responses to these five items are presented on the right in separate tables for year 4 and year 8 students, with 1997 results printed in brackets.

## YEAR 4 SOCIAL STUDIES SURVEY 2001 (1997)

1. How much do you like doing social studies at school?

© © © © S 36 (41) 42 (38) 15 (12) 7 (9)

2. How much do you think you learn in social studies at school?

heaps quite a lot some very little 30 (50) 38 (35) 28 (12) 4 (3)

3. Would you like to do more, the same or less social studies at school?

*more about the same less* 34 (36) 47 (46) 18 (18)

4. How often does your class do really good things in social studies?

*beaps* quite a lot sometimes never 15 (18) 27 (30) 53 (48) 5 (4)

5. How do you feel about learning or doing more social studies as you get older?

## YEAR 8 SOCIAL STUDIES SURVEY 2001 (1997)

1. How much do you like doing social studies at school?

① ② ② ② ③ 14 (19) 54 (52) 25 (23) 7 (6)

2. How much do you think you learn in social studies at school?

heaps quite a lot some very little 16 (29) 53 (54) 28 (14) 3 (3)

3. Would you like to do more, the same or less in social studies at school?

*more about the same less* 14 (16) 63 (67) 23 (17)

4. How often does your class do really good things in social studies?

*beaps* quite a lot sometimes never 7 (5) 30 (30) 54 (59) 9 (6)

5. How do you feel about learning or doing more social studies as you get older?

 The results show that compared to year 4 students, fewer year 8 students rated highly positive on all of the five items. These strong differences between the two year levels are consistent with the results shown in 1997 and the pattern shown in all NEMP surveys except the Technology survey: year 8 students tend not to use the most positive rating as frequently as year 4 students. There is one noteworthy change between 1997 and 2001. On the item *How much do you think you learn in social studies at school?* fewer year 4 and year 8 students chose the most positive rating in 2001 than in 1997. Whereas 50 percent of year 8 students in 1997 rated highly positive, only 30 percent of year 8 students did in 2001. At year 4 level 29 percent of students in 1997 rated highly positive, but only 16 percent of year 4 students in 2001.

The remaining sixteen rating questions were not asked in 1997, hence no comparative data is shown. The table below shows the results of both year 4 and year 8 students' responses in 2001. Year 8 results are presented in *italics*.

For items 6 to 13, students were asked to rate how much they liked learning about each thing in social

studies. At both year 4 and year 8 level, students were most positive learning about living in the future. Many year 4 students also liked learning about other places in New Zealand and how people live there. In comparison to the things students most liked learning about, year 4 students showed least liking for learning about what is happening now in New Zealand and other countries, and how people lived in the olden days. At year 8 level, fewer students liked learning about the work people do and how they make a living, and why people have different ideas.

Students were then asked to rate how often they learnt about each thing in social studies at school (items 14 to 21). Year 4 students thought that all areas featured fairly equally in their classroom programme, except current events (what is happening in New Zealand and in other countries), which they thought they learnt about more often. Year 8 students also thought they learnt more often about current events, as well as living in the future. They thought three areas featured least prominently: the work people do and how they make a living, why people have different ideas and how people lived in the olden days.

## YEAR 4 & YEAR 8 (ITALICS) **SOCIAL STUDIES SURVEY RESPONSES IN 2001** How much do you like learning about these things in social studies? (··) (··) $(\tilde{z})$ 6. The way people work together and do things in groups. 51 / 29 34 / 49 11 / 17 7. Other places in the world, and how people live there. 44/36 40 / 45 11/16 5/3 8. Other places in New Zealand, and how people live there. 56 / 34 31 / 43 11 / 19 2/4 9. The work people do and how they make a living. 47 / 23 33 / 43 14/27 6/7 10. Why people have different ideas. 51/26 30/39 13 / 28 6/7 11. What is happening now - in New Zealand and other countries. 43 / 43 27 / 35 16 / 15 14/7 12. How people lived in the olden days. 43 / 35 26/33 17/21 14/11 13. Living in the future. 73 / 67 15 / 23 7/6 5/4

How often do you learn about these things in social studies at school?					
heaps	quite a lot	sometimes	never		
14. The way people work together and do things in groups.					
25 / 10	28 / 34	42 / 47	5/9		
15. Other place there.	ces in the wo	orld, and how	people live		
22 / 15	32 / 41	39 / 40	7/4		
16. Other places in New Zealand, and how people live there.					
25 / 14	28 / 33	39 / 45	8/8		
17. The work people do and how they make a living.					
22/8	29 / 26	37 / 53	2/13		
18. Why people have different ideas.					
24 / 10	34 / 25	29 / 45	13 / 20		
19. What is happening now - in New Zealand and other countries.					
31 / 23	30 / 42	3/31	8/4		
20. How people lived in the olden days.					
21 / 10	29 / 27	34 / 48	16 / <i>15</i>		
21. Living in the future.					
31 / 22	15 / 47	30 / 23	24/8		