

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 RATING SUBJECTS AMONG THEIR THREE FAVOURITES		% responses	
		2001 ('97) year 4	2001 ('97) year 8
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Art</b>	64 (68)	52 (43)
	<b>Physical Education</b>	49 (47)	62 (57)
	<b>Mathematics</b>	42 (42)	26 (35)
	<b>Reading</b>	33 (30)	18 (16)
	<b>Writing</b>	31 (19)	13 (13)
	<b>Music</b>	27 (27)	22 (25)
	<b>Science</b>	20 (22)	25 (23)
	<b>Technology</b>	9 (10)	46 (30)
	<b>Māori</b>	8 (9)	6 (11)
	<b>Social Studies</b>	4 (5)	13 (16)
	<b>Speaking</b>	3 (4)	8 (9)
	<b>Health</b>	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?				
36 (41)	42 (38)	15 (12)	7 (9)	
2. How much do you think you learn in social studies at school?				
<i>heaps</i>	<i>quite a lot</i>	<i>some</i>	<i>very little</i>	
30 (50)	38 (35)	28 (12)	4 (3)	
3. Would you like to do more, the same or less social studies at school?				
<i>more</i>	<i>about the same</i>	<i>less</i>		
34 (36)	47 (46)	18 (18)		
4. How often does your class do really good things in social studies?				
<i>heaps</i>	<i>quite a lot</i>	<i>sometimes</i>	<i>never</i>	
15 (18)	27 (30)	53 (48)	5 (4)	
5. How do you feel about learning or doing more social studies as you get older?				
46 (51)	31 (27)	15 (12)	8 (10)	
YEAR 8 SOCIAL STUDIES SURVEY 2001 (1997)				
1. How much do you like doing social studies at school?				
14 (19)	54 (52)	25 (23)	7 (6)	
2. How much do you think you learn in social studies at school?				
<i>heaps</i>	<i>quite a lot</i>	<i>some</i>	<i>very little</i>	
16 (29)	53 (54)	28 (14)	3 (3)	
3. Would you like to do more, the same or less in social studies at school?				
<i>more</i>	<i>about the same</i>	<i>less</i>		
14 (16)	63 (67)	23 (17)		
4. How often does your class do really good things in social studies?				
<i>heaps</i>	<i>quite a lot</i>	<i>sometimes</i>	<i>never</i>	
7 (5)	30 (30)	54 (59)	9 (6)	
5. How do you feel about learning or doing more social studies as you get older?				
22 (26)	47 (50)	23 (19)	8 (5)	

