

The Project directors acknowledge the vital support and contributions of many people to this report, including:

- ❑ the very dedicated staff of the Educational Assessment Research Unit
- ❑ Dr David Philips and other staff members of the Ministry of Education
- ❑ members of the Project's National Advisory Committee
- ❑ members of the Project's Social Studies Advisory Panel
- ❑ principals and children of the schools where tasks were trialled
- ❑ principals, staff, and Board of Trustee members of the 286 schools included in the 2001 sample
- ❑ the 3153 children who participated in the assessments and their parents
- ❑ the 108 teachers who administered the assessments to the children
- ❑ the 44 senior tertiary students who assisted with the marking process
- ❑ the 166 teachers who assisted with the marking of tasks early in 2002

## SUMMARY

**New Zealand's National Education Monitoring Project commenced in 1993, with the task of assessing and reporting on the achievement of New Zealand primary school children in all areas of the school curriculum. Children are assessed at two class levels: Year 4 (half-way through primary education) and Year 8 (at the end of primary education). Different curriculum areas and skills are assessed each year, over a four year cycle. The main goal of national monitoring is to provide detailed information about what children can do so that patterns of performance can be recognised, successes celebrated, and desirable changes to educational practices and resources identified and implemented.**

Each year, small random samples of children are selected nationally, then assessed in their own schools by teachers specially seconded and trained for this work. Task instructions are given orally by teachers, through video presentations, on laptop computers, or in writing. Many of the assessment tasks involve the children in the use of equipment and supplies. Their responses are presented orally, by demonstration, in writing, in computer files, or through submission of other physical products. Many of the responses are recorded on videotape for subsequent analysis.

The use of many tasks with both year 4 and year 8 students allows comparisons of the performance of year 4 and 8 students in 2001. Because some tasks have been used twice, in 1997 and again in 2001, trends in performance across the four year period can also be analysed.

In 2001, the third year of the second cycle of national monitoring, three areas were assessed: mathematics, social studies, and information skills. This report presents details and results of the social studies assessments.



### ASSESSING SOCIAL STUDIES

Chapter 2 explains the place of social studies in the New Zealand curriculum and presents the social studies framework. It identifies five areas of knowledge or curriculum strands: social organisation; culture and heritage; place and environment; time, continuity and change; and resources and economic activities.

These are linked to three processes and placed in the context of local, regional and global communities. The importance of attitudes and motivation is also highlighted.

## SOCIAL ORGANISATION

Chapter 3 presents the students' results on 14 social organisation tasks. Averaged across 91 task components administered to both year 4 and year 8 students, 7 percent more year 8 than year 4 students succeeded with these components. Year 8 students performed better on 74 of the 91 components. The components with the largest differences were scattered across all of the tasks, as were the components on which year 8 students did not do better than year 4 students.

The students achieved quite a high level of consensus about the requirements for good team members and leaders, with strong emphasis on being encouraging, helpful and fair, and not being too bossy or dominating. Year 8 students continued along these lines when they explored the rights and responsibilities of students and teachers. They believed they had a right to be treated kindly and fairly, and allowed reasonable freedom of expression, while their responsibilities included being respectful and helpful to the teacher, kind and fair to their fellow students, and trying hard as learners. They perceived the main right for teachers to be having students who paid attention, were respectful and not disruptive, and the main responsibilities to be well prepared, try hard as a teacher, treat children kindly and fairly, and try to make school a safe place. Performance was predictably lower on tasks that explored students' understanding of aspects of social organisation that they would have more distant contact with, such as how community and national leaders win their positions, the challenges associated with disability, and steps in proposing and implementing new laws.

## CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Chapter 4 presents results for 13 culture and heritage tasks. Averaged across 48 task components administered to both year 4 and year 8 students, 20 percent more year 8 than year 4 students succeeded with these components. Year 8 students performed better on 47 of the 48 components.

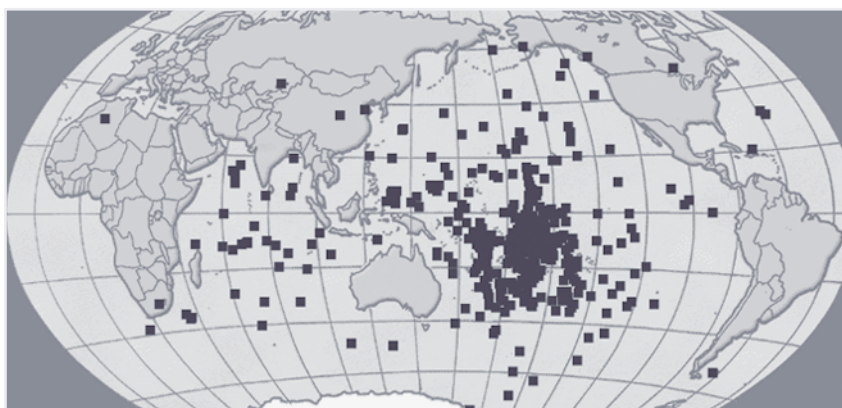
Students at both levels generally succeeded well with associating symbols or logos with the associated New Zealand activities or features, but showed quite limited knowledge and understanding of the Treaty of Waitangi and early New Zealand history. About half of the year 8 students showed little understanding of the importance of cultural traditions for immigrants from other cultures, and fewer still had well developed ideas about important features of New Zealand culture.



## PLACE AND ENVIRONMENT

Chapter 5 presents results for 12 place and environment tasks. Averaged across 47 task components administered to both year 4 and year 8 students, 19 percent more year 8 than year 4 students succeeded with these components. Year 8 students performed better on 46 of the 47 components.

Working in teams, students had good success in associating photographs with their countries of origin and various activity categories. Year 4 teams also did a reasonable job of demonstrating understanding of important differences between town and country life. Students showed less understanding of the information needs of immigrants, and quite limited knowledge of New Zealand and Pacific geography.



## TIME, CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Chapter 6 presents results for six time, continuity and change tasks. Averaged across 21 task components administered to both year 4 and year 8 students, 16 percent more year 8 than year 4 students succeeded with these components. Year 8 students performed better on 19 of the 21 components.

Because these tasks required knowledge or understanding of history or the cause and effects of historical changes, and these are things that students learn about rather than experience, performance on these tasks was not strong. In particular, students showed quite limited knowledge of New Zealand history.

## RESOURCES AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Chapter 7 presents results for four resources and economic activities tasks. Averaged across 18 task components administered to both year 4 and year 8 students, 11 percent more year 8 than year 4 students succeeded with these components. Year 8 students performed better on 17 of the 18 components.

Most students could identify ways in which rivers formed a useful resource for people, most notably themselves or other children. They were less successful in seeing the attractions of New Zealand from the perspectives of overseas tourists, often highlighting buildings or entertainment activities that are not particularly special for overseas visitors, but more likely to be of interest to New Zealand children touring within the country.

## TREND INFORMATION

Chapters 3 to 6 included trend tasks, but because these were thinly spread across these chapters the trend results have not been reported in the chapter summaries. Instead, they have been accumulated to report in this paragraph. At year 4 level, eight trend tasks were administered in both 1997 and 2001. Averaged across 79 assessed components of these tasks, 2.5 percent more year 4 students succeeded in 2001 than in 1997. This can be interpreted as a very small gain across the four years. At year 8 level, also, eight trend tasks were administered in both 1997 and 2001. Averaged across 82 assessed components of these tasks, 1 percent fewer year 8 students succeeded in 2001 than in 1997. This difference is so small that it should be interpreted as no change across the four years.

## SURVEY

Chapter 8 focuses on the results of a survey that sought information from students about their curriculum preferences and perceptions of their own achievement. Social studies was the tenth most popular of 12 subjects for year 4 students and eighth equal for year 8 students. This may be misleadingly low because social studies is often embedded in theme work and not easily identified as social studies.

Students were asked to rate how much they liked learning about each of eight things 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. 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 about why people have different ideas.

Students were then asked to rate how often they learnt about the same eight things. 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”.

There is one noteworthy change between 1997 and 2001. Asked “*How much do you think you learn in social studies at school?*”, substantially fewer students chose the most positive rating in 2001 than in 1997. For year 8 students, the percentage of students selecting that option dropped from 50 to 30, and for year 4 students from 29 to 16.



## PERFORMANCE OF SUBGROUPS

Chapter 9 details the results of analyses comparing the performance of different demographic subgroups. As was true in 1997, there were very few statistically significant differences in task performance among the subgroups based on school size, school type or community size.

There were more differences associated with geographic zone in 2001 than in 1997, when students from the South Island performed best on 5 percent of the year 4 tasks and 22 percent of the year 8 tasks. The corresponding percentages in 2001 were 11 and 20, but this time South Island students also performed worst on some tasks (8 percent at year 4 and 2 percent at year 8). All of the latter tasks involved Māori contexts.

Patterns of gender differences also changed between 1997 and 2001. In 2001, year 4 girls scored better than boys on 7 percent of tasks (none in 1997) and worse on 17 percent of tasks (14 percent in 1997). Year 8 girls performed better than boys on 9 percent of tasks (16 percent in 1997) and worse on 6 percent of tasks (32 percent in 1997).

Māori and non-Māori students performed differently on 36 percent of year 4 tasks in both 1997 and 2001, with non-Māori students performing better in almost all cases. At year 8 level, non-Māori students performed better than Māori students on 51 percent of the 2001 tasks (substantially lower than 68 percent in 1997).

The SES index (based on school deciles) showed the strongest pattern of differences. In 2001, students in low decile schools scored lowest on 67 percent of the year 4 tasks (53 percent in 1997) and 76 percent of the year 8 tasks (73 percent in 1997). Year 4 students in low decile schools were, however, distinctly more positive about studying social studies than their counterparts in medium and high decile schools.

## PACIFIC SUBGROUPS

Chapter 10 reports the results of analyses of the achievement of Pacific Island students. Additional sampling of schools with high proportions of Pacific Island students permitted comparison of the achievement of Pacific Island, Māori and other children attending schools that have more than 15 percent Pacific Island students enrolled. The results apply only to such schools, but it should be noted about 75 percent of all Pacific students attend schools in this category.

Pacific students scored lower than “other” students on 20 percent of the tasks at year 4 level and 14 percent of the tasks at year 8 level, but higher than “other” students on 1 task (3 percent of tasks) at both levels. Year 4 and year 8 Pacific students performed very similarly to Māori students. It is noteworthy that in the Social Studies Survey, Pacific students were less positive than Māori or “other” students on four rating items at year 4 level and seven rating items at year 8 level.