ASG Parents Report Card 2017
New Zealand parents’ perceptions of the state of education in New Zealand
Welcome

For more than four decades across Australia and New Zealand, ASG has been a champion for education. We believe the role of education in society can move our nations forward, enhancing our countries’ skills and most importantly, creates a foundation for each young individual to build their character, conviction, passion and success.

Parents play an important role in their children’s academic success and their views provide a unique perspective of the state of the educational environment in New Zealand. Parents’ ability to observe, analyse and link together all aspects of their child’s education makes their insight essential to the growth and evolution of education.

Last year’s ASG Parents Report Card revealed the need to balance academic success with the social and emotional growth of children.

This year, the importance of a holistic education continues to shine through, together with the growing need to evolve educational requirements, both at home and school, at the same pace as emerging influences.

Monash University developed this report based on a survey of more than 450 New Zealand parents, grandparents and guardians (parents). Of the New Zealand participants, more than 260 were members of ASG and 200 were drawn from the general population. The proportions of responses broadly matched the distribution of parents across all of New Zealand.

Two aspects of the environment were investigated, including the educational resources (Educational Capitals) that broadly support the learning of their children, and the learning resources (Learning Capitals) that are of specific benefit to their children. Furthermore, the educational aspirations of parents for their children were also determined.

Together, these beliefs constitute an ASG Parents Report Card of the current educational environment in New Zealand. Parents of school children were asked to respond to a questionnaire asking five main questions:

- To what extent does the current educational and learning resources support their children’s learning?
- Who is responsible for educating their children about Sex Education (SE), Social Skills (SS), Physical Needs (PN) and Cyber Safety (CS)? The options included Parents or Schools/Teachers.
- What is the extent and type of their involvement in their child’s learning?
- What are their expectations for academic achievement in a hypothetical Mathematics, English Dictation and English language spelling test?
- What are their greatest concerns regarding their children’s education?

Demographic information was obtained from parents, including:

- The parent type (father, mother, grandparent, other);
- Monthly income of household (range from < $500 - >$10,000);
- Their child’s current educational level (early learning, primary and secondary levels);
- Highest educational background of respondent and partner, if applicable (home-schooling, primary, secondary, vocational, university education);
- Their self-identified ethnic group (African, Australian, British, Chinese, North American, South American, Other American, Malaysian, Middle Eastern, Indian, Other Asian, Other European, New Zealander/Pacific Islander, Filipino, Cook Island Māori, New Zealand European, New Zealander, Samoan, Tongan and Other Pacific peoples);
- Sex of child (male, female);
- Age of their child (years);
- School type (state, state integrated, private).

This information was used to cross-tabulate the responses to determine whether the responses to the educational and learning capitals varies with parent origin, for example.

The questionnaire was formatted for an online survey using Qualtrics. ASG members and non-members were invited to answer the same questionnaire.

The total number of responses from New Zealand parents was 464 including 264 (56.9 per cent) from ASG members and 43.1 per cent from the general population.
Executive summary

The ASG Parents Report Card investigates the state of education using three indexes: the Educational Resources Index, the Learning Resources Index and the Aspirations Index.

The report continues to be the only one of its kind, analysing the perceptions of the educational environment, as perceived by parents.

Parents continue to be a fundamental stakeholder in the educational landscape and the only ones who can bring together the home and school life of New Zealand’s children.

Now in its third year, the ASG Parents Report Card continues to evolve, probing deeper into emerging issues in education, such as internet safety and sexuality, which are prompting a shift in the mindset of all parents, teachers and policy makers.

While confident that their children have access to the resources, skills and knowledge needed to determine their success, there is still some work to do to ensure all children have access to a holistic education. This will provide children with all the important social skills they need to develop into successful adults.

A summary of ASG’s key insights raised in this report are as follows:

- While parents believe their sons and daughters are equally as capable to achieve and succeed, they perceive girls to have a slight edge over boys when it comes to staying focused on their studies.
- Mothers express a greater sense of pragmatism about their child’s ability to study and avoid distractions in comparison to fathers.
- The cultural differences and ethnic backgrounds of parents have an impact on the perceptions of their child’s educational environment.
- Cultural differences also play a role in attitudes towards sex education, with the home not always being the best place to discuss this important issue.

Educational Resources Index

The Educational Resources Index is based on five factors to measure how parents view their children’s educational environment:

- Economic factors including families’ financial capacity
- Cultural factors including value systems and thinking patterns
- Social educational support from parents, peers, teachers and institutions
- Infrastructure, learning technologies and physical resources such as those found in learning centres, schools and at home
- Didactic educational success, including access to quality teaching, best practice teaching methods and associated curriculum.

The ASG Parents Report Card found that the overall Educational Resources Index for 2017 is 2.93, out of a total of four. This means that parents generally agree that the educational environment supports their children’s learning.

In particular, the rich social environment, such as support from parents, teachers and peers, is the measure in which parents are most confident in (3.06 out of four). This means parents believe that their social group supports their child’s learning.

Learning Resources Index

The Learning Resources Index measures parents’ perceptions of their child’s learning environment and looks at factors including:

- A child’s capacity to attend to a learning task (attentional)
- A child’s capacity to apply skills and learning in a given learning environment (episodic)
- A child’s approach and goals that allows for effective learning (telic)
- Skills and knowledge acquired by a child (actional)
- Mental and physical health (organismic).

The ASG Parents Report Card found that the overall Learning Resources Index for 2017 is 2.82, out of a total four. This means that parents generally agree that the learning environment supports their children’s learning.

Aspirations Index

The ASG Parents Report Card indicates that parents want their children to reach for the stars and have a bright future.

They say that their aspirations for success resonates with their children; playing an important part in driving their children’s educational success.

The Aspirations Index score of 2.77 out of four suggests parents generally have optimistic aspirations for their children’s success. This means that many parents have university aspirations for their children.
As you would expect, parents want their children to achieve great things, and it’s this desire that underpins their attitudes towards the resources and influences that can have an impact on their child’s ability to succeed.

**The sky’s the limit**

Parental ambitions for children are high, however parents are practical too and appreciate that rewards only come with sustained effort.

Seventy per cent of parents set high expectations for their child and 90 per cent of parents believe academic success comes from working hard.

Many parents also have higher education in their sights, with more than seven out of 10 parents (72 per cent) believing a degree will help their child achieve their ambitions.

Interestingly, while aspirations are high, they are not always vocalised. Eighty four per cent of parents agree that higher education is important for their child, yet only 62 per cent often talk to their child about it.

It’s not surprising that parents of secondary school children are more proactive in talking to their children about a degree (89 per cent). Faced with elective choices and the end of year 13 looming closer, it’s likely that parents of secondary school children want to make sure their child is thinking about their long-term future.

**Positive learning outlook**

Seventy five per cent of parents agree that their child has clear learning goals, and almost all parents (91 per cent) agree their child aims to do well in their learning.

Ninety eight per cent of parents believe their child is happy when they succeed at a test or project.

It’s encouraging to see children strive towards success. Regular communication is essential to keep children motivated, and parents who share the passions of their children can play a proactive role in their child’s desire and ability to succeed.

Regardless of age, it’s important that parents maintain their value systems, and regularly communicate their support, and expectations for their children’s academic success (Phillipson & Phillipson: 2012).

Those with shared aspirations for their child’s post-secondary future have the opportunity to positively influence their child’s belief in their ability to succeed.

**Parents’ higher education and higher earnings lead to higher aspirations**

Parents with a university degree have higher aspirations for their child’s educational success.

Seventy nine per cent of parents who are university educated believe a degree will help their child achieve their ambitions, in contrast to 59 per cent of parents who are vocationally trained, or 64 per cent of parents who hold only a school certificate and/or didn’t complete tertiary education or training.

Parents’ level of education is not the only contributing factor to expectations of a child’s academic success, with income also shaping views as to the value of a degree.

Eighty one per cent of parents who earn more than $96,000 per year agree a degree will help their child achieve their ambitions. In contrast, this drops to 76 per cent of parents who earn between $60,000-$96,000 per year and 64 per cent earning less than $60,000 per year.

Parents with a degree have a first-hand experience of the opportunities that exist post-university, and perhaps see greater value and a return on investment in tertiary education.
Motivated to succeed

The ASG Parents Report Card found that parents have high aspirations for their children, and their perception is that their child is equally as motivated to succeed. However, cultural emphasis on the importance of education and academic success appears to influence the expectations and aspirations of parents with different ethnic backgrounds.

Eighty-two per cent of Indian and other Asian parents set high standards for their child’s academic achievements, compared to 66 per cent of New Zealand parents.

Interestingly, almost all Indian and other Asian parents agree (96 per cent) that when solving a new problem, their child uses skills they have already learnt. While still high, this drops slightly to 92 per cent for New Zealand parents.

Focus and problem solving

Many parents believe paying attention is a struggle for their child. Sixty-two per cent of Indian and other Asian parents agree that their child can be distracted from their learning, which increases to 82 per cent for New Zealand parents.

Interestingly, almost all Indian and other Asian parents agree (96 per cent) that when solving a new problem, their child uses skills they have already learnt. While still high, this drops slightly to 92 per cent for New Zealand parents.

Social expectations

A large majority of Indian and other Asian parents (88 per cent) agree that all the people in their social group believe education is the key to success. This falls by 13 per cent with three quarters of New Zealand parents who feel this way.

Sixty-one per cent of Indian and other Asian parents believe all of the parents from their cultural group are disappointed when their child does poorly in their studies. This falls to 50 per cent for New Zealand parents.

New Zealand is proud of its cultural diversity. The ASG Parents Report Card also explored where only 66 per cent of New Zealand parents who identify themselves as having a New Zealand heritage.

Furthermore, 92 per cent of Indian and other Asian parents agree a degree will help their child achieve their ambitions, whereas only 66 per cent of New Zealand parents agree.

This stronger tie to education could be linked to first generation migrants who come to New Zealand to give their children a better life and seek the opportunities that a strong education brings.

Aspirations and motivations

Seven out of 10 parents say their daughters (70 per cent) and sons (69 per cent) are high achievers and that they are positively motivated by the school curriculum (80 per cent for parents of boys and girls).

However, more parents of boys (82 per cent) agree their child can be distracted from their learning, in comparison to parents of girls (74 per cent). In addition, close to seven out of 10 parents with boys (67 per cent) agreed they had to often remind their child to study in comparison to 58 per cent of girls.

Juggling study and play

Encouragingly, there is no difference in parents’ perceptions about their child’s ability to know how to juggle all of their commitments, such as music, sport and school (66 per cent).

Interestingly, more parents with sons (67 per cent) agreed their child could join a homework or study club to support their learning if needed, which falls to 63 per cent for parents with daughters.

Boys and girls

According to the ASG Parents Report Card, parents believe their sons and daughters are equally as capable to achieve and succeed. However, parents do perceive that girls have a slight edge on boys when it comes to their ability to remain focused on their studies.

Homework continues to be a topic of concern for parents. However, it is clear that there are two opposite concerns: The first is that there is too much homework and that it interferes with other activities such as sport. As a consequence, the child is constantly exhausted.

The second view is that children are not given enough homework and there is a general reluctance by children to read books, preferring electronic devices.

Perhaps the issue is not homework per se. Rather, teachers must clarify for parents and children the value and purpose of the homework.

Finally, parents expressed concerns centering on their child’s happiness. Clearly, parents regard their child’s continual happiness as important.

Research (Methush et al. 2008) has found the way in which boys and girls are perceived from a young age, and the way their parents interact with them, can impact their future educational learning outcomes.

Aspirations and motivations by gender

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<th>English</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Physical Education</th>
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Differences in aspirations and motivations by gender

- **My child is a high achiever**
- **My child is positively motivated by the curriculum**
- **My child knows how to juggle all of their commitments**
- **I often need to remind my child to study**
- **If needed, my child can join a homework club or study club to support their learning**
- **My child can be distracted from their learning**
The ASG Parents Report Card highlights some interesting observations that suggest mothers and fathers view their child’s learning differently.

Dads’ involvement
Both mothers and fathers (90 per cent and 89 per cent, respectively) agree that their involvement in their child’s learning is valued by their school. Almost all mothers (95 per cent) say they join in parent-teacher interviews, in comparison to 79 per cent of fathers. However, dads feel they are more involved with their child’s learning and development. Seventy eight per cent of fathers believe they set high standards for their child’s academic achievement, which drops by almost one fifth for mothers (61 per cent).

Parental perceptions differs
Many fathers (86 per cent) agree that they make sure their child spends enough time on school work and studying, which drops marginally to 84 per cent for mothers. Furthermore, six out of 10 fathers (59 per cent) believe their child can work tirelessly on their learning, compared to 42 per cent of mothers. Fathers are also more likely to disagree (62 per cent) that their child is often tired when learning, however only 52 per cent of mothers disagree.

Seventy two per cent of fathers (59 per cent) believe their child has a lot of knowledge compared to children the same age, however agreement is significantly lower, at 59 per cent for mothers.

Access to resources
More than nine out of 10 parents with children in private schools (92 per cent) agree their child has all the resources they need for their academic success, however this drops to 84 per cent for parents with children in state integrated schools and even lower to 81 per cent for those with children in state schools.

Interestingly, just 70 per cent of state school parents believe today’s current curriculum is better than when they were at school, compared to 82 per cent of private school parents.

Learning goals and motivation
Parents of children who attend private and state schools have similar perceptions about the importance of skills and knowledge. In fact, 61 per cent of parents with children in state schools agree that schools are the place where their child can learn all the skills and knowledge they need for academic success, followed closely in agreement by private school parents (58 per cent). However, only four out of 10 parents (44 per cent) parents with children enrolled at state integrated schools feel this way.

In comparison, 88 per cent of parents with children in state integrated schools feel that their child is motivated by the curriculum, compared to 82 per cent of private school parents and 79 per cent of state school parents.

For parents, the preference for private, state or state integrated schools comes down to the type of school environment and resources they believe will best suit their child’s learning abilities and aspirations.
The school of life

When it comes to social and life skills, the ASG Parents Report Card found parents differ in their views on learning about cyber safety, sexuality and behaviour. So where does responsibility lie?

Cyber safety

Navigating the online world can seem like a jungle for some parents. As technology enables more access to the internet than ever before, teaching children the importance of online safety is essential in today’s environment.

Interestingly, the ASG Parents Report Card found that parents of older children would like schools to be more involved in teaching them about cyber safety. Fifty-eight per cent of parents with children in secondary school would like their child’s teacher to do more to protect them from cyber predators, which drops to 52 per cent and 50 per cent for parents with children in primary school and early learning respectively.

These perceptions could be linked with greater access to, and the growing use of technology, including phones and tablets, within schools as children transition into secondary schooling.

More encouragingly, almost three quarters of parents (73 per cent) agree that they can help their children learn how to safely use social media and sixty-eight per cent of parents do not believe that schools are the best place for their child to learn about sexuality, however this changes when we start to look at it from a cultural perspective. Significantly more Indian and other Asian parents (58 per cent) believe that sexual education is best learnt at school versus 26 per cent of New Zealand parents. While 74 per cent of New Zealand parents agree they can openly talk about sex at home, this falls to 45 per cent for Indian and other Asian parents.

For some parents, sexual education may be a culturally sensitive topic which is not openly discussed, therefore Indian and other Asian parents may also rely on schools for help and support in communicating this topic successfully with their children. It may also vary from school-to-school on the level of detail they do go into addressing sexual education. Parents should openly discuss the topic with teachers to make sure everyone is on the same page.

Let’s talk about sex

Promoting a healthy attitude towards sexuality and sex education is something which is fostered in education, however not all parents agree that school is the best place to learn about sex and sexuality.

Sixty-eight per cent of parents do not believe that schools are the best place for their child to learn about sexuality, however, this changes when we start to look at it from a cultural perspective. Significantly more Indian and other Asian parents (58 per cent) believe that sexual education is best learnt at school versus 26 per cent of New Zealand parents. While 74 per cent of New Zealand parents agree they can openly talk about sex at home, this falls to 45 per cent for Indian and other Asian parents.

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Behaviour balance

Teaching children how to behave in public has traditionally been the responsibility of parents, however the ASG Parents Report Card reveals some parents may now think otherwise.

Fifty-nine per cent of all parents believe schools should do more to teach their child about social skills. When ethnicity is factored in, this increases significantly to 91 per cent among Indian and other Asian parents.

Furthermore, 42 per cent of New Zealand parents agree that they would like their child’s school to do more in teaching them how to behave in public, which increases to 88 per cent for Indian and other Asian parents.

The findings suggest increasingly blurred lines as to where responsibilities begin and end. Parents must work with teachers to strike the right balance to ensure children are learning the social skills that will give them the best start in life.

Closely linked to a child’s academic success is their parents’ involvement in their education. A simple way to describe parental involvement is to distinguish between approaches that are ‘directive’ or ‘supportive’.

Parents with younger children are more likely to have a directive relationship, such as checking homework and talking to their child’s teacher regularly. As children transition into high school, parents take on a more supportive role in their child’s education.

Encouragingly, nine out of 10 parents feel their child’s school values their involvement in their child’s learning and 87 per cent of parents agree they join in parent-teacher interviews and consultations.

Interestingly however, less than two thirds of all parents (61 per cent) agree that they would call their child’s teacher to enquire about their progress. For those with children in secondary school, this drops to 54 per cent. Agreement increases here for parents of children in primary school (87 per cent) and early learning (64 per cent).

In contrast, about a quarter of parents (24 per cent) indicated they were involved in the parent-teacher association at their child’s school, however this drops to 14 per cent of parents with children in secondary school.

These findings confirm that as a child’s education progresses, direct parental involvement decreases and a more supportive role increases.

Hands-off approach to education

As children grow older, relationships between parents and schools may become harder to navigate. Some perhaps see their involvement as unwanted, while other parents may also feel that it is not as important for them to be as directly involved as when their child was younger.
New Zealand versus Australian parents: Is the grass greener on the other side?

New Zealand and Australian parents have similar perceptions for the most part, however there are some interesting differences.

While more Australian parents have higher aspirations for their children’s academic success, more New Zealand parents believe their children have clearer learning goals than parents of Australian children. Seventy-nine per cent of Australian parents say a degree will help their child achieve their ambitions and 70 per cent say they set learning goals. However only seven out of ten Australian parents believe the school curriculum or support parents keep motivation and desire to learn. There are also differences in parental perceptions about the responsibility of teaching online etiquette: About a third (34 per cent) of New Zealand parents believe that learning about cyber-safety is the responsibility of their child’s school, but almost half (47 per cent) of Australian parents share this view.

New Zealand schools have a wider open-door policy for parents. For example, more Kiwi parents (90 per cent) agree their child’s school values their involvement in their child’s learning in comparison to 84 per cent of Australians. Kiwi parents (61 per cent) were also more likely to call their child’s teacher to enquire about their progress than Australian parents (54 per cent).

Clearly, Australians can learn much from their New Zealand counterparts as to why parent-school partnerships seem to be more successful in New Zealand than in Australia. The differences could be attributed to the advantages afforded by one national school system in New Zealand compared to many (state-based) education systems in Australia.

The report suggests that income, education and cultural influences all play a role in parents’ expectations of their children. However parents’ aspirations remain fundamental to their child’s education; underpinning their ability to dream big and reach for the sky. It’s essential that regardless of age and gender, parents must regularly communicate with their children; demonstrating support and keeping motivation and desire to succeed high.

The 2017 edition of the ASG Parents Report Card continues to deliver a snapshot of the learning environment in the context of its three core indexes; the Educational Resources Index, the Learning Resources Index and the Aspirations Index.

The report also shows that parents are divided regarding the role played by schools in developing their child’s social and life skills. When ethnicity is factored in, perceptions about who should be teaching children sexual education and how to behave in public become more apparent. Fundamentally, schools must do more to justify the place of social and life skills in the school curriculum or support parents in these areas. This will ensure all children have access to a well-rounded education, providing them with the important social skills they need to develop into successful adults.

The ASG Parents Report Card demonstrates the value of building strong parent-school partnerships, to enable a greater understanding of expectations and responsibilities, which factor in cultural influences and sensitivities to ensure all children have access to a well-rounded and quality education. The ASG Parents Report Card also demonstrates the value the parenting community has on understanding children’s educational needs.

The ASG Parents Report Card is the culmination of many months of intensive research and analysis between the two organisations.

ASG developed the concept of the index and the Faculty of Education at Monash University, Melbourne, created the questionnaire instrument and research methodology.

The survey findings were analysed and compiled by ASG, Dr Shane N. Phillipson and Dr Sivanes Phillipson, associate professor at the Faculty of Education at Monash University.

Dr Sivanes Phillipson is an Associate Professor of Family Studies at the Faculty of Education, Monash University Clayton Campus. Sivanes has diverse international experience and knowledge base in the broad field of measurements and systems approach to families and education. Sivanes’ research expertise comprises of advance quantitative approaches and analysis including Rasch modeling, meta-analysis and structural equation modelling. She has been awarded multiple research grants and consulted on multiple projects internationally including the development of measurement tools for parent engagement in schools, family services and evaluating existing services within early childhood and child development services. Sivanes has published over 95 pieces of work including books, peer reviewed journals, conference papers and book chapters.

Sivanes is the Routledge Series Editor for Evolving Families Book Series. Her 2017 book published with Springer is entitled Engaging Families as Children’s First Mathematics Educators: International Perspectives.