

# Looking to the future for Life Education

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# Contents

<b>Executive summary</b>	1
What is this report about?	1
What we found	1
Recommendations	2
<b>1. Introduction</b>	3
What is Life Education?	3
The brief from the Life Education Trust	3
What data inform this report?	3
<b>2. What does quality planning look like?</b>	5
Needs-based planning is improving practice	5
Planning before, during, and after visits	7
Life Education is becoming more inclusive	13
<b>3. How does Life Education add value?</b>	15
Life Education supports schools to deliver health education	15
Students benefit from Life Education visits	19
<b>4. Ideas for enhancements</b>	21
School staff's ideas about enhancements to practice	21
Educators' ideas about enhancements to practice	26
Green skies thinking	27
<b>5. Summing up</b>	28
Good practice planning	28
Adding value	28
Summary of recommendations for enhancements	29
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix A Teacher survey information	30
Appendix B Teacher survey data	32

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## Tables

Table 1	Good practice planning criteria	5
Table A1	Who responded to the Life Education feedback survey?	31

## Figures

Figure 1	Which of the following did you discuss with the Educator before their visit?	8
Figure 2	Did you personally attend any of the Educator's lessons?	10
Figure B1	Which of these is an important reason why your school decided to have Life Education visit this year?	32
Figure B2	Life Education helps provide children in my school with the information they need to make positive decisions	32
Figure B3	Life Education helps provide children in my school with useful skills for the future	33
Figure B4	I have seen or heard about positive attitude or behavioural changes in the children in our school as a result of Life Education	33
Figure B5	Most pressing issue: Anxiety	34
Figure B6	Most pressing issue: Distracted by personal devices	34
Figure B7	Most pressing issue: Online bullying	35

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# Executive summary

## What is this report about?

A co-design or shared planning process between an external provider and teachers is critical to achieving effective education outcomes when external providers are used in schools. Life Education Trust wanted an independent review of their co-design planning processes with schools. This evaluation report explores three areas:

- perceptions of effective Life Education planning processes
- the value Life Education adds to schools, teachers, and students
- ideas for how Life Education practice could be enhanced or expanded.

The data that inform this report were collected during July and August 2021 from three main sources:

- interviews with seven primary school leaders and teachers from four schools nominated for their good practice planning processes, as well as interviews with the nominating educator
- two focus groups with a total of 12 educators
- analysis of Life Education teacher feedback survey data from January to June 2021.

## What we found

### Good practice planning

We intentionally set out to speak to a small number of schools that demonstrated good practice planning. We have provided narratives on what this good practice looked like in these four schools. We found a process of co-design that provided flexibility and an education plan tailored to each school so that Life Education's lessons were effectively incorporated into the classroom learning. Educators work collaboratively with schools by firstly identifying the needs of the school and the students, then co-planning lessons with teachers. Prior to their visit, educators share their lesson plans and suggested pre-lesson activities with teachers. Educators encourage as many teachers as possible to participate in the co-construction of planning, while on-site educators continually check in with teachers to ensure that the sessions are meeting expectations and make adaptations as necessary. Educators leave teachers with resources they can use to follow up on the learning and ways to keep in touch if they have further questions or needs. Teachers valued the flexibility of the planning process, the interactive teaching approach, and the technology used in the mobile classroom.

We also used survey data collected from all schools that used Life Education between January and June 2021. This gives a much fuller national picture. These data indicate that 59% of teachers had contact with the educator prior to their visit and 84% got a lesson plan in advance. During visits, nearly all teachers attended sessions in the mobile classroom.

## Adding value

Life Education is seen as a unique programme that supports schools and teachers to deliver key health education messages in ways that assist students to learn about their health and wellbeing, so they have the knowledge and strategies they need. Importantly, Life Education is seen as a complement to, rather than a replacement of, a school's health curriculum.

The mobile classroom and the instantly recognisable mascot, Harold the giraffe, help make Life Education stand out from the crowd and therefore provides a unique reinforcement to school health programmes. The mobile classroom is seen by teachers as a safe environment where students feel comfortable and confident.

School staff appreciate the expertise, energy, and enthusiasm of the educators who come on-site to their school and reinforce important understandings about health and wellbeing. The educators are the "other voice" that strengthens the messages from school staff. The relationships that the educators develop with the school, the staff, and the students is highly valued.

Life Education gives students access to engaging positive programmes in a setting outside their regular classroom. Teachers report that students learn more about themselves and their bodies, and they get the chance to find out about strategies they can use every day to help them make healthy choices. Educators are seen to be inclusive of students from different cultures and backgrounds and are beginning to incorporate more te reo Māori and te ao Māori into their programmes.

Life Education Trust provides our school with yet another layer of resources, expertise, and insight into the concepts that our school and our community has deemed as the most important to cover. Our school recognises Life Education as a part of our community and provides us with a level of expertise that some of our teachers don't have. It supports them with their understanding. It that we can develop further in a more in-depth way in our classrooms. (School staff)

## Recommendations

We make a series of recommendations for ways that Life Education could enhance the delivery of their programmes. These include continuing to:

- produce new, and update existing, resources so they are current and appropriate
- provide support to teachers between Life Education visits
- invest in educator development
- explore ways for educators to be involved in resource development and revision
- find more opportunities for educators to connect with each other.

In addition, Life Education needs to develop a strategy to ensure its learning resources—and messaging around their use—are consistent across the mobile classroom, school classroom, and to whānau in their homes.

Finally, Life Education should continue its te reo Māori journey by developing more resources in te reo Māori and increasing the use of te reo Māori and te ao Māori in its programmes.



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# 1. Introduction

## What is Life Education?

Life Education is a charity-based organisation that delivers health and wellbeing programmes to schools across Aotearoa New Zealand. The *Healthy Harold* programme is taught in primary and intermediate schools by educators with specialised training in health education. Sessions take place in mobile classrooms on school grounds. The educators use a range of approaches in the mobile classroom such as videos, interactive tactile models, and software-driven apps to cover content related to identity and resilience, relationships and communities, food and nutrition, human biology, and substances. Harold the giraffe is the iconic mascot of the *Healthy Harold* programme. In 2015, Life Education launched an online interactive planning tool designed to make the planning process with schools more collaborative and responsive.

## The brief from the Life Education Trust

The Life Education Trust wanted an independent review of the extent to which their processes and practices add value to schools and health education teaching. In particular, as outside providers, are they able to plan with schools to be responsive to school and student contexts in ways that add value and achieve education outcomes?

The three evaluation questions this report addresses are:

1. **Quality planning:**
  - To what extent does the Life Education planning process with a school (communication with schools, meeting, creating learning briefs, etc.) ensure educators understand and respond to school-wide needs and specific learning needs of students?
  - What does this planning process look like when it is working well?
2. **Value added:** What value does Life Education add to teachers' and schools' health education practices, and to students' health learning?
3. **Next steps:** Are there aspects of existing practice that could be enhanced, or new or emerging areas that could add value for schools (e.g., in planning processes, educator practice, content, PLD for teachers, use of new technologies)?

## What data inform this report?

### About the school staff interviews

To find schools that had good practice planning processes, the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) invited all Life Education educators to nominate schools they considered engaged in the good practice planning processes shown in Table 1 (see page 5). The educators who responded provided information about the school including the reasons for nomination.

From the list of school nominations, we selected four schools. To ensure we heard a range of perspectives, we selected schools that had different contexts. These included low- and high-decile schools, schools with high Māori or Pacific student populations, and rural and urban schools.

We spoke to seven school staff in total—two principals, two deputy principals, and three teachers. One of the deputy principals and one teacher were the health curriculum leads in their school. The interviews focused on all three evaluation questions and took up to 1 hour by telephone or in person. In addition, we interviewed the four nominating educators.

### **About the focus groups**

We talked to two groups of educators at focus groups that were held during the Life Education conference in July 2021. All Life Education educators were invited to attend the focus groups. Twelve out of 45 educators volunteered and all 12 participated. Both groups included educators who were new to Life Education (joined in the past 2 years) as well as experienced educators (those who had been educators for 15+ years). The focus groups mostly explored evaluation questions 1 and 3.

### **About the survey**

After Life Education had visited a school, the school staff were invited to complete an online feedback survey, managed by Research NZ. To supplement the interview data and to maximise the use of existing data, we analysed the Life Education national teacher feedback survey data from January to end of June 2021. We mapped the survey questions against the three evaluation questions and then selected the questions that had the best fit to include in the analysis. We also coded the six open-ended questions that had the best fit with the evaluation questions. These are listed in Appendix A with the number of respondents to each question in brackets.

Table A1 (see Appendix A) provides a profile of the school staff who responded to the survey, from January to June 2021. There was a good spread of responses from teachers across year levels 0–8.

### **Limitations of the design**

There are several limitations to the design of this evaluation which are outlined below.

Staff we spoke to came from four schools that were nominated because they had good practice planning. We did not speak with staff from other schools. However, this was mitigated by using the survey data which includes the perspectives of teachers from a wide range of schools who have engaged with Life Education programmes in 2021.

The educators we spoke with were self-selected. These educators were ones who wanted to share their views with us, and their perceptions are not generalisable to all educators. There was some overlap between the educators in the focus groups and the educators we spoke with who had nominated good practice schools.

While we spoke to educators and school staff about the value that Life Education adds to students, there is no student voice in this evaluation.

COVID-19 had no impact on the data-gathering aspect of this project. Face-to-face data collection occurred at a time when there were no lockdowns in Aotearoa New Zealand. There was no other impact as the project design included Zoom interviews and the use of existing online data gathered by Life Education.

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## 2. What does quality planning look like?

Table 1 outlines good practice planning processes that were developed using elements of Life Education’s integrated approach to supporting schools and our own knowledge of good practice. This section of the report provides evidence to show the extent to which educators are engaging in these practices. It draws on all three sources of data: school staff interviews, educator focus groups, and the teacher feedback survey.

TABLE 1 **Good practice planning criteria**

**Good practice planning:**

- provides opportunities for educators and teachers to collaborate before the visit
- incorporates information about the school needs or the needs of specific classes
- involves educators adapting Life Education resources to fit class, student, or curriculum needs
- includes sending the Lesson Overview in advance to the school so teachers can review it
- includes pre-lesson resources that teachers can adapt
- includes post-lesson support and resource suggestions from educators.

### Needs-based planning is improving practice

In 2015, Life Education moved from using a module-based approach to teaching health education where schools selected the units they wanted to be taught from a predetermined list, to an approach based on the needs of the schools. Educators and teachers both said they valued this shift. This more collaborative approach to planning is viewed positively, as it provides schools with the opportunity to share their needs with the educator, and it provides educators with the opportunity to tailor their sessions to the school’s requirements. The flexibility of the co-design process allows educators to “mix-and-match” the content of their sessions by blending elements from Life Education’s curriculum strands into one package. Educators are also able to incorporate a school’s values into the programme being delivered.

In the online feedback survey, teachers were asked an open question about ways that Life Education could improve its planning process. Only 6% of respondents chose to make a suggestion to improve planning.

Good Practice Narrative 1 below shows how an educator incorporated a school’s newly developed values into its programme.

*They’ve been more flexible in their approach to fitting us in and working around [us]. (SCHOOL STAFF)*

## Good Practice Narrative 1: Incorporating school values through collaborative planning

### What was the school need?

As part of its work with the Māori Achievement Collective (MAC), a school has developed a new set of values based on te ao Māori concepts such as whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and kaitiakitanga. The school shared these values with the educator and asked her to include them in the sessions with students.

*The way that she connected with the teachers and talked about what we were doing as a school with our curriculum and where we were heading and the [new] values we have adopted ... this year in consultation with our community. She ... adapted her programme to incorporate our values and [used] the Māori words that we've adopted, like whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and kaitiakitanga in her programme. (SCHOOL STAFF)*

### Before the Life Education visit

Prior to a staff planning hui, the educator sent all staff a link to a collaborative planning document. During the hui she met with all the teachers, looked at the whole school focus, and talked to each individual teacher about the focus for their class. She helped the teachers navigate the big questions listed on the website, ensuring there was a “why” behind their selected focus. Suggestions made to one teacher often sparked ideas for other teachers. Teachers were encouraged to prime their students before the sessions, even if it was simply with a short conversation.

### During the visit

While on-site, the educator ensured she made contact with each teacher during break times to check that the sessions she had taught were appropriate, and to make adjustments if necessary. The educator made suggestions including an alternative to a planned session and following up back in class when some of the topics covered in a session were quite “heavy”.

*For me, our focus was friendships. [The educator] used the language of manaakitanga. Under our values we have ‘kids speak’ of what that looks like, and she was able to seamlessly put that into her lessons when she was talking about what friendships mean and how that looks at our school. (SCHOOL STAFF)*

### After the visit

The educator provided teachers with posters and other resources that were used in the classroom. She also reminded teachers that she was available if they wanted more ideas to consolidate learning back in the classroom.

### The value of Life Education for the school and teachers

Staff at the school valued the positive relationships the educator had with them and the way she understood the school's journey. They also appreciated the energy she brought to sessions with students which had a flow-on effect for teachers.

*Because [the educators] are so energetic and vibrant it engages the teachers and then they seem to come away from the caravan session a little bit more energetic themselves and a little bit more enthused about where to go next or having a little insight because it's another pair of eyes on your learners. (SCHOOL STAFF)*

## Planning before, during, and after visits

Good practice planning, as described in Table 1, includes activities that happen before, during, and after a visit to a school. The following three sections describe the ways in which educators demonstrate these criteria.

### Educators have different processes to engage teachers in planning prior to a visit

The educators we talked with spoke about the importance of building relationships with school leaders and with as many teachers as possible in a school as a key part of their role. By being seen as part of the school community, educators gain knowledge about a school and can more readily tailor their sessions to a school's needs. Educators encourage as many staff as possible to participate in the co-construction of planning.

*Usually before a school visit, I look at the school website and check out the culture, values, and how they cater for students. (EDUCATOR)*

Educators use a range of ways to discover more about the schools they work with. Some meet with school leaders prior to their visits to find out any "big picture" needs of the school or any values the school would like to see reflected in sessions. Others go online to find out more.

Attendance at staff meetings, team meetings, and/or school planning days is key for many

educators. However, for those whose schools are geographically distant, this personal contact is not always possible. Whether educators are able to meet with school staff in person or not, they share links to planning documents with teachers prior to their visit. These documents include the Life Education Concept Overview as well as draft plans for discussion. The use of shared documents allows both educators and school staff to contribute to the planning.

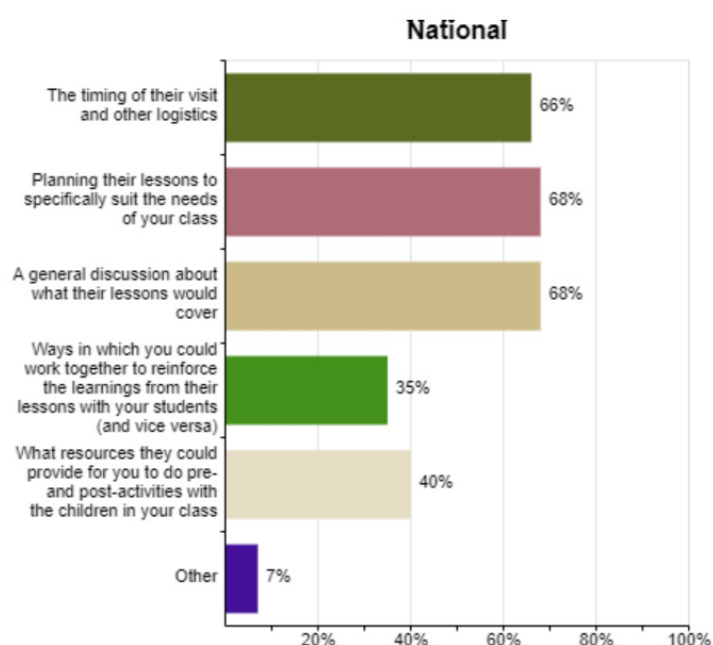
Educators aim to connect with each teacher in a school individually through email or face-to-face meetings. Discussions at meetings are useful as they often prompt schools to think about their needs and they also spark ideas among staff or between the educator and individual teachers. A key outcome of these discussions for educators is clarification of the “why” behind the teachers’ choices of big questions from the Concept Overview. This joint understanding can lead to increased engagement from teachers during the visit.

*Those questions might not always be perfectly suited. So, you really do need that human mediation process ... because some of these questions can mean many different things depending on what you are thinking and what the teacher is thinking.*  
(EDUCATOR)

*[The educator] sent the link to the Trust resources for us to see if the lessons suited. The meeting was better than the email as [the educator] could suggest what we wanted and direct us.* (SCHOOL STAFF)

Once plans are finalised, educators send resources to each teacher that can be used in class to prepare the students for their mobile classroom visits. These pre-visit activities set the scene for the students and allow the educator to maximise time in the mobile classroom on key content and messages.

FIGURE 1 Which of the following did you discuss with the Educator before their visit? (N = 665)



Data from the survey of teachers indicated that 59% of all responding teachers had personally had contact with the educator prior to their visit to the school via email, in person, or by phone. The content of this pre-visit contact varied, but the most common reasons were planning the lessons

to specifically suit the needs of the class, or a general discussion about what the lessons would cover (68% of teachers who said they had contact with an educator said this was the content of the discussion, see Figure 1 below). In a different question, most teachers (84%) said they had been provided with a lesson plan prior to the educator's arrival.

Good Practice Narrative 2 below shows an example of how an educator worked with a school to plan lessons around wellbeing strategies.

### **Good Practice Narrative 2: Planning that supports a school to build kotahitanga**

#### **What was the school need?**

Increasingly, the students at one school were asking for help to develop wellbeing strategies such as being good friends, dealing with bullying, and managing emotions or anger. Using their Wellbeing@School student survey data, school leads identified some strategies to include in an inquiry unit (e.g., being a good friend and an upstander). They designed this unit around the big idea of kotahitanga (unity, togetherness). The key concepts focused on understanding rights and responsibilities, understanding that cultures have different practices, and working together to reduce discrimination and create safe and healthy communities and environments.

#### **Before the Life Education visit**

School leads shared the inquiry with the educator and talked about the concepts, vocabulary, and ideas they wanted the students to explore. The educator then planned lessons to complement the school's focus and attended a staff meeting to hear feedback on these lessons. Then she sent the lesson plans to every teacher and asked for their individual feedback, and any particular class needs.

*She went with our big idea and went with our key concepts and formulated lessons that related to those key concepts and also what was happening specifically at our school at the time around those issues. (SCHOOL STAFF)*

#### **During the visit**

While at the school, the educator attended the staff morning briefings to keep up-to-date on issues or events at the school, and to suggest ways the lessons could be followed up in class.

During the lessons, she made links to the school values (sometimes pinning these to the wall) and adjusted the focus to follow the areas students were curious about. Teachers valued the educator's responsiveness, how she built relationships with students, and the way she used te reo Māori in her delivery.

### After the visit

In the final lesson, the educator set students a wellbeing challenge. Later she emailed staff to remind them about the links to resources in the lesson plans and sent photos of particular strategies, such as REACH or dealing with peer pressure. The school also held an exit discussion, which the educator and staff found valuable in improving how they work together.

*She was responsive as well ... Something cropped up at the time that was being discussed amongst the kids. I called her in and asked if she could include that as the kids are discussing it. So, she added it in.*  
(SCHOOL STAFF)

### The value of Life Education for the school and teachers

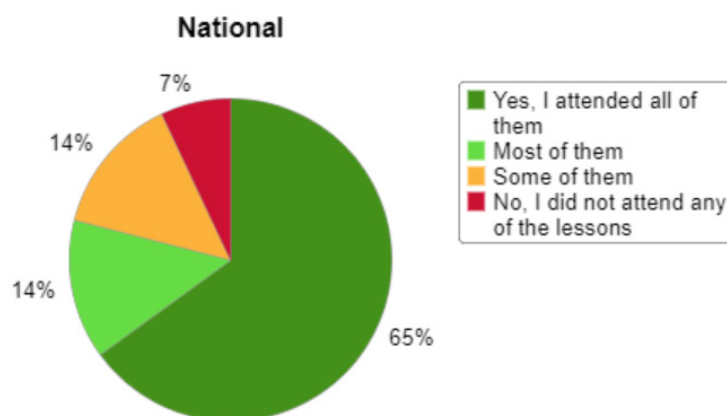
The way the educator adapts to the school focus is really important to staff, as is the way the lessons reinforce and support key messages in the learning programme.

*The biggest part would be the expert knowledge they bring. The students see Life Education as someone who is coming in with expertise. It helps to bolster what we are saying, it gives that extra authenticity. She has really good resources and the kids love the interactive side of the bus. We can't offer that.* (SCHOOL STAFF)

## Educators make just-in-time adjustments during the visit

### Teachers attend mobile classroom sessions

FIGURE 2 Did you personally attend any of the Educator's lessons? (N = 1,127)





There is a high level of teacher attendance at mobile classroom sessions (see Figure 2). Nearly all teachers attend some sessions, and 65% attend all sessions. Educators value active participation by teachers in these sessions, as it supports them to make just-in-time adjustments to planning. One educator we spoke with emails teachers and encourages them to be involved in the lessons. This has resulted in increased teacher engagement during the sessions.

### **Educators connect with teachers when on-site**

Although planning prior to a visit is important, we heard from schools that they also value the just-in-time approaches that educators use when they are on-site. Attending morning briefings and talking to teachers at break times are two ways that educators find out more about any changes that may have happened at the school or in a class since the original planning session. This information is used to adapt sessions.

Educators make themselves visible during their time at a school, connecting with both teachers and students outside of their sessions. They seek feedback from teachers between sessions and make themselves available to answer student questions, particularly if the class is covering more sensitive topics such as pubertal change.

*For me it's all about connecting ... so while I'm there I always make sure that I'm present, I'm visible, I'm available for the staff and the students. So, after a session I will always visit the teacher and get some feedback and just follow up on how they found the session. Is there anything you want to include for the next [session]? Is there any specific direction you want to take from here? What can I do? And it's always just that conversation to ensure that it's what they're after and, if not, I need to change and let them know I will do so. (EDUCATOR)*

### **Educators are required to be flexible**

Both teachers and educators note that a high level of skill is required by the educators to be inclusive and responsive to student needs in the moment. Educators need to be flexible enough to follow student interests while still delivering key messages. They must also very quickly get to know the students and make connections with them so they can alter their lessons to suit what is happening during a session.

*You get very clever at reading a class quickly. Two things happen—you see that a resource might be too easy or too hard so [you] change the resource OR because of the conversations that are happening—this is where it gets really powerful—the kids get really curious. So, I get the kids to share while I check with the teacher—‘They are curious about this, I have resources, we could follow this up.’ I am very big on taking the teachable moment—it is fostering their curiosity and so much more memorable. (EDUCATOR)*

While they are on-site, educators take note of any values, or vocabulary around health and wellbeing, that the school uses or that they see displayed around the school. Educators use resources from classrooms and put them in the mobile classroom, attach school values to the walls of the mobile classroom, or use common school phrases or acronyms during sessions to make connections with the students and their school. One educator sets challenges for students to carry out between sessions and holds “conversation cafés” with small groups of students in a school who may be all be dealing with a specific issue.

Good Practice Narrative 3 below shows an example of an educator working with a class and adapting the programme to suit the needs of the students.

### **Good Practice Narrative 3: Helping to rebuild a sense of community after COVID-19 lockdown**

#### **What was the school need?**

Usually, this school plans Life Education to support school themes, but the timing of the visit coincided with a return to school after a COVID-19 lockdown. So, school leaders talked to the educator about their main priority, which was to look after everyone’s wellbeing.

#### **Before the Life Education visit**

To start the planning process, the educator went to a staff meeting to hear teachers’ ideas about what they needed, and to make suggestions about possible content. The educator suggested areas that staff liked but had not thought of themselves.

The school had recently been exploring cyber-safety with students, so teachers also wanted Life Education to reinforce this. The educator then sent staff the lesson plan and resource links.

*My class were learning how to get on together. So, she was able to say we can do all this social stuff around respecting each other, etc. Then we also covered more of a health topic about body and respiratory systems. She came at it from a keeping ourselves healthy point of view and looking at emotional, social, and looking at cyber-safety, and body systems which the kids loved. (SCHOOL STAFF)*

#### **During the visit**

When the educator arrived 3 weeks later, one class had settled in more, so she and the teacher revised the lessons to suit where the class was now at. This class was really captured by the interactive activities and the focus on body systems, so the educator adapted the content (as she often did) to follow students’ interests. She differentiated lessons so all could join in.

#### **After the visit**

Seeing her class’s interest in body systems, the teacher did a lot of follow-up activity around this topic. She used the links the educator provided and the student workbooks.

### **The value of Life Education for the school and teachers**

Teachers valued how the planning process was so flexible, the interactive teaching approach, and the technology in the caravan. Most importantly, Life Education complements the learning programme.

*The main value added is someone else saying the same thing in a different way. Cyber safety with videos, interactive things, and examples; it was not just me. They covered the same thing: wellbeing. We looked at wellbeing from a religious education perspective, now the educator did a health and physical and emotional perspective ... For me it is about just having those really strong messages coming from a different lens. Just being able to give us something different that is outside our score or range. (SCHOOL STAFF)*

### **Educators make sure they follow up visits**

Maintaining relationships with schools is important for the educators we spoke with. They want their time at a school to be seen as more than a one-off teaching event or a presentation. They want school staff to see them as an external provider who can provide support on specific issues outside of their time on-site with the mobile classroom.

Educators engage in a range of activities that supplement the teaching they have carried out during their mobile classroom sessions. Commonly, follow-up resources are sent to the school. These include booklets, lesson plans, links to websites that can be used in class or sent home, and photos, or posters related to the specific strategies covered during on-site lessons. One educator we spoke with has a booklet with copies of all the resources available. Teachers can flick through these and select the ones they would like sent to them. Another educator, who resides in the community where she works, engages with students when she meets them outside school and reinforces messages by using the language of the mobile classroom. Educators also seek feedback from schools after their visits. Individual feedback is more useful to them than the aggregated feedback gathered in the teacher survey. Schools carry out their own post-visit reviews by conducting exit interviews with educators or holding debriefings with the educator and with students. All these activities support a culture of improvement.

### **Life Education is becoming more inclusive**

A positive change to practice noted by schools was the increased use of te reo Māori and te ao Māori in classroom sessions. Teachers commented that they had noticed educators using more te reo Māori or incorporating more of a te ao Māori focus in their sessions. Similarly, educators told us that they were making an effort to learn and use more te reo Māori in their sessions, with one educator taking a night class to increase her capacity to use the language. Another educator was pleased to see the development of bilingual resources and resources that showed respect for Māori values such as

“Harold’s Pātaka”. In addition to displaying bilingual values in her classroom, one educator told us that she would ask students with languages other than English or te reo Māori how they would say key words or phrases in their language.

Some teachers we spoke with noted that the educators were also inclusive of students from different cultures and diverse backgrounds. They also appreciated the way that educators make use of their school’s values in their programmes.

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### 3. How does Life Education add value?

*Life Education Trust provides our school with yet another layer of resources, expertise, and insight into the concepts that our school and our community has deemed as the most important to cover. Our school recognises Life Education as a part of our community and provides us with a level of expertise that some of our teachers don't have. It supports them with their understanding. It allows our students and teachers to go away from lessons with a path of inquiry into concepts that we can develop further in a more in-depth way in our classrooms. (SCHOOL STAFF)*

This section highlights the ways that Life Education programmes provide support to schools and benefits to students.

#### Life Education supports schools to deliver health education

We asked educators and teachers to describe how Life Education adds value to schools. A range of themes emerged, and these are outlined below.

##### Life Education brings magic to schools

Teachers were asked in an open question in the survey what Life Education's point of difference was, and two things stood out: the mobile classroom (mentioned by 40% of the teachers who answered this question) and Harold (mentioned by 37% of the teachers who answered this question). A further 16% of teachers responding to this question stated that the point of difference was the engaging and interactive content.

*Harold and the bus—it's a very special experience that cannot be replicated in a classroom through its magical atmosphere and groovy lights! (SURVEY RESPONSE)*

This finding was reinforced by the educators we spoke with who also spoke positively of the value of the mobile classroom and Harold. They noted that one of the ways that Life Education added value to schools was because they went to the school, rather than the school having to go to them. They also commented on the fun that Life Education brings to a school.

##### Educators affirm school messaging

Life Education is seen by schools as a support, but not a replacement, for the curriculum and for the teaching of health in schools. When asked in the teacher survey which reasons were important for having Life Education visit their school, 79% of respondents stated that "Their lessons help us to

reinforce what is being taught in the classroom” (see Figure B1, Appendix B). The importance of Life Education supporting the teachings and messages of a school was reinforced by the teachers and school leaders we spoke with.

*The big thing is that they can support what we focus on and add to it—the added value—the ‘other voice’—the nice nanny, the favourite aunt [like when you ask your children to do something and they don’t do it but when an aunty or nanny says it, they do it]. (SCHOOL STAFF)*

Educators and teachers both referred to Life Education as being the “other voice” that supported and strengthened the messages from school staff. Educators saw their role as affirming the classroom learning and being someone other than the teacher giving expert information and advice. Teachers also valued this role.

Good Practice Narrative 4 below provides an example of the way a Life Education educator supported a school by reinforcing their messages.

#### **Good Practice Narrative 4: Strengthening the school’s messages through different voices**

##### **What was the school need?**

A small school wanted to focus on the social needs of their students during a time when groups of students were in transition between classes. The Life Education sessions complemented and strengthened the messages that the staff were giving students.

##### **Before the Life Education visit**

The educator met with all staff prior to her visit, both as a whole group and individually. She determined the specific needs of the students in each class and provided teachers with information and resources. Teachers used these resources to “front-load” their students prior to their sessions in the mobile classroom.

##### **During the visit**

While at the school, the educator ensured she was visible and available, both for staff and students. She visited teachers and sought feedback on sessions, ensuring subsequent sessions met the needs of the class. The educator actively engaged the teachers during the sessions.

*Whenever [Life Education] comes in ... we look at what needs, social needs, etc., we are working on in the classroom at that time and use the educator and Harold to complement that ... You can hear the kids say ‘Harold said’ so the message is strengthened. That’s really the focus of how we use it—to strengthen what messages we are working on at the time. (SCHOOL STAFF)*

#### After the visit

Teachers used techniques from the sessions back in their classrooms, such as role plays and puppets. They were also provided with booklets to use in their classrooms. The educator kept in touch with the teachers, checking to see if they needed additional resources. As a member of the local community, the educator was able to visit the school on a frequent basis, which helped maintain connections with staff.

#### The value of Life Education for the school and teachers

As well as being “the other voice” that supported the school’s focus, staff appreciated the way the educator used the school’s values. They also valued the educator’s expertise and the knowledge and strategies that she passed on to both students and teachers.

*The coping strategies that the educator has taught them have really helped ... The educator engages the kids with a lot of role-playing and I’ve been ... using a lot of role play in my class to teach kids. There are times when children are just stuck, and they don’t know what to do but when ... they are engaged in a role-play situation about, for example, bullying, I would be the victim sometimes or I would act the student, and then the student would act as me. So, it gives them a snippet of what it might look like and how they might cope with it in the playground. (SCHOOL STAFF)*

#### Teachers learn from educators’ expertise

Teachers and educators we spoke with both agreed that one of the ways that Life Education adds value to a school is through the expertise of their educators. This is both because of their knowledge of health education and their skills as practitioners.

In the teacher survey, 52% of respondents selected “Life Education are experts in child health education” as an important reason for why their school decided to have a visit this year (Figure B1, Appendix B). In the open question about Life Education’s point of difference, 17% of teachers responding to this question commented on the expert health knowledge of the educators. Educators themselves note that one of the attributes they bring to a school is specialised knowledge in specific areas of the curriculum. Teachers concur and appreciate that Life Education educators are able to provide in-depth learning on topics that they are not so comfortable teaching or where educators have more up-to-date information and resources.

*Their expertise in the health area is great. (SCHOOL STAFF)*

In addition to their expertise in health education, Life Education educators are skilled practitioners and are seen by schools as role models. As noted previously, they are experienced at getting to know a class of students quickly and responding flexibly to their needs. In the teacher survey, 19% of teachers commented on the educators’ skills as a point of difference. This included the idea that the educators provided a form of professional learning and development (PLD) for teachers through their modelling of good pedagogical practices, strengths-based approaches, and behaviour management

techniques. During sessions in the mobile classroom, teachers got the opportunity to observe both the educator and their students. This often gave them a different perspective on their class and sometimes led to insights into student behaviour. Teachers could feel empowered and energised by these sessions.

*It helps the teachers, for example, with a student who is continually disengaged and then the educator might say 'Have you thought about why this is happening?' and it gives teachers an insight into how the child ticks. The teachers will take those thoughts away and adapt the way they do behaviour management or grouping or interactions with that child. That's having an amazing effect on relationships.*

*Sometimes it's the energy from the educator. You can go in there at the end of the day but the bubblyness and energy in the session empowers you. Actually, I'm going to try some of these techniques—this isn't such a bad job after all. (SCHOOL STAFF)*

Along with their expertise and personal qualities, Life Education educators also bring resources and fresh ideas to schools. Schools find these resources useful, particularly for their beginning teachers. Educators add value to schools through the provision of tools and resources that can support classroom learning. They offer new ideas to teachers on ways to approach classroom issues as well as up-to-date resources on specific areas of health education.

## **Educators build long-term relationships**

Developing and maintaining relationships with schools is something that is very important to both educators and school staff. It enables educators to get to know the school, its values and culture, its teachers, and, most importantly, the students and their needs. In the teacher survey, 14% of teachers responding to the open question about Life Education's point of difference made a comment about educator knowledge of their school and student needs. The long-term stability of these relationships means that Life Education educators are able to deliver programmes that support student learning.

Educators bring value to schools through their personal qualities. In the same question about Life Education's point of difference, 19% of teachers commented on the positive qualities of the educator. Teachers noted that the educators were kind, friendly, and personable. These characteristics made it easy for them to develop positive relationships with teachers and students alike.

Other characteristics of educators included their enthusiasm, passion, and engaging approach. Teachers praised the educators for being exciting, fun, and energetic. These qualities contribute towards student engagement in the mobile classroom sessions.

Educators we spoke with commented on their role as supporters of teachers. They, too, care about the students at a school and can provide a listening ear for teachers if they need it. They bring enthusiasm and energy to their teaching and can personalise lessons to suit a school's needs.

*One thing [Life Education does] quite well—they know the journey we've been on. They couldn't be covering the same things. They know that if you did friendships this year then healthy lunchboxes might be the next thing. (SCHOOL STAFF)*



## Students benefit from Life Education visits

Life Education educators not only add value to teachers and schools, but they also bring a range of benefits to students. Four of these are outlined in this section.

### Harold delivers Life Education's messages

Nearly all the school staff we spoke with mentioned Harold as a positive aspect of Life Education programmes. Both teachers and educators commented that students make a connection with Harold

*We refer to Harold and the way he taught us to calm down by smelling the flowers. This related to our traffic light calm down system and I have heard the children using this or reminded them to use it when they are feeling heightened. (SURVEY RESPONSE)*

that lasts throughout their whole time at primary school. Harold is a conduit for the learning in the Life Education sessions and it is through their relationship with him that students take on board key messages. Harold is almost seen as a role model—the language he uses and the behaviours he suggests provide a way for students to behave. He is a memorable and well-loved character with teachers and educators telling us that even the older students in schools remember and respond to Harold positively.

### Life Education engages students through a positive environment

We heard from educators and teachers that the mobile classroom provides a safe environment for students that is different from their own classroom. Its special effects help create a space that captivates and engages students. Educators and teachers perceive that students feel comfortable and more confident in the mobile classroom, and this allows them the freedom to ask questions they might not normally ask, thus increasing their own knowledge and understanding about a topic.

Educators spoke about Life Education providing opportunities for students to feel important and listened to. This is achieved through the positive environment that is established that encourages students to have a positive mental health outlook.

Educators bring fun to the learning. They know that the best way to motivate students is to make the learning interesting and memorable. The magical, inclusive fun experience outside the regular classroom that educators provide enables students to learn about and retain important life skills.

*We are also trying to support teachers to do their important work. Create a mental health landscape and a health landscape in general where students can learn and thrive. (EDUCATOR)*

### Life Education equips students with knowledge and strategies about wellbeing

Life Education educators provide knowledge and information that benefits students. In the teacher survey, nearly all respondents (97%) agreed or strongly agreed that “Life Education helps provide children in my school with the information they need to make positive decisions” (Figure B2, Appendix B). In addition, 33% of survey respondents to an open question noted that one of the

outcomes or changes they had seen in their students was their increased use of the language provided by Life Education. This included phrases such as: bucket fillers; zones of regulation; warm fuzzies/cold prickles; above the line and below the line behaviour; and fixed and growth mindset.

Survey respondents also commented on how they had noticed their students making good choices and engaging in healthy behaviours as a result of the Life Education sessions. One-fifth (21%) of teachers in the survey indicated that this was one of the positive changes they had observed.

Educators note that Life Education provides students with information about the wonders of their bodies, of life, themselves, and other people. One educator described the programme as being preventative and ensuring students were “prepared, aware, and accurately informed”.

*The biggest part would be the expert knowledge they bring. The students see Life Education as someone who is coming in with expertise. It helps to bolster what we are saying, it gives that extra authenticity. She has really good resources and the kids love the interactive side of the bus. We can't offer that. (SCHOOL STAFF)*

Alongside the knowledge that Life Education programmes provide, they also give students a range of strategies and life skills. Nearly all teachers (96%) agreed or strongly agreed that “Life Education helps provide children in my school with useful skills for the future” (Figure B3, Appendix B). Three-

*Children talked about what they had learnt with other students when I was on duty in the playground. They were making connections and putting the learning into context. (SURVEY RESPONSE)*

quarters agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I have seen or heard about positive attitude or behavioural changes in the children in our school as a result of Life Education” (Figure B4, Appendix B).

The importance of educators providing students with strategies was evident from responses in the survey to an open question about the positive changes the school had seen as a result of Life Education. One-third (34%) of

respondents to this question commented on students using social and emotional strategies or languages, while a similar-sized group noted that they had observed changes in social behaviours such as students demonstrating more empathy or kindness, naming and managing emotions, resolving conflicts within friendship groups, and accepting diversity more readily.

Educators we spoke with also agreed that one of the ways they perceive they add value to schools is through the specific skills they teach students. They commented that Life Education provides students with a range of strategies and practical tools to support them when dealing with tricky feelings.

*I think it is highly valuable. We are trying to equip these kids with tools and strategies—like a kete—in their teenage years when their frontal cortex is malfunctioning—those messages about self-esteem, the importance [of] empathy. If they have powerful messages sent to them, they will help them. Our programme has huge benefits in what it can do to help them. (EDUCATOR)*

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## 4. Ideas for enhancements

*[It's] always a stunning experience with [the educator]. Highly organised, professional, and pitched beautifully. Resources are organised, well planned, and presented in a variety of ways to create interest. Our children love it. (SURVEY RESPONSE)*

This section of the report draws predominantly on data from the teacher survey to focus on ways in which Life Education could enhance its practices. The survey data are supplemented by the perspectives of teachers and educators we spoke with.

The four main suggestions made by teachers were to continue to:

- ensure that content and resources are up to date and relevant
- ensure content and resources are at an appropriate level for students
- incorporate more interactivity and movement into lessons
- build the relationship with Life Education between visits.

The three main suggestions made by educators were to have more:

- involvement in the developing and revising of resources
- time to build shared practice
- administration time for planning and training to reflect the time needed for responsive planning.

### School staff's ideas about enhancements to practice

Overall, schools are happy with Life Education's practices. The teacher survey asks participants for specific suggestions in four different areas: content, delivery, resources, and planning. Ideas for three of these aspects are grouped below as well as ideas about maintaining relationships after a school visit.

#### School staff suggest some changes to Life Education's content

In the survey, teachers were asked for ways that Life Education could improve the content of their lessons in the future. Overall, 22% of the 187 teachers responding to this question made a generally positive comment about Life Education and the content of lessons.

There were several suggestions for ways that Life Education could improve content. The most common ideas were to:

- make the content more age appropriate or challenging (9% of the 187 respondents)
- match the content to teacher expectations (7% of respondents)
- make the content more relevant (6% of respondents).

*We love the way our Educator keeps up with the current trends in curriculum and incorporates these into the lessons, e.g., zones of regulation etc. (SURVEY RESPONSE)*

Survey respondents who wanted more challenging content often commented on the songs and music used in the sessions, stating that these were often not age appropriate, especially for Years 7 and 8 students. They also felt that sessions could go deeper into the content material which could be achieved by including fewer concepts but going more in-depth.

*We were a Year 6 class and the topics seemed surface level. I think it could have become deeper. Schools are now inserting wellbeing teaching across the curriculum so the life education truck may need to go deeper as a lot of the content they already knew. (SURVEY RESPONSE)*

For those respondents who felt that the material in the sessions did not match their expectations, some teachers felt that the session was repeating what had been covered in class or in a previous session or was material students were already familiar with.

Among the comments from respondents about making the content more relevant, suggestions included using real-life situations or examples from the classroom to enhance the learning. Other comments indicated that some of the content needed updating, specifically some of the videos.

*It would be great to link some of the content to issues in the classroom. (SURVEY RESPONSE)*

*The smoking video was around when I was at school (I remembered watching it in 2008) and looked tired—e.g., one of my students pointed out that cigarette packets didn't look like that anymore. Could be due for an upgrade? (SURVEY RESPONSE)*

As a way for Life Education to ensure that their content is relevant, the survey also asked schools to identify the most pressing issues for their schools. Of the five issues presented, anxiety, being distracted by personal devices, and online bullying were the top three selected, offering clear directions for the future development of content by Life Education (see Figures B5–B7, Appendix B).

Suggestions for improvements to content that came from school staff we spoke with paralleled the survey findings. Wellbeing and digital safety were the two areas where these teachers felt that Life Education could increase content.

## **School staff see potential for Life Education programmes to be more interactive**

The second area in which teachers were asked to suggest improvements was the delivery of Life Education lessons. As they had done when asked for suggestions about improving content, a proportion of respondents to this question made general positive comments about Life Education. In this case, 24% of the 121 responses fell into this category.

*[The educator] was absolutely amazing in her teaching, enthusiasm, management and behaviour skills ... She managed to fit in so much into each session and then backed up the learning with extra resources and also ideas and added support with noticeable classes of students that clearly needed it. (SURVEY RESPONSE)*

Four main suggestions were made to improve the delivery of sessions. These were to:

- make more adaptations to lessons, such as changing the pace (22% of the 121 respondents)
- have more interactive lessons (18% of respondents)
- include more movement in the lessons (10% of respondents)
- improve pedagogy and good practice (10% of respondents).

A smaller proportion of respondents commented that they would like the students to have more time with Harold (5% of respondents).

In general, those teachers who suggested making adaptations to the lessons wanted more differentiation of the material and/or its delivery. These teachers noted that there were students in their class who struggled with reading due to English being their second language or because of a disability. Speaking more slowly and explaining words, asking for volunteers to read aloud, or offering audio options for dyslexic students were among the suggested adaptations. Sometimes the class had a wide age range and younger students found the sophistication of the delivery made the material inaccessible. Teachers commented that they would have liked the opportunity to discuss the special needs of some of their students with the educator prior to their sessions in the mobile classroom. While most teachers wanted the lessons to go at a slower pace, there were others who would have liked the sessions to be faster paced.

Those teachers who indicated that the lessons could be more interactive often commented that the students were sitting and listening for too much time while in the mobile classroom. They felt that the environment of the mobile classroom was conducive to doing things in ways that might not happen in a regular classroom. Suggestions for improving interactivity included breaking the lessons up with games and inclusive tasks, utilising a think-pair-share approach more frequently, and varying the types of activities used during a session. Other suggestions on ways to make the mobile classroom even more appealing to students was with more interactive, technology-driven, or online resources being made use of.

Similarly, those teachers who wanted more movement during lessons felt that students were being “talked at” for long periods of time, something that did not suit neurodiverse students in particular. Suggested solutions were providing special needs students with something to fiddle with that won’t distract other children, including some energisers for those students who lose focus, and taking a games-based approach to delivery. One respondent wondered if the whole session had to be conducted inside the mobile classroom.

The fourth aspect of delivery that teachers commented on was pedagogy and practice. They noted that some educators needed to improve their behaviour management techniques by setting up clear expectations, using positive strategies such as proximal praise, and using a firm voice. Some respondents felt that the educator at their school used an inappropriate tone with students while others felt that some practices, such as getting students to read aloud without knowing their reading ability, could be embarrassing and potentially detrimental to student learning.

***[Make it] more interactive—they are not the best at sitting and listening but love it when Harold is out. (SURVEY RESPONSE)***

School staff we spoke with concurred with many of these suggestions. One further idea they had was for educators to use apps to present information in a format that would appeal to students.

While many teachers were passionate about Harold and the mobile classroom, a small number were concerned about the size of the mobile classroom and the appropriateness of a giraffe puppet for older students. A few teachers thought that the novelty of Harold may be wearing thin amongst Years 7 and 8 students, and that for 11–13-year-old students, the mobile classroom was not always fit for purpose as they were often squashed into the space. Teachers suggested splitting up larger classes into two (or more) groups and making use of the outside of the bus for some activities to alleviate this issue.

## School staff identified areas for new, or enhancements to existing, resources

Survey respondents were also asked to make suggestions on ways to improve Life Education's resources. A small proportion of these respondents included a general positive comment about Life Education (9% of 125 respondents).

When asked about ways to make Life Education resources more useful to teachers or students, teachers noted that:

- resources were not always at an appropriate level for students (21% of the 125 respondents)
- some resources needed to be updated (17% of respondents)
- there was insufficient connection between lessons and follow-up resources (14% of respondents)
- more resources were needed after lessons to support what was taught (12% of respondents).

*I am pleased there has been an update of resources and the activity pack for students—relevant and up to date.*  
(SURVEY RESPONSE)

Some of these suggestions overlap with those made about ways to improve the content, notably that resources were not always at the appropriate level of the students and some material needs updating.

Those respondents who felt that some updating was needed referred to the resources in the mobile classroom as being “a bit ragged”, “dated”, or “tired” and in need of refreshing. Others commented that the videos need updating. Some respondents felt that the resources could be less paper-based and more digital, while a small number of teachers found the website cumbersome and difficult to navigate.

Several teachers commented that the resources they received did not match the content or language of the sessions in the mobile classroom. This made it more difficult for them to follow up the learning.

*We were delighted with the lesson content in the van, and it would have been nice for the resource to more closely match the lesson content. I do recognise that the modular format of the lessons would make this tough.* (SURVEY RESPONSE)

A number of teachers said that they would like more support provided after the lessons in the mobile classroom. Some wanted the follow-up resources after the first, rather than the second, lesson while others requested access to some of the resources used in the mobile classroom or to online content such as YouTube links. Teachers would particularly like access to the keywords, language, and strategies that are used during Life Education sessions, such as big/little

problems, bucket dippers/fillers, and zones of regulation. They would also like the resources available online and promoted by the educator. They felt that this would make it easier for them to reinforce the messages the students received during their lessons.

Teachers we spoke to also had ideas for additional resources. One was to develop booklets for teenagers—a kete of tools and strategies about self-esteem and empathy, for example, and motivational leaflets for intermediate-aged students on issues such as peer pressure. Another idea was to have storybooks available on a range of topics that schools could purchase.

*In the future maybe bring in more relevant information to address digital and media influence. I am really shocked sometimes what children do at home [gaming etc.]. We need to let the children know there [is] more important stuff than digital and social media. [Life Education could focus on the] effect and impact of social media on children's brains and how they interact socially and their mental wellbeing. (SCHOOL STAFF)*

As previously mentioned, teachers identified three issues they felt were most pressing for their school (Figures B5–B7, Appendix B). These were anxiety, being distracted by personal devices, and online bullying. The idea of developing resources in these areas was reiterated by staff we interviewed. Cyber safety was of particular importance.

### **School staff want to continue building relationships with Life Education**

Teachers indicated that they would like to see the relationship between Life Education and schools continue between visits. There were several suggestions of ways that these connections could be maintained.

Teachers would like to have learning extended after a visit. This relationship could be in person or via a virtual platform such as Zoom and provide support for teachers to consolidate the learning.

*It would be really cool, instead of waiting for a whole year or cycle to see Life Education again—it would be great to develop a relationship over time. This could be in a digital space—could be a Skype lesson or send some questions (students or teacher) and get some feedback. (SCHOOL STAFF)*

*Could it be that Life Education do a session with parents? They open it up and invite parents to look at the mobile. Being able to snaffle some parents at 2.45 with some videos ready to go would be great. (SCHOOL STAFF)*

One further way that schools could feel more connected to Life Education is for there to be more engagement with parents. This might be through parents visiting the mobile classroom, the educator attending school assemblies, or by sending resources home to families.



## Educators' ideas about enhancements to practice

This section of the report draws on our conversations with the educators in the two focus groups and those who worked with good practice schools. We asked them for their ideas on ways that Life Education could improve its practice and any other ideas for the future. Overall, educators we spoke with would like to have more input into the ongoing development of Life Education practices and resources. They enjoy networking and sharing ideas with each other and would like to have more opportunities to do this.

*[Working for Life Education is] by far my most favourite job in my career. I'm excited and inspired to go to work. At the end of the day, I'm smiling and get to do it all again. (EDUCATOR)*

### Educators would like more involvement in resource development

Educators we spoke with would like to have more input into decisions made about the development of new resources and the refreshing of existing resources. Several suggestions about how this might happen were offered:

- develop a process for providing feedback on resources
- allocate time to provide feedback on resources that are being developed
- rotate educators into the head office to work on resource development in specific areas
- have experienced trainers meet to co-design new foundation modules
- arrange for job exchanges between head office and experienced educators.

### Educators want more time to build shared practice

The new educators we spoke with were generally positive about the support they had received since starting with Life Education. Educators, both new and experienced, value the three professional development seminars they have during the year which give them the opportunity to network with other educators and build their practice. However, they feel that this time is insufficient to keep up with the demands of the job and they would like more ways to connect with their colleagues and share good practice.

Educators note that Life Education has been good at keeping up to date with the development of new resources covering issues such as vaping or developing bilingual resources in English and te reo Māori. However, they also note that educators are often building their own content to meet the needs of the schools they visit. This is something that is time consuming and may be more challenging for newer educators. Educators would like to find ways to share these resources amongst themselves.

Educators have a range of suggestions for ways that Life Education could support them to build their practice through networking and sharing ideas. This could be achieved through an annual observation of an experienced educator which would give educators more ideas about teaching approaches and resources. More PLD opportunities would be welcomed to help educators become experts in a range of areas and to develop a better understanding of the reasons for teaching particular topics. Educators often independently develop lessons in new areas such as gender identity, vaping, or pornography. They would like ways for this content to be shared with the larger group.



*[My suggestion is that we] visit other educators to see them in action rather than just hearing about what they're doing, actually see it being delivered and just getting that different lens on the same focus but from a different personality, different perspective. With that it could very well trigger more creativity and help ... our practice. I'd love to be able to have some scheduled release time to go to a different mobile classroom ... not in my local area. (EDUCATOR)*

During the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown, educators who had been running SLUG (Sharing Learning Uniting Growing) sessions, for example, enlisted a nurse to talk to them about the immune system which helped them when talking with schools and students about COVID-19. Ongoing access to expertise like this is a way to help build up the educators' subject knowledge.

### **Planning in responsive ways is valuable but time consuming**

As noted earlier in this report, both educators and teachers value the shift from the use of modules to needs-based visits. This approach allows educators to tailor their sessions to the needs of the students at the schools they visit. Educators “mix-and-match” content from a range of modules and programmes.

Educators, particularly those with more experience, told us that this approach makes the job both more satisfying and more complex. While they agree with the importance of meeting the needs of students, they also find it challenging to get the balance right between drawing on structured module-like content and developing totally flexible programmes. Educators often have difficulty finding specific online resources that link with what is being taught, especially strategies. There is further tension for the educator when providing follow-up activities for students.

When set modules were taught (prior to 2015), workbooks that matched each module were distributed to schools and many teachers continue to expect to receive these. However, with adaptable and responsive lesson planning, educators now provide follow-up resources in a range of formats such as digital or loose-leaf packs that pull together activities from a range of places. These are not as well received as the booklets despite them being tailored to the delivered programme rather than relating to a module. Comments in the teacher survey reflect this tension, with some teachers noting that the student booklets did not always match what was taught in the lesson (implying that they received booklets related to set modules) while those who received the loose-leaf activity packs commented that these were not as easy to manage, particularly with younger students.

Educators would appreciate more time to develop their programmes as they often find that there is insufficient time to plan and prepare between school visits.

### **Green skies thinking**

When asked for their “blue skies” thinking, one educator made a “green skies” suggestion. The educator felt that Life Education might need to think about how they adapt or mitigate their programme or delivery in response to climate change. As Aotearoa New Zealand moves towards becoming zero carbon, there are some things that Life Education may need to consider if it wishes to be more sustainable, such as their use of paper-based resources or diesel trucks that move their mobile classrooms around the country.

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## 5. Summing up

The purpose of this evaluation is to address the three evaluation questions:

- **Quality planning:**
  - To what extent does the Life Education planning process with a school ensure educators understand and respond to school-wide needs and specific learning needs of students?
  - What does this planning process look like when it is working well?
- **Value added:** What value does Life Education add to teachers' and schools' health education practices, and to students' health learning?
- **Next steps:** Are there aspects of existing practice that could be enhanced, or new or emerging areas that could add value for schools?

### Good practice planning

In this project, we intentionally set out to speak to a small number of schools that demonstrated good practice planning. We have provided narratives on what this good practice looked like in four schools. Educators work collaboratively with schools by firstly identifying the needs of the school and the students then co-planning lessons with teachers. Prior to their visit, educators share their lesson plans and suggested pre-lesson activities with teachers, while on-site educators continually check in with teachers to ensure that the sessions are meeting expectations and make adaptations as necessary. Educators leave teachers with resources they can use to follow up on the learning and ways to keep in touch if they have further questions or needs.

We also used survey data collected from all schools that used Life Education between January and June 2021. This gives a much fuller national picture. These data indicate that 59% of teachers had contact with the educator prior to their visit and 84% got a lesson plan in advance. During visits, nearly all teachers attended sessions in the mobile classroom.

### Adding value

We have heard and read many positive and affirming comments during this evaluation from both interview and focus group participants and respondents to the survey. Life Education is a unique programme that supports schools and teachers to deliver key health education messages in ways that assist students to learn about their health and wellbeing, so they have the knowledge and strategies they need to better manage their health and wellbeing. For schools, the idea that Life Education was a support to their health curriculum, not a replacement, was important, with 79% of schools stating that Life Education lessons reinforced what was taught in the classroom.

The mobile classroom and the instantly recognisable mascot, Harold the giraffe, help make Life Education stand out from the crowd and therefore provides a unique reinforcement to school health programmes.

School staff appreciate the expertise, energy, and enthusiasm of the educators who come on-site to their school and reinforce important understandings about health and wellbeing. They value the relationships that the educators develop with the school, the staff, and the students.

Life Education gives students access to engaging positive programmes in a setting outside their regular classroom. They learn more about themselves and their bodies and they get the chance to find out about strategies they can use every day to help them make healthy choices.

### Summary of recommendations for enhancements

Overall, the educators and teachers we spoke with and the teachers who responded to the survey were positive about Life Education. Educators told us they enjoy their jobs and school staff spoke about the value of the Life Education programmes. There was a range of suggestions made by both groups on ways that Life Education could make improvements.

Teachers would like Life Education to:

- target current issues of importance to students and schools
- ensure their resources are fresh, relevant, and at appropriate levels
- include more interactive approaches that enable student input and movement in lessons, and for educators to consider using spaces outside the mobile classroom to allow for this
- provide ongoing support between visits such as resources or staff.

Educators would like Life Education to:

- provide more opportunities to be involved in developing new resources and revising existing resources
- put systems in place that allow them to share their own resources with their colleagues
- allow more time for training and planning to ensure that they are delivering quality programmes to all schools.

There is a further challenge facing Life Education around the use of pre-packaged resources within a flexible, co-design approach to planning and delivery. Communication with teachers about the purpose of the pre-packaged resources as home-based activities may need to be clearer. Management of all resources across the mobile classroom, the school classroom, and into homes is another part of this challenge.

Life Education is on a journey to include more te reo Māori and te ao Māori in its programmes. Feedback from the survey and from teachers we spoke to indicates that they should continue building their capacity in this area.

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## APPENDIX A

### Teacher survey information

The six open-ended questions that had the best fit with the evaluation questions were:

1. Q16: If you have any specific suggestions as to how Educators could improve the content of their lessons in the future please comment below. (N=187)
2. Q18: If you have any specific suggestions which would help Educators better deliver lessons in the future please comment below. (N=121)
3. Q23: If you have any specific suggestions which would help make Life Education's resources more useful to teachers/students in the future please comment below. (N=125)
4. Q25: You indicated that there have been positive changes in the children in your school as a result of Life Education, can you please provide an example of this? (N=527)
5. Q28b: Do you have any suggestions as to how the Life Education Trust educators could enhance their planning process to better meet the needs of your students and the local community? (N=117)
6. To finish off, please outline what you believe is Life Education's key point of difference. (N=664)

TABLE A1 Who responded to the Life Education feedback survey?

	%*
<b>Description of school (N = 1,127)</b>	
Full primary	53
Contributing primary	32
Area school	5
Intermediate	4
Composite	1
Secondary	1
Special needs	1
Other	3
<b>Role* (N = 1,127)</b>	
Principal	7
Deputy principal	8
Teacher	87
Health co-ordinator	3
Other	3
<b>Year level of students* (N = 980)</b>	
Year 0 (New Entrant)	15
Year 1	22
Year 2	22
Year 3	23
Year 4	24
Year 5	24
Year 6	24
Year 7	19
Year 8	17
Other	2

\*Percentages do not sum to 100 as respondents could choose more than one option.

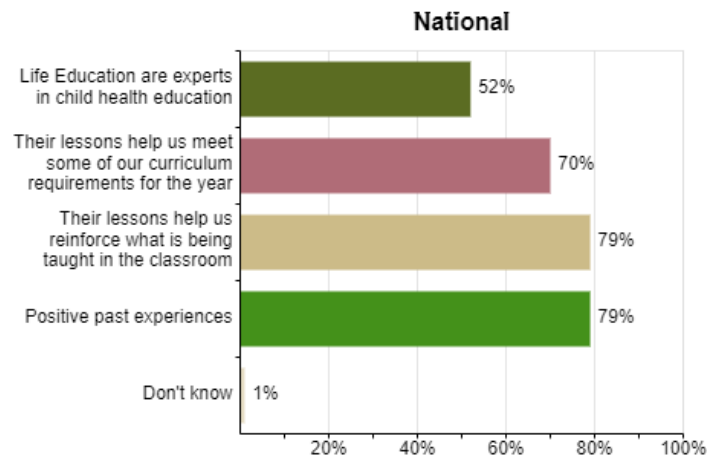
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## APPENDIX B

### Teacher survey data

FIGURE B1 Which of these is an important reason why your school decided to have Life Education visit this year? (N = 485)

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**Note:** This question was only answered by a subset of respondents who said they had been involved in deciding whether Life Education would visit their school this year.

FIGURE B2 Life Education helps provide children in my school with the information they need to make positive decisions (N = 1,127)

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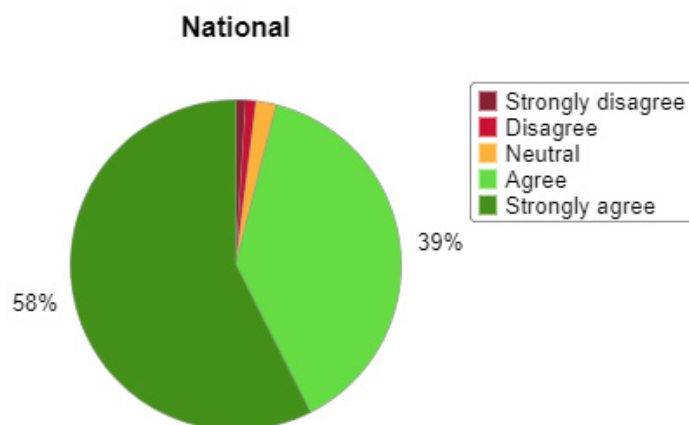


FIGURE B3 Life Education helps provide children in my school with useful skills for the future (N = 1,127)

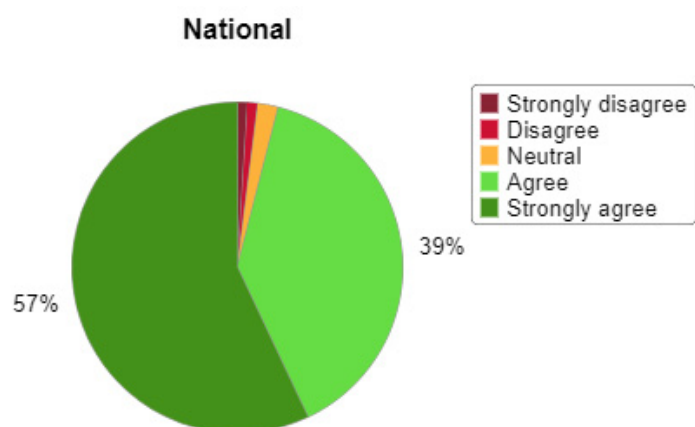


FIGURE B4 I have seen or heard about positive attitude or behavioural changes in the children in our school as a result of Life Education (N = 1,127)

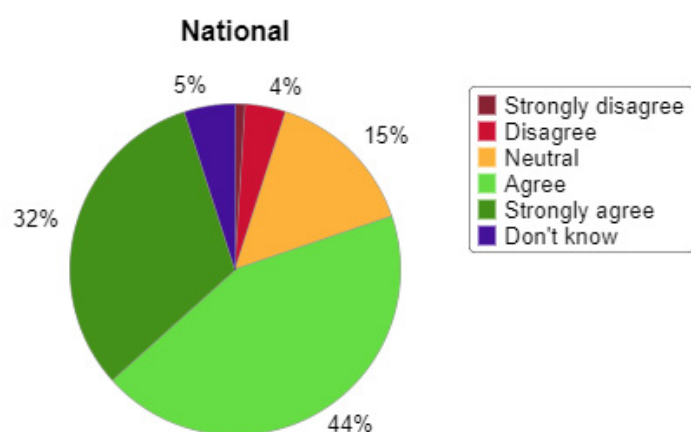


FIGURE B5 **Most pressing issue: Anxiety** (N = 1,127)

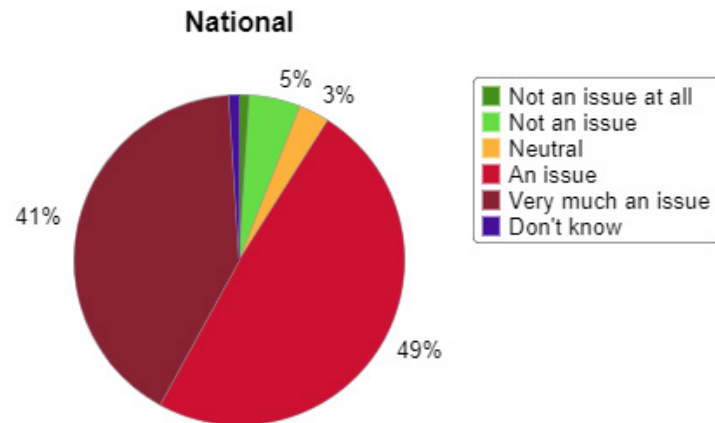


FIGURE B6 **Most pressing issue: Distracted by personal devices** (N = 1,127)

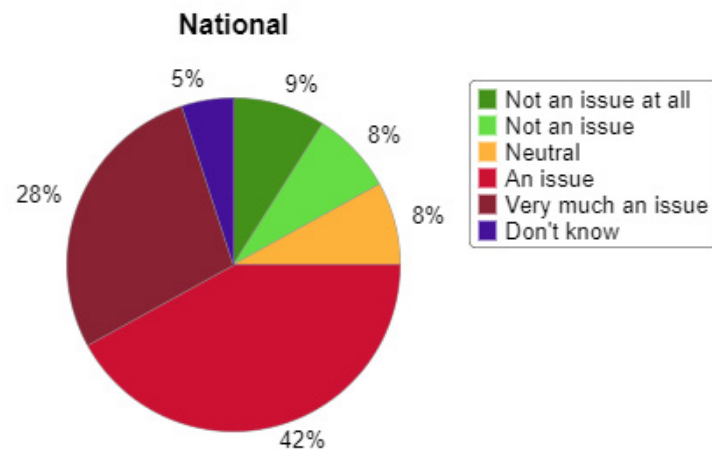




FIGURE B7 **Most pressing issue: Online bullying (N = 1,127)**

