



Evaluation of Travellers Programme 2016

Prepared for Skylight Trust by Sarah Wylie, Mark Turner and Ria Schroder, The Collaborative Trust for Research and Training in Youth Health and Development (November, 2016).



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Travellers is an in-school, small group programme that enables young people to learn skills to cope with change, loss and transition and to build their self-esteem and confidence to be able to face life's future challenges. Travellers has previously been evaluated four times by independent evaluators, the first two evaluations formative and process in nature, the third exploring short and medium-term outcomes undertaken in 2012 by NZCER, focused on participants from 2008 and 2009, and the most recent one in 2014 (Victoria University Education Department) focused on programme content.

The present independent evaluation again sought to explore short and medium term outcomes of the programme, and how well the programme is meeting the needs of young people and their schools, for the cohort who took part in the programme in 2014. In order to make comparisons over time, some elements of the 2012 evaluation were replicated, and in particular, some survey questions were the same across the two evaluations. The present evaluation expands on the 2012 NZCER methodology with considerably more qualitative data gathering incorporated into the present methodology.

The evaluation employed a mixed methods approach, triangulating findings across a number of different data gathering techniques.

Ethical approval for this project was sought and obtained from The New Zealand Ethics Committee (NZEC 2016_3). Participation in the evaluation was voluntary.

Limitations

There are two main limitations of the quantitative survey.

1. Failure to use a probability sampling technique significantly limits our ability to make broader generalisations from our results (i.e., our ability to make statistical inferences from our sample to the population being studied). In the present study it was not possible to obtain access to all the schools that had participated in Travellers in 2014. Some schools no longer had their facilitators on staff, while others were too busy with school work to participate. In future, Skylight may want to look at further embedding follow-up in the core requirements of conducting the Travellers programme, so that schools are better prepared to participate in follow-up.
2. The results of the survey can only infer that any changes between baseline and follow-up are due to the Travellers Programme. However, the inclusion



of multiple sources of information triangulating consistent findings across a number of different data gathering techniques adds weight to the conclusions presented. In future, the inclusion of a control group of young people who met criteria for inclusion but were randomly assigned to not receive the Travellers programme would strengthen the ability to draw robust conclusions.

Findings: Quantitative

The student survey found that overall, 63.5% of students reported the Travellers Programme was helpful (score of 5-7), 22.8% were unsure (score of 4) and 13.8% reported the programme was unhelpful (score of 1-3) two years after completing Travellers. Analysis was conducted to see if any subgroups in particular found travellers helpful. The programme was less likely to be identified as helpful by students demonstrating a high level of distress on the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale (SEDS) two years after completing Travellers than by those with lower scores on this scale.

The findings of the present evaluation identified a number of sustained impacts of the Travellers programme approximately two years-post programme. Travellers seeks to develop engaged, confident and motivated young people. Sixty percent of student survey respondents reported feeling confident to navigate changes and challenges, and for Pasifika students this portion was even greater, at 80%.

The survey included some questions that had been used in Skylight's initial screening survey so that responses from the screening data could be compared to follow-up responses to see if there were any changes over time in how students felt about themselves. Matched data from 2014 were available for 102 out of 199 students. Where data could not be matched between the two surveys, this was due in part to differences in the way in which students identified themselves in the two surveys. In at least one school, the follow-up survey was administered to students who undertook Travellers in 2015 and not 2014. It is unknown if this was a one-off occurrence. Further, for ethical reasons, students did not have to identify themselves in the survey and only 140 students (70.4%) chose to do so.

Of those with data in 2014 and 2016, there was a significant change in the percentage answering yes to "feeling good most of the time". In 2014, 50% reported "feeling good most of the time", while in 2016 this had increased to 75%. Statistical testing (McNemar test) showed that the two proportions were significantly different, ($p < .001$). Of those who said they did not feel good most of the time in 2014, 70% had changed their views at the time of the 2016 survey and indicated that they did feel good most of the time.



The 2012 evaluation conducted by Robertson, Boyd, Dingle & Taupo also found a significant decrease in students' reports of "not feeling good most of the time". In the screening survey 31% of the 129 young people said they did not feel good about themselves most of the time compared to only 18% in the follow-up survey.

Compared with the participants in the 2012 study (Robertson et al.), students who took part in the present evaluation demonstrated higher levels of distress in the last 12 months (i.e. between year one to two since taking part in Travellers), higher scores on the Life Events Scale, and a smaller percentage reporting that Travellers had helped two years post-Travellers. Further research is needed to determine if the right students are being selected to participate in Travellers.

A survey was also undertaken of facilitators of Travellers, to which 48 facilitators responded. The respondents rated the programme highly in terms of both short and medium term outcomes. They mostly identified the programme as contributing to improved overall wellbeing and increased resiliency and ability to manage challenges and changes. Facilitator respondents also indicated that they felt well-supported by Skylight in relation to the programme.

Findings: Qualitative

Thirty-five young people took part in seven focus groups run in early term 3, 2016 at six schools which delivered Travellers in 2014. The schools were selected from all schools where at least five students had responded to the evaluation survey, and purposively sampled to represent a spread of decile levels, school size and community composition in terms of ethnicity and to a lesser extent, urban/rural character. With a limited travel budget for the evaluation and no participating schools in Canterbury where the evaluators were based, selection was limited to three locations. Participation in focus groups was voluntary, with full informed consent obtained. The cultural mix of focus group participants was largely reflective of the cultural make-up of the participant schools, with the exception of Māori students at some of the schools. However, it should be noted that Travellers sits alongside Kaupapa Māori programmes in these schools which cater to Māori students who might otherwise have been enrolled in Travellers.

Student feedback about the manner in which the programme was delivered was overwhelmingly positive in all but one of the schools where focus groups were undertaken.

With the exception of a few students who felt that they would have benefitted from Travellers if they had the programme in year 8 before starting secondary school,



most felt that they had the programme at the right time, and none felt that it would have been better to receive the programme later.

Students particularly liked the Guidance Counsellor involvement in the programme, the programme format and activities, and the confidentiality and trust established within the programme.

Most commonly, the young people in focus groups identified increased confidence, especially around discussing their feelings with others, and a relationship of trust with both the Guidance Counsellor(s) and with others in their Travellers group as the key outcomes they experienced immediately after doing the programme. In the medium term, thinking about outcomes from Travellers that the young people still carry with them and experience at the time of the focus groups, confidence was most commonly identified as the lasting impact of Travellers. This confidence was especially noted around asking questions in front of others at school, talking about their feelings, speaking up in new groups and generally finding it easier to talk to others. The other medium term outcome identified most strongly by the participants of all but one focus group was the relationship they had with guidance staff in their school and knowledge of where to go for help if they, or a friend, needs it.

Thirteen Travellers facilitators took part in interviews or small focus groups at the six schools sampled. Of the 13 facilitators consulted, 10 were Guidance Counsellors, two were Year Deans / Heads and one a Health and PE teacher. Three of the six schools at which consultation was undertaken were in fact pilot schools for Travellers, and as such, some of the facilitators interviewed had been involved in the programme for more than a decade.

Feedback regarding the facilitator training was very positive, whether this had been undertaken several years ago or more recently. Because of its hands-on nature, the training was seen to equip facilitators well to deliver the programme.

A number of facilitators praised the hard copy resources provided by Skylight for Travellers. A number also praised the range of activities that make up the programme, and the fact that facilitators can pick and choose activities to suit the needs of the group, as well as their own strengths as a facilitator. Travellers was highly valued for the relationships it creates between students and Guidance Counsellors / Deans.

In terms of the manner in which Travellers is delivered in different schools, those where sharing of food and drink was an embedded part of each session identified this as valuable in affirming nurturing relationships and providing opportunities for



participants to help each other. Those who hold an end of year celebration for Travellers also identified this as valuable and something that works well.

In terms of the short-term outcomes for students, facilitators most commonly identified a sense of connection and belonging, a connection / relationship between the Guidance Counsellor(s) and high risk students, and increased confidence in students' ability to cope, their capacity to deal with stress and anxiety, and simply a confidence to express their views and feelings in front of others.

Medium term, Travellers was seen to result in greater readiness to access guidance counsellor support if needed and a lasting relationship between young person and counsellor, along with a sense of perspective around their feelings and being better equipped to access support than those who have not undertaken the programme. A number of facilitators were aware of friendships among students that had developed in Travellers groups that endured through high school.

Conclusions

Findings of the present evaluation suggest that Travellers is an intervention that is helpful for the majority of its participants, teaching young people strategies to deal with stress, and helping them see life as a journey of ups and downs. Travellers works well at helping young people feel connected at school, and building confidence to talk about their feelings. Travellers successfully informs students of where to go to access help and support if they require it, and builds confidence for young people who need it to reach out for this support. Qualitative evidence suggests that Travellers is likely to work best:

- when the programme has the full support of school management, and in turn that teaching staff at the school understand and support the rationale for student participation in the programme and the need for discretion around student participation in Travellers;
- when facilitated or co-facilitated by a trained Guidance Counsellor who understands the programme logic of Travellers and the purpose of each core exercise;
- where relationships of trust have been carefully and purposefully established within the group and with the facilitator(s) in the first three sessions of the programme, in part through full engagement in the Travellers process by the facilitator themselves; and
- when delivered largely intact as outlined by the training provided by Skylight (although additional activities can be added to meet student needs).



Suggested Improvements

Travellers is working well for many students in its current form. That said, a number of suggestions emerged for improving the programme for the future.

- Encouraging more discretion from teachers in responding to release and return / absence from Class for Travellers
- Peer co-facilitation
- Get-togethers of students who have participated in Travellers initiated by the facilitators at least yearly
- Follow-up sessions in later years of secondary school
- Outdoor activities, and more practical activities
- More information for students as to why they were invited to take part in Travellers
- Guest speakers
- Addition of content regarding bullying, social media and sexuality as part of Travellers.
- Update of music and videos
- More time to talk about their own experiences
- Te Reo and English wording should be included when the resources are next reprinted.
- It is strongly recommended that Travellers should always be facilitated either by a guidance counsellor(s) or a guidance counsellor alongside another member of school staff.
- On-going upskilling of facilitators is important, and opportunities to engage in refresher training and networking should be promoted and encouraged.

Future Research

Future evaluation of travellers should consider applying a prospective longitudinal study of programme outcomes, including a control group of students who met criteria for participation but were not included. It would be worth including several time points two and three years post-Travellers to examine if the outcomes reported are retained.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	ii
Background	ii
Limitations.....	ii
Findings: Quantitative.....	iii
Findings: Qualitative	iv
Conclusions	vi
Suggested Improvements	vii
Future Research	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xi
LIST OF TABLES.....	xii
1. BACKGROUND	1
2. OVERVIEW.....	3
3. METHODOLOGY	4
3.1 Quantitative Components.....	4
3.1.1 Measures.....	4
3.1.2 Data analysis	5
3.2 Qualitative Components	6
3.2.1 Participant Focus Groups.....	6
3.2.2 Travellers Facilitator Focus Groups / Interviews	7
4. EVALUATION FINDINGS: QUANTITATIVE	9
4.1 Student Survey.....	9
4.1.1 The Respondent Group.....	9
4.1.1.1 Demographic characteristics	10
4.1.1.2 The Life Experiences Scale	11
4.1.1.3 Subjective Experience of Distress Scale individual items.....	12
Subjective Experience of Distress Scale total scores	14
4.1.2 Students' Overall Thoughts on Travellers.....	15
4.1.2.1 Age when completing Travellers	15
4.1.2.2 Helpfulness of Travellers Programme	15
4.1.2.3 Perceived Benefits of the Travellers Programme.....	17
Once you finished the Travellers Programme, did you feel you had knowledge of strategies to navigate changes and challenges?.....	18



Once you finished the Travellers Programme, did you feel confident to navigate changes and challenges?.....	18
To what extent does Travellers develop engaged, confident and motivated young people?.....	19
Travellers programme assisted students to become engaged, confident and motivated.....	19
Assistance with development of time management strategies.....	21
To what extent does Travellers develop positive relationships between participants and peers/families/teachers?.....	22
4.1.2.4 How Can the Travellers Programme be Improved?.....	27
4.1.2.5 Support available after Travellers.....	28
4.1.2.6 Comparison with 2012 NZCER research.....	29
4.1.3 Changes over Time.....	30
4.1.3.1 Do you feel good about yourself most of the time?.....	30
4.1.3.2 Changes in the Life Events Scale.....	31
4.1.3.3 Changes in the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale.....	31
4.2 Facilitator Survey.....	31
4.2.1 The Respondent Group.....	31
4.2.2 Facilitator Perspectives of Travellers.....	32
4.2.2.1 How well does the Travellers Programme achieve its key objectives?.....	32
4.2.2.2 Facilitators perspectives on other aspects of the Travellers programme.....	34
Skill retention.....	35
Supporting different ethnic groups.....	36
Adherence to Travellers Programme.....	37
Support and Training.....	38
4.2.2.3 Suggestions for Improving Travellers.....	39
5. EVALUATION FINDINGS: QUALITATIVE.....	42
5.1 Summary of Focus Group Findings: Young People.....	42
5.1.1 The Respondent Group.....	42
5.1.2 Manner in Which Travellers was Delivered at Schools Sampled.....	42
5.1.3 What is Working Well?.....	44
5.1.4 How Could Travellers Be Improved.....	46
5.1.5 Short Term Outcomes.....	48
5.1.6 Medium Term Outcomes.....	49
5.2 Summary of Focus Group Findings: Travellers Facilitators.....	49



5.2.1	The Respondent Group	49
5.2.2	Manner in Which Travellers was Delivered at the Schools Sampled	49
5.2.3	What is Working Well?	51
5.2.4	How Could Travellers Be Improved	52
5.2.5	Short Term Outcomes.....	54
5.2.6	Medium Term Outcomes.....	54
6.	DISCUSSION.....	56
6.1	Delivery of the Travellers Programme.....	56
6.2	Short-term Impacts of the Travellers Programme	60
6.3	Medium-term Impacts of the Travellers Programme.....	62
6.4	How Well is the Programme Meeting the Needs of Young People?.....	63
6.5	How Well is the Programme Meeting the Needs of Schools?.....	65
6.6	How can the Travellers Programme be Improved?.....	66
6.7	Limitations of the current Evaluation	68
6.8	Future Evaluation.....	69
	REFERENCES	70
	APPENDIX 1 Student Survey.....	71
	APPENDIX 2 Facilitators survey.....	80



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Percent of students reporting items on the Life Events Scale in the last 12 months	12
Figure 2 Percent of young people with ‘somewhat true / true’ responses on the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale	12
Figure 3 Percent of young people with ‘often / almost always’ responses on the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale	13
Figure 4 Overall, how helpful was the Travellers Programme for you?	15
Figure 5 Would you recommend the Travellers Programme to other students like you?.....	16
Figure 6 How students felt once they had finished the Travellers programme.....	17
Figure 7 Once you finished the Travellers Programme, did you feel you had knowledge of strategies to navigate changes and challenges?.....	18
Figure 8 Once you finished the Travellers Programme, did you feel that you knew how to access support if you needed it?	23
Figure 9 Once you finished the Travellers Programme, did you feel confident in seeking support if you needed it?	23
Figure 10 Since doing Travellers, have you asked for any support from other people to help you get through a difficult time?.....	24
Figure 11 Did completing the Travellers programme made asking for support easier?	25
Figure 12 Percent of students endorsing ways the Travellers Programme could be improved?	28
Figure 13 Once you finished the Travellers Programme, did you feel that support was available if needed?’	29
Figure 14 Reported decile of school worked in by facilitators	32
Figure 15 How well do facilitators feel the Travellers Programme achieves its key short term objectives?	33
Figure 16 How well do facilitators feel the Travellers Programme achieves its key medium term objectives?	34
Figure 17 Facilitators’ impressions of how well students retain the skills learnt during the Travellers Programme	35
Figure 18 Facilitators impressions of how well the Travellers Programme contributes to supporting different ethnic students	37
Figure 19 How well facilitators adhere to the Travellers Programme	38
Figure 20 Do facilitators feel they receive enough support and training?	39



LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 School attended by responding students in 2016	9
Table 2 Demographic characteristics of students that responded to the survey	10
Table 3 Student perceptions of how well the Travellers programme assisted them to become engaged, confident and motivated for present study and NZCER (2012)	20
Table 4 Student perceptions of how well the Travellers programme assisted them to develop time management strategies for present study and NZCER (2012)	22
Table 5 Student perceptions of how well Travellers programme assisted them to develop positive relationships with peers, families and teachers for present study and NZCER (2012).....	26
Table 6 Demographic characteristics of students that responded to the present (2016) survey and had baseline (2014) data available	30



1. BACKGROUND

This is the final report on an evaluation of the Travellers programme, prepared for Skylight Trust. Skylight contracted The Collaborative Trust for Research and Training in Youth Health and Development (“The Collaborative Trust”) to undertake an independent, external evaluation of the programme. The Collaborative Trust is an independent Charitable Trust established in 2004. It is governed by a Board of Trustees and functions at an operational level through a Director (Dr Sue Bagshaw) and a Research and Evaluation Manager (Dr Ria Schroder), who manages a team of independent researchers and evaluators who are contracted to work on projects as required. The present evaluation was undertaken by Dr Mark Turner (quantitative evaluator) and Ms Sarah Wylie (qualitative evaluator) from March to August 2016. In contracting the evaluation, Skylight sought to further ascertain the effectiveness or not of Travellers and to help others understand what Travellers is and how it works. The evaluation also sought to provide Skylight with information that could inform changes to make the programme better in the future.

Travellers is an in-school, small group programme that enables young people to learn skills to cope with change, loss and transition and to build their self-esteem and confidence to be able to face life's future challenges. Travellers has previously been evaluated four times by independent evaluators, the first two evaluations formative and process in nature, the third exploring short and medium-term outcomes undertaken in 2012 by NZCER, focused on participants from 2008 and 2009, and the most recent one in 2014 (Victoria University Education Department) focused on programme content.

The present independent evaluation again sought to explore short and medium term outcomes of the programme, and how well the programme is meeting the needs of young people and their schools, for the cohort who took part in the programme in 2014. In order to make comparisons over time, some elements of the 2012 evaluation were replicated, and in particular, some survey questions were the same across the two evaluations. The present evaluation expands on the 2012 NZCER methodology with considerably more qualitative data gathering incorporated into the present methodology.

As part of the Travellers programme, all year 9 students in schools who choose to run the Travellers programme complete the Travellers screening survey. This screening survey gathers demographic information (including age, gender, ethnicity and student name), and contains the Life Events Scale and the Subjective Experience



of Distress Scale¹. The data gathered from this survey are kept by Skylight and anonymised reports of these data are provided to individual schools. In addition, the Travellers Programme Facilitator within each school is notified of students within the school whose scores meet Skylight's criteria for participation in the Travellers programme, so that they are able to invite these students to participate in this programme.

The current evaluation employed a mixed methods approach, triangulating findings across a number of different data gathering techniques.

Ethical approval for this project was sought and obtained from The New Zealand Ethics Committee (NZEC 2016_3).

¹ See page 4 for a description of the Life Events Scale and the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale.



2. OVERVIEW

The overarching evaluation question was as follows:

What are the short-term and medium-term impacts of the Travellers programme for Year 9 students and how well is the programme meeting the needs of young people and their schools?

The evaluation sought to probe short-term outcomes via the following evaluation questions:

1. To what extent does Travellers offer young people access to appropriate youth-focused sharing and learning opportunities?
2. To what extent does Travellers impact on participants' connectedness to school?
3. To what extent are trusting relationships formed in the group?
4. To what extent does Travellers improve help-seeking skills of participants?
5. To what extent does Travellers impact on participants' access to appropriate support.

The medium-term outcomes were explored as follows:

1. To what extent does Travellers impact on participant resiliency and ability to navigate changes and challenges?
2. To what extent does Travellers develop engaged, confident and motivated young people?
3. To what extent does Travellers develop positive relationships between participants and peers/families/teachers?

The evaluation also sought to explore the following:

- How is Travellers currently being delivered, and how is this working for facilitators, schools and for young people?
- How well is the Travellers programme meeting the needs of particular sub-groups e.g. Maori, Pacific and other ethnic groups?
- How can the Travellers programme be improved?

Data were gathered between March 2016 and August 2016, in terms 1, 2 and the early part of term 3 of the school year.



3. METHODOLOGY

In order to effectively answer the evaluation questions, the evaluation employed a mixed methods approach, triangulating findings across a number of different data gathering techniques.

Firstly, young people who took part in the survey in 2014 and subsequently completed the Travellers Programme in 2014, and were still enrolled at the same school, were invited to participate in this evaluation. The evaluation is therefore focused on a sub sample of Travellers. While efforts were made to identify the number of Travellers participants in 2014 and the number of the 2014 cohort who were still at school at the time of the evaluation, this was not feasible because such data were deemed too time-consuming for schools to produce. The proportion of the total Travellers cohort from 2014 cannot therefore be quantified. Young people were asked to take part in:

- i) an online quantitative survey
- ii) a selection of students were invited to participate in a focus group.

The feasibility of gathering school data on student attendance, engagement with extra-curricular activities and participation for the participant group was explored, but this also was deemed to placed too much burden on schools and so was not pursued.

Secondly, Travellers facilitators were asked to participate in:

- i) an online quantitative survey
- ii) a selection of facilitators were invited to participate in a focus group. Facilitator focus groups or interviews were conducted at each of the schools where Travellers student focus groups were undertaken.

3.1 Quantitative Components

3.1.1 Measures

An online survey was developed² that included custom-designed questions that are used in Skylight's initial screening survey (Appendix 1). These questions include a Life Events Scale developed by Skylight and the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale, a short version of the Weinberger Adjustment Inventory³ that measures social-emotional adjustment. These questions were asked in order for responses from the

² Paper copies were available if required.

³ Weinberger, D. A., & Schwartz, G. E. (1990). Distress and restraint as superordinate dimensions of self-reported adjustment: A typological perspective. *Journal of personality*, 58(2), 381-417.



baseline (screening) data to be compared to follow-up responses, to determine whether there were any changes over time. Questions were also asked on the areas that the Travellers programme had helped students in and how the programme could be improved. Some of these questions were taken from the previous research of Robertson, Boyd, Dingle & Taupo (2012) so that comparisons could be undertaken with their sample.

In addition, an online survey was developed for Travellers facilitators (Appendix 2) seeking their feedback regarding how the programme is working for them and for their school, how it fits alongside other interventions occurring in the school, the benefits it may or may not have for students who take part in it, and seeking suggestions for improvement.

3.1.2 Data analysis

Along with presenting results for all of the young people in the evaluation, the analysis looked at the outcomes for students from populations previously shown to be at greater risk⁴. These at-risk groups were:

- Māori students
- Pasifika students
- Students from low socio-economic communities (as indicated by the socio-economic decile of the school).

Analyses also explored whether there were any differences between:

- male compared to female students; and
- co-educational compared to single-sex schools.

Generally continuous data were analysed using t-tests or ANOVA, as appropriate, and categorical data (sex, ethnicity etc.) were analysed using chi squared.

Data were also examined to look for changes over time. Students were asked to include their name and class name in 2014 as part of the survey⁵ so that their responses could be matched to baseline screening data held by Skylight. For ethical reasons, students did not have to identify themselves in the survey and only 140 students (70.4%) chose to do so. Of those who did, only 102 provided sufficiently similar identifying details to allow them to be matched to their baseline responses.

School decile

⁴ See Robertson, Boyd, Dingle & Taupo (2012). *Evaluation of Skylight's Travellers Programme*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research

⁵ This question was voluntary, so students could decide whether they wanted to provide their name or not.



In order to see if there were any differences in students' responses by school deciles, comparisons were made between responses from low (1-4) medium (5-8) and high (9-10) decile schools.

Pasifika students

In order to see if there were any differences in students' responses by ethnicity, students were classified as Pasifika if they identified with one or more Pacific ethnicities. It also includes students who selected other ethnicities as well as those classified as Pasifika.

Māori students

In order to see if there were any differences in students' responses by ethnicity, students were classified as Māori if they identified as Māori in the ethnicity question. It also includes students who selected other ethnicities as well as Māori.

3.2 Qualitative Components

3.2.1 Participant Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted in six different schools with students who had taken part in Travellers in 2014, and who had responded to the quantitative component of the evaluation. Focus group sites were selected from all schools where at least five students had responded to the evaluation survey. Cohorts were purposively selected to include a spread of high, medium and low decile schools, both urban and rural school communities, and to include a spread of ethnic compositions. Sampling was targeted at three regions in New Zealand, one in the North Island (four schools) and two in the South Island (one school each). With a limited travel budget for the evaluation and no participating schools in Canterbury where the evaluators were based (excluded by Skylight due to Canterbury earthquakes to avoid additional burden), selection was limited to three locations.

Participation in focus groups was voluntary, with full informed consent obtained. The cultural mix of focus group participants was largely reflective of the cultural make-up of the participant schools, with the exception of Māori students (11 percent of the total focus group participant group) at some of the schools. However, it should be noted that Travellers sits alongside Kaupapa Māori programmes in these schools. Feedback from some facilitators suggested that they utilise these for some Māori students, and indicated sensitivity to individual student cultural needs when connecting them with supports.

The six schools selected are summarised as follows:

Decile: _____ **n**



Decile 10:	1
Decile 9:	2
Decile 7:	1
Decile 5:	1
Decile 4:	1

A decile 1 school was invited to be part of the evaluation but declined due to research burdens on the school.

School rolls ranged from 800 to 2,500 with three of the schools having rolls 1,900 or larger and three 1,100 or smaller. One of the schools served an urban – rural community, with others urban in character. Two of the schools were single sex female, one single sex male, and three co-educational.

In total, 35 young people took part in the focus groups, 19 female and 16 male. Ethnicity of focus group participants included:

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>n</u>
New Zealand European:	13
Pasifika:	8
Asian:	6
New Zealand Māori:	4
Middle Eastern:	3
African:	1

All participants were given an information sheet about the focus group component of the evaluation, as were their parents, and completed informed consent prior to participation in the focus group component of the evaluation. Parental consent was sought for participants aged under 16 years. The Travellers facilitator in each school administered distribution and collection of parental consent forms and sheets, while student information sheets and consent forms were provided and explained to the students by the evaluator.

Three of the focus groups were conducted during the school lunchtime and three during normal class time. Kai was provided for students in three of the schools (including halal food where required), where focus groups took place during lunchtime. Focus groups took between 25 and 45 minutes.

3.2.2 Travellers Facilitator Focus Groups / Interviews

Thirteen Travellers facilitators took part in interviews or small focus groups at the six schools sampled. While the facilitators were asked to extend the invitation to take



part in the focus group to other teachers at each school, only Travellers facilitators took part. Facilitators reported that they felt that those not involved in facilitating the programme would not be in a position to comment on it, and were also prohibited due to time commitments. Of the 13 facilitators consulted, 10 were Guidance Counsellors, two were Year Deans / Heads and one a Health and PE teacher. All facilitators were provided with an information sheet about the evaluation, and informed written consent was obtained prior to the interview / focus group.



4. EVALUATION FINDINGS: QUANTITATIVE

4.1 Student Survey

4.1.1 The Respondent Group

Table 1 School attended by responding students in 2016

School	Decile ⁶	Co-Ed ⁷	Number of students	Percent of all students responding
A	9	N	31	15.6
B	2	Y	26	13.1
C	4	Y	17	8.5
D	1	Y	14	7.0
E	7	Y	10	5.0
F	5	N	10	5.0
G	6	Y	9	4.5
H	10	N	9	4.5
I	10	N	7	3.5
J	7	Y	7	3.5
K	8	Y	6	3.0
L	10	Y	6	3.0
M	10	Y	5	2.5
N	9	N	4	2.0
O	8	N	4	2.0
P	10	Y	4	2.0
Q	8	N	4	2.0
R	10	N	4	2.0
S	9	N	3	1.5
T	9	N	3	1.5
U	6	Y	3	1.5
V	5	N	3	1.5
W	3	N	2	1.0
X	2	Y	2	1.0
Y	8	N	1	.5
Z	2	Y	1	.5
School not identified	-	-	4	2.0
Total			199	100.0

Accessed from <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/data-services/directories/list-of-nz-schools>

⁷ Co-educational school (compared with single-sex school)



In total survey responses were received from 199 students attending 26 schools. This is comparable to the Robertson, Boyd, Dingle & Taupo (2012) study by NZCER who received 212 completed survey responses from students at 26 different schools. Details of the schools with students who responded to the evaluation survey are presented in Table 1. Findings show a broad spread of deciles for schools with the highest number of responses. Over a third of students (39.0%) who responded to the survey were from decile 9 or 10 schools. The median decile was 7. When interpreting the results that follow, it should be considered that 15% of the total responses received came from one decile 9 boys school.

4.1.1.1 Demographic characteristics

Demographic characteristics of the respondent group are presented in Table 2. Almost three-fifths (59.4%) of the evaluation survey respondents were female. Just under a fifth (19.6%) of respondents were New Zealand Māori, and almost two-thirds (63.8%) New Zealand European. Pasifika accounted for 18% of the respondent group.

Table 2 Demographic characteristics of students that responded to the survey

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Male	80	40.6
Female	117	59.4
<u>Ethnicity</u> ⁸		
New Zealand European	127	63.8
Māori	39	19.6
Samoa	16	8.0
Cook Islands Māori	9	4.5
Tongan	10	5.0
Niuean	1	0.5
Total Pasifika ⁹	36	18.1
Chinese	4	2.0
Indian	7	3.5
Other	36	18.1

As was the case in the 2012 evaluation undertaken by NZCER¹⁰, the fact that Travellers was first introduced in Auckland schools and has only been a national programme since 2008 was reflected in a high number of the respondent schools being from the Auckland region. This also resulted in a higher proportion of Pasifika

⁸ Note that students could choose more than one ethnicity, so this column could add up to more than 100%.

⁹ Note Pasifika includes students who indicated Pacific ethnicity in the 'other' option and several students identifying with more than one Pacific ethnicity.

¹⁰ Robertson, Boyd, Dingle & Taupo (2012). *Evaluation of Skylight's Travellers Programme*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research



students completing the survey than is found in the general population¹¹. It is possible that those schools involved from the outset of the programme have a sense of ownership of Travellers that compelled them to respond to the evaluation to a greater extent than schools which have become connected with Travellers more recently, but this cannot be confirmed or quantified in the present evaluation. It may reflect a higher proportion of Auckland schools undertaking Travellers rather than just using the screening survey, but again, this is unknown, and may be a useful target of further research.

It should also be noted that Canterbury schools were excluded by Skylight from this evaluation to prevent over burdening these schools who were still dealing with a lot of extra issues as a result of the Canterbury earthquakes. This resulted in a number of schools from New Zealand's second largest city being excluded from the evaluation and thereby increasing the likelihood of Auckland schools to be included.

4.1.1.2 The Life Experiences Scale

The Life Experiences Scale consists of 16 items plus an 'other' category, and the students were asked to indicate whether they had experienced each event in the last 12 months.

Almost all (99%) students reported at least one event in the previous 12 months. This compares with 82% of students in the 2012 NZCER evaluation¹². As with the 2012 study, the most common event reported was 'not doing so well at school work' (72.4% of those students with survey data) followed by 'afraid of being hurt by someone' and 'being put down' (both 66.3%). However, the percentages of students in the present study reporting these events was substantially higher than the 2012 study, which found 50, 42 and 42 percent respectively for these three events. The median number of events reported in the last 12 months was seven, compared to four in the 2012 study of Robertson, Boyd, Dingle & Taupo. This indicates that the present sample reported, on average, more adverse life events two years after completing Travellers than the 2012 sample. Without a control group, it is not possible to determine the extent to which Travellers participation relates in any way to life events post-programme. However, it means that the higher number of adverse life events may make comparisons with the 2012 sample more difficult.

¹¹ In the 2013 census, 11% of all children who specified their ethnic groups identified with the Pacific peoples ethnic group.

¹² Robertson, Boyd, Dingle & Taupo (2012). *Evaluation of Skylight's Travellers Programme*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research



Figure 1 *Percent of students reporting items on the Life Events Scale in the last 12 months*

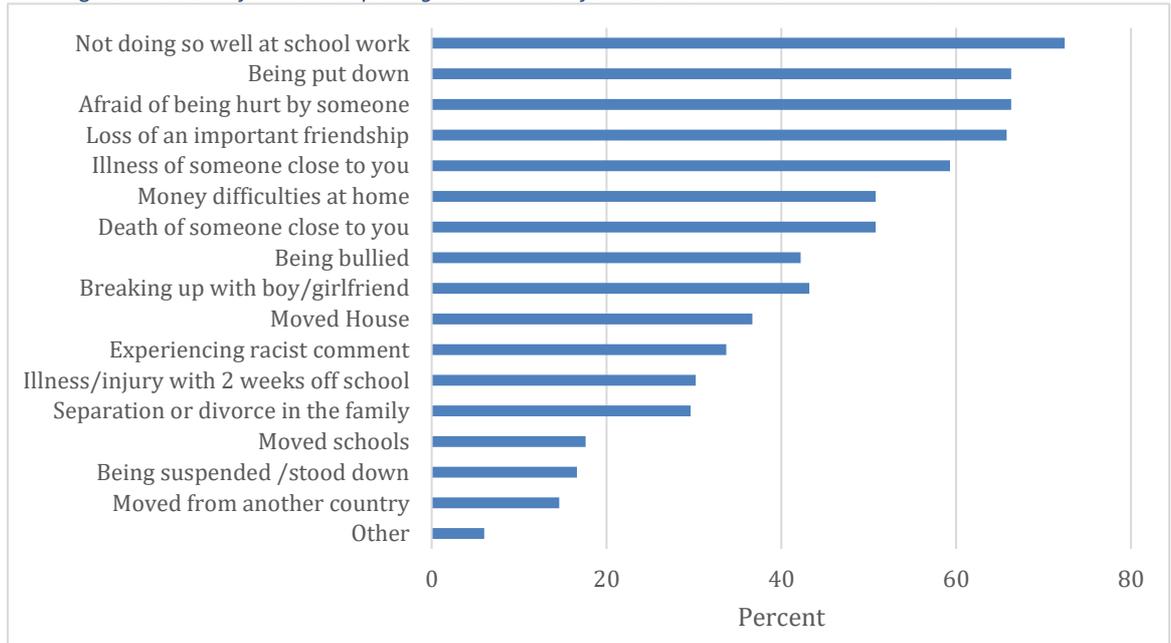
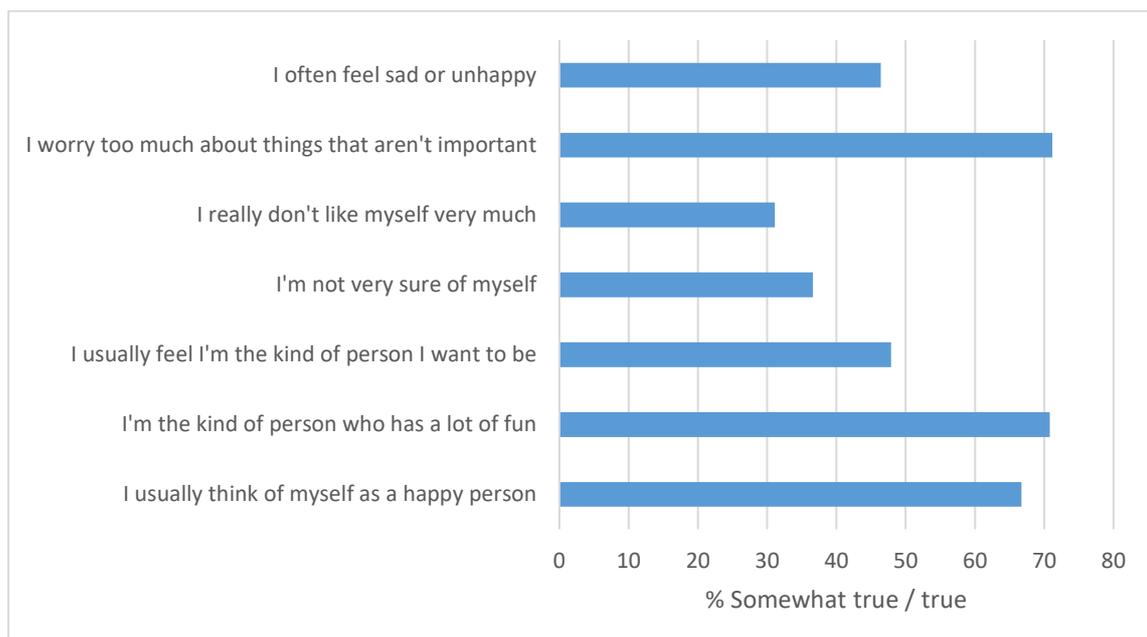


Figure 1 shows that nearly all students in the Travellers survey had faced a number of challenging life events in the previous 12 months. Only 9.2% of respondents reported less than two of these events in the previous 12 months.

4.1.1.3 Subjective Experience of Distress Scale individual items

The following findings emerged for the individual items on the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale showing how students were feeling at the time they completed the survey, Figure 2.

Figure 2 *Percent of young people with 'somewhat true / true' responses on the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale*





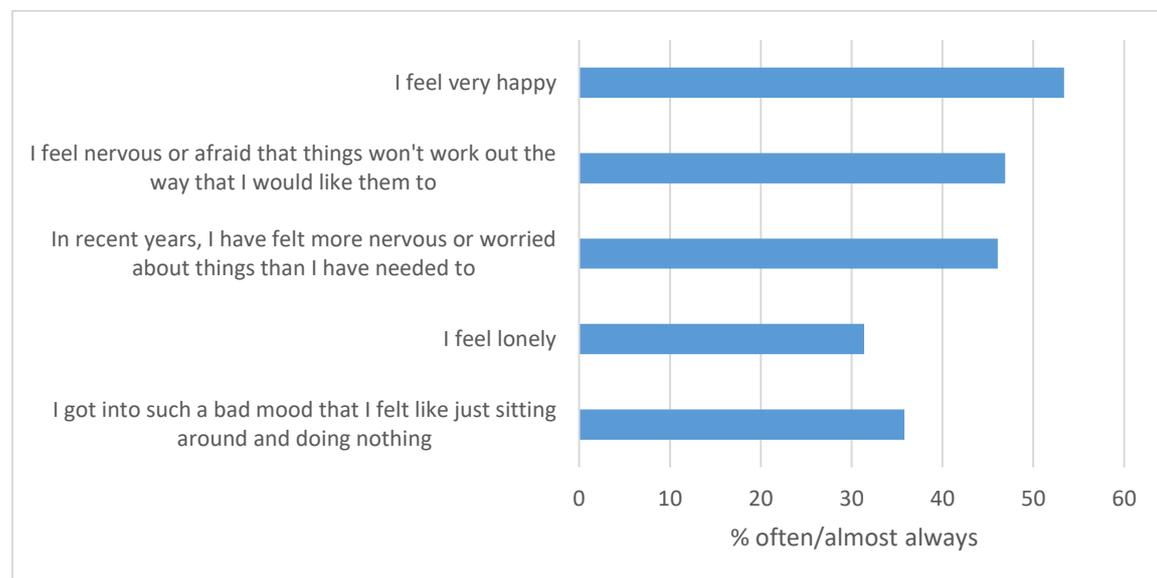
The majority of the young people thought that they were the type of person who:

- has a lot of fun (70.8% said this was somewhat true / true); and
- that they usually think of themselves as a happy person (66.7% said this was somewhat true / true).

However, there were some areas where the young people reported less favourable responses:

- Less than half (47.9%) felt they're the kind of person they want to be.
- Almost three-quarters (71.2%) said they worry too much about things that aren't important.

Figure 3 Percent of young people with 'often / almost always' responses on the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale



While half (53.4%) the young people reported that they often/ almost always felt very happy, a substantial proportion responded 'often/ almost always' to the following questions:

- In recent years, I have felt more nervous or worried about things than I have needed to (46.1%). This compares¹³ to 47% of the Robertson et al; (2012) study cohort responding true/somewhat true.
- I feel nervous or afraid that things won't work out the way that I would like them to (46.9%). This compares to 60% of the Robertson et al; (2012) study cohort responding true/somewhat true.

¹³ It should be noted that the NZCER study used different response options to those used by both the Skylight baseline questionnaire and the present study and therefore the individual scores are not strictly comparable. The present study used the same question anchors as Skylight so that comparisons could be made between each student's baseline (screening) scores and their 2016 scores reported in this study [see section 4.2.1.6 Changes over time].



- I got into such a bad mood that I felt like just sitting around and doing nothing (35.8%). This compares to 50% of the Robertson et al; (2012) study cohort responding true/somewhat true..

In summary, despite reporting (on average) more adverse events on the Adverse Events Scale than the students in the Robertson et al; (2012) study cohort, fewer students in the present sample responded 'often/almost always' to negative statements on the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale individual items.

Subjective Experience of Distress Scale total scores

Total scores on the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale can range from a minimum of 12 (low subjective distress) to a maximum of 60 (high subjective distress). In the present survey, there was a range of scores from 12 to 55. The median score was 35, which is within the normal range. In the 2012 study of Travellers conducted by Robertson and colleagues, the median score on the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale was 32¹⁴. The lower average score on the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale reported by Robertson and colleagues (2012) two years after completing Travellers may reflect the lower number of adverse events reported by their cohort.

Overall, 36.2% of students in the present study scored 40 or more on the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale total score, which is the threshold score seen as potentially being at risk¹⁵ from high distress.

In the present study, more students in medium decile schools (53.7%) reported high distress (40+ on the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale) than in low (19.0%) or high (35.7%) decile schools $\chi^2(2, N=182)=14.7; p=.001$.

Females (47.3%) were significantly more likely to report high distress compared with males (27.3%) $\chi^2(1, N=184)=13.9; p=.001$.

Māori (21.6%) were significantly less likely to report high distress compared to non-Māori (39.9%) $\chi^2(1, N=185)=4.3; p=.039$. No significant differences were found for Pasifika students.

No differences in rates of high distress were found between co-educational compared to single-sex schools.

¹⁴ It should be noted that the NZCER study used different response options to those used by both the Skylight baseline questionnaire and the present study and therefore the total score is not strictly comparable.

¹⁵ See Robertson, Boyd, Dingle & Taupo (2012). *Evaluation of Skylight's Travellers Programme*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research



4.1.2 Students' Overall Thoughts on Travellers

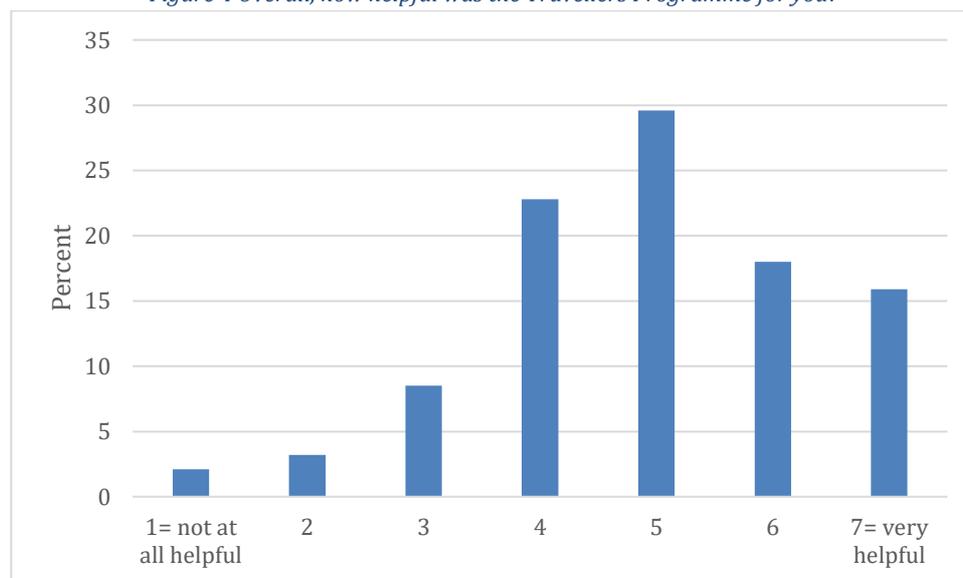
This section examines general questions relating to the students' overall experience of the Travellers Programme for all students. It also discusses the experience for different subgroups in order to see if there are different outcomes for different groups.

4.1.2.1 Age when completing Travellers

Approximately three quarters of students (74.2%) felt that Year 9 was the right age to do Travellers while 3.5% felt they should have done it when they were younger and 7.6% when they were older. The other 14.6% were not sure if this was the right age for them. By comparison, the 2012 study¹⁶ found that 64% of young people felt they had taken part in Travellers at the right age for them.

4.1.2.2 Helpfulness of Travellers Programme

Figure 4 Overall, how helpful was the Travellers Programme for you?



Overall, 63.5% of students reported the Travellers Programme was helpful (score of 5-7), 22.8% were unsure (score of 4) and 13.8% reported the programme was unhelpful (score of 1-3). These are somewhat better results to those found in the Robertson et al; (2012) study where just over half (52%) thought that it was very helpful or helpful, 30% were neutral, and 16% thought that it was not helpful or not at all helpful. Analysis was conducted to see if any subgroups in particular found Travellers helpful.

¹⁶ Robertson, Boyd, Dingle & Taupo (2012). *Evaluation of Skylight's Travellers Programme*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research



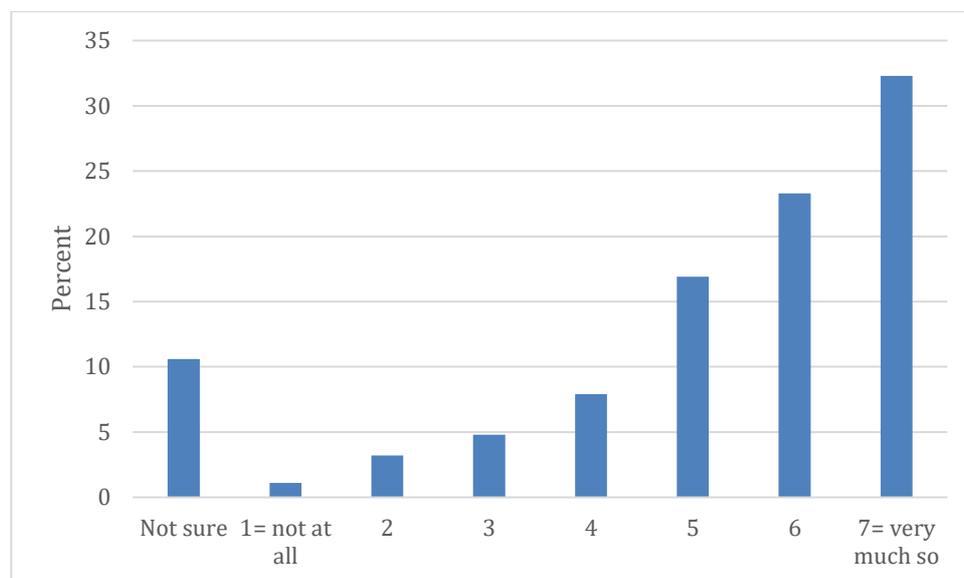
There were no differences in the proportion of students that reported the Travellers Programme was helpful, by:

- Decile of school
- Co-educational status of school
- Māori ethnicity
- Pasifika ethnicity
- Sex

In the 2012 Robertson et al; study, significantly more Māori students (71%) compared to non-Māori students (61%) rated Travellers as either helpful or very helpful overall.

The programme was less likely to be identified as helpful by students demonstrating a high level of distress on the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale (SEDS) two years after completing Travellers than by those with lower scores. 45.5% of those with a high SEDS (40+) reported the Travellers Programme was helpful compared to 73.3% of those with lower SEDS scores $\chi^2(1, N=182)=14.0$; $p<.001$.

Figure 5 Would you recommend the Travellers Programme to other students like you?



Overall, 72.5% of students reported they would recommend the Travellers Programme to other students like themselves (score of 5-7), 18.5% were unsure (stated 'not sure' or a score of 4) and 9.1% reported they would not recommend the programme (score of 1-3). Analysis was conducted to see if any subgroups in particular reported they would recommend the Travellers Programme.

There were no differences in the proportion of students that reported they would recommend the Travellers Programme, by:



- decile of school;
- co-educational/single sex status of school;
- Māori ethnicity;
- Pasifika ethnicity; or
- sex.

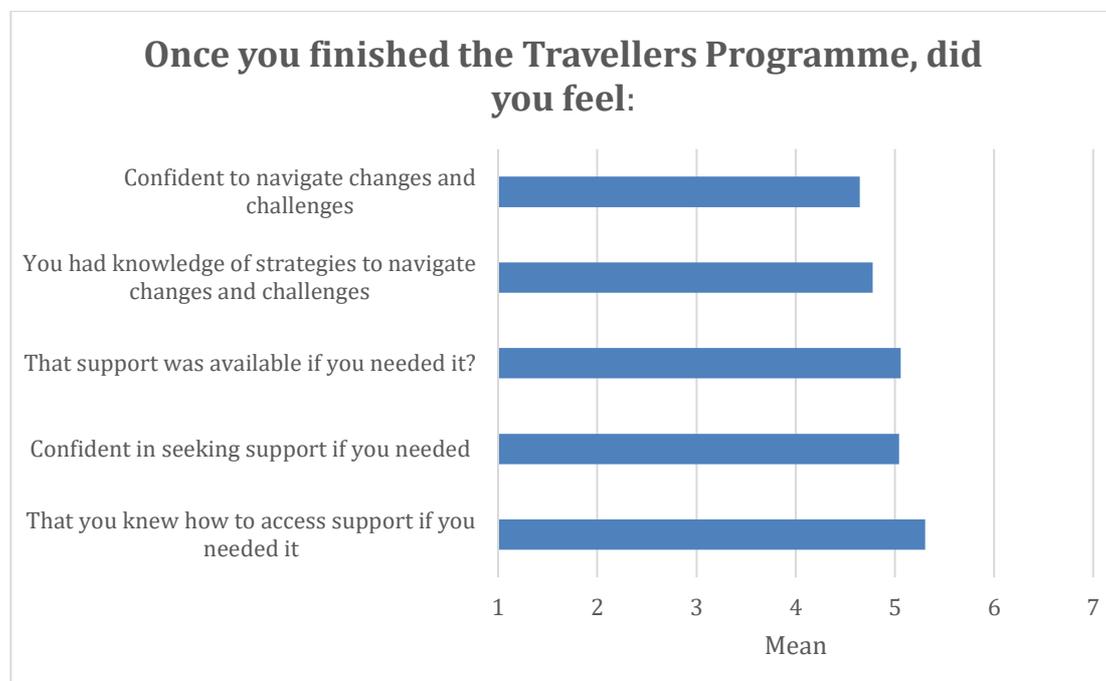
4.1.2.3 Perceived Benefits of the Travellers Programme

A series of questions were asked on perceived benefits of the Travellers Programme to the students. Students were asked: “Once you finished the Travellers Programme, from 1=‘not at all helpful’ to 7=‘very helpful’ did you feel:

- That you knew how to access support if you needed it?
- Confident in seeking support if you needed?
- That support was available if you needed it?
- You had knowledge of strategies to navigate changes and challenges?
- Confident to navigate changes and challenges?

From Figure 6, it would appear that students were slightly more positive that Travellers assisted with support-type assistance than the knowledge and confidence to navigate changes and challenges.

Figure 6 How students felt once they had finished the Travellers programme



Each area will be addressed in detail below.



Once you finished the Travellers Programme, did you feel you had knowledge of strategies to navigate changes and challenges?

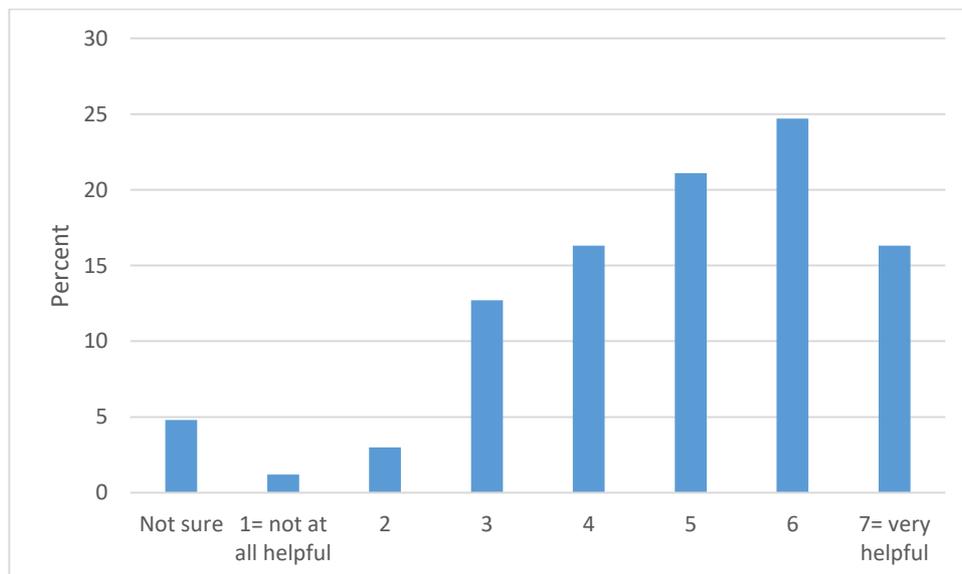
Students were asked: “Once you finished the Travellers Programme, did you feel you had knowledge of strategies to navigate changes and challenges” from 1=‘not at all helpful’ to 7=‘very helpful’.

Figure 7 shows that almost two-thirds of students (62.1%) reported they had knowledge of strategies to navigate changes and challenges (score of 5-7), 21.1% were unsure (stated ‘not sure’ or a score of 4) and 16.9% reported they did not have knowledge of strategies to navigate changes and challenges (score of 1-3). Analysis was conducted to see if any subgroups found Travellers particularly helpful.

There were no differences in the proportion of students that reported Travellers particularly helpful for knowledge of strategies to navigate changes and challenges, by:

- decile of school;
- co-educational/single sex status of school;
- Māori ethnicity;
- Pasifika ethnicity; or
- Sex.

Figure 7 Once you finished the Travellers Programme, did you feel you had knowledge of strategies to navigate changes and challenges?



Once you finished the Travellers Programme, did you feel confident to navigate changes and challenges?

Similar results were obtained for the students’ perceived confidence to navigate changes and challenges, with 60% of students confident, 26.7% unsure and 13.3%



not confident. Further analysis was conducted to see if any subgroups in particular felt confident. 80% of Pasifika students felt very confident to navigate changes and challenges, compared to 59.5% of other students $X^2(1, N=156)=4.4$; $p=.036$. Similarly, in the NZCER 2012 evaluation, Pasifika rated Travellers higher than did other young people for helpfulness in teaching them a range of strategies. However, NZCER cautioned readers about this finding, noting a general pattern in their own research whereby Pasifika students tend to respond more positively to survey questions compared to non-Pasifika students.

There were no differences in the proportion of students that reported Travellers particularly helpful for knowledge of strategies to navigate changes and challenges, by:

- decile of school;
- Co-educational/single sex status of school;
- Māori ethnicity; or
- sex.

To what extent does Travellers develop engaged, confident and motivated young people?

Students were asked: “Do you feel good about yourself most of the time?” Overall 73.8% responded ‘yes’ to this question. Analysis was conducted to see if any subgroups were more likely to respond in the negative to this question and therefore may require more assistance. Females (32.5%) were significantly more likely to respond ‘no’ to this question compared to males (17.7%) $X^2(1, N=193)=5.2$; $p=.02$.

There were no differences in the proportion of students responding in the negative to this question, by:

- decile of school;
- co-educational / single sex status of school;
- Māori ethnicity; or
- Pasifika ethnicity.

Travellers programme assisted students to become engaged, confident and motivated

A series of custom-designed questions previously used in the evaluation of Travellers¹⁷ were used to examine the extent students perceive the Travellers programme assisted them to become engaged, confident and motivated. From Table 3, it can be seen that approximately three-quarters of students felt that Travellers

¹⁷ Robertson, Boyd, Dingle & Taupo (2012). *Evaluation of Skylight’s Travellers Programme*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research



helped with each aspect of becoming engaged, confident and motivated ‘a bit’ or ‘a lot’.

By way of comparison, Table 3 also contains the percent of students in the NZCER (2012) study that reported they ‘Did not Learn this/ Travellers did not help’ for each item in the table. Examination of Table 3 shows that for each question a higher percentage of students in the present study reported that they ‘Did not Learn this/ Travellers did not help’ for each item than the students who responded to the 2012 study.

Table 3 Student perceptions of how well the Travellers programme assisted them to become engaged, confident and motivated for present study and NZCER (2012)

	Present Study			NZCER (2012)
	% Travellers helped a lot	% Travellers helped a bit	% Did not learn this/ Travellers did not help	% Did not learn/did not help
(d) How to understand how I feel	30.0	48.3	21.7	13
(f) How to think positively	36.5	43.3	20.2	13
(g) How to manage my emotions	24.9	48.6	26.6	17
(i) How to understand or think differently about stuff I have found difficult	25.7	54.2	20.1	17
(j) How to feel differently about stuff I have found difficult	23.5	53.6	22.9	16
(k) How to feel more confident	31.7	37.8	30.6	17
(o) How to be comfortable with myself (i.e; my identity)	30.7	40.2	29.1	14

These seven items were summed (Travellers helped a lot= 2; Travellers helped a bit= 1; didn’t help= 0) and analysis was conducted on the total ‘engaged, confident and motivated score’ to see if any subgroups differed in how they saw Travellers helping.

Male students (mean= 8.1) reported Travellers being significantly more help to them than female students (mean=6.7) in terms of becoming engaged, confident and motivated $t(177)=-2.36$; $p=.02$. An analysis of variance showed a significant difference in scores by school decile $F(2,174)=3.8$; $p=.02$. Post hoc analyses using the Scheffé post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the students from lower



decile schools (mean score= 8.2) reported significantly more benefit than students from medium decile schools (mean score= 6.2).

There were no differences by:

- co-educational / single sex status of school;
- Māori ethnicity; or
- Pasifika ethnicity.

A significant association was found between the total 'engaged, confident and motivated score' and the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale ($r=-.29$; $n=175$; $p<.001$) indicating that higher scores of distress are associated with lower student perceptions of how well Travellers assisted them to become engaged, confident and motivated.

[Assistance with development of time management strategies](#)

A series of custom-designed questions previously used in the evaluation of Travellers¹⁸ were used to examine the extent students perceive the Travellers programme assisted them to develop time management strategies. From Table 4, it can be seen that only half the students felt that Travellers helped with management of school work and time 'a bit' or 'a lot'.

By way of comparison, Table 4 also contains the percent of students in the NZCER (2012) study that reported they 'Did not Learn this/ Travellers did not help' for each item in the table. Examination of Table 4 shows that for each question a higher percentage of students in the present study reported that they 'Did not Learn this/ Travellers did not help' for each item than the students who responded to the 2012 study. The lower percentage of students reporting Travellers helping with time management is similar to the 2012 NZCER findings.

¹⁸ Robertson, Boyd, Dingle & Taupo (2012). *Evaluation of Skylight's Travellers Programme*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research



Table 4 Student perceptions of how well the Travellers programme assisted them to develop time management strategies for present study and NZCER (2012)

	Present Study			NZCER (2012)
	% Travellers helped a lot	% Travellers helped a bit	% Did not learn this/ Travellers did not help	% Did not learn/did not help
(l) How to better manage my schoolwork	21.2	29.1	49.7	31
(m) How to better manage my time (e.g., at school or work)	19.0	33.5	47.5	32

To what extent does Travellers develop positive relationships between participants and peers/families/teachers?

The survey explored this by asking if students knew where to go for support, how confident they felt about seeking support, and whether they had accessed support since the programme.

Almost three-quarters of students (73.7%) reported they felt they knew how to access support if needed since taking part in the Travellers Programme (score of 5-7), 16.8% were unsure (stated 'not sure' or a score of 4), and 9.6% reported they did not know how to access support if needed (score of 1-3). Findings are presented in Figure 8. Analysis was conducted to see if any subgroups differed in knowledge of how to access support if needed.

There were no differences in the proportion of students that reported they knew how to access support, if needed, by:

- decile of school;
- Co-educational / single sex status of school;
- Māori ethnicity;
- Pasifika ethnicity; or
- sex.



Figure 8 Once you finished the Travellers Programme, did you feel that you knew how to access support if you needed it?

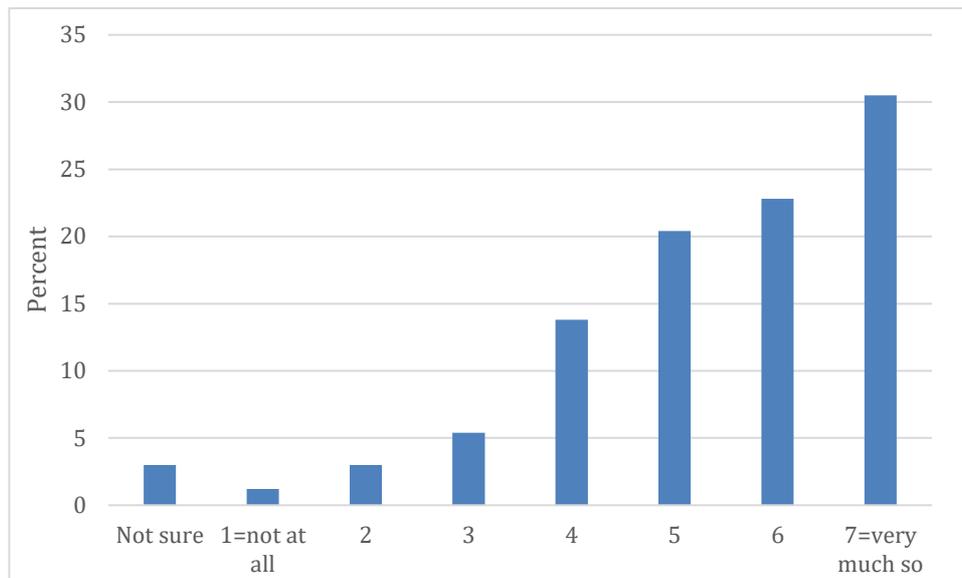
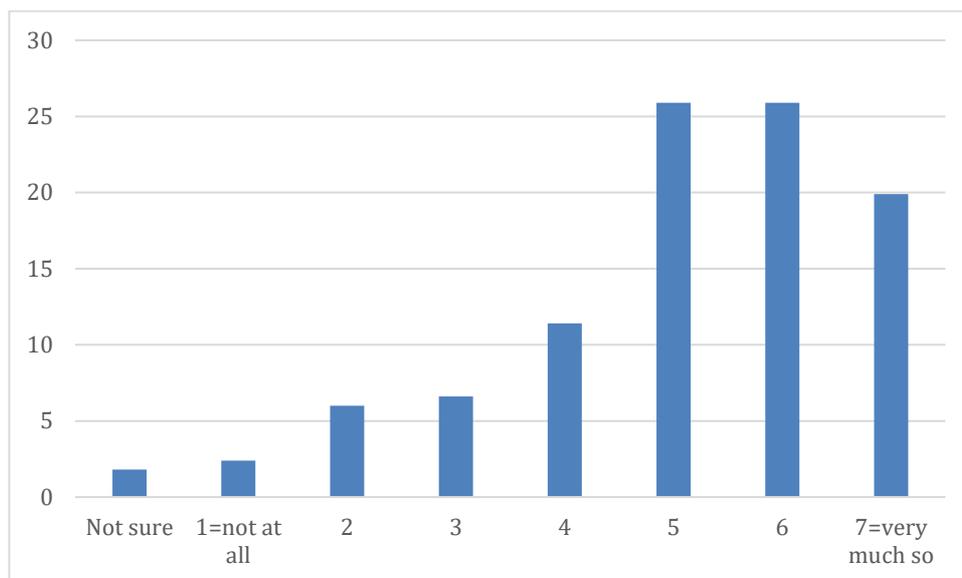


Figure 9 Once you finished the Travellers Programme, did you feel confident in seeking support if you needed it?



As shown in Figure 9, almost three-quarters of students (71.7%) reported they felt confident in seeking support if needed since the Travellers Programme (score of 5-7), 13.2% were unsure (stated 'not sure' or a score of 4) and 15% reported they did not feel confident in seeking support (score of 1-3). Analysis was conducted to see if any subgroups differed in confidence to seek support if needed.

There were no differences in the proportion of students that reported confidence to seek support if needed, by:

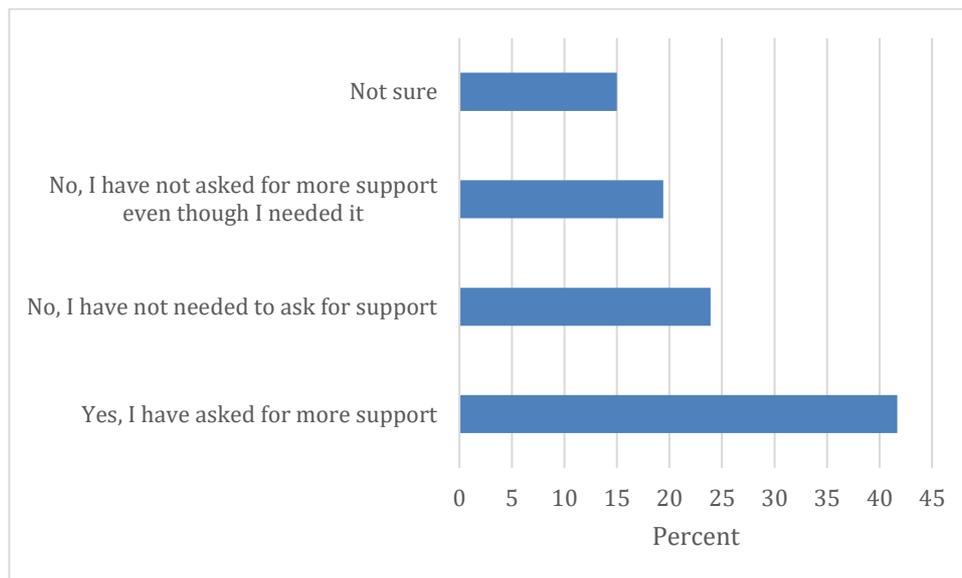
- decile of school;
- co-educational /single sex status of school;



- Māori ethnicity;
- Pasifika ethnicity; or
- Sex.

We asked the young people if they had asked for any support from other people to help get through a difficult time since taking part in Travellers and, if yes, had doing Travellers made asking for support easier.

Figure 10 Since doing Travellers, have you asked for any support from other people to help you get through a difficult time?



Seventy-five students reported they have asked for more support. These 75 were asked if doing Travellers made asking for support easier from 1='not at all' to 7='very much so'.

Of those who had asked for help, almost three-quarters of students (73.3%) reported doing Travellers made asking for support easier (score of 5-7), 16% were unsure (score of 4) and 10.6% reported doing Travellers had not made asking for support easier (score of 1-3). Analysis was conducted to see if any subgroups differed in whether Travellers made asking for support easier. Of those students who reported they had asked for help, 88.9% of males reported doing Travellers made asking for support easier compared to 64.6% of females $\chi^2(1, N=75)=5.2$; $p=.02$.

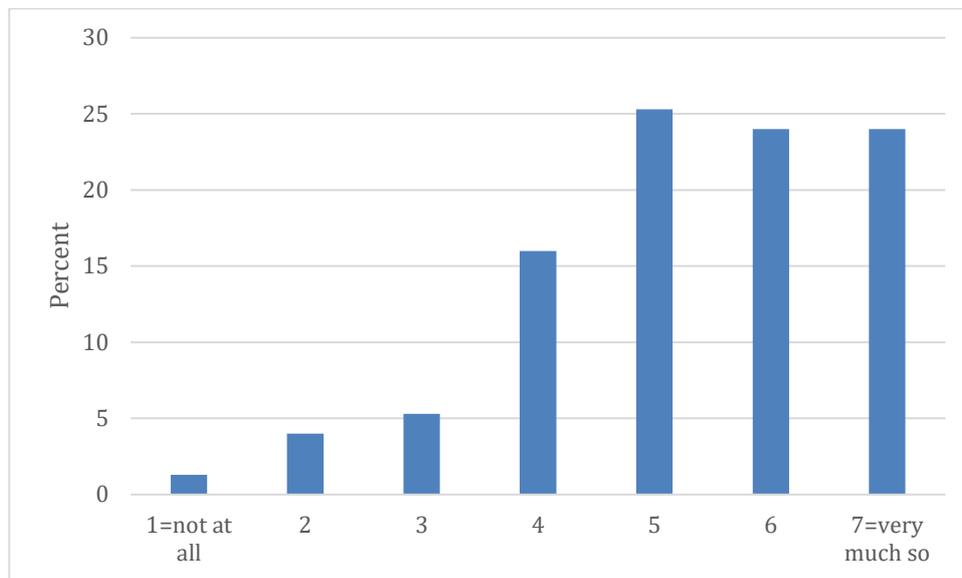
There were no differences in the proportion of students that reported Travellers made asking for support easier, by:

- decile of school;
- co-educational / single sex status of school;
- Māori ethnicity; or



- Pasifika ethnicity.

Figure 11 Did completing the Travellers programme made asking for support easier?



A series of custom-designed questions previously used in the evaluation of Travellers¹⁹ were used to examine how well students perceive Travellers assisted them to develop positive relationships with peers, families and teachers.

From Table 5, it can be seen that approximately two-thirds of students felt that Travellers helped with each aspect of relationships ‘a bit’ or ‘a lot’. By way of comparison, Table 5 also contains the percent of students in the 2012 NZCER study the reported the ‘Did not Learn this/ Travellers did not help’ for each item.

Examination of Table 5 shows that for each question a higher percentage of students in the present study reported that they ‘Did not Learn this/ Travellers did not help’ for each item compared to the 2012 students’ responses.

¹⁹ Robertson, Boyd, Dingle & Taupo (2012). *Evaluation of Skylight’s Travellers Programme*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research



Table 5 Student perceptions of how well Travellers programme assisted them to develop positive relationships with peers, families and teachers for present study and NZCER (2012)

	Present Study			NZCER (2012)
	% Travellers helped a lot	% Travellers helped a bit	% Did not learn this/ Travellers did not help	% Did not learn this/ Travellers did not help
(a) How to ask other young people for help	22.2	52.8	25.0	18
(b) How to ask adults at school for help	30.2	47.5	22.3	17
(c) How to ask family for help	21.2	43.6	35.2	22
(e) How to tell people how I am feeling	20.2	51.7	28.1	17
(h) How to talk about stuff in my life that is difficult	20.8	49.2	29.8	17
(n) How to solve personal and relationship problems better	21.7	48.3	30.0	17
(p) How to get on well with friends	31.3	40.8	27.9	13

These seven items were summed (Travellers helped a lot= 2; Travellers helped a bit= 1; did not learn/didn't help= 0) to develop a positive relationships scale and analysis was conducted on the total 'relationship score' to see if any subgroups differed in how they saw Travellers helping with relationships.

Pasifika students (mean= 8.1) reported significantly more help than other students (mean=6.4) helping with relationships $t(172)=-2.25$; $p=.025$. As discussed, a similar finding emerged in the 2012 evaluation of Travellers undertaken by NZCER, although this finding could reflect a response bias.

An analysis of variance showed a significant difference in scores by school decile $F(2,168)=5.04$; $p=.007$. Post hoc analyses using the Scheffé post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the students from lower decile schools (mean score= 8.0) reported significantly more benefit than students from medium decile schools (mean score= 5.7).

There were no differences by:

- Co-educational status of school
- Māori ethnicity



- Sex.

A significant association was found between the relationship score and the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale ($r=-.23$; $n=175$; $p=.002$) indicating that higher scores of distress are associated with lower student perceptions of how well Travellers assisted them to develop positive relationships with peers, families and teachers.

4.1.2.4 How Can the Travellers Programme be Improved?

A series of questions on how the Travellers programme could be improved were asked in a previous evaluation²⁰. These questions were again asked so that differences over time could be assessed. The question was multi-choice, with an option for other suggestions.

Figure 12 shows the students' recommendations for how the Travellers programme could be improved. The most common suggestions were as follows:

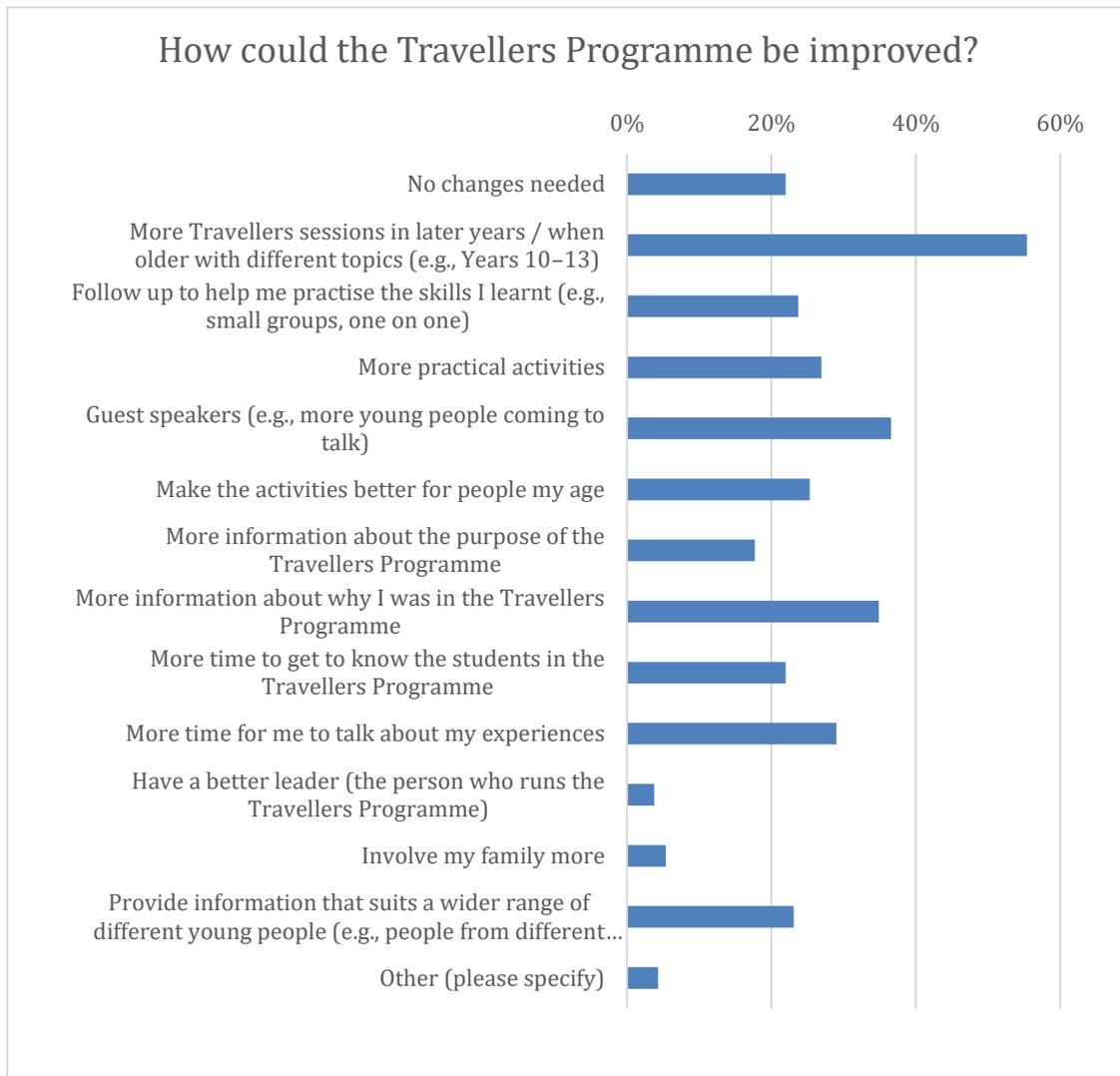
- More Travellers sessions in later years / when they were older, with different topics (55.5%)
- Guest speakers (e.g., other young people) (36.6%)
- Provide more information about why I was in Travellers (34.9%)
- More time for me to talk about my experience (29.0%)

These suggestions were very similar to those found in the 2012 evaluation, with more Travellers sessions in later years the most common suggestion (48%). Just under a quarter of students (22%) reported no changes were needed and 6.5% did not answer this question. One survey respondent indicated that it was hard talking about mental health issues in front of a group.

²⁰ Robertson, Boyd, Dingle & Taupo (2012). *Evaluation of Skylight's Travellers Programme*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research



Figure 12 Percent of students endorsing ways the Travellers Programme could be improved?



When asked what other topics could be covered by the Travellers programme, the top responses were:

- relationships;
- mental health; and
- bullying.

4.1.2.5 Support available after Travellers

The survey asked respondents a question around what support they felt was available if they needed it once they finished Travellers (Figure 13). Although over half the students who responded to this survey thought there should be more Travellers sessions in later years, the majority of young people (68.2%) felt that support was available to them after they had finished the Travellers Programme.

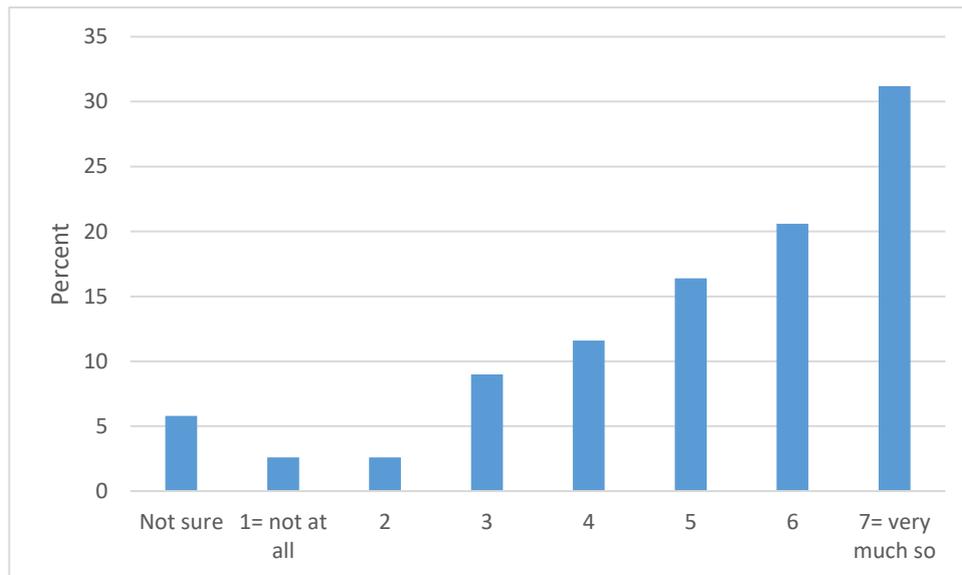
Analysis was conducted to see if any subgroups differed in whether they felt that support was available to them after they had finished the Travellers Programme.



There were no differences in the proportion of students that reported they felt that support was available to them, by:

- decile of school;
- co-educational/single sex status of school;
- Māori ethnicity;
- Pasifika ethnicity; or
- Sex.

Figure 13 Once you finished the Travellers Programme, did you feel that support was available if needed?



4.1.2.6 Comparison with 2012 NZCER research

The present quantitative results are similar to those reported in 2012²¹:

The majority of young people felt that Travellers was helpful or very helpful for them and that they could trust the people in their group. Travellers has supported the young people to learn a range of strategies, in particular, strategies that contribute to increased resiliency and ability to navigate changes and challenges, and to positive relationships and help-seeking.

Some consistent differences between the two groups were evident, with the present sample reporting more distress on average, higher score on the Life Events Scale and a smaller percentage reporting that Travellers had helped with the specific objectives of:

- Travellers programme assisted students to become engaged, confident and motivated
- Travellers programme assisted them to develop positive relationships
- Travellers programme assisted them to develop time management

²¹ Robertson, Boyd, Dingle & Taupo (2012). *Evaluation of Skylight's Travellers Programme*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research, page 39.



The comparatively lower perceptions of assistance in the present study may be associated with the higher reported distress and this is an area that would benefit from further research to see if the right students are being selected to participate in Travellers.

4.1.3 Changes over Time

The survey also included questions that had been used in Skylight's initial screening survey so that responses from the screening data could be compared to follow-up responses to see if there were any changes over time in how students felt about themselves.

Matched data from 2014 was available for 102 out of 199 students. For ethical reasons, students did not have to identify themselves in the survey and only 140 students (70.4%) chose to do so. Of these 140, matching baseline data could not be identified for 38 students.

Table 6 Demographic characteristics of students that responded to the present (2016) survey and had baseline (2014) data available

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Male	47	46.5
Female	54	53.5
<u>Ethnicity</u> ²²		
New Zealand European	68	67.7
Māori	19	18.6
Pasifika	20	19.6
Other	21	20.6

Over a third of students (43.6%) who responded to the 2016 survey and had 2014 data available were from decile 9 or 10 schools. The median decile was 7. These figures are comparable to the overall survey population, suggesting that the results in this sample may generalise to the wider group of young people.

4.1.3.1 Do you feel good about yourself most of the time?

Of those with data in 2014 and 2016 there was a significant change in the percentage answering yes. In 2014, 50% reported feeling good most of the time, while in 2016 this had increased to 75%. Statistical testing (a McNemar test) showed that the two proportions were different, ($p < .001$). Of those who said they did not

²² Note that students could choose more than one ethnicity, so this column would add up to more than 100%.



feel good most of the time in 2014, 70% had changed their views at the time of the 2016 survey and indicated that they did feel good most of the time.

The 2012 evaluation conducted by Robertson, Boyd, Dingle & Taupo²³ also found a significant decrease over time in the number of students who did not feel good about themselves. In the screening survey 31% of the 129 young people said they did not feel good about themselves most of the time compared to only 18% in the follow-up survey.

4.1.3.2 Changes in the Life Events Scale

On average, the students with complete data at both 2014 and 2016 showed a non-significant increase in challenging life events in the last year, as indicated in the Life Events Scale $t(101)=-1.70$; $p=.09$. In the initial screening survey students reported an average of 6.7 challenging life events in the last year while in the follow-up survey this had increased to 7.3.

4.1.3.3 Changes in the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale

On average, the students with complete data at both 2014 and 2016 showed a non-significant decrease in scores on the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale (indicating a decrease in distress) $t(99)=1.7$; $p=.09$. the mean score in 2014 was 36.5, while in 2016 it was 35.1 for the 100 students with data at both times.

The 2012 evaluation conducted by Robertson, Boyd, Dingle & Taupo found a significant decrease in the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale from an average of 35 in the screening survey, and at the time of follow-up this had decreased to 32.

4.2 Facilitator Survey

4.2.1 The Respondent Group

An online survey was developed for Travellers facilitators to find out more about how the Travellers programme works and the benefits it may or may not have for students who take part in it. From 62 online responses received, 14 were blank, leaving 48 facilitators' responses. Of the 48 facilitators providing responses, the average length of time they had been facilitators was 6.0 years and the average number of years the Travellers programme had been in their schools was 6.5 years. This indicates that the facilitators who responded to the online survey had generally been using Travellers since it had been in their respective schools.

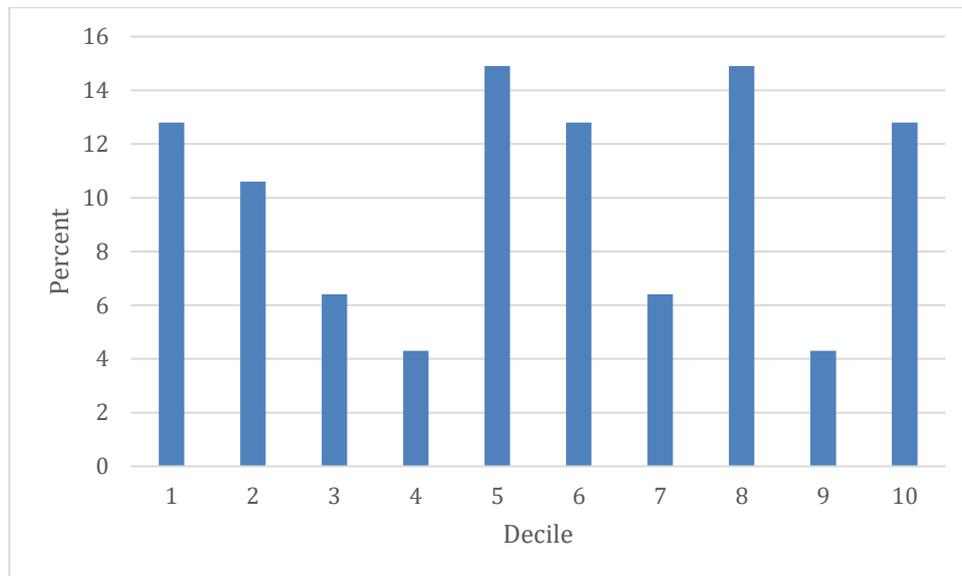
²³ Robertson, Boyd, Dingle & Taupo (2012). *Evaluation of Skylight's Travellers Programme*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research



To ensure confidentiality, we did not ask facilitators to indicate whether they were teachers or counsellors, so no differences in answers between these professions can be analysed. However, it would be useful to ask this in future evaluations of the programme, as perspectives regarding the programme may differ based on professional background.

The average decile of the school where facilitators who responded to this survey were working was 5.5. From the figure below it can be seen that there was a good representation of each decile by facilitators who responded to the online survey.

Figure 14 Reported decile of school worked in by facilitators



In order to examine if there were any perceived differences in facilitators' views of the Travellers programme by the decile of the school they worked in analysis of any differences by low (1-4), medium (5-7) and high (8-10) decile were conducted.

4.2.2 Facilitator Perspectives of Travellers

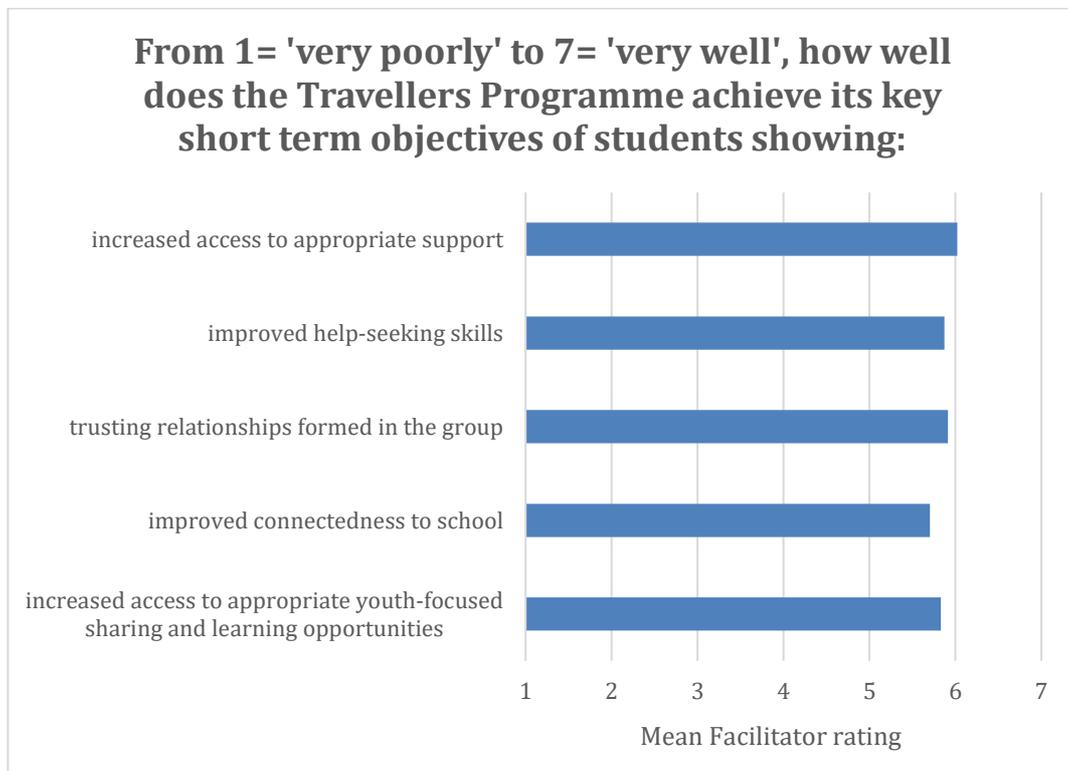
4.2.2.1 How well does the Travellers Programme achieve its key objectives?

Facilitators were asked to rate from 1= 'very poorly' to 7= 'very well', how well the Travellers Programme achieves each of its key short term objectives of students showing a variety of positive outcomes. Mean facilitator ratings are presented in Figure 15. It can be seen that facilitators were generally very positive about how well the programme achieved its key short term objectives with mean scores ranging from a mean of 5.7 for 'improved connectedness to school' to a mean of 6.0 for 'increased access to appropriate support'.



There were no differences in facilitators' responding patterns by decile of school worked in or length of time as a Travellers Programme facilitator.

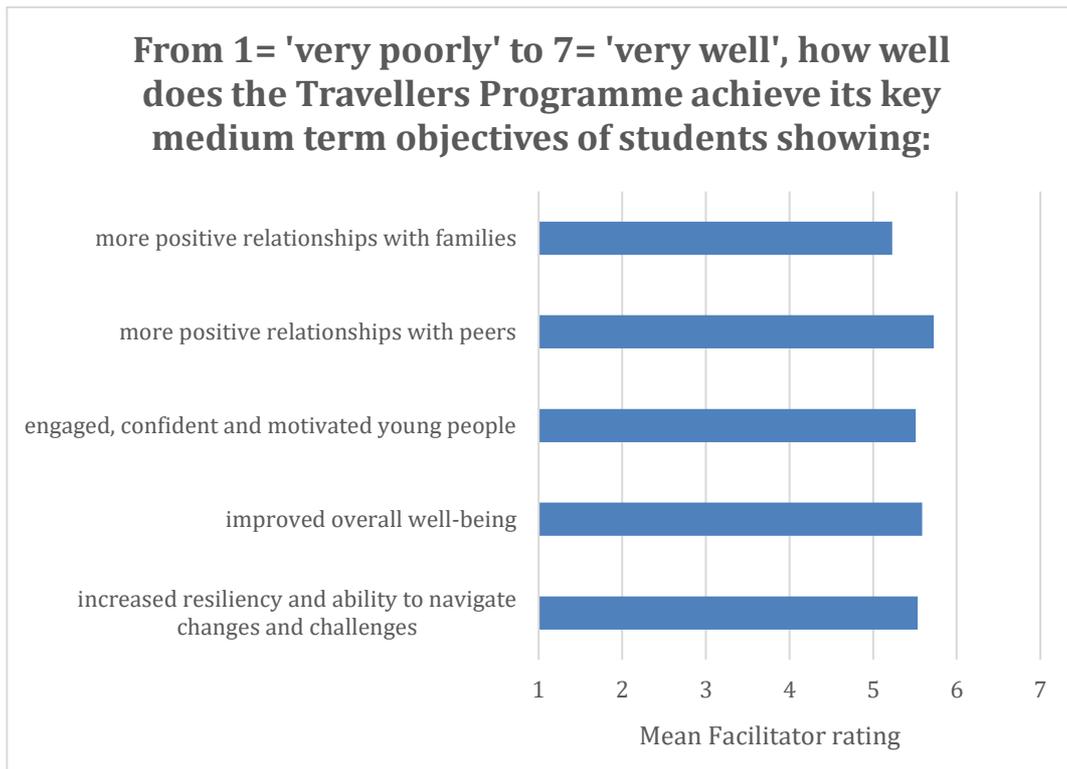
Figure 15 How well do facilitators feel the Travellers Programme achieves its key short term objectives?



Similarly, facilitators were asked to rate from 1= 'very poorly' to 7= 'very well', how well the Travellers Programme achieves each of its key medium term objectives.



Figure 16 How well do facilitators feel the Travellers Programme achieves its key medium term objectives?



Results, presented in Figure 16, show that facilitators were generally very positive about how well the programme achieved these objectives with mean scores ranging from a mean of 5.2 for 'more positive relationships with families' to a mean of 5.7 for 'more positive relationships with peers'.

There were no differences in facilitators' responding patterns by decile of school worked in or length of time as a Travellers Programme facilitator.

4.2.2.2 Facilitators perspectives on other aspects of the Travellers programme

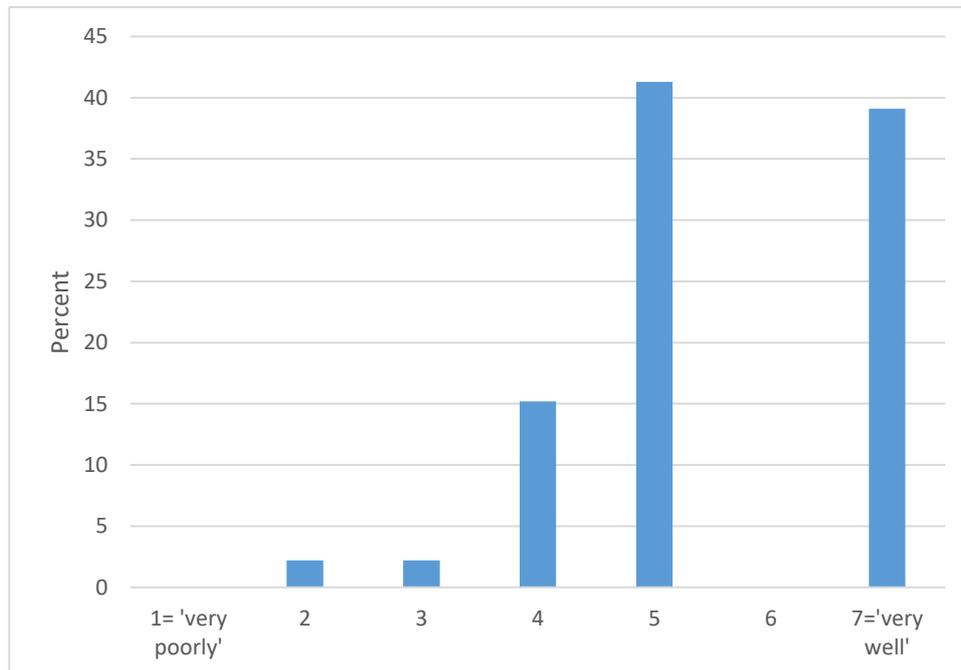
Along with the facilitators' thoughts on how well the Travellers programme achieves its key objectives, questions were also asked on:

- how well students retain the skills learnt;
- the extent the Travellers programme contributes to supporting different ethnic groups;
- how well they follow the Travellers Programme protocol in their school; and
- whether they received enough support and training from Skylight to implement the Travellers Programme.



Skill retention

Figure 17 Facilitators' impressions of how well students retain the skills learnt during the Travellers Programme



Facilitators were asked to rate how well they think students retain the skills learnt during the Travellers Programme from 1='very poorly' to 7='very well'. The majority of facilitators (80.4%) thought students retain the skills learnt during the Travellers Programme well to very well.

There were no differences in facilitators' responding patterns by decile of school worked in or length of time as a Travellers Programme facilitator.

The survey asked facilitators "why?" in relation to their response regarding skill retention. Individuals who rated the programme low in terms of skill retention noted that it can be rushed, students do not learn much from the programme, and that it depends on the individual student. Four facilitators commented that skill retention depends on the individual student, and in one case, their family as well.

Most of the comments made to qualify their rating regarding skill retention were positive. Retention was noted as strong for participants because the programme is well-designed and scaffolded, because of group work components, because of the mid risk selection criteria and the capacity students in this cohort have for self-management, because of the practical nature of many of the activities, because the skills build on each other each week, and in one case because a facilitator commented that they get the group back periodically for follow-up after the programme. A number of facilitators commented regarding the evidence on which they had rated retention as high. One commented that some graduates of Travellers



go onto become student leaders, while another noted that they had observed skill retention grow session by session, and following the programme, because often the group remains tightknit post-programme. Several commented that it was obvious in the students they came in contact with in the years following the programme that they had retained what they learned, although some noted that this was most obvious for those who sought support, and unknown for those who had not done so.

Supporting different ethnic groups

Facilitators were asked to rate from 1='very poorly' to 7='very well', to what extent the Travellers Programme contributed to supporting different ethnic groups. As Figure 18 illustrates, while overall facilitators reported the Travellers Programme contributed to supporting students of all ethnicities, they thought the programme contributed to supporting New Zealand European students more than students of other ethnicities. The lowest scores were for Asian and other ethnicities.

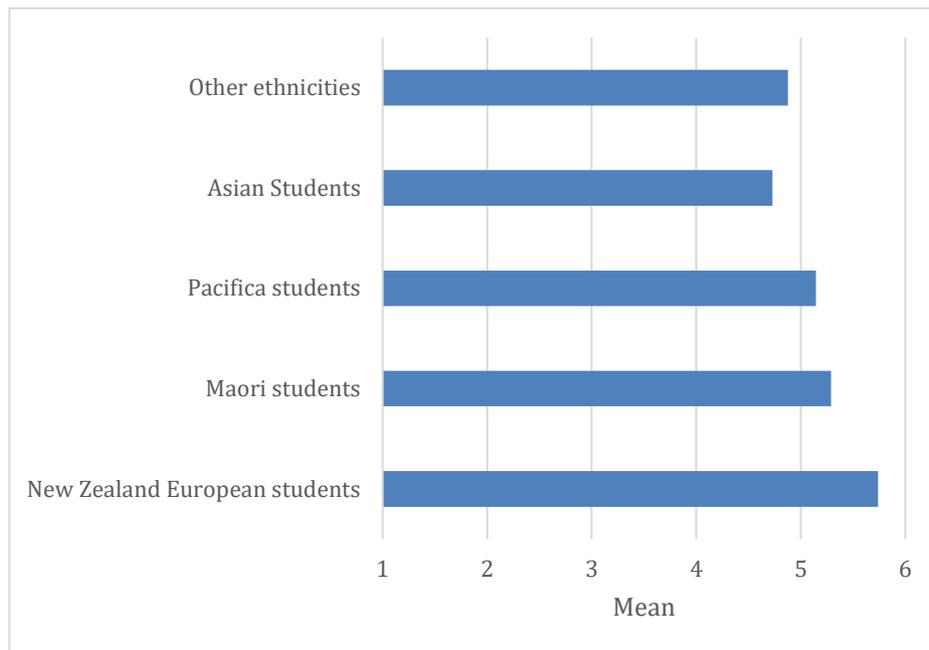
An analysis of variance showed a significant difference by school decile for the extent the Travellers Programme contributed to supporting Asian students $F(2,33)=3.84$; $p=.032$ and Other ethnicities $F(2,29)=5.20$; $p=.012$.

Post hoc analyses using the Scheffé post hoc criterion for significance indicated that:

- the facilitators from median decile schools (mean score= 4.0) reported significantly less support of Asian ethnicity students compared with facilitators from high decile schools (mean score= 5.5).
- the facilitators from median decile schools (mean score= 3.9) also reported significantly less support of 'other' ethnicity students compared with facilitators from high decile schools (mean score= 5.3) and low decile schools (mean score= 5.4).



Figure 18 Facilitators impressions of how well the Travellers Programme contributes to supporting different ethnic students



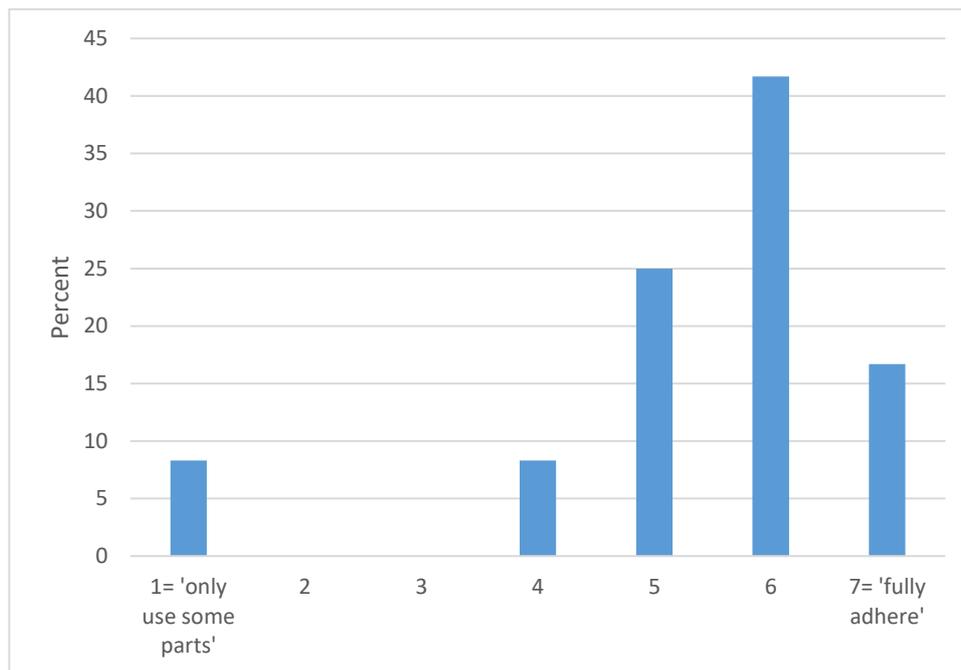
Adherence to Travellers Programme

Facilitators were asked to rate from 1= 'only use some parts' to 7= 'fully adhere' how well they follow the Travellers Programme protocol in their school. The majority of facilitators (83.4%) reported they mostly or fully adhered to the Travellers programme protocol (refer Figure 19.).

The survey also asked the open-ended question, "Any comments on why?". A number of respondents (n=7) who reported adhering fully to the programme reported doing so because they knew experts had developed the programme and/or trusted it. Others found it fitted well with the culture and/or practices of their school, one citing a good match to in-school restorative justice practice.



Figure 19 How well facilitators adhere to the Travellers Programme



Nine of the respondents who made comments reported adapting the programme for suitability to their students and/or to fit time constraints. Several other respondents noted that some components take more time, and one noted that their school sometimes runs it for longer than ten weeks to ensure all components are covered, while others reported dropping some activities. Three respondents commented that they had shortened the sessions or the duration of the programme because of pressure from other staff in the school concerned about the amount of class time students missed because of Travellers, or concerned about impact on academic achievement. Three respondents reported tailoring the programme to the cultural needs of their students, one reporting that they run a separate Travellers group specifically tailored to Pasifika females.

Other changes reported by individual respondents were addition of “fishbowl” activities which their students respond well to, adding additional discussion topics at student request, adding in alternative resources, and one respondent reported adapting the programme for delivery to intermediate aged children. One person commented that some resources were out-dated, and that they would like to see a genogram activity added alongside the life map. One respondent simply commented that the programme “does not fit”.

Support and Training

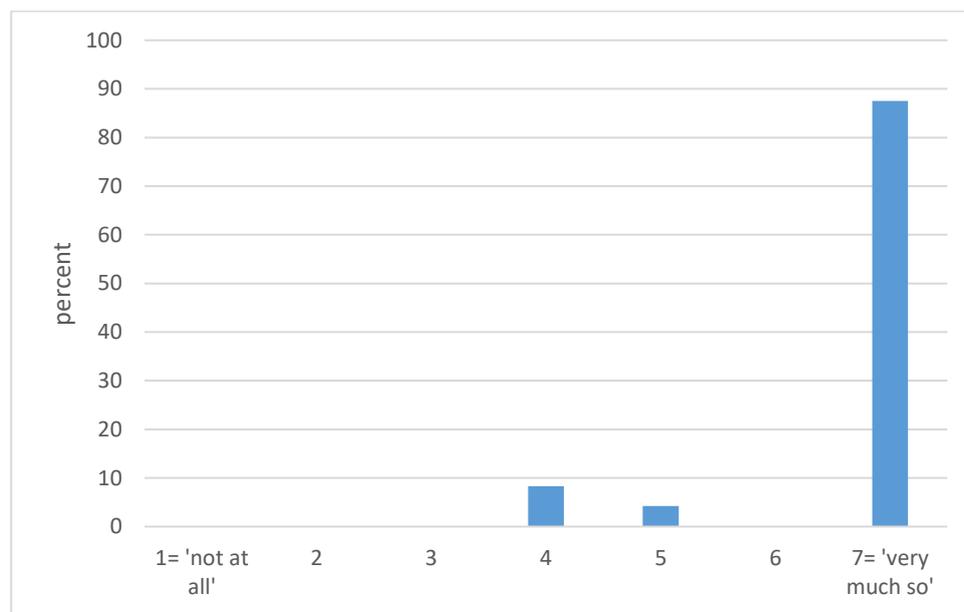
Facilitators were asked to rate from 1= 'not at all' to 7= 'very much so', if they feel they receive enough support and training from Skylight to implement the Travellers Programme. The majority of facilitators (87.5%) who answered this survey felt they



received enough support and training from Skylight to implement the Travellers Programme.

There were no differences in facilitators' responding patterns by decile of school worked in or length of time as a Travellers Programme facilitator.

Figure 20 Do facilitators feel they receive enough support and training?



4.2.2.3 Suggestions for Improving Travellers

The survey sought suggestions for improving the student experience of Travellers, and 33 respondents completed this open-ended question, although two commented that they were unsure how this could be improved, and 7 indicated that they thought it was already good as is. The following suggestions were offered regarding programme content:

- Continually refreshing content and especially music and videos to remain relevant (n=5)
- Adding mindfulness content (n=3)
- Adding social media and online resource components / tech components (n=2)
- Content is more suited to girls than boys (n=2), although one had addressed this by running single sex groups
- Adopt a narrative approach
- Include some outdoor activities
- Giving students input into what is covered
- Enhancing Māori / bilingual content in guides and activities



- Adding relationship building activities
- Some language is difficult for Māori and Pasifika students
- Increase multi-cultural content
- Stickers are not as valued as they once were

Five respondents commented that giving the programme more time would improve the experience for students, but this was a school decision that needed to be balanced with impact of time out of class or bus schedules etc.

Other individual respondents felt the programme would achieve better outcomes for students if it was co-facilitated (although resources at their school did not permit this), and that facilitators get better at delivering it over time and tailoring it to the needs of each group.

Asked how the overall programme could be improved, 32 facilitators responded, although eight noted that they believed the content of the programme was fine as it stands, and four felt that it was great but needs to be regularly revisited and updated as necessary. Some responses reiterated the comments the respondents had made in the previous question.

- Two respondents were keen to see enhancements to cultural appropriateness of the content.
- Two commented that the facilitators needed to tailor it to the gender of participants.
- One was keen for Te Reo resources for use in immersion settings.
- One felt that the resources could now be replaced by a book divided into sections with a fold-out centre for the life map, reducing cost and making it more likely that the materials be retained by the participants.
- Two reiterated a desire for the programme to incorporate more digital content.
- Timing was raised as an issue by several respondents, some wanting the programme lengthened and others shortened. Some were already adapting the timing to suit the needs of their students and/or their school.
- Two respondents raised concerns about the screening survey, reporting a number of double negatives in the screening questions, and a need to simplify these.

The Facilitator's Survey concluded with an open-ended question asking respondents if they had any other comments, questions or concerns about the Travellers programme. Twenty-nine respondents responded to the question, 24 expressing praise and appreciation for the programme, for the screening survey and its



usefulness to the school in identifying vulnerable young people, programme content and/or the support provided to schools participating in Travellers by Skylight. Two respondents suggested that refresher training for facilitators would be useful, especially if content was updated. One suggested that instead of sharing the manual and kit in their school, it would be good if facilitators each had their own copy. Two respondents expressed a lack of support/buy in for the programme from school management and class teachers, one wondering if this could be addressed by relationship building between Skylight and each school Principal. One respondent commented that the programme was not adapted well for Māori needs.



5. EVALUATION FINDINGS: QUALITATIVE

5.1 Summary of Focus Group Findings: Young People

5.1.1 The Respondent Group

35 young people took part in seven focus groups run in early term 3, 2016 at six schools which delivered Travellers in 2014 (with two focus groups run at one of the schools). All focus groups were with year 11 students except one where the school accidentally had the evaluation survey completed by year 10 students who completed Travellers in 2015. The schools represented a spread of decile levels, school size and community composition in terms of ethnicity and to a lesser extent, urban / rural character. Three of the schools turned out to be pilot sites from when Travellers was first set up. This was not known until the time of the focus groups. It possibly reflects a higher rate of engagement in the evaluation from pilot schools than schools in general.

Of the 35 young people who took part in the focus groups, 54% (n=19) were female and 46% (n=16) male. Ethnicity is summarised as follows:

New Zealand European:	37.1% (n=13)
Pasifika:	22.9% (n=8)
Asian:	17.1% (n=6)
New Zealand Māori:	11.4% (n=4)
Middle Eastern:	8.6% (n=3)
African:	2.9% (n=1)

5.1.2 Manner in Which Travellers was Delivered at Schools Sampled

Travellers had been delivered at four of the schools by two facilitators working alongside each other, in one case being two Guidance Counsellors, one a school-based Youth Worker and a Guidance Counsellor, one a Guidance Counsellor and the Year Dean, and one the Year Dean and a Health teacher. A Guidance Counsellor facilitated the programme alone at one of the schools, and at the other, two Guidance Counsellors took it in turns taking Travellers, assisted by Year 13 former Travellers participants.

All students had undertaken Travellers in a consistent location in the school, in all cases being a quiet room, with privacy, most often a nice outlook, and furnished with a relaxed feel. In some cases this was a seminar room, and in other cases a lounge-type space that formed part of the student services complex at the school.



The programme ran for a term at each school, although the duration bridged two terms at one of the schools. Sessions were two periods long in four of the schools, an extended 70-minute period in one school and ran for a period in one school. The sessions were held at the same time each week in most schools. For some, a rotating timetable meant they missed different classes each week, but most commonly, they missed the same classes for the duration of Travellers. This was a concern for some students.

At the three most culturally diverse schools where focus groups were held, the preparing and sharing of food and drink was an integral part of every Travellers session.

In most cases, students demonstrated a high degree of recall of Travellers, and the things that they did as part of the programme. Asked what they remembered most about Travellers, the Life Maps developed early on in the programme were most commonly recalled and talked about quite a bit, followed by the relaxation exercises, the games and activities in teams and pairs in general, and the exercise at the start of each session where students recapped their week and shared something good, or funny, or bad etc. This was recalled in detail by a number of participants, who really liked this activity and recalled it fondly. In three of the schools, focus group participants talked about the programme in general and the way it gave them a relaxing and enjoyable break, relieving stress and giving them a safe place at high school at a time when many did not feel safe at school and found it very stressful settling into high school.

Other things identified as strongest memories of Travellers were the end of year celebrations for those groups who had this as part of Travellers, content around positive thinking, centring exercises with candles, the analogies around travel in general and the way this was used to develop trust in the group, and a sense of acceptance.

Feedback about the manner in which the programme was delivered was overwhelmingly positive in all but one of the schools where focus groups were undertaken. Interestingly, in the responses at this school to the question of what they remembered most about the programme, they too recalled the exercises around drawing themselves on a plane, and the passports, but the plane exercise appeared to not make any sense to them, and the passports were recalled for the fact that one participant never got their passport returned to them.

With the exception of some who felt that they would have benefitted from Travellers if they had the programme in year 8 before starting secondary school,



most felt that they had the programme at the right time, and none felt that it would have been better to receive the programme later. Mostly the programme had been delivered in term 2 or 3 and this worked well, as did the duration of the sessions. Some students expressed the view that the programme could have run for longer.

5.1.3 What is Working Well?

- Guidance Counsellor involvement

Whether the programme was facilitated by a Guidance Counsellor or not, every student focus group identified having Guidance Counsellors facilitate Travellers as something that was important. Those who had Travellers facilitated in this way talked about the way they had got to know and trust the counsellor by doing the programme, and how they felt that a Guidance Counsellor was best placed to deliver a programme such as this in the school and deal with the sorts of issues that Travellers might face.

“(The Guidance Counsellor) knew what she was doing and we knew that we could trust her.”

“I think it definitely helped us build a relationship with the counsellor. They’re here to hear your problems and help you. I think doing Travellers, you get to know the counsellors a little bit better... I think that is one of the most prized thing any guy in Travellers looks forward to – getting trust from the counsellors and then getting to feel safer in your school.”

In talking about the involvement of Guidance Counsellors in Travellers, a number of participants talked about how valuable it had been that the Counsellor and other facilitators had shared their own life experiences during the Life Map exercise, and how this had helped them trust the facilitator(s).

For the participants at the one school where a Guidance Counsellor had not been involved in facilitating Travellers, the young people felt strongly that a Guidance Counsellor should have been involved in facilitating the programme.

- Programme format and activities

Feedback regarding the format of the programme was positive. Students liked the relaxed feel of the group, the group discussions, the hands-on activities and especially creative activities, the meditation, the recap at the start of each session and the way this happened each week, and for those who received it, the food and drink each week. Providing refreshments was identified as one way that Travellers caters for the needs of people from diverse cultures. When asked how well the



programme caters to the needs of Māori, Pacific and students from other cultures, all feedback was positive. Participants in all focus groups agreed that the programme was youth-friendly, providing participants with youth-focused sharing and learning opportunities.

- Confidentiality and trust within the programme

Being able to trust others in the group was very important. The exercises setting ground rules for the group, placing people on a journey together (e.g. the aeroplane picture and drawing selves on the plane), covering what is shared and not shared, and choices around this, and what goes on the journey staying on the journey appear to be an effective means of establishing group trust and confidentiality when delivered well.

“They made it a pretty big deal about keeping it between us, what we were talking about.”

In five of the six schools, trust and group confidentiality was well-established. In the one school where this appeared not to be the case, the whole experience of Travellers was different, appearing compromised as a result. For these focus group participants, they talked about the aeroplane (a metaphor exercise intended to get group members on-board with the journeying together theme of the programme, and covering confidentiality and group rules), and how they had drawn themselves outside the plane or hanging off the wheel, and it seemed that the point of the exercise had been lost. Trust did not seem to have been well-established in the group, and breaches of confidentiality were seen by young people as not responded to. The following comment was made in the student survey by a student from this same school:

“In some ways I didn't enjoy it because it's hard to talk about mental health problems in a room full of people I don't necessarily like or want knowing my business.”

The contrast between this one school and all the others was stark, affirming the importance of establishing ground rules and group trust at an early stage in the programme. Focus group feedback from young people indicated that this was mostly executed very well.

A wide range of topics had been covered in the course of undertaking Travellers, with the most identified key topics for any future Travellers programme identified by young people as self-esteem, managing stress, positive thinking, communicating with others and especially parents, and dealing with bullying. Other topics also



identified as important, but less commonly so were making good choices, body image, dealing with relationship break up and with loss, sexuality, resiliency, drug and alcohol issues. A number of students talked about the passport they had for Travellers, and how they could write in it anything they wanted the facilitator to discuss. For the one programme that appeared from feedback to have not gone well, issues identified in the passport were not responded to or were dismissed. Again, this feedback affirms the value of the passports as a feedback mechanism, and the importance of facilitators being guided by participant feedback.

5.1.4 How Could Travellers Be Improved

- Discretion regarding programme

Students in three of the six schools where focus groups were undertaken reported some degree of stigma in attending Travellers, with the group variously seen as a bit remedial, for depressed people, and a bit secretive. In other schools, this was not identified as an issue, and feedback suggested that a sense of stigma had a lot to do with how teachers responded when Travellers' participants came into class late or left class because of it. Where teachers were very discrete about it, attendance did not seem to be an issue. None of the students seemed to think that the stigma outweighed the appeal of attending the group. In terms of improving Travellers, ensuring that all teachers are sensitive to the need for privacy of students attending Travellers appeared enough to address this issue, on top of the existing practice of delivering the programme in a safe and private location in the school.

- Peer co-facilitation

Students in two of the focus groups were keen for older students to assist Guidance Counsellors in facilitating the programme, on the basis that they would relate well to younger people. This was with the caveat that they be well trained and demonstrate a high level of trust and integrity regarding the privacy and confidentiality of group members. This was already happening at one of the schools visited.

- Get-togethers at least yearly

A number of students expressed a desire for their Travellers group to get back together now and then through high school, for a shared lunch or similar and to touch base with each other.

- Feedback on selection

A number of young people consulted wanted future Travellers to be provided with more information about why they were selected for Travellers. Not knowing had worried some of them, and some had not realised the survey had anything to do



with selection until the focus group. A number expressed the view that their parents had worried when they got the letter about Travellers.

- Outdoor activities

Participants in two of the focus groups expressed a desire for some activities, and especially team building ones, to be delivered in outdoor spaces, both talking about wanting Travellers to “connect with nature”.

Other suggestions for improvements coming from individual focus groups were as follows:

- Two Guidance Counsellors should co-facilitate the programme, bringing two different perspectives to the programme.
- More coverage of sexuality and coming out could be offered.

In thinking about improving Travellers, there was some variation in what young people thought regarding an ideal group size, largely settling on what they had, which was generally 8 to 10 Travellers.

Young people in the school where Travellers had not worked so well for their programme had been in a group not facilitated by a Guidance Counsellor, and were students with a range of quite complex needs. Their suggestions for improving Travellers were to put a lot more effort into getting confidentiality and group trust well-established in the group from the outset, and allowing students to choose whether they wanted to be part of Travellers, or to opt out if they choose to do so.²⁴ They also strongly felt that Travellers should be facilitated by a trained Counsellor(s) who knows what to do when students are struggling or disclose difficult information.

Feedback from the group that did not work well reiterated the importance of setting clear ground rules from the outset, understanding the purpose of each activity, and working hard to develop trust and ensure confidentiality was maintained in the group. Their feedback also reiterated the importance of providing good closure at the end of the programme, returning Travellers materials to each participant and making sure that they are connected to ongoing supports if needed or know where to go for these. While some of the groups of young people left the programme with resources about different help services, this particular group did not appear to do so.

²⁴ The student suggestions all aligned with Skylight’s training and resources concerning Travellers. Skylight would never endorse delivery of Travellers that did not include these elements.



5.1.5 Short Term Outcomes

Most commonly, the young people who had taken part in Travellers consulted via focus groups identified increased **confidence**, and especially around discussing their feelings with others, and a **relationship of trust with both the Guidance Counsellor(s) and with others in their Travellers group** as the key outcomes immediately after doing the programme. Other outcomes commonly identified in the short term were as follows:

- **Friendships** were formed with others in the group.
- **Improved ability and confidence to communicate with others**, and especially with their parents, particularly around their feelings and their opinions (a finding that seemed to come mostly from Pacific and Asian students in the group, who often commented that this had been hard before).
- **Feeling less alone**, as they came to realise that their experiences and struggles were shared by others; this gave them a new perspective on their own problems, and an **increased empathy** towards others.

Other short term outcomes identified in one or two of the focus groups were as follows:

- Increased ability to relate to others.
- Much more confidence asking for support.
- Learning to analyse feelings.
- Something to look forward to each week, at a time when school was not enjoyable.
- Stress management skills.
- Skills around positive thinking and dealing with negative energy.
- Skills to deal with conflict.
- Self-esteem and less self-doubt / feeling better about selves.

Specifically asked to what extent the programme had achieved a range of outcomes, feedback suggested that Travellers had made a notable difference for most young people by building trusting relationships formed in the group, improving help-seeking skills of participants, and by strongly impacting on participants' access to appropriate support. To a lesser extent, it had improved connectedness to school for some of those students who were finding school an unhappy place to be prior to the programme. A small number of students reported feeling more motivated as a result of Travellers. All focus groups affirmed Travellers as a programme delivered in a youth-friendly manner.



5.1.6 Medium Term Outcomes

In the medium term, thinking about outcomes from travellers that the young people still carry with them and experience at the time of the focus groups, **confidence** was most commonly identified as the lasting impact of Travellers, and especially around asking questions in front of others at school, talking about their feelings, speaking up in new groups and generally finding it easier to talk to others.

“I’m definitely a lot more confident about myself.”

The other medium term outcome identified most strongly by the participants of all but one focus group was the **relationship they had with guidance staff** in their school and **knowledge of where to go for help** if they need it or a friend needs it. A number of students talked about how they had been able to help other people they knew share some of the issues they had been referred to Travellers for.

A number of participants were still friends with others from their Travellers group and identified this **friendship** as a lasting outcome.

Other medium term outcomes which were identified were resilience, being able to share emotions with others, self-esteem, and to a lesser extent, feeling engaged in school.

5.2 Summary of Focus Group Findings: Travellers Facilitators

5.2.1 The Respondent Group

Thirteen Travellers facilitators took part in interviews or small focus groups at the six schools sampled, two out of a team of three at school 1, two out of a team of four at school 2, the two facilitators who deliver the programme at school 3, the only current facilitator at school 4, four out of a large team at school 5 and two out of a large team at school 6. While the facilitators were asked to extend the invitation to take part in the focus group to other teachers at each school, only Travellers facilitators took part. This was due to facilitators feeling that those not involved in facilitating the programme would not be in a position to comment on it, and due to time commitments. Of the 13 facilitators consulted, 10 were Guidance Counsellors, two were Year Deans / Heads and one a Health and PE teacher.

5.2.2 Manner in Which Travellers was Delivered at the Schools Sampled



Three of the six schools at which consultation was undertaken were in fact pilot schools for Travellers, and as such, some of the facilitators interviewed had been involved in the programme for more than a decade.

Of the six schools, each Travellers programme was facilitated by a sole Guidance Counsellor at two of the schools (with one of these schools alternating Guidance Counsellor for each session), one school had two Guidance Counsellors deliver each programme together, one school had a Guidance Counsellor and the Year Dean deliver the programme together, one school had Travellers delivered by a Guidance Counsellor and a school-based Youth Worker together, and once school always used two facilitators per programme, from a team of Deans, Health Teachers and a Guidance Counsellor. The programme sampled in the evaluation was delivered by a Dean and a Health / PE Teacher.

Facilitators at each school were asked how they select students for Travellers.

- Two of the schools take the list of highest risk students from the survey and invite them all to participate.
- One school takes the highest risk group and adds to this those who have presented to the Guidance Counsellor and who are socially isolated, as well as others identified via the HEADSS assessment undertaken on every year 9 student in their school by the school nurse. They identify the programme as catering well for high-risk students as long as it is facilitated by skilled Counsellors.

“We have become very good at creating safety in small groups. I feel very confident that no matter how high the distress score, it can be and feel safe in our groups – ensuring that we have two hours of uninterrupted time, removing ourselves from the main school to kick back a little bit, we are good rapport builders and we make sure the students feel safe. ... We set it up with a lot of care.”

- One school takes the medium risk group and prioritises those with no other interventions in place and those who say they do not feel good about themselves.
- One school takes a combination of moderate and high risk students, and also invited students who have come to Guidance Counsellor notice. They think about the dynamics of the group as a whole when selecting participants



- One school prioritises those who identify as lonely and lacking in friends via the survey along with vulnerable students known to the Guidance Counsellor and the Dean. They also consider what other supports are already in place.

In terms of the number of groups they run:

- one school ran one group in 2014, a reduced programme in 2015 and no Travellers had been run so far in 2016;
- two schools always ran one programme per year;
- one school runs one or two programmes each year;
- one school runs three or four programmes each year; and
- one school runs four Travellers programmes every year.

One of the schools runs Travellers to groups of 8 students, one to 8-9 students, two to groups of 8-10 students, one 10-12 students and one 8-12 students, the average group size being just over 9 students.

5.2.3 What is Working Well?

- Facilitator Training

Feedback regarding the facilitator training was very positive, whether this had been undertaken several years ago or more recently. Because of its hands-on nature, the training was seen to equip facilitators well to deliver the programme, some Guidance staff referenced this response by saying this was especially the case when facilitators are trained counsellors, because they are already familiar with the components of the programme and their rationale for inclusion.

- Programme Resources and Content

A number of facilitators praised the hard copy resources provided by Skylight for Travellers. A number also praised the range of activities that make up the programme, and the fact that facilitators can pick and choose activities to suit the needs of the group, as well as their own strengths as a facilitator.

- Survey

While one facilitator queried the validity of the survey, this was an isolated response. One of the schools running Travellers most frequently identified the survey as a useful tool in their school not just for selecting for travellers but for getting a picture of who is at risk in general in the year 9 cohort, given that the school was seen as a high pressure environment.



- School-wide Outcomes

Travellers was explicitly identified in two of the schools as highly valued by staff throughout the school, while feedback in most of the schools suggested that this was also the case, often with the number of programmes being delivered per year only limited by resource constraints. Only one facilitator identified a lack of buy-in to the programme from other staff, but this school was newly opened. As well as producing outcomes for participants, one facilitator group identified school outcomes from the programme in terms of counsellors getting an insight into the current issues in the school via the discussions in travellers.

- Relationships

Travellers was highly valued for the relationships it creates between students and Guidance Counsellors / Deans.

“What is so wonderful is it builds that relationship with the student for the next five years, coz we often see them at different times throughout those five years ... At the end of the course you are left with something really profound with each and every student – there’s a link there. ... you are going to be the adult that they call upon in the school when things go wrong. ... There is something there that’s forever.”

In terms of the manner in which Travellers is delivered in different schools, those where sharing of food and drink was an embedded part of each session identified this as valuable in affirming nurturing relationships and providing opportunities for participants to help each other. Those who hold an end of year celebration for Travellers also identified this as valuable and something that works well.

5.2.4 How Could Travellers Be Improved

Once facilitators are trained to deliver Travellers, there is no on-going formal training, although according to Skylight, facilitators can seek this if they wish. At least half the facilitators interviewed expressed a desire for some kind of refresher training, and especially if the programme is modified or updated at all. It seemed that most delivered it the way they were training to do so, and with the resources covered in their training, with the exception of components they had added to the programme themselves. Three of the schools had added their own content to Travellers, two adding mindfulness activities to the programme and one adding positive thinking activities. One school (the school with the least Guidance Counsellor input to the programme) had adapted a lot of the content, viewing the programme as too babyish for modern Year 9s. They had dropped the Snakes and Ladders game and altered other activities, including supporting resources. Two



schools questioned the CBT components of the programme, while another found this a powerful aspect of Travellers and reported that if they had the resources, they would like to take this and extend it into year 10.

Summarising suggestions for improvement to the programme, the following suggestions came through most strongly regarding Travellers:

- Provide refresher training for Facilitators, even for half-day sessions every few years.
- Foster opportunities for facilitators to network together locally via cluster groups, and via an online forum, to share ideas and support each other in the Travellers facilitation journey. A Facebook group already exists for this purpose, but it seems this was not known to all informants.
- Imbed relaxation activities into every session so that they skills are learned to a deeper level by students, forming a strong takeaway from the programme.
- Update the videos and music suggestions as these are now quite dated.
- The survey wording includes a number of double negatives. The wording needs to be simplified in places.
- Social media content needs to be included in travellers.
- Outdoor activities could be built into Travellers. Some students were expected to respond well to this.
- It would be good to have more tokens that facilitators can give participants as a reminder of their Travellers journey. Some facilitators make these themselves in the form of painted stones reminding students of Snakes and ladders thinking.

In talking about how Travellers could be improved, facilitators at half the schools were strongly of the view that Travellers should only be delivered by trained Guidance Counsellors. A key reason for this was that young people today, for whatever reason, are much more willing to open up in a group, and face a high risk of over disclosure in group settings. Such a scenario requires a high level of counselling skill to respond appropriately and effectively uphold the safety of the student. Further, facilitators at two of the schools talked about how important they saw it that facilitators are passionate about the programme and fully believe in it.



The first few sessions were identified as needing to be delivered with great skill and full commitment from the facilitators in order to create the culture of openness but also of safety and confidentiality in the group. A number noted that if this does not occur, the programme will not be as effective.

5.2.5 Short Term Outcomes

Asked what outcomes they seek when delivering Travellers, confidence, friendships and not feeling alone, learning that support is available for them and building a portfolio of supports, building resilience, developing a willingness to ask for help and realising that their experiences are not unique were all identified as desired outcomes.

In terms of the short-term outcomes they actually see Travellers achieve for students, most commonly, they identified a sense of connection and belonging, a connection / relationship between the Guidance Counsellor(s) and high risk students, and increased confidence in their ability to cope, their capacity to deal with stress and anxiety, and simply a confidence to express their views and feelings in front of others.

Other less commonly identified outcomes were skill development around assessing their own feelings, building relationships of trust within the school, helping them process the things that have happened to them, learnings about how other young people and their families live, and especially those from other cultures, enhanced capacity to talk about their feelings, a feeling of being less alone, resilience, and knowledge of where to go for help and support and a willingness to act on this.

5.2.6 Medium Term Outcomes

Facilitators at two of the schools were unsure what outcomes remained for Travellers participants one to two years post-course. Others identified more readiness to access guidance counsellor support if needed and a lasting relationship between young person and counsellor, along with a sense of perspective around their feelings and being better equipped to access support than those who have not undertaken the programme. A number of facilitators were aware of friendships that had developed in Travellers groups that endured through high school. Other enduring outcomes less commonly identified were a sense of hope and acknowledgement that life is made up of ups and downs, feelings of belonging and connectedness, and evidence of students putting strategies into place around stress management and dealing with anxiety.



Thinking about the kinds of young people who they see benefitting most from Travellers, the group most identified as likely to benefit were shy, quiet or withdrawn young people lacking in confidence and needing a self-esteem boost, or those suffering loss. Next-most identified were young people who have been bullied or who are anxious. Other kinds of young people seen as benefitting from Travellers but less identified were young people with attachment issues or from dislocated families, young people with body image issues, socially isolated students, those who are reluctant to discuss their problems with others or those who have lived a transient life.

Those for whom travellers was not seen as a good fit were young people who act out/ have low impulse control and behaviour management issues, those with Asperger's or autism, limited English or mental health issues.



6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Delivery of the Travellers Programme

As a psycho-educational group programme, the Travellers programme manual acknowledges that effective facilitation is reliant on the facilitator's attitude, leadership style and personal characteristics, and that facilitator qualities and skills, many centred around counselling, are critical to the group process (Facilitator's Manual, p7). The manual states that school counsellors, pastoral care and guidance personnel *are often the primary professionals trained to facilitate Travellers groups.*

The survey administered to Travellers Facilitators in the present evaluation did not ask the respondent what their role was in the school, and this would be a useful question to include in future surveys. At the six schools at which focus groups were undertaken, Guidance Counsellors had been either the sole facilitator or a co-facilitator of the programme at all but one of the schools. In that instance, a Guidance Counsellor facilitates some Travellers programmes (although not the groups included in the evaluation), while others are facilitated by health teachers and year deans. Qualitative data strongly endorsed the importance of having a guidance counsellor either facilitate or co-facilitate a Travellers group. The one school where this had not occurred was also the only school where feedback from students regarding the programme was of concern. Further, students at all schools strongly voiced a perception that the programme should always include at least one guidance counsellor in the facilitation team. Several of the schools where facilitator focus groups were undertaken had used year deans or health teachers in the past but had moved away from this to facilitation only by guidance staff. While staff turnover had accounted for some of this shift, feedback suggested that preference for Guidance Counsellor facilitation was primarily due to their specific skill set as compared with teaching staff.

As an example, at a school that had deans trained in Travellers in the past, and that now only uses counsellors as facilitators, this was seen as important because they have the counselling skills to respond to issues which come out in the group, and are flexible enough to deliver a responsive programme. Talking about disclosures in the group, the interviewees at this school did not feel that non-counsellors would be equipped to deal with these appropriately.

"Sometimes you get premature disclosures, where I really have to quickly scoop up that student to keep them safe. When you disclose something for the first time like sexual abuse in front of strangers, it's too much too quick,



so you have to catch it. Imagine, if a disclosure was made like that and it wasn't caught, it could be extremely hurtful for the student."

In the time they have been delivering Travellers, the facilitators at this school have seen an increase in students wanting to come out about their sexual orientation or to disclose abuse in the first session, and this requires counselling skill. They wondered if messages in social media were prompting young people to be more open and to take opportunities to disclose more readily. For whatever reason this is occurring, it was identified as hugely important that this is well-managed by a highly skilled group facilitator.

Travellers appears from the qualitative feedback to mostly being delivered to groups of 8-10 students, in line with the suggested group size put forward in the manual. In some cases, the group is slightly larger than this, up to 12 students. Feedback from facilitators indicated that this was sometimes to allow for drop-off in numbers after the first one or two sessions. This size appeared from focus group feedback to work well for participants.

Feedback was also positive regarding the setting in which the programme was held. All students had undertaken Travellers in a consistent location in the school, in all cases being a quiet room, with privacy, most often a nice outlook, and furnished with a relaxed feel. In some cases this was a seminar room, and in other cases a lounge-type space that formed part of the student services complex at the school. Some students who took part in the focus groups expressed a desire to have some activities undertaken outdoors, and for these students, connecting with nature seemed to be a theme behind this idea. Including some outdoor activities also emerged from the facilitator survey as a suggestion for future groups.

The Travellers programme manual strongly recommends running the programme over eight weekly 90-minute sessions, to allow time for interaction, processing of concepts and individual experiences. At the six schools sampled for qualitative data collection, the programme ran for the prescribed duration; sessions were two periods long in four of the schools, and an extended 70-minute period in one school. One of the schools ran the recommended number of sessions, but of shorter length (one period). The sessions were held at the same time each week in most schools. For some, a rotating timetable meant they missed different classes each week, but most commonly, they missed the same classes for the duration of Travellers. This was a concern for some students who took part in focus groups. The concern was also expressed by a small number of facilitators who responded to the survey, who identified perceived impact of missed class time on academic performance as a barrier to obtaining buy-in to the programme from teaching staff and some parents.



However this was a minority response, and focus group feedback was that the benefits of the programme far out-way any negative impact on academic performance.

Just under three quarters of respondents to the student survey felt that they had taken part in Travellers at the right age, up from 64% in 2012. Students consulted via focus groups mostly felt that year 9 was the right time to deliver Travellers, with a small number feeling that they would have benefitted more from the programme in year 8 because it would help prepare them for secondary school. In both the present student survey and the survey administered as part of the 2012 evaluation of Travellers, more students felt that they should have taken part in the programme when they were older compared with at a younger age.

At the three most culturally diverse schools where focus groups were held, the preparing and sharing of food and drink was an integral part of every Travellers session. Students consulted via focus groups were positive regarding the extent to which the programme was appropriate for students of different cultures. The facilitator survey however found ratings of how well the programme supports different cultural groups to vary, with ratings strongest for New Zealand European students, followed by New Zealand Māori, then Pasifika, and lowest for Asian students, and slightly higher for “other”. Ratings were higher than five on a seven-point scale for the first three groups.

While facilitators at the most culturally diverse schools where qualitative data gathering was undertaken included the preparing and sharing of food as a routine part of Travellers, this practice is not discussed in the Facilitator’s manual, and it would seem valuable to share this suggestion. Feedback from Skylight indicates that this is encouraged in training and via the facilitator Facebook page. Feedback from students in focus groups in these schools indicated that they understood the cultural relevance of the practice. Cultural appropriateness was also identified in focus groups as being established through the choice of space in which the programme was hosted, with art work and posters reflecting cultural diversity displayed in the spaces.

The Travellers Programme Facilitator Manual sets out suggestions for informing classroom teachers of the programme so that students can be released and return from the group without hassle. Feedback from students via focus group suggested that this was not always happening as prescribed, and teacher response was a source of stigma for some Travellers participants. The feedback reiterated the importance of teachers understanding the value of the programme and their need to



treat student attendance at the group with discretion. This needs to be strongly emphasised in training.

In terms of the content covered in Travellers, and the way in which this is covered, feedback from students consulted via focus groups, and gathered via the survey was positive. Students appear to enjoy the format of the groups and the activities delivered as part of Travellers, particularly the hands-on nature of so many of these. They liked the relaxed feel of the group, the discussions held, the way each session recaps on the previous ones, and the way a sense of trust is built within the group. Over a fifth of students who responded to the survey felt no change was needed to the programme. Where changes were seen as needed, these were most commonly running additional Travellers sessions for participants in later years or other follow-up, incorporating the use of guest speakers into sessions, including more practical activities providing students with more information on why they had been selected for Travellers, and having more time available to talk about their experiences. Focus group feedback reiterated how important it is for some participants to understand why they have been referred to the programme. This was a source of stress for some Travellers.

The Travellers programme is intended to target students presenting with medium risk according to their screening survey results. While the number of schools sampled for the qualitative component of the evaluation was small, it was evident that this was not being adhered to, with two schools taking the list of highest risk students from the survey and inviting them all to participate, one taking the highest risk group and adding to this those who have presented to the Guidance Counsellor and who are socially isolated, as well as others identified via HEADSS assessment, one targeting the medium risk group and prioritising those with no other interventions in place and those who say they do not feel good about themselves, one taking a combination of moderate and high risk students, and also inviting students who have come to Guidance Counsellor notice, and one school prioritising those who identify as lonely and lacking in friends via the survey along with vulnerable students known to the Guidance Counsellor and the Dean.

Schools targeting highest risk students were in all but one case schools that had run the programme since its beginnings, when it seems this was the directive. All such schools had guidance counsellors delivering the programme who were highly experienced with the programme. The school targeting medium and high-risk students was however the only school to not include a guidance counsellor in its facilitation team for each programme. Feedback from the student focus group participants for this school was concerning, and was conveyed back to Skylight. The findings from the qualitative component of the evaluation suggested that the



programme could work well for higher risk students, as long as it was facilitated by highly skilled counsellors, the overall composition of the group was carefully devised, a strong relationship of trust was established within the group and with the facilitators, and disclosures were skilfully managed and responded to. The qualitative findings regarding characteristics of group participants, and their individual risk strongly reiterated the importance of skilled facilitation from a counselling background. The greater the risk of students, the greater it would seem important that Travellers is facilitated by a guidance counsellor. It is important that the quantitative evaluation finding that the programme was less likely to be identified as helpful by students demonstrating a high level of distress on the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale (SEDS) than by those with lower scores be considered. Without information on the background of facilitators for survey respondents, we were unable to test to see whether this result was the same for students whose Travellers programme was facilitated by a guidance counsellor or a teacher.

Feedback gathered via the facilitator survey indicated that the majority of Travellers groups are delivered according to programme guidelines, with almost 85% of respondents indicating that they mostly or fully adhere to the programme. Those not fully adhering to the programme most commonly reported adapting the programme for suitability to their students and/or to fit time constraints. A small number of respondents reported tailoring the programme to the cultural needs of their students, and the addition of refreshments in some of the schools visited could be seen as an example of this. Some facilitators have added resources to the programme that they find useful, while others have added activities, including mindfulness components. Of the schools visited, the school where the programme seemed weakest in terms of student feedback was also the programme where content had been altered most significantly, with some core components of Travellers dropped. There did appear to be a lack of understanding of the rationale for some of these components on the part of the facilitation team.

6.2 Short-term Impacts of the Travellers Programme

The student survey found that overall, over three-fifths of students found the Travellers programme helpful, with a further fifth or so unsure about this. The programme was less likely to be identified as helpful by students demonstrating a high level of distress on the Subjective Experience of Distress Scale (SEDS) than by those with lower scores. Thinking about short-term outcomes of Travellers, most commonly, the young people who had taken part in Travellers consulted via focus groups identified increased confidence and a relationship of trust with both the Guidance Counsellor(s) and with others in their Travellers group as the key outcomes immediately after doing the programme.



- **Access to appropriate youth-focused sharing and learning opportunities**

Evidence gathered regarding the extent to which Travellers offers young people access to appropriate youth-focused sharing and learning opportunities was positive, with students and facilitators consulted via focus group identifying Travellers as a youth-friendly programme that provides participants with access to appropriate youth-focused sharing and learning opportunities.

- **Connectedness to school**

Questions probing the extent to which Travellers impacts on participants' connectedness to school did identify impacts, but these emerged as less strong than some of the programme's other short-term impacts. Findings from the facilitator survey showed a mean rating of 5.7 out of 7 for this impact. However the facilitator focus groups revealed that the programme is highly valued for the relationships it builds between participants and guidance staff and year deans, as well as with other group members. This can in turn impact on a sense of connectedness and engagement at school. Students who took part in focus groups commonly identified friendships formed within their Travellers group, and an improved ability and confidence to communicate with others, including at school. Connectedness did seem to grow as a result of the programme for some of those who had previously found school an unhappy place. For some, Travellers had given them something to look forward and enjoy at school. A small number of students reported feeling more motivated as a result of Travellers. The student survey revealed only limited impact of the programme on participants' time management at school or management of schoolwork.

It would have been useful to explore school attendance patterns of programme participants but due to the burden this would create for school administration staff, this was not possible. Anecdotally, focus group feedback did suggest that participation in Travellers did impact on attendance and school engagement for some participants.

- **Trusting relationships**

The findings of the present evaluation strongly support a positive impact of Travellers on building trusting relationships. Two-thirds of student survey respondents reported that the programme helped them build positive relationships with family, teachers and peers, and this result was even stronger for Pasifika students. Pasifika and Asian students in some of the focus groups talked about how they were better able to discuss their feelings or express their wishes to their parents after taking part in Travellers. The facilitator survey also identifies strong impacts on relationships of trust, and focus groups highlighted the building of trust



relationships between students and their guidance counsellors and deans as a major outcome of the programme. In some schools, this was the most valued outcome from a school perspective, and one that was seen as enduring.

- **Help-seeking skills**

Findings from the facilitator survey regarding the extent that Travellers improves help-seeking skills of participants were also positive, and facilitator focus group participants identified this as a major outcome of Travellers, the programme effectively building a portfolio of supports for students. Of student survey respondents, almost two thirds reported knowledge of supports to navigate changes and challenges after finishing Travellers. Almost three quarters felt confident in seeking support if needed.

- **Access to appropriate support**

Exploring the extent to which Travellers impacts on participants' access to appropriate support, over 42% of student survey respondents had asked for support since doing Travellers, and of these, three-quarters reported that Travellers had helped them do this. Of those males who had accessed support, almost 90% reported that Travellers had helped them access support. This affirms feedback from facilitators consulted in a single sex boys' school, who saw this as the key outcome of the programme. As a high decile school where students were under considerable pressure from all quarters to perform and excel, being able to reach out when they are not coping was seen as key to holistic wellbeing for students.

Knowing how to access support if needed emerged from the student survey as one of the strongest outcomes, and this was also reflected in the facilitator survey findings, where knowing where to go for support was rated as the highest short term outcome of Travellers. Almost 70% of student survey respondents felt support was available for them if they needed it. Facilitators who took part in the focus groups reported that students who undertake travellers commonly develop a willingness to ask for help, and both facilitators and students reported increased student confidence around doing so.

6.3 Medium-term Impacts of the Travellers Programme

The findings of the present evaluation identified a number of sustained impacts of the Travellers programme approximately two years-post programme. Travellers seeks to develop engaged, confident and motivated young people, and facilitators rated these medium term impacts highly. They mostly identified the programme as



contributing to improved overall wellbeing and increased resiliency and ability to manage challenges and changes.

60% of student survey respondents reported feeling confident to navigate changes and challenges, and for Pasifika students this portion was even greater, at 80%. Increased confidence was a major outcome of the programme identified by students consulted via focus groups, and this was reiterated by facilitators consulted face to face. Some facilitators talked about students who took part in the programme in year 9 and who had since blossomed in confidence, to the point that they have taken on leadership roles as senior students. Students consulted via focus group generally felt that impacts on their levels of motivation were less strong than on their confidence.

To a large extent, Travellers appears to develop positive relationships between participants and peers, families and teachers in a manner that is sustained in the medium term. Relationship building appears from the student survey strongest in school, with staff and with peers, and least strong with family in terms of asking for help. However, a number of individuals in the focus groups talked about how doing travellers had made a big difference to their relationships with their parents, and such feedback was mostly from Pasifika and Asian students who indicated that it had been hard talking to their parents before doing the programme, and that their relationship with their parents benefitted from their increased confidence to speak up about their feelings. Survey findings showed stronger impacts on relationships for Pasifika students and for students in low decile schools.

In relation to the medium and longer term impacts of taking part in Travellers, skill retention was noted as strong for participants by facilitators surveyed for a variety of reasons including because the programme is well-designed and scaffolded, because of group work components, because of the selection criteria and the capacity students in this cohort have for self-management, because of the practical nature of many of the activities, and because the skills build on each other each week.

6.4 How Well is the Programme Meeting the Needs of Young People?

Findings of the present evaluation suggest that Travellers is an intervention that is helpful for the majority of its participants, teaching young people strategies to deal with stress, and helping them see life as a journey of ups and downs. Travellers works well at helping young people feel connected at school, and building confidence to talk about their feelings. Travellers successfully informs students of where to go to access help and support if they require it, and builds confidence for



young people who need it to reach out for this support. Qualitative evidence suggests that Travellers is likely to work best when:

- the programme has the full support of school management, and in turn that teaching staff at the school understand and support the rationale for student participation in the programme and the need for discretion around student participation in Travellers;
- when facilitated or co-facilitated by a trained Guidance Counsellor who understands the programme logic of Travellers and the purpose of each core exercise;
- where relationships of trust have been carefully and purposefully established within the group and with the facilitator(s) in the first three sessions of the programme, in part through full engagement in the Travellers process by the facilitator themselves; and
- when delivered largely intact (although additional activities can be added to meet student needs).

For the majority of key outcomes, Travellers appears from the present evaluation, to reach a wide range of young people, with no statistical difference in results for students across different decile schools, whether schools are single sex or co-educational, for Māori and Pasifika students and for males versus females. However, a small number of differences in findings emerged for different sub-groups of the student survey respondents.

The only significant difference to emerge by gender was for the likelihood that Travellers had helped young people become more engaged, confident and motivated, with males significantly more likely to provide responses indicating this. Similarly, students at low decile schools scored significantly higher on these measures.

For distress scores at the time of 2016 follow-up, Māori students scored significantly lower than other ethnic groups, while females scored significantly higher for distress than males who responded to the survey, and students at mid-decile schools scored significantly higher than those at either low or high decile schools.

Pasifika students in the survey sample scored significantly higher than other ethnic groups in their confidence navigating changes and challenges, and in scores on the extent to which Travellers helped them in their relationships. Similarly, in the NZCER 2012 evaluation, Pasifika rated Travellers higher than did other young people for helpfulness in teaching them a range of strategies. However, NZCER cautioned readers about this finding, noting a general pattern in their own research whereby Pasifika students tend to respond more positively to survey questions compared to



non-Pasifika students. They recommended further research to look at whether the programme did have particularly good outcomes for Pasifika students, or whether this is due to different survey response tendencies.

Of note, a number of Pasifika students in the student focus groups also talked about how the programme had helped them communicate better with their parents. As an example, a Pacific female reported that her parents were very strict and it used to be very hard talking with her father at all, but since doing Travellers, she talked to her father a lot more, especially about her feelings, and was better able to express her own opinions. Similar feedback also came through from a number of Asian students. While there may be an acquiesce bias in survey responses of Pasifika students, the fact that the survey findings were echoed in feedback face to face in the focus group makes it much more likely that results reflect a real difference for this sub-group. The advantage of a mixed methods approach and the opportunity this gave the evaluators to triangulate findings would be usefully repeated in future evaluation methodologies of the programme.

6.5 How Well is the Programme Meeting the Needs of Schools?

Because participation in the evaluation was voluntary, there is a possibility that the sample of schools from which feedback was provided is not reflective of all schools which currently deliver Travellers in terms of their views of the programme. Further, the evaluation did not seek the feedback of schools that have undertaken travellers in the past but ceased to do so, so it is possible that the sample of schools in the present evaluation is skewed towards those viewing the programme more favourably. However even if this is the case, their experiences of the programme are still valid.

The majority of the facilitators who responded to the survey fully adhere or mostly adhere to the programme, suggesting that the programme was meeting their needs as it stands. Where changes had been made, these were often changes in timing of sessions to fit in the school day / year, or to ensure full coverage of content to a degree which matched with student needs. Other changes commonly made to the programme were addition of exercises or resources which in the facilitators' experiences added value to the programme. Mindfulness and relaxation exercises had commonly been added because facilitators had seen these work well in other contexts in the school.

Feedback was very supportive of the training provided to facilitators, in terms of duration, experiential nature and facilitation. The idea of having refresher training every few years was well-received, but facilitators consulted had not actively sought



this for themselves. It may be that this needs encouragement from Skylight if uptake is to occur.

In some of the schools visited, Travellers appears to be highly valued by school management, but this was not universal. One school had not run a Travellers programme in 2016 due to lack of buy-in from other school staff. Facilitators are likely to get the best outcomes, and the programme is likely to operate with a stronger sense of trust, when all school staff understand the programme and value it. A number of schools utilise the screening survey for purposes other than selecting students for Travellers. It was identified as a key tool for identification of at-risk students not only for guidance staff but also year deans. Feedback suggested that often year 9 students arrive at high school with little information provided by their previous school regarding their psychosocial wellbeing. With the survey undertaken early in year 9, the information it provides the school on students was highly valued, and widely identified as accurate. As well as identifying who would benefit from Travellers, the survey lets guidance staff know who to look out for in the coming years.

Those schools that select high risk students to undertake Travellers commonly reported doing so because it allows the guidance counsellor to form a relationship with each of these students that will make it easier for each of those students to approach them when they are not coping, have a need or face a challenge.

The building of a relationship between student and guidance counsellor was the most important outcome of Travellers, with this relationship viewed as something enduring that could make a difference and continue to impact on the student throughout their four- five years of high school. Some of the facilitators noted that they often do not see Travellers participants one on one until several years down the track, yet when the student does have a need, they reach out, and it seems as if Travellers makes this easier. This strategy of selection of high risk students must be reconciled by the finding that the programme was less likely to be identified as helpful by students demonstrating high levels of distress.

6.6 How can the Travellers Programme be Improved?

Travellers is working well for many students in its current form. That said, a number of suggestions emerged for improving the programme for the future.

- **Release and Return / Absence from Class**

It is a concern that students in three of the six schools where focus groups were undertaken reported some degree of stigma in attending Travellers, in large part due to the way in which classroom teachers responded when Travellers came into class



late or left class because of it. Where teachers exercised discretion, attendance did not seem to be an issue. None of the students seemed to think that the stigma outweighed the appeal of attending the group. However it would be beneficial for facilitators to communicate to the wider school staff, with full support of school management, the purpose of Travellers and the need for teachers to ensure privacy of students attending the programme.

- **Peer co-facilitation**

Students in two of the focus groups were keen for older students, trained regarding confidentiality, to assist Guidance Counsellors in facilitating the programme, and the idea of guest speakers, especially young people being involved in the programme was favourably received in the surveys. This was already happening at one of the schools visited and after evaluation of how well this works may be good to expand into other schools.

- **Get-togethers at least yearly**

A number of students expressed a desire for their Travellers group to get back together now and then through high school, for a shared lunch or similar and to touch base with each other. A need for follow-up was reiterated via the survey, and it would be good to see this more actively encouraged by Skylight through its regular communications with Travellers facilitators.

- **Outdoor activities**

Participants in two of the focus groups expressed a desire for some activities, and especially team building ones, to be delivered in outdoor spaces, both participants talking about wanting Travellers to “connect with nature”. A number of facilitators consulted face to face also saw benefit from such activities, and the idea also emerged in the facilitator survey as a suggested enhancement to the programme.

- **Content**

In terms of content, demand was evident from the present evaluation for coverage of bullying, social media and sexuality as part of Travellers. Relaxation exercises already in Travellers were identified by several facilitators as very useful, and worthy of revisiting every session for a few minutes to enable participants to practise these skills to ensure greater skill retention post-programme. Some schools have added in mindfulness components successfully to travellers, and it seems sensible to build these into any future update of the programme.

- **Resources**

The music and videos are in some cases dated and need updating with something more familiar to young people of today, just as future updates will also be necessary.



The suggestion that some of the resources be revised for bilingual content, with Te Reo and English wording should be taken on board when the resources are next reprinted. The suggestion of developing digital content for Travellers is worth pursuing.

- **Facilitation**

As mentioned, it is strongly recommended that Travellers should always be facilitated either by a guidance counsellor(s) or a guidance counsellor alongside another member of school staff. This may mean that some schools may have to reduce the number of programmes they deliver, but it is the view of the evaluators that this practice is necessary to minimise risk to students posed through disclosure in a group situation.

- **Training and Support of Facilitators**

Opportunity to network digitally with other facilitators is already available via the facilitator Facebook group, but none of the facilitators met with in the course of the present evaluation identified this, suggesting that they either did not know about it or had not joined. This group needs stronger promotion to facilitators. The suggestion of encouraging facilitators to form cluster groups with others in their area to meet once or twice a year to exchange ideas around Travellers, or to be able to liaise more informally should be actively pursued. It would be good to see a requirement to undertake refresher training periodically (e.g. every three years) built into conditions of delivering Travellers, even if it is in the form of a two-hour update on content and any programme changes.

- **Screening Survey Wording**

A small number of facilitators raised concerns about the screening survey and some of the wording of the items that use double negatives. These were seen as especially problematic for students for whom English is not their first language. They were keen to see such wording simplified for future surveys. This concern has previously been raised with Skylight.

6.7 Limitations of the current Evaluation

Failure to use a probability sampling technique significantly limits the ability to make broader generalisations from the evaluation results (i.e., the ability to make statistical inferences from the current sample to all students who participated in Travellers in 2014). In the present study, it was not possible to obtain access to all the schools that had participated in Travellers in 2014. Some schools no longer had their facilitators on staff, while others were too busy with school work to participate. Additionally, even from the school who did participate, it was not possible to obtain



access to all students who took part in Travellers. Nor was it possible to ascertain how representative this sample of students is of all Travellers students. For this reason generalisation of these findings to the wider cohort of Travellers students should be made with caution.

While the use of a matched sample allowed us to ascertain changes overtime for about 70% of the students who took part in this evaluation, the results of the survey can only infer that any changes between baseline and follow-up are due to the Travellers Programme. However, the inclusion of multiple sources of information triangulating consistent findings across a number of different data gathering techniques adds weight to the conclusions presented. In future, the inclusion of a control group of young people who met criteria for inclusion but were randomly assigned to not receive the Travellers programme would strengthen the ability to draw robust conclusions.

6.8 Future Evaluation

As was the case with the 2014 evaluation of Travellers, we encountered issues obtaining parental consent. This proved to be a barrier for at least one school approached to take part in the focus group component of the evaluation, and placed a burden on facilitators. Jaspers, Stevens and van der Meer (2014) suggested in their report that Skylight seek parental consent for their child to take part in evaluation (should this occur) at the time that students complete the initial wellness survey. It is strongly suggested that this suggestion is implemented through changes to the Travellers consent form.

As has also been previously suggested, a good next step in evaluative research regarding Travellers would be development of a prospective longitudinal study following up Travellers participants over time with a randomized control group. It would be useful to see part of school's commitment to the programme being collation of key monitoring data regarding school-based outcomes, and in particular, school attendance rates, rates of stand-downs and suspensions, and NCEA achievement as Travellers move through secondary school. This data could then be used to compare to the school population data to gather quantitative indicators of programme impact.



REFERENCES

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Robertson, S., Boyd, S., Dingle, R. & Taupo, K. (2012) *Evaluation of Skylight's Travellers Programme: Final Report*. Report commissioned by Skylight and funded by the Ministry of Health, NZCER

Skylight (2005) *Facilitator's Manual, Travellers on the road to resilience*. Skylight



APPENDIX 1 Student Survey

Introduction and Consent

Thank you for taking part in this survey.

You have been asked to complete this survey because you completed the Travellers Programme in 2014 and we would like to learn more about how this programme is working.

The survey will take about 10-15 minutes to complete. If you don't want to answer any of the questions in the survey, you don't have to.

Your responses will only be viewed by the research team and will not be passed on to your school, your parents, or anyone else.

The researchers will study the survey responses and write a report on what has been said. Any comments from the surveys that are used in the report will be anonymous; this means that no one will know who said them.

For more information about the survey please contact Ria Schroder of The Collaborative Trust. ria@collaborative.org.nz or text 0272017152.

* 1. Having read the above information, I wish to complete the survey and consent to my responses being used in a report.

Yes

No, I do not wish to participate



Section 1 - Basic information

2. Name of school you were at in 2014

3. Name of class you were in in 2014? (e.g. 10MTU)

4. Are you?

- Male
 Female

5. Which ethnic group do you belong to?

Mark the space or spaces which apply to you.

- New Zealand European
 Maori
 Samoan
 Cook Islands Maori
 Tongan
 Niuean
 Chinese
 Indian
 Other. Please state: eg Dutch, Japanese, Tokelauan

6. Do you feel good about yourself most of the time?

- Yes
 No

7. How old were you in 2014 when you completed the Travellers Programme?



8. Do you feel like this was the right age for you to do Travellers?

- Yes – it felt like the right age
- No – I would have liked to have done Travellers when I was younger
- No – I would have liked to have done Travellers when I was older
- Not sure

If no, please explain why:



Section 2 - Life Events Scale

9. In the last 12 months have you experienced any of the following?

If Yes, show how much this experience affected you by using this scale:

Click one of **Very Little**, **Some**, or **Major**

If No, leave blank or click N/A meaning 'not applicable'

	Very Little	Some	Major	N/A
Moved from another country	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moved House	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Separation or divorce in the family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Death of someone close to you	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Illness of someone close to you	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Loss of an important friendship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Afraid of being hurt by someone	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Breaking up with boy/girlfriend	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Illness/injury with 2 weeks off school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not doing so well at school work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Money difficulties at home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being put down	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Experiencing racist comment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being suspended /stood down	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moved schools	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being bullied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)



Section 3 - Life Experience Scale

10. In this section we want you to focus on yourself and your experiences.

Please tick the appropriate box in each row.

	False	Somewhat false	Not sure	Somewhat true	True
I'm not very sure of myself	<input type="radio"/>				
I usually think of myself as a happy person	<input type="radio"/>				
I really don't like myself very much	<input type="radio"/>				
I'm the kind of person who has a lot of fun	<input type="radio"/>				
I worry too much about things that aren't important	<input type="radio"/>				
I often feel sad or unhappy	<input type="radio"/>				
I usually feel I'm the kind of person I want to be	<input type="radio"/>				

11. Please tick the appropriate box in each row.

	Never	Not often	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
I got into such a bad mood that I felt like just sitting around and doing nothing	<input type="radio"/>				
I feel lonely	<input type="radio"/>				
In recent years, I have felt more nervous or worried about things than I have needed to	<input type="radio"/>				
I feel nervous or afraid that things won't work out the way that I would like them to	<input type="radio"/>				
I feel very happy	<input type="radio"/>				



Section 4 - The Travellers programme

12. Overall, how helpful was the Travellers Programme for you?

1= 'not at all helpful'	2	3	4	5	6	7= 'very helpful'
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Would you recommend the Travellers Programme to other students like you?

1= 'not at all'	2	3	4	5	6	7= 'very much so'	Not sure
<input type="radio"/>							

14. Once you finished the Travellers Programme, did you feel that support was available if you needed it?

1= 'not at all'	2	3	4	5	6	7= 'very much so'	Not sure
<input type="radio"/>							

15. Once you finished the Travellers Programme, did you feel you had knowledge of strategies to navigate changes and challenges

1= 'not at all'	2	3	4	5	6	7= 'very much so'	Not sure
<input type="radio"/>							

16. Once you finished the Travellers Programme, did you feel confident to navigate changes and challenges?

1= 'not at all'	2	3	4	5	6	7= 'very much so'	Not sure
<input type="radio"/>							

17. Once you finished the Travellers Programme, did you feel that you knew how to access support if you needed it?

1= 'not at all'	2	3	4	5	6	7= 'very much so'	Not sure
<input type="radio"/>							



18. Once you finished the Travellers Programme, did you feel confident in seeking support if you needed it ?

1='not at all'	2	3	4	5	7='very much so'	6	Not sure
<input type="radio"/>							

19. How could the Travellers Programme be improved?

Please tick all that apply

- No changes needed
- More Travellers sessions in later years / when older with different topics (e.g., Years 10–13)
- Follow up to help me practise the skills I learnt (e.g., small groups, one on one)
- More practical activities
- Guest speakers (e.g., more young people coming to talk)
- Make the activities better for people my age
- More information about the purpose of the Travellers Programme
- More information about why I was in the Travellers Programme
- More time to get to know the students in the Travellers Programme
- More time for me to talk about my experiences
- Have a better leader (the person who runs the Travellers Programme)
- Involve my family more
- Provide information that suits a wider range of different young people (e.g., people from different cultures)
- Other (please specify)

20. Are there any other topics you would like the Travellers Programme to cover?



Section 5 - Changes since completing the Traveller's Programme

21. After completing the Travellers Programme how well do you feel it has helped you to navigate the following changes and challenges?

If these changes and challenges are not applicable (haven't happened to you) click 'N/A'

	Travellers helped a lot	Travellers helped a bit	Travellers did not help	Did not learn this in Travellers	N/A
(a) How to ask other young people for help	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(b) How to ask adults at school for help	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(c) How to ask family for help	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(d) How to understand how I feel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(e) How to tell people how I am feeling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(f) How to think positively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(g) How to manage my emotions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(h) How to talk about stuff in my life that is difficult	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(i) How to understand or think differently about stuff I have found difficult	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(j) How to feel differently about stuff I have found difficult	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(k) How to feel more confident	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(l) How to better manage my schoolwork	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(m) How to better manage my time (e.g., at school or work)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(n) How to solve personal and relationship problems better	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



	Travellers helped a lot	Travellers helped a bit	Travellers did not help	Did not learn this in Travellers	N/A
(o) How to be comfortable with myself (i.e., my identity)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(p) How to get on well with friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(q) Other skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(please specify)

22. Since doing Travellers, have you asked for any support from other people to help you get through a difficult time?
Please tick one

Yes, I have asked for more support

No, I have not needed to ask for support

No, I have not asked for more support even though I needed it

Not sure

23. If yes, has doing Travellers made asking for support easier?

	1='not at all'					7='very much so'	Not applicable, I haven't asked for support
Please indicate from 1='not at all' to 7='very much so'	<input type="radio"/>						

24. Is there anything else you would like us to know about the Traveller's Programme

Thank you for participating in this survey.

We would like to compare what you said in today's survey with what you said in the survey you did before you took part in Travellers . We are only doing this to see if things have changed for you over time. This is why we need to ask for your name.

It is important for you to know that only the evaluators from the Collaborative Trust (Mark, Sarah and Ria) will see your name and this will never be shared with anyone else or used in anything that we write.

You do not need to give your name if you don't want to.



APPENDIX 2 Facilitators survey

THE COLLABORATIVE TRUST
For Research & Training in Youth Health & Development



Introduction and Consent

Thank you for taking part in this survey. You have been asked to complete this survey because you have been trained to facilitate the Travellers Programme and we would like to learn more about how this programme works and the benefits it may or may not have for students who take part in it.

Please complete the survey by 15 April.

The survey will take about 5-10 minutes to complete. If you don't want to answer any of the questions in the survey, you don't have to.

Responses will be analysed by an independent evaluation team from The Collaborative Trust and any data that could identify you or your school will be anonymised.

For more information about the survey please contact Ria Schroder of The Collaborative Trust. ria@collaborative.org.nz or text 0272017152.

* 1. Having read the above information, I wish to complete the survey and consent to my responses being used in a report.

- Yes
- No, I do not wish to participate



Section 4 - The Travellers programme

1. What is the decile of your school?

2. How long have you been a Travellers facilitator? (years)

3. How long has the Travellers Programme been in your school?

4. From 1= 'very poorly' to 7= 'very well', how well does the Travellers Programme achieve its key short term objectives of students showing:

	1= 'very poorly'	2	3	4	5	6	7= 'very well'
increased access to appropriate youth-focused sharing and learning opportunities	<input type="radio"/>						
improved connectedness to school	<input type="radio"/>						
trusting relationships formed in the group	<input type="radio"/>						
improved help-seeking skills	<input type="radio"/>						
increased access to appropriate support	<input type="radio"/>						



5. From 1= 'very poorly' to 7= 'very well', how well does the Travellers Programme achieve its key medium term objectives of students showing:

	1= 'very poorly'	2	3	4	5	6	7= 'very well'
increased resiliency and ability to navigate changes and challenges	<input type="radio"/>						
improved overall well-being	<input type="radio"/>						
engaged, confident and motivated young people	<input type="radio"/>						
more positive relationships with peers	<input type="radio"/>						
more positive relationships with families	<input type="radio"/>						
more positive relationships with teachers	<input type="radio"/>						

6. From 1='very poorly' to 7='very well', how well do you think students retain the skills learnt during the Travellers Programme?

1='very poorly'	2	3	4	5	6	7='very well'
<input type="radio"/>						

Why?

7. From 1='very poorly' to 7='very well', to what extent has the Travellers Programme contributed to supporting:

	1= 'very poorly'	2	3	4	5	6	7= 'very well'
New Zealand European students	<input type="radio"/>						
Māori students	<input type="radio"/>						
Pacific students	<input type="radio"/>						
Asian Students	<input type="radio"/>						
Other ethnicities	<input type="radio"/>						

Any comments on the Travellers Programme in relation to its suitability to sub-populations?



8. From 1= 'only use some parts of the Travellers Programme' to 7= 'fully adhere to the Travellers Programme' how well do you follow the Travellers Programme protocol in your school?

1= 'only use some parts'	2	3	4	5	6	7= 'fully adhere'
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any comments on why?

9. How could the student experience of the Travellers Programme be improved?

10. How could the overall programme be improved?

11. From 1= 'not at all' to 7= 'very much so', do you feel that you receive enough support and training from Skylight to implement the Travellers Programme?

1= 'not at all'	2	3	4	5	6	7= 'very much so'
<input type="radio"/>						

12. Do you have any other comments, questions, or concerns about the Travellers Programme?

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your help is very valuable to us.