

## Cabinet Paper material

### Proactive release

Minister & portfolio	Hon Erica Stanford, Minister of Education
Name of package	The Minister of Education's priorities
Date considered	15 April 2024
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#### These documents have been proactively released:

##### **The Minister of Education's priorities**

Date considered: 15 April 2024

Author: Office of the Minister of Education

##### **Cabinet of the Social Outcomes Committee Minute: SOU-24-MIN-0026**

Date considered: 10 April 2024

Author: Committee Secretary

##### **Cabinet Minute: CAB-024-MIN-0131**

Date considered: 15 April 2024

Author: Secretary for the Cabinet

## In Confidence

Office of the Minister of Education

Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee

## The Minister of Education's priorities

### Proposal

- 1 This paper asks you to note my priorities for the Education Portfolio for the next three years.

### Relation to government priorities

- 2 Delivering better public services is a key priority for this Government. A transformational reform agenda in education is essential if we are to turn around decades of decline in achievement.
- 3 This proposal supports the coalition Government's commitments through *Teaching the Basics Brilliantly* for an hour each day on reading, writing and maths; minimum requirements for what schools must teach every year in reading, writing, maths and science; regular standardised assessment and clear reporting to parents and guardians; and better training and more tools to support teachers.
- 4 Through the coalition agreement we acknowledge our commitment to Charter schools to lift academic achievement. The priorities discussed in this paper relate to lifting achievement in state and state integrated schooling to ensure that we are on track to reach 80% of learners at curriculum at year 8 by 2030 and to return New Zealand to the top 10 in PISA results for reading, mathematics and science.

### Executive Summary

- 5 My vision is to put ambition and achievement back at the very heart of our education system. I aim for an education system that;
  - 5.1 **Inspires, engages and excites learners** to be aspirational about their future study and career pathways so that they can contribute to vibrant and successful communities and workplaces.
  - 5.2 **Values excellence and achievement** and strives to have a world-leading approach to achieving the best learner outcomes.
  - 5.3 **Develops well-rounded, critical thinkers** that have the knowledge and skills required to tackle the challenges and opportunities that the future holds.
  - 5.4 **Reduces the equity gap** that has become entrenched in our attendance and achievement statistics so that all learners have the opportunity to succeed and fulfil their potential.

- 6 Educational success contributes to personal, collective, and national success. Every child deserves the opportunity to succeed, achieve to the best of their ability and gain qualifications that will support them into further study and employment. I have an unrelenting focus on student achievement and will drive this through change that is purposeful, sequenced, and coherent.
- 7 My plan involves starting with developing a world-leading and knowledge-rich curriculum to provide structured and consistent approaches to teaching and learning for all students, wherever they live. Alongside this we will be consistently monitoring how well students are learning throughout their time in education, to provide data and information for parents and guardians, teachers and the Government. Our teachers must be trained and supported to deliver this new approach requiring effective teacher education at every stage of a teacher's career. For learners who fall behind or need extra help, we must provide the right options and supports to learn. Data and evidence will enable us to identify and invest in interventions, supports and services that work.
- 8 In its *Briefing to the Incoming Minister* the Ministry of Education identified that our education system does not currently deliver excellent or equitable outcomes.
- 9 New Zealand's average scores in international assessments like PISA are falling and achievement rates for the NCEA numeracy and literacy assessments show that too many children are failing to gain even the most basic numeracy and literacy skills. There is significant variability in how and when learner progress is assessed and gaps in the data we hold for decision-making.
- 10 We must ensure that children are achieving at school so that they can feel confident and remain engaged in their learning.
- 11 Our reform package is designed to reverse the impact of decades of decline in student achievement. We are working at pace to develop cohesive, system-level responses to the challenges faced in our education sector and to put scientific evidence and data at the forefront of decision-making. The reform package has six related and inter-dependent priority areas that will drive fundamental system change. I will embed the policies and practices required for a high-performing system that will help deliver a better public service, get kids back in school so that they are meeting or exceeding expectations with their curricular progress and gaining internationally comparable secondary qualifications.
- 12 These priority areas are:
  - 12.1 Establishing a knowledge-rich curriculum grounded in the science of learning
  - 12.2 Implementing evidence-based instruction in early literacy and mathematics
  - 12.3 Implementing consistent modes of monitoring student progression and achievement
  - 12.4 Developing the workforce of the future, including leadership development pathways
  - 12.5 Targeting effective learning support interventions for students with additional needs

12.6 Using high-performing data and evidence to inform decision-making.

- 13 Over this term of government my work programme will be focussed on delivering tangible and sustainable changes in line with these priorities. My aspiration is to see New Zealand back in the top ten countries in the OECD, delivering a world-leading education system that puts young New Zealanders on the global stage as confident, capable and innovative learners ready to take on the world.
- 14 In late April I will be bringing a paper to Strategy Committee outlining key elements of the work programme that will give effect to my priorities and drive the achievement of our target of getting 80% of children meeting or exceeding the expected curriculum levels by Year 8 in 2030.

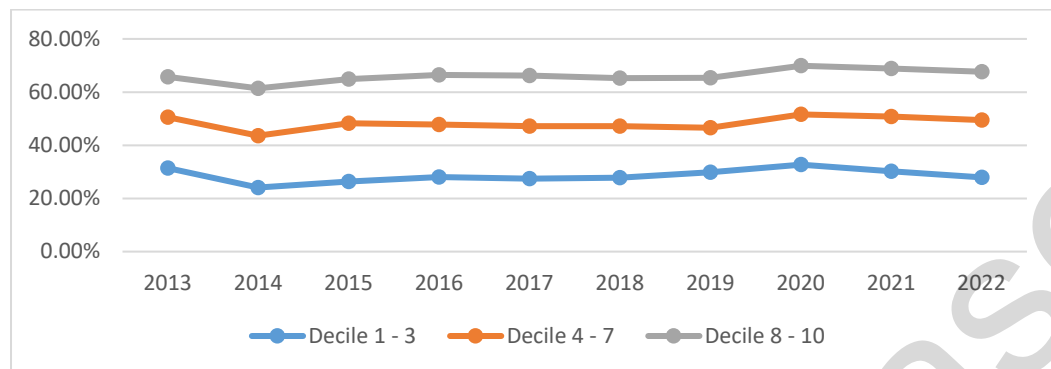
### **The challenges we face are significant**

- 15 Our devolved system results in variable learning experiences and outcomes and lacks the mechanisms needed for continuous improvement.
- 16 New Zealand has embedded inequality through low expectations and inconsistent practice and our learners have paid the price.
- 17 Student engagement and achievement data tells an unenviable story about the trajectory of system performance and learner outcomes.
- 18 PISA 2018 scores reveal that New Zealand has some of the largest gaps in achievement compared to other countries.<sup>1</sup> Well-resourced families compensate through parental support, tutoring and private schools whilst those from less financially privileged families, who need access to education the most to change their circumstances have no such opportunities. The “Matthew effect” takes hold and accumulated advantage widens socio-economic disparity.
- 19 This is directly evidenced in our NCEA results which show disparities in students attaining University Entrance by decile band. These disparities are also seen in attainment at NCEA in Levels 1 – 3.

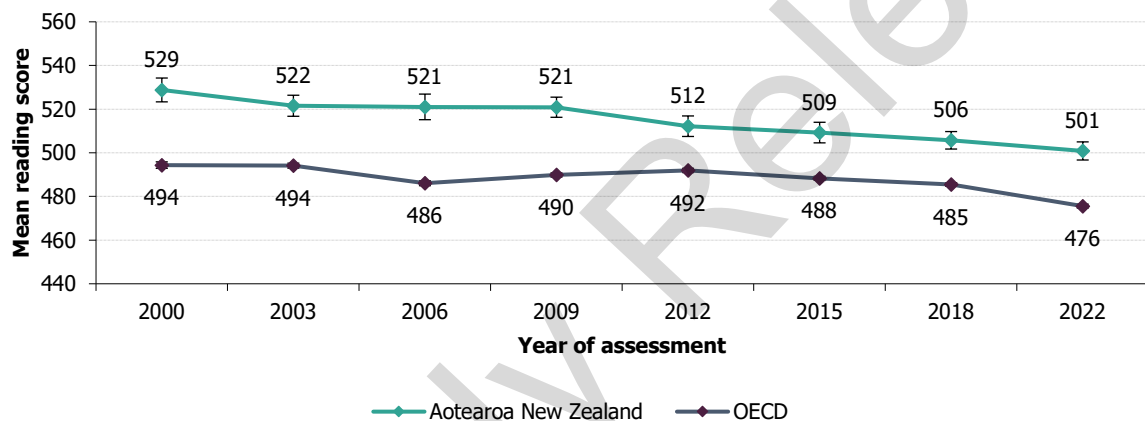
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<sup>1</sup> While the number of New Zealand children achieving at the highest level is above the OECD average, we have almost twice as many students represented in the lowest band of achievement.

**Figure 1: Enrolment-based Year 13 Students Attaining University Entrance by Decile Band**



**Figure 2: Trend in PISA achievement since 2000**



- 20 In the 2022 PISA results, our reading results stand 28 points lower than in 2000. In science, they are 26 points lower than in 2006. Mathematics is a lot worse. Our 2022 results for maths are down a whopping 15 points since 2018. Since testing began in 2003, we have fallen by 44 points.
- 21 National measures have found that most students are not achieving at an appropriate level for their age. National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA) has found that 35% of Year 8 students are meeting curriculum expectations for writing, 45% for maths and 56% for reading. In 2023, 36% of students (the majority of whom were in Year 10) did not achieve the NCEA co-requisite writing assessment set at curriculum Level 4-5, comparable to the curriculum expectations for a Year 8/9 student.<sup>2</sup> NZQA figures showed NCEA and University Entrance attainment rates peaked in 2020 for all NCEA levels and declined between 2021 – 2023.<sup>3</sup>

*Our curriculum is vague and incoherent*

- 22 The current high-level curriculum means schools and teachers need to develop their own curricula resulting in too much variation in what is taught across the country. The expectation is that teachers fill the void. “A systematic failure to teach all children the

<sup>2</sup> NCEA. (2023). NCEA Co-Requisite results <https://ncea.education.govt.nz/NCEA-corequisite-standards-Results>.

<sup>3</sup> The decrease in NCEA attainment rates are provisional and may be subject to change.

knowledge they need in order to understand what the next grade has to offer is *the* major source of avoidable injustice in our schools”<sup>4</sup>. The Curriculum Refresh to-date has been largely centred on broad phases without clarity of the knowledge and skills students need to succeed.

- 23 Concerns have been raised by the sector regarding the alignment of curriculum and assessment changes, particularly with regard to the NCEA Change Programme, and there is a heightened sense of a workload and change burden as discussed in my earlier cabinet paper. Curriculum needs to lead assessment rather than the other way around and I want to make sure we have a clear, knowledge rich curriculum in place, before landing on the best way to assess against it.

*Teachers are not well supported to give young people the foundational learning that they need.*

- 24 Initial Teacher Education (ITE) fails to sufficiently prepare graduates for the workforce. Teaching programmes don’t systematically cover or assess content knowledge, the science of learning or key teaching practices like structured literacy. Evidence from entry into ITE suggests that a majority of primary teacher candidates cannot answer mathematics questions appropriate for curriculum Level 4.<sup>5</sup>
- 25 The Ministry of Education administers a range of PLD services delivered through a mix of national and regional contracts which currently lack coherence in investment and direction. In addition, schools and kura, or Kāhui Ako, purchase and arrange PLD for their teachers through their own resources. This can result in inconsistency, variation, inefficiencies, and inequities in access.

*There is varied and inconsistent use of assessment*

- 26 To lift student achievement, regular and consistent assessment of progress is crucial to understand student progression. Currently, the Ministry of Education holds very limited information about student progression for lower primary, intermediate and lower secondary students. Schools make a majority of choices about the mode and frequency of assessment.
- 27 Prior to the newly introduced co-requisite assessments (Year 10/11 numeracy and literacy), we had no real national-level picture of student achievement other than through sampling like NMSSA.
- 28 Year 10 or 11 is far too late for the Ministry to learn, as per recent assessment data in June 2023, that more than 40% of students attempting the co-requisite were failing to meet the standard in writing and numeracy. We know the earlier we intervene the more success we have, and the fewer resources are required.
- 29 The National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA) provides us with some monitoring at Year 4 and Year 8 through sampling. The results clearly indicate that were we to provide more comprehensive assessment earlier, we would see that a trajectory of poor achievement already exists much earlier in many students’

<sup>4</sup> Hirsch, E. D. JR., *The Schools We Need and Why We Don’t Have Them*, Anchor Books, 1999. P33

<sup>5</sup> Royal Society Te Apārangi (2021). *Pāngarau Mathematics and Tauanga Statistics in Aotearoa New Zealand*

education journey. For example, the 2022 data indicated that while most year 4 students were meeting curriculum expectations (82%), as few as 42% of students met or exceeded the curriculum level for mathematics at Year 8.

- 30 A regular, standardised approach to assessment tools and frequency, alongside analysis of assessment data will provide insight into the challenges being faced by students in New Zealand and enable teachers to better provide for their learning needs.

*The system is failing to support the success of many students with particular learning needs*

- 31 The provision of Learning Support has been a key issue raised with me by parents and guardians, teachers and the education sector as a whole. The previous Minister, Jan Tinetti is on record as calling Learning Support “one of the most broken areas in education”.
- 32 It is clear that although in excess of \$1.3 Billion is invested in learning support, through innumerable programmes and services, that the service is disparate, dysfunctional, and failing to deliver the right service, to the right child at the right time. This is the opposite of my aspirations for a social investment approach grounded in early intervention and effective, targeted services and supports.
- 33 The “broken system” is the ultimate result of a system that lacks focus, fails to use evaluation to assess policy implementation, doesn’t use data effectively to understand need and ultimately fails to deliver the support required by our teachers and students.
- 34 Workforce shortages and availability of specialist supports is a barrier to service delivery and a reactive approach to needs-identification means that we often intervene too late to provide transformative change.

*There is a lack of data and evidence to drive decision-making*

- 35 Data and evidence underpin the analysis and insights needed to understand impact across the school systems and to inform future investment decisions. Currently, as described above, the lack of consistent and regular assessments particularly in the primary years means we lack data and evidence to inform decision making.
- 36 This means we have a limited ability to understand the effectiveness and comparable outcomes of different programmes, services and interventions funded by the government. This in turn reduces our ability to target funding to where it can most effectively drive sustainable change in people’s lives. This is a lost opportunity to use data to preventatively target students at risk of becoming NEET (not in education training or employment) or YARLE (youth at risk of limited employment).



*Student attendance rates are poor*

- 37 When students are not in the classroom regularly, they cannot achieve. By the age of 15, a student who has attended school an average of 90% of the time has already missed a year's worth of teaching and learning time. Data from Term 3, 2023 show that "regular" (90% or over) school attendance is at 45.9%. This figure is even lower for Māori learners at 33.7% and Pacific learners at 33.8%.<sup>6</sup>
- 38 Whilst acknowledging the presence of socio-economic barriers to attendance, we must also acknowledge the risk of failing to turn around this trend on the future wellbeing, productivity and success of a generation of young people. Cabinet has agreed to the Attendance Action Plan [SOU-24-MIN-0010 refers].

**My six priorities represent a significant shift in approach**

- 39 The six priority areas below represent a significant shift from a very loose and devolved current system – where school communities make varied decisions about how students are taught and assessed – to a more nationally consistent system. This will mean that all students will have the opportunity to be taught the same quality content knowledge and skills to succeed no matter where they live, and teachers can do what they do best by teaching the national curriculum in ways that best engage their learners and meet their individual needs.

**Priority one: Establishing a knowledge-rich curriculum grounded in the science of learning**

- 40 Key features of this work programme will include:
- 40.1 Acting on the advice of the Ministerial Advisory Group I have established to advise on the refreshed New Zealand Curriculum for Years 1 to 10
  - 40.2 Issuing a refreshed and detailed Numeracy and Literacy Curriculum for Years 1-10 by the end of 2024
  - 40.3 Undertaking a curriculum reform programme to refresh other Y1-10 subject areas
  - 40.4 Rephrase the NCEA Change Programme [CAB-23-MIN- 0098.01 refers] to develop the senior secondary Y11-13 curriculum before new assessments are rolled out to schools.
  - 40.5 Complete the redesign of the Ako Framework and Te Marautanga to provide quality learning in reo Māori language contexts
- 41 To raise achievement, it is vital that our learners are taught to read, write, and do mathematics using an intentional, evidence-based and structured approach, supported by a detailed curriculum.
- 42 The national curriculum for schooling is vague and impractical and leaves teachers and schools to do the work of deciding what to teach and how. It focuses too heavily

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/224715/Term-3-2023-Attendance-report.pdf](https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/224715/Term-3-2023-Attendance-report.pdf)



on vague competencies and child-led, project-based learning. Students are not set up with the knowledge they need to achieve throughout their schooling, and there are inconsistencies in what students are taught across schools.

- 43 My main priority is shifting to a curriculum that is knowledge rich and specific about the content that needs to be taught – and how. This will support all students to achieve by being explicit and intentional about the knowledge that they need to be taught as they progress through their education. The current curriculum competencies are still important, but a knowledge-rich curriculum will equip students with the foundational knowledge they need to apply competencies such as critical thinking.
- 44 The refreshed curriculum will provide clear and detailed guidance to teachers, school leaders and parents and guardians. It will set out the essential knowledge and skills that children should gain at each year level with consistency across the country. It will be grounded in evidence and be internationally comparable.
- 45 Curriculum resources that are clear, accessible and practical for use will remove unnecessary teacher workload. Teachers will instead be able to focus on what they do best, teaching the national curriculum in ways that are relevant and exciting for their learners.
- 46 I have already rephased the NCEA Change Programme to enable the development of the New Zealand Curriculum before assessments are developed [CAB-23-MIN-0098.01 refers] and I have appointed a Ministerial Advisory Group [CAB-23-MIN-0497 refers] which will advise me on curriculum content changes.
- 47 Getting the national curriculum right is foundational as it sets out what schools and kura need to deliver through their teaching and learning programmes. I am intentionally resetting the scope and objectives for the changes that are already underway to make sure that the national curriculum delivers for our priorities. These adjustments will be progressed at pace to maintain current timelines. I will update Cabinet shortly on next steps for this work, including the advice of the MAG for the English and Maths curriculum.

## **Priority two: Implementing evidence-based instruction in early literacy and mathematics**

- 48 Key features of this work programme will include:
  - 48.1 Taking decisions on the rollout of structured literacy for year 1-3 in 2024 and year 4-6 in 2025
  - 48.2 Refocusing Professional Learning and Development from Term 2 2024 to support the introduction of structured literacy and the science of learning
  - 48.3 Introducing a phonics check for students in their early years
  - 48.4 Planning the implementation of a structured approach to teaching maths, including pāngarau.

- 49 We know that literacy skills are important for success all areas of the curriculum. Without great foundational skills developed early on in primary school and kura, it is extremely challenging for students to catch up as they get older. Poor literacy results in primary school and kura are mirrored in NCEA results.
- 50 The education system is not delivering equitable achievement rates across New Zealand. I want all students in New Zealand state schools and kura to have access to literacy and mathematics that is taught in a way which demonstrates effective and evidence-based practice.
- 51 International research consistently shows that a whole language approach is not effective for some learners, partly because it encourages guessing words based on pictures or other cues<sup>7</sup> and promotes poor reading habits.<sup>8</sup> There is a wealth of evidence from schools and kura in New Zealand who have implemented a structured literacy approach, showing that the approach is lifting achievement, closing the equity gap, and reducing the need for reading and pānui interventions (extra learning support).
- 52 However, despite clear evidence for a structured literacy approach schools and kura have not consistently adopted this practice. Through survey data collected by the Ministry of Education over recent weeks, we are able to estimate that around half of our primary and intermediate schools and kura are still not teaching reading using a Structured Literacy approach.
- 53 Many students are not being set up with the foundational mathematical skills they need to achieve later on. As mentioned earlier, many teachers are not confident in teaching mathematics.<sup>9</sup>
- 54 I have also brought to you for consideration my plan to implement a structured approach to literacy in schools and kura to ensure that all children receive effective reading and pānui instruction. From term 2, 2024 existing professional learning and Development funding will be repurposed to provide a focussed roll out of training and structured literacy approaches will be a requirement in all state schools and kura from term 1, 2025.
- 55 To support this, I plan to introduce a mandatory requirement for state schools and kura to use short phonics checks, this will help teachers assess how well a child can read words by sounding out letters and provide information to parents and guardians on their child's progress. I will return to Cabinet later in the year to seek agreement to regulatory changes that are necessary to implement a mandatory phonics check requirement for teachers across New Zealand. I will continue to work with officials to plan a structured approach to teaching mathematics.

<sup>7</sup> In comparison to the whole-language approach, structured literacy approaches develop students' skills to enable them to break down words and sound out letters using sounds that they commit to memory.

<sup>8</sup> Hanford, E. (2019). At a Loss for Words. Retrieved from: <https://www.apmreports.org/episode/2019/08/22/whats-wrong-how-schools-teach-reading>

<sup>9</sup> Evidence from entry into initial teacher education suggests that a majority of primary teacher candidates cannot answer mathematics questions appropriate for curriculum Level 4. Royal Society Te Apārangi (2021). *Pāngarau Mathematics and Tauanga Statistics in Aotearoa New Zealand*

### Priority three: Implementing consistent modes of monitoring student progression and achievement

- 56 Key features of this work programme will include:
- 56.1 Building the habit of regular assessment through the introduction of twice-yearly assessment for Y3-8 students.
  - 56.2 Taking decisions about the tool or tools that can be used to implement more consistent modes of assessment
  - 56.3 Improving the quality of regular reporting to parents and guardians
  - 56.4 Considering how achievement data can streamline access to Learning Support resource for teachers and students
  - 56.5 Extending system-level monitoring of student progress and achievement of those learning through the New Zealand Curriculum.
- 57 Once we have a curriculum that is knowledge rich and specific about the content that needs to be taught, we can focus on what progress and achievement should look like against that curriculum. To reach our goal of 80% of children meeting or exceeding the expected curriculum levels by Year 8 in 2030 and being prepared to excel in their secondary schooling journey, assessment data is a crucial tool.
- 58 The use of assessment tools and how progress and achievement is reported is inconsistent across schools. As a result, some teachers, students and parents and guardians are not receiving information in a way that is timely, consistent and clear about whether students are making progress. This means that there is variability in the information schools are using to improve their teaching and learning programmes and we do not have a clear picture of progress of the whole system.
- 59 I plan to introduce detailed requirements for assessment and reporting in primary and intermediate schools. This will provide consistent, quality, and regular information for teachers, students and parents and guardians. Assessment data will enable teachers to better provide for their students' needs, schools to identify school-wide challenges, and enable the government to better target supports and investments.
- 60 I am rephasing the NCEA Change Programme to enable the development of the New Zealand Curriculum before assessments are developed [CAB-23-MIN-0098.01 refers]. Next, I intend to introduce a common reporting approach alongside the updated English, mathematics and statistics, te reo Māori and pāngarau curriculum areas. I am working with officials on options for the approach to standardised assessment. I will provide an update to Cabinet by June 2024.
- 61 There is anxiety in the sector about what the purposes to which centrally collected assessment data may be put. I want to be abundantly clear that assessment data is a crucial tool for decision-making in every layer of our education system. For example;

- 61.1 **For teachers and students:** to inform the next-steps in learning, monitor individual progression and achievement and keep parents, guardians and whānau informed about their children's progress and explore what support and/or extension might be required to keep children engaged and working towards their potential.
- 61.2 **For school leaders:** to understand trends and patterns within their school so that targeted PLD, resourcing and staffing can support the best outcomes for learners.
- 61.3 **For the Ministry of Education:** to monitor and evaluate the impact of achievement trends, policy settings and inform future resourcing and decision-making that will be required to lift student achievement and engagement.

#### **Priority four: Developing the workforce of the future, including leadership development pathways**

- 62 Key features of this work programme will include:
  - 62.1 Taking action to strengthen Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and in-service teacher training, including refocusing Professional Learning and Development for teachers on numeracy, literacy and assessment
  - 62.2 Collaborating with peak bodies and unions on a program of work to create a pipeline of future Principals by proactively identify aspiring leaders and investing early to support their aspirations and future career pathway, as well as investing in supporting in-service Principals with leadership PLD.
  - 62.3 Growing our teaching workforce using targeted overseas teacher recruitment activities, delivering a domestic recruitment campaign, and supporting multiple pathways into the education workforce, with a specific focus on in-class training
- 63 If we want to see a positive shift in student achievement, we must invest in our workforce to deliver this new approach. Teacher education needs to be effective at every stage of a teacher's career, from selection and Initial Teacher Education (ITE) through beginning teachers, experienced teachers, and experts, leaders, and principals.
- 64 There are limited requirements on ITE providers to include specific content-knowledge or any standardised approaches to best teaching practice, such as structured approach to literacy teaching. As a result, new teachers are starting their careers without the essential knowledge and skills required to deliver the curriculum effectively.
- 65 In addition, many teachers enter the workforce without training to support learners with particular learning needs. The 2016 Education and Science Select Committee Inquiry into the identification and support for students with the significant challenges of dyslexia, dyspraxia and autism spectrum disorders recommended that initial and ongoing teacher education be strengthened to respond to these needs. I

will work with the Ministry and the Teaching Council to check that the changes made in response to this Inquiry are achieving the workforce we need.

- 66 There are also significant teacher supply challenges. In particular, Ministry of Education modelling shows an insufficient secondary school teacher supply to meet future requirements<sup>10</sup> and the supply of adequately trained teachers for Kaupapa Māori and Māori medium education is not keeping pace with demand<sup>11</sup>.
- 67 Effective schools need effective leaders. Good principals make a positive impact on educational delivery, teacher development, the quality of teaching and learning outcomes. Clear pathways and opportunities to develop contributes to the retention of good leaders, while also preparing the next generation of leaders. Principal retention is on average 92% for the 2023 calendar year. While it's been around this level for several years, we know we have a number of acting principals and principals reporting undue pressure in their role.
- 68 There is no quick fix. In the short-term, whilst we work to incentivise, train and retain New Zealand teachers, overseas teachers and learning support specialists will play a key role in addressing immediate supply challenges. You will note from my immigration priorities, initial work is already underway to expediate secondary teachers onto the immediate pathway to residence [CAB-24-MIN-0089 refers]. Making sure we have an effective specialist workforce, working alongside teachers and school leaders is central to priority four, below.
- 69 In the medium-to-long term, I will focus on investing in aspiring leaders with specific support and development for aspiring principals, targeted recruitment initiatives both domestically and overseas including consideration of current immigration settings and incentivisation measures.

#### **Priority five: Targeting effective learning support interventions for students with additional needs**

- 70 Key features of this work programme will include:
- 70.1 Identifying the quantum of spending on Learning Support and focussing it on a smaller number of high-quality interventions, programmes and supports.
  - 70.2 Operational changes to make the system easier for users and to improve data collection
  - 70.3 Optimising the learning support workforce
  - 70.4 Building teacher capability to meet diverse learning needs.

<sup>10</sup>Ministry of Education projects of an undersupply of 227 teachers in 2024, with the shortage increasing to 546 in 2025 and to 679 in 2026 Ministry of Education (2023) Teacher Demand and Supply Planning Projection

<sup>11</sup> Kaupapa Māori and Māori Medium education student enrolments have increased by 45.8% since 2014. The high percentage (26%) of Limited Authority to Teach holders in Kaupapa Māori and Māori medium kura, compared to their relatively small proportion in the overall school system (5.3% of schools serving 3.1% of students), indicates the challenge these schools face finding fully qualified teachers (there is a limited pool of teachers who have both the teaching credentials and the cultural-linguistic skills needed for these roles).

- 71 A significant part of our education system is dedicated to supporting students (and their families) with learning support needs. These learners require a range of supports for their physical, neurodiverse or behavioural differences.
- 72 There have been several recent reviews and inquiries related to education for children and young people with learning support needs in New Zealand.<sup>12</sup> These reviews have found that, although hundreds of millions of dollars are invested across a large number of programmes and services, many children and young people with learning support needs are not having their needs adequately met within local schools and early learning services.
- 73 Only half of the parents, guardians and whānau surveyed by the Education Review Office (ERO) as part of their evaluation of education for disabled learners thought that their child was progressing well as a learner.<sup>13</sup> As a group, disabled learners are more than twice as likely to attain no qualification at school.<sup>14</sup>
- 74 My focus to strengthen our curriculum and increase the use of evidence-based teaching practice (such as structured approaches to literacy and social and emotional learning programmes) should reduce the number of students who need additional support. Strengthened assessment of progress and achievement will enable us to identify those who need support sooner.
- 75 However, the more I explore this learning support system, the more I realise the problems are highly complex and systemic, and there is no quick fix. Whilst immediate operational changes can be made to improve communications and interactions with parents and guardians, I will need to explore options and engage the help of experts, including potentially a Taskforce who can advise me on evidence-based approaches to policy and resource settings.
- 76 It is a priority for me to see a Learning Support system that is responsive to the needs of children and their families and is built on evidence and targeted investment. Parents and guardians must be able to determine what will work best for their children. For some families, this will be through attending their local school and for others, attending a specialist setting. I know local schools can improve but this will require teachers to be upskilled and supported as well as an effective specialist workforce. Supports for families need to be streamlined, more transparent and accessible.
- 77 I intend to work closely with the sector to give more choice and flexibility to schools to deliver what students need, without going through layers of bureaucracy and waitlists. In the immediate term I will focus on digitising application processes to reduce unnecessary wait times.

<sup>12</sup> These include the Highest Needs Review, Māori Affairs Select Committee inquiry into learning support for ākonga Māori, and evaluations by the Education Review Office (ERO) of Alternative Education and education for disabled learners in early learning and schooling.

<sup>13</sup> Education Review Office, *Thriving at school? Education for disabled learners in schools* (2022).

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Education, *He Whakaaro: The educational experiences of disabled learners* (2020).



**Priority six: Using high-performing data and evidence to inform decision-making**

- 78 Key features of this work programme will include:
- 78.1 Developing a strategic evaluation action plan, including using the Equity Index and Integrated Data Infrastructure to coordinate work on measurement, impact and analysis of performance and to identify whether programmes are well targeted and delivering the outcomes we expect
  - 78.2 Embedding reporting requirements into service provider contracts to understand performance and enable the provision of targeted services and interventions.
  - 78.3 Collaborating with social sector Ministers and identifying opportunities to use education data to reduce the number of students who become NEET.
- 79 Across all of my priorities the better use of data and evidence will enable us to identify and invest in interventions, supports and services that work for the students who need them, and at the right time.
- 80 We do not currently have the data we need to understand what interventions are most effective at driving the best results for students and their families. To create the shift required to improve attendance and lift achievement, we must understand need, and target services and supports using evidence and evaluation. We need a system that is continuously learning and improving, and this cannot be done without better data, evaluation and assessment.
- 81 Assessing student progress earlier and more consistently will support teachers, students, and parents and guardians to better understand and respond to learning needs. It will enable the government to better target supports and investments and know how we are tracking at a national level.
- 82 I have asked officials to improve the monitoring and evaluation of services and interventions across the education system, so that we can in turn understand what works, or who needs what, and target resources more effectively.

**The Associate Minister of Education's responsibilities support my priorities**

- 83 I have delegated the following to the Associate Minister of Education:
- 83.1 Functions and responsibilities of the Education portfolio relating to school choice including Charter schools
  - 83.2 Functions and responsibilities of the Education portfolio relating to school attendance
  - 83.3 Functions and responsibilities of the Education portfolio relating to early childhood education (ECE).
- 84 The Associate Minister of Education will keep Cabinet updated on his priorities and programmes of work for these delegations.



### **Cost-of-living Implications**

- 85 There are no cost-of-living implications associated with this work programme.

### **Financial Implications**

- 86 The financial implications of this work programme will be subject to future Budget decisions consistent with the Government's Budget Strategy and ongoing fiscal sustainability programme.

### **Legislative Implications**

- 87 There are no legislative implications associated with this paper. Future government decisions on this issue may give rise to legislative change proposals.

### **Population Implications**

- 88 New Zealand has long-standing excellence and equity challenges to deliver education success for Māori, Pacific peoples, and those who are disabled, have learning difficulties or support needs, or are from low socio-economic backgrounds.
- 89 Education is a key protective factor for young people at risk of poor future social and economic outcomes. I expect that the actions I have indicated in this paper will improve outcomes for all learners including most at risk of not experiencing success.
- 90 My priority focus to target effective learning support interventions will improve outcomes for disabled learners and those that require learning support.

### **Human Rights**

- 91 This proposal is consistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act

### **Use of External Resources**

- 92 External resources have not been used in the development of the proposals in this paper. Any use of external resource for future work, including any external advisory groups, will be consistent with the Governments ongoing fiscal sustainability programme.

### **Consultation**

- 93 The following agencies have been consulted:

The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Ministry of Health, Ministry for Pacific Peoples, Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, Oranga Tamariki- Ministry for Children, Social Wellbeing Agency, The Treasury, and Whaikaha Ministry for Disabled Peoples.

## Proactive Release

- 94 The Minister of Education intends to release the Cabinet paper proactively within 30 business days of decisions being informed by Cabinet.

## Recommendations

The Minister for Education recommends that the Committee:

- 1 note that the school system is not delivering equitable and excellent outcomes for all learners
- 2 note that I will be intentionally resetting the scope and objectives for the changes that are already underway to make sure that the national curriculum delivers for our priorities and I will update Cabinet shortly on next steps for this work
- 3 note that I have informed the Prime Minister of my priorities for the education portfolio:
  - 3.1 Establishing a knowledge-rich curriculum grounded in the science of learning
  - 3.2 Implementing evidence-based instruction in early literacy and mathematics
  - 3.3 Implementing consistent modes of monitoring student progression and achievement
  - 3.4 Developing the workforce of the future, including leadership development pathways
  - 3.5 Targeting effective learning support interventions for students with additional needs
  - 3.6 Using high-performing data and evidence to inform decision-making
- 4 invite the Minister of Education to report to Cabinet on the progress of actions that give effect to their priorities by April 2025.

Hon Erica Stanford

Minister for Education



# Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee

## Minute of Decision

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### The Minister of Education's Priorities

**Portfolio**                      **Education**

On 10 April 2024, the Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee:

- 1        **noted** that the school system is not delivering equitable and excellent outcomes for all learners;
- 2        **noted** that the Minister of Education (the Minister) will be intentionally resetting the scope and objectives for the changes that are already underway to make sure that the national curriculum delivers for our priorities and she will update Cabinet shortly on next steps for this work;
- 3        **noted** that the Minister has informed the Prime Minister of her priorities for the education portfolio:
  - 3.1        establishing a knowledge-rich curriculum grounded in the science of learning;
  - 3.2        implementing evidence-based instruction in early literacy and mathematics;
  - 3.3        implementing consistent modes of monitoring student progression and achievement;
  - 3.4        developing the workforce of the future, including leadership development pathways;
  - 3.5        targeting effective learning support interventions for students with additional needs;
  - 3.6        using high-performing data and evidence to inform decision-making;
- 4        **invited** the Minister to report back to SOU by April 2025 on the progress of actions that give effect to the above priorities.

Rebecca Davies  
Committee Secretary

**Attendance: see over**

**Present:**

Rt Hon Christopher Luxon  
Hon David Seymour  
Hon Dr Shane Reti  
Hon Erica Stanford  
Hon Paul Goldsmith  
Hon Louise Upston (Chair)  
Hon Mark Mitchell  
Hon Tama Potaka  
Hon Matt Doocey  
Hon Melissa Lee  
Hon Nicole McKee  
Hon Casey Costello  
Hon Penny Simmonds  
Hon Chris Penk  
Hon Karen Chhour

**Officials present from:**

Office of the Prime Minister  
Officials Committee for SOU

Proactively Released



# Cabinet

## Minute of Decision

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### Report of the Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee: Period Ended 12 April 2024

On 15 April 2024, Cabinet made the following decisions on the work of the Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee for the period ended 12 April 2024:

Out of scope		
SOU-24-MIN-0026	<b>The Minister of Education's Priorities</b> Portfolio: Education	CONFIRMED
Out of scope		

Rachel Hayward  
Secretary of the Cabinet