

Cabinet Paper material

Proactive release

Minister & portfolio	Hon Erica Stanford, Minister of Education
Name of package	A Literacy Guarantee for children learning to read in state schools or kura
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A Literacy Guarantee for children learning to read in state schools or kura

Date considered: 15 April 2024

Author: Office of the Minister of Education

Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee Minute: SOU-24-MIN-0023

Date considered: 10 April 2024

Author: Committee Secretary

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Date considered: 15 April 2024

Author: Secretary of the Cabinet

Material redacted

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<http://legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1982/0156/latest/DLM64785.html>

In Confidence

Office of the Minister of Education

Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee

A Literacy Guarantee for children learning to read in state schools or kura

Proposal

- 1 This paper outlines the plan to implement a structured approach to literacy (reading, writing, pānui and tuhituhi) in schools and kura, as part of the Literacy Guarantee, and seeks agreement to proposals necessary to progress the next steps.

Relation to government priorities

- 2 This proposal implements the coalition Government commitments to focus on Teaching the Basics Brilliantly through emphasising reading, writing, pānui, tuhituhi and maths and pāngarau and to introduce structured approaches to literacy through the “Literacy Guarantee” policy.
- 3 The proposal supports our goal to have 80% of year 8 students at curriculum level in reading writing, pānui and tuhituhi by 2030 and our Quarter 2 Target of taking decisions on the rollout of structured literacy approaches for Year 0-3 students, including a phonics check.
- 4 A new Cabinet Strategy Committee is being established. I will be providing that committee with details of key implementation milestones of the Literacy Guarantee as part of the strategy to achieve our overall education targets.

Executive Summary

- 5 All students should acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and capabilities to thrive in the workforce, society, and their communities. I have significant concerns about New Zealand children missing out on future opportunities due to declining literacy achievement.
- 6 Reading achievement in New Zealand has been in decline for many decades, in part due to the adherence to practices that teach students the habits of poor readers, the effects of which disproportionately fall on our lower socio-economic students, who fall further and further behind.
- 7 40 years of cognitive research sits behind structured literacy, including substantial research undertaken by the Child Wellbeing Research Institute at

the University of Canterbury focused on the introduction of structured literacy approaches through the Better Start Literacy Approach in New Zealand.

- 8 The Better Start Literacy Approach has seen an 87 to 96% success rate of students reaching the expected level for their year group.¹
- 9 A structured literacy approach teaches in an explicit and systematic way that aligns with the science of how our brains learn best. It starts with decoding words using the smallest units of sound (phonemes) and building up from there.
- 10 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).
- 11 I am making deliberate changes to our education system to improve student achievement and to establish consistency across the country. Structured literacy approaches will be a requirement in all state schools and kura from Term 1, 2025 to ensure that all children receive effective reading and pānui instruction.
- 12 From Term 2 2024 elements of existing Professional Learning and Development (PLD) funding will be repurposed to provide a focussed roll out of training on structured literacy approaches in New Zealand primary schools and kura. From Term 3 2024, schools will be able to work with a range of accredited providers, with the aim of training as many of the remaining 10,500 Year 0-3 teachers who have not had Structured Literacy PLD as possible before the end of the year.
- 13 Performance reporting requirements will be introduced for all PLD providers to ensure the best possible service provision for schools and kura, and a clear focus on building teacher capability to help lift student achievement.
- 14 PLD will be augmented by the provision of decodable phonics books and other resources to ensure a comprehensive implementation package. 9(2)(f)(iv)

- 15 Some students may still require additional support when learning to read, although the evidence shows that this number is greatly reduced when using a structured approach. Targeted and tailored² structured literacy support for

¹ University of Canterbury (2023). The Better Start Literacy Approach (Briefing from the November 2023 Report to the Ministry of Education). Retrieved from: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d5e600b9630870001cf8cb9/t/656fce65adfd126d4fdac65/1701826150469/Data+Update+November+2023.pdf>

² Also referred to as Tier 2 (targeted) and 3 (tailored) supports. Learners can receive multiple levels of support at any time from Te Matua (Universal), which strengthens inclusive environments, cultures and practices, Te Kāhui (Targeted), which offers focused approaches to enhance participation, learning and wellbeing, and Te Arotahi (Tailored), which provides more specific supports for unique needs and contexts. See <https://hepikorua.education.govt.nz/how-we-work/flexible-tailored-model-of-support/> for more information.

students with additional needs will be fully rolled-out in primary schools using redirected funds from the Reading Recovery programme.

- 16 It is essential that New Zealand schools and kura take a cohesive approach to learning to read that includes both the classroom and tiered intervention for students who require additional support. The intentional replacement of Reading Recovery with targeted and tailored supports that use a structured literacy approach is to ensure that all staff, including support and specialist staff, are able to use the same approach when supporting small group and individual students. This will maximise the opportunity to reinforce and deepen classroom learning for additional investment in support.
- 17 A structured approach to literacy is a foundational tool to unlock the joy of reading and pānui and it is my expectation that schools and kura, and teachers will continue to plan and implement engaging, creative and exciting, cross-curricula literacy programmes based on this approach.
- 18 The efficacy of policy roll out will be supported by ongoing evaluation of implementation and efficacy by the Education Review Office, ^{9(2)(f)(iv)} [REDACTED], and the future implementation of an expanded national study to measure progress in reading, writing, pānui and tuhituhi.
- 19 This policy is based on key components of the Literacy Guarantee which are:
 - 19.1 Teaching every child to read using structured literacy;
 - 19.2 Teachers receive training on the structured literacy approach and resources such as decodable books;
 - 19.3 Introducing phonics checks for students;
 - 19.4 Providing structured literacy approach interventions for students who need extra support.

The case for change

- 20 Our education system faces several challenges. There is huge variation in the curriculum taught across schools and kura, and widespread methods of teaching reading and pānui being used that do not work for the majority of students. Initial teacher education and professional learning and development has not provided teachers with the support necessary to provide students with foundational learning.
- 21 As a result, the data consistently show a decline in students literacy rates, both in international and local assessment data sets. As students progress through school and kura, more of them are falling behind in their performance. Literacy skills unlock students' ability to access other curricula areas, and without these skills, students can struggle to do well in other subjects or reach their full potential.

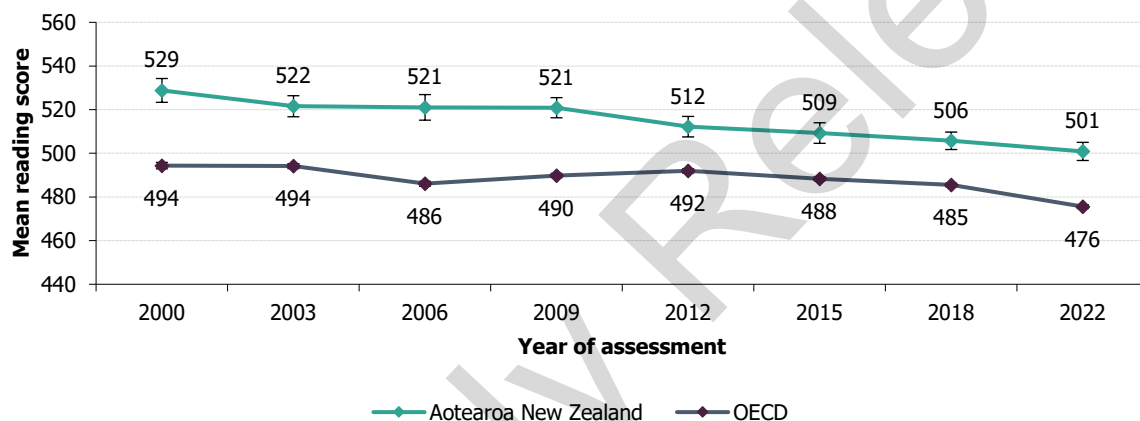
PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study)

- 22 2020 PIRLS data shows that nearly 30% of Year 5 students were considered to have low reading and pānui achievement, New Zealand had a greater number of lower-performing students than the international average.³

PISA (Program for International Student Assessment)

- 23 According to the 2018 PISA scores⁴, New Zealand had significant achievement gaps compared to other countries⁵. Analysis of the 2022 PISA reading results showed that New Zealand students were achieving 28 points lower than in 2000, which is estimated to be equivalent to a decline of almost a full year of schooling⁶.

Figure 1: Trend in PISA achievement since 2000



- 24 Local studies also show that many students are not meeting the expected level of achievement for their age. Around 40% of students at both Year 4 and Year 8 fail to meet expectations for reading and nearly two-thirds of Year 8 students did not meet expectations in writing⁷.
- 25 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.⁸

³ This is the intermediate benchmark, with 29% in NZ compared with the international median of 25%. 10% of NZ students did not reach the low benchmark compared with 6% for the international median.

https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/221037/PIRLS-2021-Reading-literacy-Year-5.pdf

⁴ OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment

⁵ While the number of New Zealand students achieving at the highest level is above the OECD average, we have almost twice as many students represented in the lowest band of achievement.

⁶ Pisa results: Michael Johnston on why New Zealand's education system is failing | The New Zealand Initiative (nzinitiative.org.nz).

⁷ National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (2019). *English-Key Findings*. Retrieved from: https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/203581/NMSSA-2019-English-Key-Findings.pdf

⁸ NCEA. (2023). NCEA Co-Requisite results <https://ncea.education.govt.nz/NCEA-corequisite-standards-Results>.

Current practice delivers inequitable results

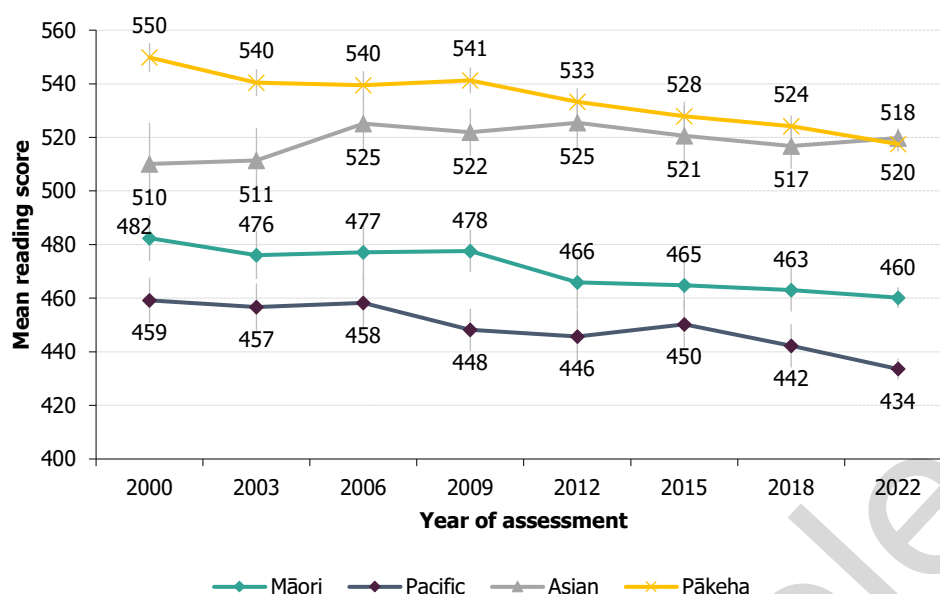
- 26 The education system is not delivering equitable achievement rates across New Zealand. Students with poor reading skills from higher socio-economic homes are more likely to receive assistance from parents and tutoring to help them develop their reading skills. For those students in lower socio-economic homes there is less chance that their poor reading will be corrected using an evidence-based approach. These are the students who need a great education to change their circumstances and who are most affected by the failure to teach them good literacy skills, further entrenching cycles of poverty.
- 27 For example, Māori students, who are over-represented in lower socio-economic statistics, have lower scores in reading and writing compared to other students, creating a significant achievement gap that widens as students' progress through their education and the Matthew Effect takes hold.⁹
- 28 National Monitoring (NMSSA) data shows that in writing Māori students score 5 scale points lower in Year 4 than other students, and 10 scale points lower in Year 8. This indicates a 1-to-1.5-year gap in writing between Māori and non-Māori students which grows as students' progress through their education.¹⁰
- 29 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.
- 30 For the NCEA co-requisite, which is set at the curriculum level expected of Year 8/9 students, results for participating Māori students remain low.¹¹ In 2022, just over half of participating Māori students achieved the reading corequisite and only one-third achieved the writing corequisite. Of all the New Zealand students who sat the NCEA corequisites in 2022, two-thirds achieved the reading corequisite and half achieved the writing corequisite. Fewer than half of all students who sat the Te reo matatini unit standard (62 students) achieved it – nearly all of these students were Māori.
- 31 PISA shows the difference among ethnic groupings have persisted since 2000, with only small shifts for Māori and Pacific Students.¹²

⁹ The Matthew Effect refers to the phenomenon where initial advantages accumulate while initial disadvantage leads to further disadvantage, creating widening gaps between those who have more and those who have less. <https://books.google.co.nz/books?hl=en&lr=&id=TCiCwj1UF14C&oi=fnd&pg=PP5&dq=matthew+effect&ots=qvdNkEtpHp&sig=op9eluiOHM1v6P7XWw62k7Jd0c#v=onepage&q=matthew%20effect&f=false>

¹⁰ 7 score points is about a year of progress. See NMSSA (2019). *English-Key Findings*. Retrieved from: https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/203581/NMSSA-2019-English-Key-Findings.pdf

¹¹ Evaluation Associates (2023). 2022 NCEA Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau | Literacy and Numeracy Pilot Evaluation Retrieved from: https://ncea-live-3-storagestack-53q-assetstorages3bucket-2o21xte0r81u.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2023-03/NCEA%20Te%20Reo%20Matatini%20me%20te%20P%20C4%81ngarau_Literacy%20Numeracy%20Pilot%20Evaluation-Report%20Two_March%202023.pdf?VersionId=HhHaDJzIselkwvLnzn89JqqkKIJhbRv

¹² See for example Ranson, C. (2022). PISA 2022 Ākonga Māori Summary. Retrieved from: https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/224604/PISA-2022-Akonga-Maori-Summary.pdf

Figure 2: Trend in PISA achievement by ethnicity¹³

Declining literacy rates contribute to poor future social, health and economic outcomes for the future of New Zealand

- 32 The declining literacy rates have negative effects on New Zealand's future, shaping social, health and economic outcomes. Being literate leads to better job opportunities, higher pay, better health, and lower incarceration rates.¹⁴ Currently, 60% of prisoners in New Zealand have low literacy levels.¹⁵ Investing in literacy skills early in life can have significant impact on a child's future and reduce Crown costs. Literacy is not just an educational issue. It is a social issue, and it is an economic issue.

Evidence for change

- 33 Many countries have followed the evidence of the Science of Learning and adopted a structured literacy approach to reading which systematically and explicitly teaches the foundational literacy skills. It emphasises systematically learning letters, letter combinations, and new words using sound¹⁶, along with explicitly teaching vocabulary, comprehension, and writing.¹⁷ New Zealand schools and kura over recent years have begun to adopt structured literacy

¹³ See for example Ranson, C. (2022). PISA 2022: Pacific Learners Summary. Retrieved from: [PISA-2022-Pacific-Learners-Summary.pdf](https://educationcounts.govt.nz/pisa-2022-pacific-learners-summary.pdf) (educationcounts.govt.nz). In PISA, students could identify with as many ethnicities as they wished. This means that the results for each grouping cannot be directly compared because an individual student can, and does, 'count' in more than one grouping.

¹⁴ Hood, N. (2022). The state of literacy; how bad are things and why does it matter? Retrieved from: <https://theeducationhub.org.nz/the-state-of-literacy-how-bad-are-things-and-why-does-it-matter/#:~:text=Being%20literate%20is%20also%20connected,it%20is%20an%20economic%20issue.>

¹⁵ Banks, N. (2017). Investing in prison education: New approaches to improving educational outcomes and reducing re-offending. Retrieved from: https://www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/research/journal/volume_5_issue_1_july_2017/investing_in_prison_education_new_approaches_to_improving_educational_outcomes_and_reducing_re-offending

¹⁶ Which sound goes with which letter as well as which letter goes with which sound – both directions.

¹⁷ International Dyslexia Association (2019). Structured Literacy: An Introductory Guide. <https://app.box.com/s/mvuvhel6qaj8tghvu1n175i0ndnlp0yz>

approaches through the Better Start Literacy Approach and Ready to Read phonics books. However, anecdotally we know that New Zealand teachers are still not consistently using a structured literacy approach and intervention supports are often adopting a different method, using whole language or balanced literacy approaches.¹⁸

- 34 Research undertaken by the Child Wellbeing Research Institute at the University of Canterbury found that investment in the Better Start Literacy Approach at scale had the potential to deliver a social-return-on-investment of up to \$38.20 for every dollar invested training teachers and delivering tiered in-class support using a structured literacy approach. This measure includes avoiding future costs related to addiction, offending and risky behaviour, as well as the positive value generated by improved mental health, employment and academic achievement. By setting students up to unlock future success, applying structured literacy approaches in schools and kura reduces the likelihood of social harm and government dependence across a student's lifetime.
- 35 In New Zealand, teaching using the Better Start Literacy Approach significantly improves students' reading and writing skills within 10 weeks. After 30 weeks, students reach high proficiency levels (87-96%) for foundational literacy, demonstrating that this support helps students catch up in reading and spelling.¹⁹ A case study from Maramarua school showed an improvement in student achievement after adopting a structured literacy approach.²⁰

Case study: Maramarua school - roll of 122, 40% Maori students.
Implemented structured literacy approach in 2021.

In 2021 about 60 percent of the kids at the school were below or well below the expected reading level. After three years of structured literacy approaches more than 60 percent are at or above the expected curriculum level.

In 2021 37 percent of Maori learners were at or above the curriculum level for reading. By the end of 2023 68 percent of those kids were where they needed to be, or achieving a higher level than expected for their age.

- 36 Through the Better Start Literacy Approach data and analysis showed that Māori and Pacific students made more progress, but New Zealand European and Asian students have higher proficiency at the beginning. After 30 weeks, the gaps in attainment narrowed in most assessments. Understanding how

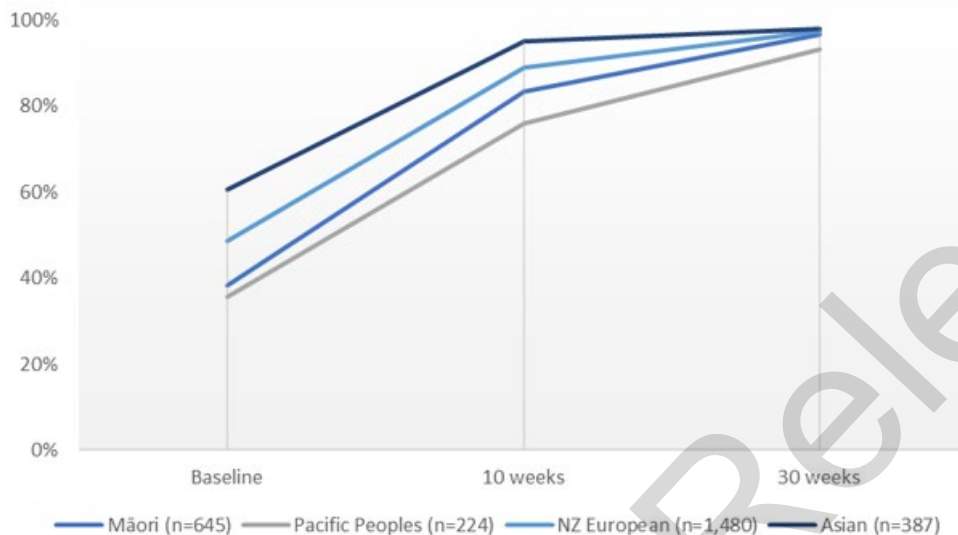
¹⁸ Whole language and balanced literacy approaches use guessing strategies when a student encounters a new word and usually don't teach sound and letter relationships systematically.

¹⁹ University of Canterbury (2023). The Better Start Literacy Approach (Briefing from the November 2023 Report to the Ministry of Education). Retrieved from: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d5e600b9630870001cf8cb9/t/656fce65adfa126d4fdac65/1701826150469/Data+Update+November+2023.pdf>

²⁰ Newsroom. (2024). Education minister vows to close yawning equity gap. Retrieved from <https://newsroom.co.nz/2024/03/20/education-minister-vows-to-close-yawning-equity-gap/>

letters and sounds relate to each other was the area that showed the greatest narrowing of gaps with little difference between ethnic groups after 30 weeks.

Figure 3: Percentage of students proficient in letter sound knowledge over time



- 37 Structured literacy approaches work well for students with learning support needs, particularly those with dyslexia because they explicitly focus on skills that learners with dyslexia need to develop.²¹ They have also been shown to work well for those with low oral language abilities.²²
- 38 I want all students in New Zealand state schools and kura to have access to structured literacy approaches, as the leading approach demonstrating effective and evidence-based practice.

Despite clear evidence for structured literacy approaches, state schools and kura have not consistently adopted this practice

- 39 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 cues²³ and promotes poor reading habits.²⁴ To address literacy challenges, the OECD, in their draft report, recommends that New Zealand establish a detailed National Curriculum that specifies by subject the learning outcomes, core concepts and knowledge students should have

²¹ Spear-Swerling, L. (2018). *Structured Literacy and Typical Literacy Practices: Understanding Differences to Create Instructional Opportunities*. Retrieved from:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0040059917750160>

²² Scott, A., Gillon, G. McNeill, B., & Gath, M. (2022). *Impacting Change in Classroom Literacy Instruction: A Further Investigation of the Better Start Literacy Approach*. Retrieved from:

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40841-022-00251-6>

²³ 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.

²⁴ Hanford, E. (2019). *At a Loss for Words*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.apmreports.org/episode/2019/08/22/whats-wrong-how-schools-teach-reading>

acquired and provide high-quality assessment and teaching materials.²⁵ Furthermore, the OECD draft report notes that New Zealand continues to pursue outdated methods of teaching reading, like whole language approaches, and should instead focus on the implementation of structured literacy approaches (including phonics) to teach reading.

- 40 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.
- 41 Briefings to the previous government about the implementation of the Better Start Literacy Approach noted that “the majority of teachers have not experienced professional support in a structured literacy approach before. We must strengthen our curriculum and the pedagogy (teaching practice) that is used in our classrooms.
- 42 The Literacy Guarantee recognises that early reading and pānui instruction is crucial for educational achievement, as literacy forms the foundation for all learning. It seeks to empower students with strong literacy skills, regardless of their background, to ensure equal educational outcomes.

Our plan to implement structured literacy approaches for students in state schools and kura

- 43 I am making a deliberate shift to create a high-performing education system for all. This shift, outlined in my Cabinet paper on education priorities, focuses on key components that drive student achievement. It involves moving towards consistent, high-quality education for students in all state schools and kura. I am starting with clear definitions of what and how to teach, followed by a more consistent approach to assessment using standardised assessment tools. I aim to support this by strengthening our workforce, and drawing on data and evidence that will effectively inform decision-making.
- 44 We started shifting towards a high-performing education system by introducing an hour a day each of reading, writing and maths, or pānui, tuhituhi, pāngarau, for Years 0-8 (CAB-23-MIN-0491 refers). I intend to build upon this work by now requiring teachers and schools and kura to apply structured literacy approaches from Term 1 2025.
- 45 I am providing Cabinet a high-level plan for how we will implement the mandatory requirement by this timeframe, including potential ways to influence the necessary system changes. Our goal is to fully implement structured literacy approaches, provide resources, and support students with additional needs in state primary schools and kura by the end of 2025. The main milestones are:

²⁵ OECD Economic Development Survey 2024

- 45.1 From Term 2 this year greater PLD and resources will be available for state schools and kura to become ready to apply structured literacy approaches.
- 45.2 From Term 1 2025 state schools and kura will be required through curriculum statements to apply structured literacy approaches in classrooms for reading and writing, or pānui and tuhituhi.²⁶
- 46 The core components of the plan are:
 - 45.1 introducing structured literacy approaches to teach students how to read;
 - 45.2 providing training for teachers on structured literacy approaches and resources such as decodable books;
 - 45.3 introducing phonics checks for students to assess their abilities; and
 - 45.4 making extra support available for students who need it.
- 46 We will provide clear communications so that schools and kura to have clear direction about plans to implement these future requirements so they can start preparing early on.

Teaching New Zealand students to read using structured literacy approaches

- 47 To reach the goal of all students in state schools and kura learning to read through structured literacy approaches, I will set a mandatory requirement by issuing curriculum statements²⁷ under section 90 of the Education and Training Act 2020. These statements provide guidance on teaching, learning and assessment in all types of state schools and kura.²⁸
- 48 The design of the mandatory requirement for structured literacy approaches is important. I will make sure the mandatory requirement is designed so that teachers in state schools and kura can easily understand what is expected and are able to provide teaching for various students' needs. This includes disabled students for whom Individual Learning Plans and alternate modes of assessment may be more appropriate.
- 49 I will engage with Kaupapa Māori education providers, including with Te Rūnanga Nui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa, Ngā Kura ā Iwi o Aotearoa and Kura Motuhake (unaffiliated kura) providers, to understand their needs before making any decisions that may significantly affect them.
- 50 A Ministerial Advisory Group is reviewing the English and mathematics & statistics learning areas of the New Zealand Curriculum and the draft common

²⁶ The statement would also encourage schools and kura to adopt structured literacy approaches in cross-curricular learning areas where students are also engaging with literacy learning.

²⁷ Under section 90 of the E&T Act, the Minister of Education has the ability to issue Foundation Curriculum Policy Statements and National Curriculum Statements.

²⁸ Private schools can set their own curriculum and do not have the same obligation to give effect to foundation policy statements. Charter schools will also be able to set their own curriculum.

practice model to create clear teaching sequences and practice expectations for the teaching of literacy [CAB-23-MIN-0497]. Equivalent work, appropriate for Māori Medium and Kaupapa Māori Education contexts, will be undertaken for Te Marautanga o Aotearoa. These teaching sequences and practice expectations together will provide the structured approach to literacy that schools and kura will be required to use.

Teachers receive training on structured literacy approaches

- 51 Many teachers are already taking structured literacy approaches in their classrooms. Through anecdotal information, we know that over 50% of state schools and kura have participated in PLD on structured literacy approaches.²⁹ An estimated 10,500 additional teachers could still require PLD with a focus on structured literacy approaches. We will gather more detailed information to determine the number of teachers who still require PLD and prioritise their training this and next year.

Support for teachers – increasing PLD

- 52 As part of the shift in our education system, I am committed to providing teachers with the tools, knowledge, and skills they need to teach the basics brilliantly in the classroom. I intend to provide greater national direction on the PLD state schools' and kura access.

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²⁹ For example, approximately 818 facilitators and 5,162 teachers participated in Better Start Literacy Approach training between 2021-2024. There are other providers that have also trained many other teachers during this period.

Support for teachers – ITE

57 To support the shift in our education system, it will be essential for teachers to receive training on structured literacy approaches early in their careers so they can teach the basic brilliantly from the start. This means considering the role of teachers' ITE in delivering training on structured literacy approaches.

58 9(2)(f)(iv)

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Introducing phonics checks for students

60 The shift in the education system will require the right data and evidence to inform decision-making about how to effectively target the workforce, interventions, and resources. Phonics checks will provide important insights about students' learning at key points in their schooling.

61 A phonics check is a simple test that helps teachers assess how well a child can read words by sounding out letters. It can provide information for reporting to parents and system monitoring. I intend to introduce a mandatory requirement for state schools and kura to use a short phonics check.

62 Phonics check information will help identify individual students who require additional support and targeted interventions, contribute to system information about the impact and effectiveness of the Literacy Guarantee.

System-level monitoring

61 There will be an impact evaluation framework to monitor the impact of Teaching the Basics Brilliantly initiatives on student outcomes, including for initiatives within the Literacy Guarantee policy. The impact evaluation framework measures changes across three domains; Student outcomes, Teacher practice, and School Leader practice (where relevant). This is subject to final confirmation.

62 We will monitor implementation of structured literacy approaches through student assessment data, an expanded national study for the New Zealand Curriculum, and the Education Review Office's Board Assurance Statement process.

63 Our new national curriculum monitoring study, the Curriculum Insights and Progress Study (CIPS - previously this was done through NMSSA), will assess

reading, writing, pānui, tuhituhi and maths³⁰. These assessments can be used as a baseline to help monitor outcomes for students in reading, writing, pānui and tuhituhi as structured literacy approaches are implemented.

- 64 The impact of the Structured Literacy approach initiatives on teacher practice will be monitored through performance-based evaluations of PLD services and teacher participation in these services.

65 9(2)(f)(iv)

Providing structured literacy approaches interventions for students who need extra support

- 66 Structured literacy approaches are known to be supportive of students with Dyslexia and are advocated for by the International Dyslexia Association.³¹ However, there may still be some students who need extra support learning to read and write. The purpose of targeted and tailored interventions is to provide this support.

- 67 Because structured literacy approaches include teaching about the relationships between letters and sounds, teachers of deaf or hard of hearing students will need to modify their approach, as is already the case for teaching reading and writing to deaf or hard of hearing students.

- 68 Funding and resources for Reading Recovery & Early Literacy Support will be redirected towards applying structured literacy approaches in state schools and kura. Students who need extra support in reading, writing, pānui and tuhituhi will have access to targeted and tailored interventions³² that apply structured literacy approaches, regardless of where they live across New Zealand.

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Next steps

- 69 I will be bringing four further papers back to Cabinet this year on these topics:

³⁰ Reading was assessed through CIPS at Years 3, 6, and 8 in 2023 (and will be done so again in 2025), and writing will be assessed at the same Year levels in term 4 in 2024.

³¹ See for example <https://dyslexiaida.org/what-is-structured-literacy/>

³² This will be for primary schools. Also referred to as Tier 2 (targeted) and 3 (tailored) supports. Learners can receive multiple levels of support at any time from Te Matua (Universal), which strengthens inclusive environments, cultures and practices, Te Kāhui (Targeted), which offers focused approaches to enhance participation, learning and wellbeing, and Te Arotahi (Tailored), which provides more specific supports for unique needs and contexts. See <https://hepikorua.education.govt.nz/how-we-work/flexible-tailored-model-of-support/> for more information.

- 69.1 Next steps for the refresh of the national curriculum, including the response to the report of the Ministerial Advisory Group review of the English and Mathematics Curriculum;
- 69.2 Year 3-8 twice yearly consistent assessment and reporting for all students in schools and kura;
- 69.3 Release of new curriculum statements which make clear what needs to be taught, and when, and effective teaching approaches to be used;
- 69.4 Strengthening Initial Teacher Education.

Cost-of-living Implications

- 70 There are no direct cost-of-living implications for this proposal.

Financial Implications

- 71 9(2)(f)(iv)
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- 72 9(2)(f)(iv)
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Legislative Implications

- 73 There are no direct legislative implications for this proposal, although I expect legislative decisions because of my proposals for teacher regulation.

Treaty of Waitangi Implications

- 74 I am committed to fulfilling obligations under the Tiriti o Waitangi by implementing effective literacy strategies for learning in state primary schools and kura across New Zealand. Structured literacy approaches have proven to close achievement gaps in foundational literacy between and within different groups of students, the evidence clearly shows that the Literacy Guarantee will lift Māori students' educational achievement.
- 75 Under the Education and Training Act 2020 there is a strong directive to give effect to the Treaty principles in the exercise of statutory powers. This creates a clear expectation of partnership, which applies to all the Crown's actions. The Ministry of Education's general advice is to work with the Kaupapa Māori

Education movements on their own terms and be open to creating bespoke arrangements. We know from speaking to Kura Kaupapa that a phonics-based approach to early literacy is already a core element of their approach.

- 76 While the purpose and overall implementation timeline for both the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa contexts are the same, there will be differences in what structured literacy approaches look like for students due to the different languages of instruction and curriculum contexts. This means we need to consider how we can implement the Literacy Guarantee in a way that suits the needs of Māori communities. I intend to discuss this with Te Rūnanga Nui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori and Ngā Kura-a-lwi.
- 77 We will work with pānui and tuhituhi experts will lead work to identify (and create if needed) professional learning and development resources and tools to assist in implementing a structured approach to literacy for children learning through te reo Māori. The approach will take into consideration the advice of the Ministerial Advisory Group supporting the review of the English medium curriculum. These resources will support teachers who teach in and through te reo Māori, including a phonics check in te reo Māori, and will be tailored to support all those learning through te reo Māori.

Impact Analysis

Regulatory Impact Statement

- 78 There is no Regulatory Impact Statement required for the decisions I am seeking at this time. I will provide Regulatory Impact Statement for the changes signalled in this paper, when I return to Cabinet for policy decisions.

Population Implications

- 79 I expect this proposal will provide students with developing the foundational skills for reading, writing, pānui and tuhituhi. This may benefit students who experience lower than average achievement rates in literacy, including Māori, Pacific students, those who are disabled, have learning difficulties or support needs (for example, Dyslexic students). A modified approach will likely be needed for deaf and hard of hearing students.
- 80 Schools and kura have shown marked improvements in outcomes for all students after implementing structured literacy approaches. Examples in lower decile schools and kura show a switch from more than half of Māori students failing to well over half succeeding, in a relatively short period of time. The Better Start Literacy Approach has been shown to close gaps between different groups for foundational literacy, specifically after 30 weeks the gaps in attainment started to narrow in most assessments. Extra support is still made available for students who need it in a structured literacy approach. Students who received extra lessons caught up with their peers of the same ethnicity.
- 81 I expect that achievement results will also improve for Year 4 and Year 8 students, as well as those achieving NCEA literacy, particularly those of Māori students in Year 8, where few are achieving at curriculum level currently.

- 82 Education is a key protective factor for young people at risk of poor future social and economic outcomes. I expect that implementing structured literacy approaches across state schools and kura will improve outcomes for all students including most at risk of not experiencing success.

Human Rights

- 83 The right to education is set out in several international treaties which New Zealand has ratified.³³ Literacy is a key determinant of social, health and economic outcomes and may help progressively realise other rights affirmed in these treaties.
- 84 I expect that a structured literacy approach will benefit more students than the current approach, particularly those groups that experience lower than average achievement rates in literacy. This will include Māori and Pacific students, along with those who are disabled³⁴, have learning difficulties or support needs (for example, Dyslexic students). Extra support for students with additional learning needs will still be available under a structured literacy approach.
- 85 Through agency consultation a concern was raised around how structured literacy approaches will support deaf and hard of hearing students as well as those who predominantly communicate using New Zealand sign-language. It is my intention to seek specialist advice on the teaching of reading and writing for deaf and hard of hearing students and to ensure evidence-based advice and recommendations are available for teachers in mainstream education as part of supporting material for this policy.

Use of external resources

- 86 There were no external resources used in the development of this policy or the drafting of this paper.

Consultation

- 87 The Ministry has consulted with the Treasury, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Pacific Peoples, the Ministry for Women, the Education Review Office, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, Te Puni Kōkiri, the Teaching Council, Whaikaha, Oranga Tamariki and Stats NZ. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet was informed.
- 88 We have incorporated feedback from agency consultation where applicable in this paper.

³³ E.g., International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

³⁴ Article 23 paragraph 3 Of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), to which New Zealand is a signatory, states "recognising the special needs of a disabled child ... to ensure that the disabled child has effective access to and receives education ... in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development ..." See <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text>

Communications

- 89 If Cabinet endorses the overall implementation plan, it is my intention to publicly announce the Literacy Guarantee. I will issue a press release where I will signal my intentions to implement structured literacy approaches (reading, writing, pānui and tuhituhi) in state schools and kura, as part of the Literacy Guarantee.
- 90 Detailed communications to principals and teachers will be sent out explaining how to access Professional Development and decodable resources.
- 91 The Ministry of Education will also communicate through its usual channels, provide other support to schools and continue to engage with Te Rūnanga Nui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa, Ngā Kura ā Iwi o Aotearoa, and non-affiliated kura.

Proactive Release

- 92 I intend to release the material within this Cabinet paper within 30 days after decisions have been made by Cabinet, subject to any redactions as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendations

- 91 The Minister of Education recommends that the Committee:
- 1 **note** that some state schools and kura are still teaching New Zealand students how to read and write using approaches that are ineffective for all students and promote poor reading and pānui habits;
 - 2 **note** that I am making a deliberate shift to create a high-performing education system so that all teachers in state schools and kura are Teaching the Basics Brilliantly;
 - 3 **note** that as part of the Teaching the Basics Brilliantly, the Literacy Guarantee will address New Zealand's declining literacy rates, close equity gaps and unlock students' abilities in other subjects and their future opportunities;
 - 4 **note** that as a core component of the Literacy Guarantee, I intend to require teachers to apply an approach grounded in scientific research, structured literacy, to improve students' literacy across state schools and kura in New Zealand;
 - 5 **endorse** the plan to implement the Literacy Guarantee, including:
 - 5.1 Introducing structured literacy approaches to teach students how to read;
 - 5.2 Providing training for teachers on structured literacy approaches and resources such as decodable books;
 - 5.3 Introducing phonics checks for students to assess their abilities;

- 5.4 Making extra support available for students who need it;
- 6 **endorse** the main milestones for implementing a mandatory requirement for structured literacy approaches in state schools and kura:
- 6.1 From Term 2 this year greater PLD and resources will be available for state schools and kura to become ready to apply structured literacy approaches;
- 6.2 From Term 1 2025 state schools and kura will be required through curriculum statements to apply structured literacy approaches in classrooms for reading and writing, or pānui and tuhituhi.
- 7 9(2)(f)(iv) 
- 8 **note** that a new Cabinet strategy committee is being established and I will be providing that committee with details of the implementation plan for Quarter 2 as part of the strategy to achieve our overall education targets.
- 9 **note** that I will return to Cabinet later in the year to seek agreement on various matters shaping the next steps of the implementation plan.

Authorised for lodgement
Hon Erica Stanford
Minister of Education



Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

A Literacy Guarantee for Children Learning to Read in State Schools or Kura

Portfolio Education

On 10 April 2024, the Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee:

- 1 **noted** that some state schools and kura are still teaching New Zealand students how to read and write using approaches that are ineffective for all students and promote poor reading and pānui habits;
- 2 **noted** that the Minister of Education is making a deliberate shift to create a high-performing education system so that all teachers in state schools and kura are Teaching the Basics Brilliantly;
- 3 **noted** that as part of the Teaching the Basics Brilliantly, the Literacy Guarantee will address New Zealand's declining literacy rates, close equity gaps and unlock students' abilities in other subjects and their future opportunities;
- 4 **noted** that as a core component of the Literacy Guarantee, the Minister of Education intends to require teachers to apply an approach grounded in scientific research, structured literacy, to improve students' literacy across state schools and kura in New Zealand;
- 5 **endorsed** the plan set out in the paper under SOU-24-SUB-0023 to implement the Literacy Guarantee, including:
 - 5.1 introducing structured literacy approaches to teach students how to read;
 - 5.2 providing training for teachers on structured literacy approaches and resources such as decodable books;
 - 5.3 introducing phonics checks for students to assess their abilities;
 - 5.4 making extra support available for students who need it;

- 6 **endorsed** the main milestones for implementing a mandatory requirement for structured literacy approaches in state schools and kura:
- 6.1 from term 2 this year greater Professional Learning and Development (PLD) and resources will be available for state schools and kura to become ready to apply structured literacy approaches;
- 6.2 from Term 1 2025 state schools and kura will be required through curriculum statements to apply structured literacy approaches in classrooms for reading and writing, or pānui and tuhituhi;
- 7 9(2)(f)(iv) 
- 8 **noted** that the Minister of Education will provide the Cabinet Strategy Committee with details of the implementation plan for Quarter 2 as part of the strategy to achieve the Government's overall education targets;
- 9 **noted** that the Minister of Education will return to Cabinet later in the year to seek agreement on various matters shaping the next steps of the implementation plan.

Rebecca Davies
Committee Secretary

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



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-0023	A Literacy Guarantee for Children Learning to Read in State Schools or Kura Portfolio: Education	CONFIRMED
Out of scope		

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet