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More to Come from Labour on Education say Principals

Source: NZ Principals Federation

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The President of the New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF), Perry Rush, in commenting on the Education Election Manifesto for the Labour Party, said it was important to view the manifesto in the context of our current COVID crisis and in the light of changes made in the last three years, but there is more to come.

"The shift in direction for education, away from the high emphasis on national standards data and charter schools, towards high quality public education and engagement, has been warmly welcomed by the sector over the past three years," he said.

In relation to the level four lockdown in March this year, he said, "The Government's response to support schools' home learning plans was much appreciated, especially in addressing the inequities for our tamariki which the pandemic exposed."

"Getting devices and internet connectivity into so many homes, creating television channels for learning and delivering thousands of home learning packs supported the schools' efforts and will help us immensely should we be forced into home learning again in the future," he said.

The Labour Party manifesto promises to increase the number of schools receiving free, healthy lunches for children, replace deciles with a more appropriate Equity Index, further increase digital access, address school leadership, boost funding for more te reo Māori teachers to further integrate te reo Māori in our schools, build cultural competency for Pasifika learners, expand the Creatives in Schools programme and establish a new curriculum centre.

"These are all very welcome initiatives," said Rush.

"I also note that Labour recognises the importance of constructing, with the profession, a robust, practical and enduring system of responding to wellbeing needs, which is so critical to every school facing high numbers of children with extreme behaviour dysfunctions, anxiety and trauma," he said.

"So far we do not have appropriately funded system-wide support structures, such as counsellors in schools and services such as Te Tupu Managed Moves to respond to the escalating and continually evolving needs of our young people in schools," said Rush.

"Only when that system is co-designed with the profession, will we have learning support that makes sense, that is practical and advances the health, mental health, wellbeing and education of our most vulnerable young people," he said.

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