

NEW ZEALAND PRINCIPALS' FEDERATION

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SUBMISSION ON: EDUCATION AMENDMENT BILL 2012

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The New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) represents the interests of 2,578 Principals of Primary, Intermediate and Secondary Schools throughout New Zealand. We acknowledge Parliament's call for submissions on the Education Amendment Bill 2012 and thank you for the opportunity to respond. We request to appear before the Select Committee to speak to this submission.

NZPF offers the following comments for consideration in relation to the Bill:

Charter Schools (Partnership school kura hourua) and the NZPF Position

Background

The very first charter schools were established in the 1980s in New Zealand. These are a model of public charter schools fully funded by the state. The schools are self-managing under a board of trustees and require a high level of community input. Schools are accountable directly to their boards and school communities.

This model works well, has the full support of NZ's school principals and allows NZ public schools the right level of autonomy to be responsive to individual children's needs, to be innovative and creative. The model has kept NZ in the top 10 OECD world achievement rankings for many years.

During the 2008 general election campaign, no political party campaigned for a different form of Charter school. After the election, the leader of the ACT party and now partner in the Government proposed as a coalition condition

that a new form of Charter school be established as an additional school choice.

The new type of Charter school is described as a publicly funded school which runs as a private business. Schools would be owned and managed by 'sponsors' that are private companies, corporations, either for-profit or not-for-profit, religious groups, or some other group. In our view, they are the first move in a bid to 'normalise' the privatisation of education in NZ.

The justification put forward for Charter schools to be established in NZ includes:

- Provide an alternative school for those children the Government maintains are systematically failed or 'under-served' by the public school system.
- Address the 'under-performance' of Māori and Pacific Island children, special needs children and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
- Address the gap between NZ's highest achieving students and lowest achieving students which is unacceptable and is one of the highest levels of inequity of any country in the OECD.

NZPF's objections to a new model of Charter school in NZ

- Provision already exists under the New Zealand Education Act (s.156) for parents to propose new schools e.g Discovery /Unlimited
- NZ currently has a wide variety of school choices which likely contributes to our high level of inequity
- Charter schools will be able to employ teachers who are not registered and there will be no requirement for the principal of a Charter school to be a registered qualified teacher. This provision contradicts current research which provides evidence that quality teachers make the greatest difference to children who are under-achieving (Hattie, 2003)
- Charter schools will not be subject to OIA requests, the Ombudsman's Office or the Auditor General's Office, reducing public accountability
- Charter schools will be exempted from the NZ Teachers' Council provisions
- Charter school governance bodies will not be required to include community representatives, Crown appointees, nor will the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act apply to Charter schools
- Charter schools will not have to adhere to normal school opening hours and will be able to run multiple timetables
- Charter school students will be chosen through a ballot system. They will not be subject to geographic enrolment zones so there will be no requirement for them to accept students from their local area
- There will be no requirement to adhere to the NZC in its entirety and will be encouraged to be 'innovative'
- It is likely that the curriculum for Charter schools would be narrower than NZ's world class NZC

The model being proposed is not a public school system but a **tax-payer funded private schooling system**. We believe if such Charter schools were to be established in NZ, it would create potential for our high performing public school system to be undermined. There is no call from the education sector or the NZ public to establish Charter schools and the Treasury has advised that they do not see benefits in establishing Charter schools. There is an absence of Charter schools in OECD countries which rank highly for student achievement.

Research Evidence on the Performance of Charter Schools Overseas

- Pasi Sahlberg (Finland) says that Charter schools will never address issues of inequity and this view is supported by British and USA evidence. On the contrary, Charter schools have been found to **increase** inequity. The British research shows that free schools admit **fewer** poor children than state schools so Charter schools are unlikely to address NZ's biggest problem which is the gap between its highest and lowest achievers
- Finland, with the highest equity in the world, has just one type of school and that is the public school

Research shows that in the main charter schools, with all their freedom to be innovative, do not perform better than public schools.

- In a large American study conducted at Stanford University's Centre for Research on Education Outcomes discovered that while '17% provide superior education opportunities for their children a whopping '37% deliver learning results that are significantly worse than their children would have realised had they remained in traditional public schools.'
- Similarly the National Centre for Educational Statistics found that Charter school children performed significantly worse on academic assessments than their peers in traditional public schools.
- According to a new report from the National Education Policy Centre, Charters 'tend to be more racially segregated than traditional public schools' and in many places are openly hostile to children who are poor, who are from minority communities or who have special education needs.
- Charter schools do not save money. Evidence from Ohio to New Mexico to Tennessee to Florida to Pennsylvania suggests charter schools are often more expensive than their counterparts. Taxpayers are paying a premium to underwrite a segregated system now producing worse academic results than traditional public schools.

New Zealand Academics' Review of Research

A Massey University group of academics led by emeritus Professor Ivan Snook conducted a comprehensive review of research on Charter Schools and their performance and came to the following conclusions:

- 'The evidence is clear that Charter schools have the potential to cause harm to the very groups of children they are supposed to help.'
- 'The Charter school proposal seems to persist with narrow assessments of individual progress and this is very risky.'
- 'It is common for Charter schools to lead to an increase in inequality based on culture, race or socio-economic status.'

NZPF Position on Charter Schools

NZ has a world class education system and excellent reputation internationally for the quality of public education offered and the achievements of our children.

- NZPF does not support the introduction of Charter schools as there is no crisis in NZ's education system that requires a solution in the form of Charter Schools.
- Charter schools are not a systemic answer to what the New Zealand government is trying to achieve. They make it worse by exacerbating inherent inequalities and distract from the real ills rooted in economic inequality.
- Progress is being made for Māori and Pacific Island students. A contributing factor is likely to be initiatives that have already been taken such as the Te Kotahitanga programme, whanau based learning approaches and other initiatives. Recent results for NCEA Levels 1, 2 and above have lifted substantially.

In a September 2012 media release, the Minister of Education acknowledged the progress saying:

"Ms Parata says it's particularly exciting to see improvement in the number of Māori and Pasifika students leaving school with either NCEA Level 1 or Level 2 or above.

"We have seen the proportion of Maori school leavers who have achieved NCEA Level 1 or above go from 61.8% in 2009 to 68.6% last year. For Pasifika students over that period it went from 72.8% to 78.2%. If we look at those with NCEA Level 2 and above, there is also pleasing progress there. Figures for Maori students have gone from 44.3% to over 51%, while for Pasifika it's up from 55.7% to just over 63%."

- We do not believe that schools should be able to select the children they want and reject those they don't. Charter Schools have the capability to reject children who do not fit their profile such as special needs children and children from lower SES backgrounds.
- We do not believe that even where Charter schools have succeeded in lifting achievement in targeted areas of learning that it is sustained across time. Children pressured to learn a narrow set of responses are not learning for understanding or wider application. While test scores

may improve in the short term through drilling and extra hours of practice, long term learning and understanding does not improve.

- Keeping children at school for longer hours is contradictory to best practice. Finland, ranking up with the best in the world has the shortest school opening hours of any OECD country.
- Māori children have been singled out as a target group to benefit from Charter schools. Studies are equivocal about the effects of Charter schools on learning for ethnic minorities.
- Children who have to achieve in a narrow number of performance indicators to suit a government economic agenda will become homogenous, compliant, non-creative test takers.
- NZ has an issue with child poverty and societal inequities. Charter schools will not address this. In the June UNICEF report measuring child poverty it was reported that NZ has an 11.7% poverty rate, similar to our underachievement rate.
- High quality teachers do make a difference to children's progress. Challenging and vulnerable children will benefit from the experience and knowledge of a high quality registered teacher. They will not benefit from unregistered teachers and Charter schools. We support a broad rich curriculum delivered through a high quality public education system and by qualified, registered teachers.
- Charter schools should not be able to employ unqualified teachers who will be responsible for the learning of our most challenging and vulnerable children.
- We support a highly qualified teaching profession including significant training at pre service on accommodating special needs, Māori and Pacific island learners and ongoing professional development for all teachers.
- Whilst the Government requires the schooling system to be evidence based, in the case of Charter schools there is no evidence to say that they are or would be successful.
- Charter schools have the negative affect of removing funding from local state schools and lack accountability to their communities by operating outside of normal school regulations
- Charter schools will be receiving 100% tax payer funding but will not be accountable to the NZ tax payer by the processes of parliamentary scrutiny.

NZPF encourages the government to create a truly equitable public school system where every school is given the opportunity to be as successful as it possibly can be.

Hattie, J. (2003, October). Teachers make a difference: What is the research evidence? Paper presented at the Australian Council for Educational Research Annual Conference on Building Teacher Quality, Melbourne.

Surrender and retention of property

The amendment makes changes to section 139A which colleagues, particularly secondary and intermediate school colleagues, report places limitations on their ability to guarantee the safety of all teachers and students.

- The amendment s139AAB does not permit a teacher to search any student or to search any bag in a student's control.
- Colleagues report this will limit their ability to maintain the safety of all students and teachers
- Further, the amendment prevents a school from conducting a random Police dog search.
- Colleagues have found random Police dog searches to be a useful means of preventing students from bringing illicit drugs to school.

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