



25th November 2019

New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) Submission on The Statement of National Education & Learning Priorities

To: The Ministry of Education

Personal Details:

Agency: New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF)
Designation: National Executive
Address: National Office, PO Box 25380, Wellington 6146

The New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) is the largest professional organisation for lead educators representing the interests of 2,000 Principals of Primary, Intermediate, Area and Secondary Schools. Principals are from public, integrated and independent schools and are spread throughout New Zealand. NZPF aims to be the most influential advocate for school principals to enable high quality, well supported leadership for school learners in New Zealand.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Statement of National Education & Learning Priorities (NELP).

General Comments

NZPF welcomes the opportunity to submit comments on the NELP. We have independently sought the views and commentary of our own members and those of the executive committee. The views contained in this submission are therefore reflective of the NZPF membership, and the NZPF national executive members.

Purpose of the NELP

The NELP is intended to shape a stronger education system, by creating a long-term vision, establishing five objectives and actions for the early learning and schooling settings and taking account of the tertiary sector through the life-long learning Tertiary Education Strategy (TES). This submission will focus exclusively on the schooling setting.

Background and Context

The NELP is not a new idea and was first initiated by the previous government. The TES has existed for many more years and has tended to be updated every five years as society, and therefore priorities for the tertiary sector, have shifted. Since the change in government in 2017, the NELP has joined many other education policy documents in the queue for review.

As national conversations were held and views from far and wide were gathered, it became clear that what the nation desired was a NELP that took a long-term (thirty-year) view and included the notions of an equitable, accessible, world class, future focused, high quality public education system where learners and their needs would influence decision making. This position is far from the previous narrow focus on defined groups of priority learners for whom achievement in reading writing and maths was expected to be lifted through national standards assessment, and through a new accountability mechanism of publicly reporting of national standards results.

The introduction of national standards and culture of accountability generated a culture of profound mistrust. The profession was frequently heard to object that their views were not heard and that they were continually being ‘done to’ rather than invited to feed into education policy and systems. Morale diminished and it is fair to say, the profession hit an all-time low.

This Government has honoured its promise to abolish national standards and charter schools and quickly reversed legislation to allow

PO Box 25380
Wellington 6146

Level 8 The Bayleys Building
36 Brandon Street

THE MOST RESPECTED AND INFLUENTIAL ADVOCATE FOR NEW ZEALAND'S SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

ph:+64 4 471 2338
fax:+64 4 471 2339

email: office@nzpf.ac.nz
web: www.nzpf.ac.nz

teachers to democratically elect the members of their own Teaching Council. Despite these actions, the culture of scepticism and distrust remained.

We congratulate the government on announcing the final *Tomorrow's Schools* review recommendations which demonstrate a willingness on the part of government to participate in meaningful conversations, listen to a diversity of views and respond accordingly. Changes to the original set of recommendations, presented by the independent task force, are substantial and were made to accommodate the views expressed through the consultation phase.

This response to consultation is a positive step which will eventually result in higher levels of trust between Government and the sector and we welcome that. We make our comments on the NELP in the spirit of having the comments of our membership and executive respected and considered.

This submission will make some brief general remarks, address each of the five Objectives outlined in the NELP document and provide a summary statement.

General Remarks

NZPF supports taking a long-term view of education and has called for its extraction from the political arena to make that possible. Given the level of investment of tax-payers' funds in education, it is not likely that this will happen any time soon. Unfortunately, that leaves education in the precarious situation of being vulnerable to the vagaries of political party preferences and ideologies, rather than what is best for the education of the young people of Aotearoa New Zealand.

We have frequently observed that education is a point of difference for political parties, particularly during election campaigns. We

PO Box 25380
Wellington 6146

Level 8 The Bayleys Building
36 Brandon Street

THE MOST RESPECTED AND INFLUENTIAL ADVOCATE FOR NEW ZEALAND'S SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

ph:+64 4 471 2338
fax:+64 4 471 2339

email: office@nzpf.ac.nz
web: www.nzpf.ac.nz

therefore have some concerns about how realistic a thirty-year strategy for education can be if cross-party agreement is not achievable.

We recognise that the education system in Aotearoa New Zealand serves more than 80% of our young people well. We also recognise that those not well served fall into the categories of Māori, Pasifika, those from disadvantaged back grounds and those with special learning needs. The gap between those experiencing learning success and those who are not is at an unacceptably high level. In striving for equity of learning outcomes, these groups must be our greatest concern. We therefore commend the approach to value wellbeing, respect cultural identity and practices and encourage community connectedness, as outlined in the document. NZPF believes that there would be little if any disagreement with the aspirations of this document. What is lacking is the next phase of planning and resourcing.

We note that many schools are already engaged in excellent practices to address issues such as student and whānau agency, valuing cultural differences and community connectedness. It would be helpful to engage with these schools, identify the factors that have led to success and apply further resources and PLD to extend these practices to more schools.

Similarly, all schools want to be as inclusive as possible and give every child the best education possible that supports their potential and meets their needs. We acknowledge that resource has already been applied to appoint 600 Learning Support Coordinators which is a helpful start. We also acknowledge Minister Martin's work in developing a learning support plan. It will take a great deal more resource to fully address all learning and behavioural challenges for our young people, including alternative education options, specialist educators and mental health professionals. Until we have a full complement of these specialists we cannot expect progress for all students with learning and behavioural support needs.

PO Box 25380
Wellington 6146

Level 8 The Bayleys Building
36 Brandon Street

THE MOST RESPECTED AND INFLUENTIAL ADVOCATE FOR NEW ZEALAND'S SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

ph:+64 4 471 2338
fax:+64 4 471 2339

email: office@nzpf.ac.nz
web: www.nzpf.ac.nz

Our concern is whether we currently have the necessary resources, expertise, training and on-going PLD to make Minister Martin's plan a realistic option for all schools.

We note that the NELP is a set of actions for ten-years, and these are not time-framed.

Objective One – Learners at the Centre

NZPF agrees that the best approach to ensure success for learners is to place them and their whānau at the centre of decision making. That means recognising and respecting what each learner and their whānau most value, building on their strengths and giving both students and whānau voice in learning decisions.

We applaud the increased emphasis on Te Reo Māori in the curriculum and the actions to address racism and discrimination. Extensive PLD will be necessary to implement the objectives of Te Hurihanganui and raise the Te Reo Māori capability of teachers to achieve this.

Alongside addressing identity, language and culture when identifying '*who they are*' we would like to see 'gender' included. We would therefore prefer a statement that read:

*'New Zealand society is made up of a diverse range of cultures, ethnicities, **genders** and identities and places of learning should embrace this diversity'* (p.15).

To achieve the aspiration of 'Learners at the centre' will therefore require extensive PLD for both school leadership and teachers.

PO Box 25380
Wellington 6146

Level 8 The Bayleys Building
36 Brandon Street

THE MOST RESPECTED AND INFLUENTIAL ADVOCATE FOR NEW ZEALAND'S SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

ph:+64 4 471 2338
fax:+64 4 471 2339

email: office@nzpf.ac.nz
web: www.nzpf.ac.nz

Objective Two – Barrier-free access

NZPF fully supports the aspirations of barrier-free education. We believe that every child, irrespective of their abilities or social circumstances, has a right to an education that is best suited to support them to reach their potential.

It is our experience that the volume of young people presenting with severe learning and behavioural challenges has greatly increased over the past decade. This is in part due to the high increases in young people presenting with anxiety disorders, trauma - including domestic and sexual abuse - fetal alcohol syndrome and the effects of ante-natal methamphetamine exposure.

Principals have repeatedly reported that the range of severe behaviours they now experience in schools, cannot be accommodated without further expert health, mental health and specialist educators.

We acknowledge the attempts, extra funding and intentions of this government to address these issues. That said, the reality is that schools are buckling under the pressures of continuing to try and keep education barrier-free. The biggest barrier is the lack of funding for teacher aides, expertise - including health, mental health and educational, and the lack of alternative education options.

NZPF believes that little attention has been paid to supporting gifted children and those who want to pursue full Māori medium pathways and we welcome the inclusion of these in the document.

We believe that without an urgent and substantial injection of additional funding, resources and expertise for learning and behavioural support, the aspiration of barrier-free education will not be achieved in ten years.

PO Box 25380
Wellington 6146

Level 8 The Bayleys Building
36 Brandon Street

THE MOST RESPECTED AND INFLUENTIAL ADVOCATE FOR NEW ZEALAND'S SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

ph:+64 4 471 2338
fax:+64 4 471 2339

email: office@nzpf.ac.nz
web: www.nzpf.ac.nz

Objective Three – Quality Teaching and Leadership

NZPF agrees with the establishment of a workforce strategy to ensure sustainability of the teaching workforce over time. We also welcome the emphasis on building cultural competency through Tapasa for Pasifika learners and Tātaiako for Māori learners.

We welcome the emphasis placed on local curriculum and supporting teachers to deliver and assess learning progress and the promise to deliver the necessary PLD to achieve this.

NZPF has always supported leadership groups in the regions. Already there are 121 established Regional Associations of principals across the country. These associations provide opportunities for principals to network and to take advantage of PLD opportunities funded by the associations. The financial resources of each of these associations varies, according to their size and ability to attract funds. We would suggest that rather than establishing a new structure for regional skills leadership groups, associations could be used for this purpose.

We agree that teachers at all levels will require appropriately funded PLD to increase their proficiency in Te Reo Māori, if they are to achieve the aspiration of using Te Reo Māori correctly every day. We believe that the volume of Te Reo Māori capable teachers is very low and welcome the focus on Initial Teacher Training to help address the future need to lift the Te Reo Māori capabilities of our teachers.

NZPF has long promoted the establishment of a leadership centre to be located with the Teaching Council. We were active participants in the development of the leadership strategy and look forward to contributing to the development of the leadership centre. We are pleased to see the aspiration to value and lift the status of the teaching profession.

PO Box 25380
Wellington 6146

Level 8 The Bayleys Building
36 Brandon Street

THE MOST RESPECTED AND INFLUENTIAL ADVOCATE FOR NEW ZEALAND'S SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

ph:+64 4 471 2338
fax:+64 4 471 2339

email: office@nzpf.ac.nz
web: www.nzpf.ac.nz

NZPF has always recognised learning and teaching as a reciprocal activity where teachers learn from their students/iwi/community as much as they learn from their teachers.

Objective Four – Future of Learning and Work

NZPF supports all learning being relevant to the future lives of young people in our schools. Whilst technology has been well used in our schools for many years, we welcome the Digital Technologies curriculum with its inclusion of skills to provide future work opportunities for our young people.

We also welcome the compulsory teaching of NZ history in our schools, which we believe will assist in breaking down racism and discriminatory behaviours whilst connecting young people to New Zealand's people, history, identities, languages and cultures.

As with so many of the objectives in this NELP document, teachers will require extensive PLD before they are ready to deliver the Digital Technologies and NZ History curricula.

NZPF supports the NCEA as a recognised New Zealand qualification and welcomes flexibility to make it more accessible for more students. We would add that there has been too much emphasis on assessment, both internal and external for NCEA qualifications and would welcome some changes to the frequency and volume of assessments to reduce the pressure, especially on vulnerable students.

Linkages to the world of work and allowing students to learn in authentic contexts is a welcome inclusion. Already there are some excellent examples of schools operating in very successful authentic learning spaces involving experts from industry and the professions. This is an approach which assists in breaking down the subject silos for secondary students and providing more flexible timetabling. We

PO Box 25380
Wellington 6146

Level 8 The Bayleys Building
36 Brandon Street

THE MOST RESPECTED AND INFLUENTIAL ADVOCATE FOR NEW ZEALAND'S SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

ph:+64 4 471 2338
fax:+64 4 471 2339

email: office@nzpf.ac.nz
web: www.nzpf.ac.nz

would recommend that such examples be used in the pursuit of this goal.

NZPF supports equitable funding and support for Māori medium education pathways and expanding Māori medium so that all who wish to participate in this option can do so. Currently many Māori are excluded from Māori medium education pathways because of distance from Māori medium schools or schools being unable to accommodate more students through lack of resourcing and expertise.

Objective Five – World Class Inclusive Public Education

NZPF agrees that we want an education system which is trusted by both students and employers, iwi and whānau and international students.

We especially welcome the inclusion of the statement that *‘Definitions of progress, achievement and success reflect and sustain what is valued by learners/ākonga and their whānau through their view of the world, including for Māori and Pacific and disabled people.’*

Respecting and accepting that Māori and Pacific world views are different and therefore have different definitions of what count as learning success, progress and achievement are critical shifts if we are to make progress in allowing our Māori and Pacific students to succeed as who they are.

We welcome the aspiration to strengthen Māori-Crown partnerships which will facilitate the acceptance of different world views in our education system.

Whilst NZPF supports the Te Rito project to facilitate the sharing of critical student learning data, we would sound a note of caution to

PO Box 25380
Wellington 6146

Level 8 The Bayleys Building
36 Brandon Street

THE MOST RESPECTED AND INFLUENTIAL ADVOCATE FOR NEW ZEALAND'S SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

ph:+64 4 471 2338
fax:+64 4 471 2339

email: office@nzpf.ac.nz
web: www.nzpf.ac.nz

ensure that only data that is critically relevant to facilitate transitions and learning pathways would be shared and great care is taken in the protection of all student data and how it is shared. We believe that there must be stringent protocols around such data to ensure it cannot be shared beyond its immediate purpose.

Summary

This submission has made some generic comments and examined the five objectives of the NELP outlined for the schooling sector. NZPF has no disagreement with the general aspirations and intent of the document. Our concerns focus on the lack of detail, time frame for implementation and resourcing to realise the aspirations.

We have noted the barriers to achieving a thirty-year strategy, given the way in which political parties currently tend to use education as a political football, rather than agree on educational matters.

We have explained the urgent need to apply additional resources to learning support, especially specialist services, if we are to achieve the objective for barrier-free education for all.

NZPF would welcome participation in the development of the newly announced leadership centre and will bring expert professional leadership knowledge and capability to the discussions. In addition, we would bring the experiences of our international colleagues in Ireland, the UK, Singapore and Ontario.

We would also bring first-hand knowledge of excellent examples of addressing culture shift in school leadership which has resulted in high rates of learning success for Māori.

We fully support a curriculum that is agile, connected to community aspirations and relevant to the future work of New Zealand students. We welcome the acknowledgement of different world views and learning pathways that reflect that.

PO Box 25380
Wellington 6146

Level 8 The Bayleys Building
36 Brandon Street

THE MOST RESPECTED AND INFLUENTIAL ADVOCATE FOR NEW ZEALAND'S SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

ph:+64 4 471 2338
fax:+64 4 471 2339

email: office@nzpf.ac.nz
web: www.nzpf.ac.nz

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the
NELP.

Yours sincerely,

Whetu Cormick
**National
President**
[whetu@nzpf.ac.
nz](mailto:whetu@nzpf.ac.nz)

PO Box 25380
Wellington 6146

Level 8 The Bayleys Building
36 Brandon Street

THE MOST RESPECTED AND INFLUENTIAL ADVOCATE FOR NEW ZEALAND'S SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

ph:+64 4 471 2338
fax:+64 4 471 2339

email: office@nzpf.ac.nz
web: www.nzpf.ac.nz