

## THE NEW ZEALAND PRINCIPALS' FEDERATION (NZPF) 2011 GENERAL ELECTION MANIFESTO

### Introduction

The New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF), established in 1982, is the largest Principals' organisation in the country, representing the interests of 2,578 school Principals. It is the only New Zealand organisation set up to work solely on behalf of all New Zealand Principals. NZPF is a professional body, and supports its member Principals through the provision of information, professional resources, professional development, a helpline, advocacy and legal support and advice. NZPF also represents its members on reference and community groups pertaining to education as well as meeting regularly with the Minister of Education, the Secretary for Education and the CEO of the Education Review Office as appropriate. NZPF is a membership driven organisation with the work of NZPF directed through its AGM, its members and its 15 strong executive committee.

### Principles:

1. A successful education system will lead to a successful and prosperous country
2. Positive and healthy working relationships between the education sector and government is critical to the implementation of education policy
3. Accountability for the public investment in education should be transparent and trustworthy
4. Children should leave school with appropriate skills to be successful in the 21st century global world
5. New Zealanders can expect teachers to provide a high quality relevant inclusive education system

### Core beliefs and values

NZPF operates from a set of core beliefs shared by its members. These include:

1. That the educational interests of the nation's children are central to any position held by NZPF.
2. That empowering and supporting Principals in their leadership role will enhance the quality of education for New Zealand children.
3. That NZPF can assist in advancing the educational aims for New Zealand
4. That there should be equity of access to quality life-long learning for Principals
5. That state and integrated schools should continue to be fully funded by the government.

## **NZPF key policy areas:**

### **National Standards:**

'National Standards' (NS) were introduced as a flagship policy by the National party during the 2008 general election. The 'standards' have been the most controversial reform since the 1980s and 'tomorrow's Schools'. Justification for NS was explained as the National party's solution to children underachieving in NZ. They put the figure as one in five. A later OECD report showed the figure at 14%, which is about average for OECD countries. The same report found NZ ranked alongside the top OECD countries in literacy, numeracy and science.

NZPF believes NS should be completely reviewed because:

- They were hastily constructed, are vague and untested
- They assume all children are the same and they are not
- They are not nationally norm referenced as other assessments are
- They undermine the NZC which is celebrated as the best in the world.
- 95% of NZ principals are calling for a full review of national standards in partnership with the sector.
- Those attempting to implement national standards to fulfil legislative demands are doing so without confidence
- National standards do not reflect progress, do not take uneven learning into account or respect that children do not all start school on equal footing
- The standards cannot produce reliable data
- The standards are dangerous if they are the basis of reporting to parents
- National standards can potentially threaten our world class position in the OECD

NZPF believes:

- All schools should have robust assessment systems using tools which are nationally norm referenced and produce reliable data.
- Schools should choose their own assessment tools from a range of excellent options including PATs, STAR, Asttle and others
- ERO should be tasked with monitoring assessment practices in schools
- ERO's reporting line should be changed to reflect its independence from the Ministry of Education and should report directly to the Auditor General's Office or the Parliamentary Science & Education Select Committee.
- Schools should be adequately funded for learning support programmes such as PB4L, reading recovery, RTLB services, and many more initiatives that have shown to make a difference for children who struggle with achievement
- Schools should be encouraged to implement KaHikitia, the Maori strategy for learning which has shown to be successful in lifting Maori achievement levels.
- Schools should be encouraged to fully implement the excellent NZC and this should be their major focus

## **Professional Development (PD):**

NZPF believes:

- On-going PD is essential for NZ principals
- The Ministry should continue to provide funding for Principals to engage in PD which is relevant to their development as leaders of learning
- The recent shift in the Ministry's direction for PD, linking all options to national standards and achievement is a narrow focus and unhelpful, given the lack of confidence in national standards by the sector
- Funding should be available for the professional development of NZ Principals through programmes that they consider appropriate.
- Funding for PD for programmes that specifically assist low decile school achievement, such as First Chance, should be reinstated.

## **Self-managed Schools:**

NZPF believes that

- Schools should remain self-managed under a Board of Trustees
- Self-management includes the continuation of stewardship over school property
- NZPF does not support a move towards private/public partnerships for schools
- Schools should be accountable to their BoTs, to their parents and to their communities
- Schools should continue to have their practices monitored by ERO

## **Maori Education:**

NZPF believes that

- Lifting achievement for Maori children must include cultural, economic, social and educational solutions
- Promoting practices in schools that are more compatible with making Maori children feel a sense of belonging and connection to their school, especially in mainstream schools, would assist their motivation to learn
- Schools should be encouraged and given the necessary support to implement the Maori Strategy KaHikitia which shows promise in lifting the achievement levels for Maori children

## **Reducing the tail of underachievement**

NZPF believes that

- Solutions lie with economic and social solutions as well as educational
- The government needs to provide more resources for existing learning support programmes
- Enhancing existing learning support programmes and researching new approaches would help reduce the tail of underachievement
- Placing emphasis on Maori achievement and learning is the appropriate approach not emphasising Maori underachievement.

## **Special Education**

NZPF believes that

- The special education service requires full, fair and flexible funding
- Funding stays as close to the child as possible
- The system should allow for local initiatives and decisions to optimize financial and human resources
- There should not be a one size fits all RTL cluster service

- There should be an expanded and equitable verification process for the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme
- There be more categories in which severe behaviour must be considered
- Simpler and more responsive application process be established
- There be more flexible use of teacher and teacher aide funding
- Parents have a choice of different special education options
- It is helpful to maintain and expand special schools/units where possible as resource centres as well as possible joint enrolment with mainstream.
- School accountability be executed through annual reporting, financial audit and E.R.O. visits
- There needs to be a heightened awareness on the part of politicians and Ministry staff of children with challenging behaviour

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