



# He taonga te tamaiti Every child a taonga

Strategic plan for early learning 2019-29  
Summary

Draft for consultation

## Summary

**In April this year, the Minister of Education appointed a Ministerial Advisory Group to develop a Strategic Plan for early learning.**

The Ministerial Advisory Group worked with a Sector Reference Group and was supported by the Ministry of Education. The draft Strategic Plan sets out five goals for early learning for the next 10 years. This summary of the draft sets out these goals and their associated recommendations. To read the whole plan, including the rationale and proposed timeline, go to <https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/early-learning-strategic-plan/>

## Vision

**New Zealand's early learning system enables every child to enjoy a good life, learn and thrive in high quality settings that support their identity, language and culture and are valued by parents and whānau.**

*Ko tā ngā whakaakoranga kōhungahunga he whakarite kia tipu ora ai ia tamaiti i ngā wāhi pai rawa e hāpai ana i tōna whakapapa, tōna reo me ngā tikanga, ā, he mea whaihua hoki aua wāhi ki ngā mātua me ngā whānau.*

## Providing feedback

**We welcome your feedback on the proposals in this draft plan by the 15th March 2019.**

You can provide this via an online survey or by attending one of the hui to be held across the country.



The **online survey** and information about the hui is available at [www.conversation.education.govt.nz](http://www.conversation.education.govt.nz)

You can also email or write to us.



**Email:** [early.learning@education.govt.nz](mailto:early.learning@education.govt.nz) and put "Strategic Plan feedback" in the subject line



**Write to:**  
Early Learning Strategic Plan feedback  
Ministry of Education  
P. O. Box 166  
Wellington



# Goals and Recommendations

## Goal 1: Quality is raised for children by improving regulated standards

### 1.1 | Regulate new adult:child ratios for infants and toddlers

High adult:child ratios enable adults to interact responsively with infants and toddlers. New Zealand's minimum adult:child ratios for children under 3 years old compare unfavourably with evidence-based recommendations and with ratios in similar OECD countries.

It is proposed to increase the ratios of teachers to children under the age of 3 years in two bands: to 1:4 for under 2 year olds, and 1:5 for 2 year olds.

Age (year)	Under 2	2	3 and over
Current ratios	1:5	1:10	1:10
Proposed ratios	1:4	1:5	1:10

**Note:** Adult:child ratios are calculated across a licensed centre and do not require that children are grouped by age.

This change would be implemented in stages, beginning with higher funding rates to encourage the new ratio for under 2 year olds, followed by regulation. Next, the 2 year old ratio would have funding incentives, then regulation.

### 1.2 | Require early learning services to support secure and consistent relationships for children

Research tells us that children need secure, consistent and responsive relationships with adults.

It is proposed to require early learning services to demonstrate how their organisation of teaching staff supports infants and toddlers to experience secure and consistent care. They would also need to show how they support positive transitions for children and their whānau. The Ministry of Education would work with the early learning sector to share good examples of effective practice.

### 1.3 | Incentivise for 100% and regulate for 80% qualified<sup>i</sup> teachers in teacher-led centres, leading to regulation for 100%

Teacher qualifications make an important contribution to quality practices, eg, by enabling higher quality interactions with children.

It is proposed to increase the percentage of required staff who are qualified in teacher-led, centre-based services from 50% to 80% by 2022 and then to 100%. Where children are in separate spaces, at least one qualified teacher would need to be with each group.

This change would be implemented in stages, starting with funding incentives for 100% qualified.

<sup>i</sup> In this context, qualified means holding an early childhood teaching qualification recognised by the Education Council for registration purposes (see regulation 3 in the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008). All persons responsible and 50% of all staff in teacher-led centre-based services must be qualified <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2008/0204/latest/DLM1412611.html> regulation 44 and <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2008/0204/latest/DLM1412635.html> schedule 1). Persons Responsible must also hold a current practising certificate. For the purposes of funding, all teachers counting towards the staff hour count must hold a practising certificate (Ministry of Education Funding Handbook).

#### **1.4 | Develop advice on group size, the design of physical environments and environmental factors**

Small group sizes are linked to better quality, particularly for younger children and those living in high risk situations. Also, environments that are warm, spacious and allow children to experience nature are important for children's wellbeing and learning. Research tells us that group size and the size and design of built environments are inter-related.

It is proposed to develop comprehensive and integrated advice about the relationships between group size and wider environmental issues, and how to improve quality standards in these areas. If this advice leads to proposals for regulatory changes, financial implications would need further consideration.

#### **1.5 | Gazette *Te Whāriki* to support shared expectations**

It is proposed to gazette the principles, strands, goals and outcomes that are included in the early learning curriculum, *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa*. Gazetting will strengthen the legal status of *Te Whāriki* and create clear expectations that every child experiences a rich and empowering curriculum.

#### **1.6 | Prevent low quality service providers from opening additional services**

Currently service providers with a poor history of provision can establish new services, as long as they meet licensing standards at the time of opening.

It is proposed to require existing service providers to apply for an 'authorisation to expand'. They would need to demonstrate that they have the capability, governance and management expertise needed. This would mean that service providers with a poor history of provision could not expand without authorisation.

#### **1.7 | Increase monitoring of services**

It is proposed to introduce a consistent and rigorous programme of monitoring, including unannounced visits by the Ministry of Education or the Education Review Office (ERO). Services would also need to tell parents or whānau if the service is put on a provisional licence, and to explain the reasons why and how these are being addressed. Where a service is repeatedly on provisional license, the regulations could be amended to allow the service's licence to be cancelled. Serious concerns around one service could trigger an automatic review of all of a service provider's other licences.

## **Goal 2: Every child is empowered through timely access to the resources they need to thrive**

### **2.1 | Ensure equity funding supports children who need it**

The Government currently provides equity funding and targeted funding for disadvantage to support children to attend high quality services and to gain learning support when needed. It is proposed to review this funding to ensure that it best supports children to benefit from participation. The review would include the amount of funding and the way it is allocated.

### **2.2 | Co-construct progress tools to support children's learning and wellbeing**

We currently have limited tools for understanding children's progress across the range of capabilities described in *Te Whāriki*. It is likely that some children might need further support in areas such as health, wellbeing or language.

It is proposed that the Ministry of Education work with the early learning sector to co-construct valid, reliable and culturally appropriate progress tools for formative assessment of children's learning and development within the framework of *Te Whāriki*. These tools would provide appropriate guidance to support children's learning and wellbeing and would also identify when specialist support or other interventions are needed.

### **2.3 | Expand the number of early learning services that facilitate wrap-around social services to support children and their whānau**

The Ministry of Education would work with the early learning sector and other agencies to identify effective examples where early learning services facilitate access to social and health services. These services could include visits from public health nurses, iwi and Māori engagement for whānau, budgeting programmes and mental health programmes. The Ministry of Education will share information about how successful integrated approaches operate in diverse communities.

## **Goal 3: Investment in our workforce supports excellence in teaching and learning**

### **3.1 | Improve the consistency and levels of teacher salaries and conditions across the early learning sector**

Inconsistent salaries and conditions in the early learning sector can cause high staff turnover and constrain the opportunities teachers have to plan for children's learning. These outcomes do not benefit children.

It is proposed to develop a mechanism for the Government to support more consistent and improved teacher salaries and conditions in the early learning sector. This would also help services with a high number of children from disadvantaged backgrounds to attract capable and experienced teachers.

### **3.2 | Strengthen Initial Teacher Education (ITE)**

There is already work underway to improve the initial education of teachers.

It is proposed to make sure Initial Teacher Education (ITE) enables newly graduated teachers to fully implement *Te Whāriki*. Issues of equity of access, variable quality of available qualifications, multiple pathways to teaching, and teacher diversity would be addressed. It is also recommended that professional learning and development (PLD) be offered to help services support student teachers.

### **3.3 | Improve professional learning and development**

It is proposed to develop a sustained and planned approach to PLD, to strengthen the capability and effectiveness of teachers, kaiako, educators and leaders. PLD would include opportunities for collaborative learning and support curriculum implementation, understanding of te ao Māori and proficiency in te reo Māori, cultural competency, digital literacy and effective leadership.

### **3.4 | Develop a workforce supply strategy**

It is proposed to develop a workforce supply strategy that includes a range of pathways to achieve early learning qualifications.

This includes expanding the current scholarship programme that provides fees and allowances for early learning students in undergraduate and graduate ITE programmes and attracts Māori and Pacific students.

The Ministry of Education would also work with the sector to improve data on the early learning workforce.

## **Goal 4: Planning ensures that provision is valued, sufficient and diverse**

### **4.1 | Develop and introduce a process to determine whether a new early learning service is needed**

Currently new early learning services can be set up as long as they meet the licensing criteria. In some areas there may be more or less capacity than needed, or the provision may not be the best fit for parents and whānau.

It is proposed that new applications for a licence would only be accepted in areas where a new service is needed.

### **4.2 | Provide governance and management support for community-owned services**

Additional advice and support would be provided to community-owned services to help build effective governance and management. This would include more resources and training, as well as face-to-face support for in-depth help.

### **4.3 | Support the establishment and maintenance of early learning services on Crown land administered by the Ministry of Education**

The Ministry of Education would commit space where possible for early learning services alongside new primary school sites. This would help new services to develop close connections to schools and kura.

The Ministry of Education would also clarify expectations about current leases, including responsibility for building maintenance.

### **4.4 | Co-design an appropriate funding model with Te Kōhanga National Trust**

Te Kōhanga Reo is a Māori development initiative aimed at maintaining and strengthening Māori language and philosophies within a cultural framework inspired by Māori elders in 1982. To continue to support this valued provision, the Ministry of Education will co-design an appropriate funding model with the Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust that is consistent with the findings of the Waitangi Tribunal with respect to their claim.

### **4.5 | Co-design an appropriate funding model with the Playcentre Federation**

Playcentre is a uniquely New Zealand model of early learning service that views parents as the first and best educators of their children. Playcentres tend to have lower staffing costs than teacher-led services because parents or whānau are the educators. The administration costs may not be adequately reflected in the current funding model. To continue to support playcentres as a valued form of provision, the Ministry of Education would co-design an appropriate funding model.

### **4.6 | Consider setting up state-owned early learning services with an associated research programme**

In some communities, affordable, high quality and culturally responsive early learning services may not be available.

It is proposed to consider establishing three fully funded, state-owned and operated early learning services.

These services would facilitate access to health and social services to support parents and whānau and children's wellbeing. They could also have a research programme, to improve our knowledge and understanding about supporting wellbeing, and transitions into schooling.

## **Goal 5: The early learning system continues to innovate, learn and improve**

### **5.1 | Establish innovation hubs for early learning services**

It is proposed that the Ministry of Education contract the development of innovation hubs. These are visualised as places where services could access innovation expertise and research partners to enable practitioner-led innovation and research.

### **5.2 | Support early learning services to collaborate with other education services**

Collaboration is important in sharing good practice and supporting the transition to school.

It is proposed to provide more support for early learning services to participate with schools and kura in Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako, and for them to participate in other collaborations across the sector and between sectors.

### **5.3 | Support robust internal evaluation to ensure ongoing improvement**

It is proposed that the Ministry of Education and the ERO work together to support services to evaluate their own performance. This would strengthen the use of *Te Whāriki* and ensure ongoing improvement.



## What this means for parents and whānau

### Raising quality

Many of the recommendations in this plan aim to improve the quality of care, teaching and learning that children experience in early learning services.

Improving adult:child ratios, increasing the number of teachers who are qualified, and requiring consistent caregiving should result in children experiencing more responsive interactions with the adults who support their learning and development.

Investing in the early learning workforce will help ensure that we have enough capable teachers, kaiako and educators and that they reflect the full diversity of New Zealand society. Improving the consistency of teacher salaries and conditions should help attract and retain teachers. Improved conditions could enable teachers to have more time to meet with parents and whānau and to involve them in curriculum planning and share information about children.

Additionally, by supporting research and innovation we expect that the early learning sector will develop new knowledge about how to better support children, parents and whānau.

### Improving equity

Currently the Ministry provides some additional funding to early learning services to support disadvantaged communities. It is proposed to review this funding to ensure that it is adequate and that it best supports children who need it. The recommendation to develop progress tools will help teachers assess children's learning and wellbeing in order to tailor education to their individual needs. Facilitating the expansion of wrap-around social services should also better support children and whānau.

### Enabling choice

It is proposed that the Ministry of Education would take a more active role in planning where new services can open, based on population and the service types that are valued by parents and whānau. It is intended to strengthen provision in te reo Māori to better support children's pathways to Māori medium schooling and kura.

In some cases, the Ministry's decisions about where and what type of services open in particular locations might lead to less choice where a poor quality service is closed or a provider is prevented from expanding.

The recommendations to review the funding for ngā kōhanga reo and playcentres are intended to ensure these valued services are maintained and strengthened. Additional governance and management support for community-owned services aims to better support local parent and community initiatives.

### Will this cost parents and whānau more?

The Government currently spends approximately \$1.8 billion a year on early learning provision. This funding is paid to services in the form of subsidies for the hours children attend up to 30 hours a week (6 hours a day). Children over 3 attract a higher level of funding for 20 hours a week ('20 hours ECE'). Most services also charge fees or seek other contributions from parents. While services are regulated and funded by government, they are independent entities which make their own operational decisions.

A number of recommendations within this draft plan would increase the cost of early learning provision. It is the intention of this draft plan that affordability for parents will be maintained, or improved in those cases where affordability is a barrier to attendance. The expectation is that for these recommendations to go ahead, additional investment from government would be required.

The purpose of the draft plan is to test the level of support for each recommendation. Once feedback has been received there will be further work to be done to prioritise and plan the implementation of new initiatives.

## What we expect to see if the plan is successful

We will know we've been successful when:

1. Children are recognised as taonga and as rights holders, including having the right to a good life in high quality settings that support their overall education and wellbeing.
2. All children are able to participate in early learning services that are responsive to family and whānau needs, values and aspirations.
3. All children experience a rich curriculum which supports strong and equitable outcomes, consistent with the aspirations of *Te Whāriki*.
4. Teachers, kaiako and educators are culturally competent and are able to support Māori to succeed as Māori, promote and affirm te ao Māori and support all children's identity, language and culture.
6. Teaching in early learning services is a desired and valued profession.
7. The early learning sector innovates, learns and strives for excellence.
8. Shared understandings about children and their learning facilitate successful transitions to schools and kura.

## Proposed phasing of implementation

The goals and recommendations in this draft plan are interdependent and will help to shape the architecture of the future early learning sector. The proposed phasing identifies implementation over the short, medium and longer term which sets us on the course towards fully realising the vision of this plan. See diagram of proposed phasing on the next page.

## Assumptions

Implementing recommendations in the final Strategic Plan will be contingent on Cabinet agreement to individual proposals and future Budget processes.

# Early Learning Strategic Plan

## Proposed phasing of implementation

	SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	LONGER TERM
<b>Goal 1</b> Raising quality for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incentivise for 100% qualified teachers in teacher-led centres</li> <li>Develop advice on group size and environments</li> <li>Gazette Te Whāriki to support shared expectations</li> <li>Prevent low quality service providers from opening additional services</li> <li>Increase monitoring of services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incentivise then regulate new adult:child ratios for under 2 year olds</li> <li>Require services to support secure and consistent relationships for children</li> <li>Regulate for 80% qualified teachers in teacher-led centres by 2022</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incentivise then regulate new adult:child ratios for 2 year olds</li> <li>Regulate 100% qualified teachers in teacher-led centres</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 2</b> Empowering every child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure equity funding supports children who need it</li> <li>Co-construct progress tools to support children's learning and wellbeing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand the number of early learning services that support wrap-around social service</li> </ul>	
<b>Goal 3</b> Investing in our workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the consistency and levels of teacher salaries and conditions</li> <li>Strengthen Initial Teacher Education</li> <li>Improve professional learning and development</li> <li>Develop workforce supply strategy</li> </ul>		
<b>Goal 4</b> Planning provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and introduce a process to determine whether a new early learning service is needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the establishment and maintenance of early learning services on Ministry land</li> </ul>	
<b>Goal 5</b> Innovating and improving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide governance and management support for community-owned services</li> <li>Co-design an appropriate funding model with Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust</li> <li>Co-design an appropriate funding model with the NZ Playcentre Federation</li> <li>Support early learning services to collaborate with other education services</li> <li>Support robust internal evaluation to ensure ongoing improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider setting up state-owned early learning services</li> <li>Establish innovation hubs for early learning services</li> </ul>	



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**Kōrero**

**Mātauranga**

**Me kōrero tātou**

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