



# Our Schooling Futures: Stronger Together

## Whiria Ngā Kura Tūātitini

Report by the Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce

Written by the Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce.

Published by the Ministry of Education, New Zealand, November 2018.

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[www.education.govt.nz](http://www.education.govt.nz)

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ISBN 978-1-77669-516-4 (PRINT)  
ISBN 978-1-77669-517-1 (ONLINE)



# Whiria Ngā Kura Tūātinini

refers to the weaving together of schools and is an exhortation to action. Embedded within are notions of connectedness, interdependence, strength drawn from collaboration as well as an implicit future focus. The term originates from the whakataukī, *Whiria te kaha tūātinini, whiria te kaha tūāmanomano*.



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# Report Summary

## He Whakarāpopototanga

### *Background to the review*

In April 2018, the Tomorrow's Schools Review Independent Taskforce was appointed by the Minister of Education to carry out a review of the compulsory schooling sector.

**We were asked to consider if the schooling system is fit for purpose, and to focus on developing a system that promotes equity and excellence and ensures that every learner achieves educational success. This includes the ability of governance, management and administration of schooling to meet the needs of all New Zealanders, the environment in which schools operate, and how to give active expression to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.**

### **Our approach**

We developed a set of purpose statements and design principles of the things we considered to be the key priorities for a future education system. These have framed our approach to the review.

We have consulted widely to gather diverse views and experiences of, and information about, the schooling system. These are reflected in our findings and recommendations.

## Our overall findings

On some outcome measures, many of our students do well at school. However, the system is not working well enough for our most disadvantaged children and young people. This is not fair or just. It costs all of us when the system does not deliver for everyone. Conversely, when we get it right there will be substantial economic and social benefits for us all.

There is no evidence to suggest the current self-governing schools model has been successful in raising student achievement or improving equity as was intended by its originators. In fact, the performance of our students has plateaued and in some areas deteriorated, while the gap between the best performing and worst performing students has widened. Children from disadvantaged homes, too many Māori and Pacific families, and those with significant additional learning needs remain those most poorly served by the system.

Equally important, wellbeing data, such as the prevalence of bullying and self-harm among adolescents, tell us that there is an urgent need to collectively support schools to address complex community and societal challenges.

We struggle to address these system-wide challenges because our current schooling system has been designed for autonomous self-governing schools, not for networked and connected schools and their communities. The current system does not, and cannot provide any assurance that we have the capability or capacity to collectively improve outcomes for all our children, particularly for those in disadvantaged communities.

Of course there are success stories—examples of schools that have been able to innovate and ‘buck the trend’. But these isolated successes are hardly ever adopted across the system as a whole. Innovation and success are difficult to scale up because currently we have few mechanisms to enable system-wide improvement to be initiated, supported and sustained.

## The way forward

If we are to build a schooling system where all our learners/ākonga succeed, we need a cultural and structural transformation.

Tinkering with the existing system simply will not work, especially if future generations are to be well prepared to cope with the large and complex economic, social, and environmental challenges we face.

We need a different way of thinking about our schooling system while continuing to provide for genuine community engagement in local schools. This means we have to cut through the assumptions that underpin ‘self-governing schools’. Instead, we need to focus on an explicit commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and developing a coherent, connected and interdependent system based on collaboration, support and improvement.

**This report analyses eight key issues and makes detailed recommendations which are briefly summarised as follows.**

We struggle to address system-wide challenges because our current schooling system has been designed for autonomous self-governing schools, not for networked and connected schools and their communities.

# The 8 Key Issues:

## 1 Governance

The Board of Trustees self-governing model is not working consistently well across the country.

- » Too much time and effort is expended on matters which many boards are not well equipped to address, such as property and the appointment of the principal.
- » Many boards do not have the capacity and capabilities to do what is required of them.
- » It is very difficult for boards, as currently constituted, to represent their community.
- » Decisions which impact significantly on the lives of children can be made without due process or appropriate checks and balances.
- » A focus on 'one school, one board' rather than on the collective interest of the network of schools in the wider community causes unhealthy competition and often impacts on already disadvantaged children and their families.

### Our recommendations in brief

- » The role of boards should be re-oriented so that their core responsibilities are the School Strategic and Annual Plan, student success and wellbeing, localised curriculum and assessment.
- » Education Hubs would assume all the legal responsibilities and liabilities currently held by school boards with automatic 'delegation back' to principals/tumuaki regarding control of operational grants and staffing entitlements and recruitment.
- » Further 'delegation back' opportunities would be provided regarding property development through 5YA (five yearly agreements).
- » Boards should be involved in principals/tumuaki' appointments and retain final right of veto on their appointment, but will not be the employer of the principal or teachers.
- » Boards will not be responsible for decisions on student suspensions, exclusions, and expulsions.
- » Mana whenua representation on boards will ensure strategic knowledge for schooling and localised curricula.

Education Hubs should be Crown entities. Education Hubs would replace current Ministry of Education regional offices. They would assume many of the 'business' governance responsibilities currently held by school boards, while also providing specialist educational support to build good teaching and learning for all their students.



Education Hubs should have a Ministerial appointed governance board with at least half of the positions filled by practising educators, and other positions from local iwi and community stakeholders.

Education Hubs will support schools individually, as well as collectively.

As part of the Crown's obligations to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, active consideration should be given to the establishment of a national Education Hub for Kaupapa Māori settings.

*Education Hubs should:*

- » Partner with and monitor schools on a regular and collaborative basis to ensure they are supported, and any problems are identified and responded to early.
- » Provide and/or broker local curriculum, learning, assessment and pedagogy advisory and development services to teachers; and provide leadership advisers to support principals/tumuaki.
- » Support teachers/kaiako and principals/tumuaki to share their effective practices for the benefit of all the schools in the network.
- » Assume all the legal responsibilities and liabilities currently held by school boards with automatic 'delegation back' to principals/tumuaki regarding control of operational grants and staffing entitlements/recruitment.
- » Provide further 'delegation back' opportunities regarding property development through 5YA.
- » Support Boards of Trustees.
- » Provide principals/tumuaki with ongoing employment, appoint them to schools on five year contracts, and ensure their performance management.
- » Take responsibility for learner support provision.
- » Ensure the network of schools in the area is properly managed and utilised, that enrolment schemes are fair, and that unhealthy school competition is mediated and reduced.
- » Provide parent and student advocacy and complaints services, and take responsibility for processes when students are suspended.
- » Systematically review progress and decide goals for the Education Hub network in ways that involve school leaders, teachers, Boards of Trustees, and community stakeholders.

# The 8 Key Issues:

## 2 Schooling Provision

The nature, type, provision, and accessibility of meaningful schooling for all New Zealanders is inadequate, and characterised by:

- » Poor provision for Kaupapa Māori schooling
- » Inefficient management of the network of schooling in an area
- » Inconsistent transitions between schools
- » Underutilisation of The Correspondence School - Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura), including its digital resources, flexible learning infrastructure, and expertise with disengaged students.

### Our recommendations in brief

There is a need for a national school network strategy that prioritises:

- » The investigation of a dedicated pathway for Kaupapa Māori settings that would include planned capacity building to support the most proficient Māori language provision for teaching and learning.
- » Seamless student transitions between schools as they progress through the education system.
- » The phasing in of schooling provision that provides more stability and better transitions for students - for example, primary, middle school, senior college, or full primary, secondary school, or composite school.
- » The further development of full service schools and the more intensive use of school buildings and facilities both during and out of school hours.
- » Community-wide flexible curriculum assessment and timetabling offerings in schools, including enhanced digital infrastructure and provision.
- » An investigation and possible change in the role of Te Kura to more closely incorporate its learning expertise across the education system as a whole.

## 3

## Competition and Choice

Unhealthy competition between schools has significantly increased as a result of the self-governing school model. It has also impacted on the ability of some students and whānau to exercise choice.

- » Schools have been encouraged to compete for students rather than collaborate.
- » This has impacted particularly on many Māori, Pacific, and other disadvantaged students' communities, and increased ethnic and socio economic segregation.
- » Decile ratings have been misused as a proxy for school quality.
- » Some schools have unfairly and sometimes illegally prevented local students enrolling.
- » Current school funding and staffing formulae and principal remuneration incentivise competition for students.

### Our recommendations in brief

We need to ensure that:

- » All enrolment schemes are fair and equitable with the Education Hub having final decision making rights.
- » Limits are placed on schools recruiting out of zone students.
- » Limits are placed on the donations schools may request.
- » Schools which enrol international fee-paying students provide for them independently of government funding.
- » Students with learning support needs have the same access to schools as other students.
- » School provision, including opening and closure decisions are made based on community needs and equity considerations.
- » State-integrated schools are treated in the same way as state schools with regard to the operation of transport subsidies and enrolment schemes.

# The 8 Key Issues:

## 4 Disability and Learning Support

Students with learning support requirements should have the same access to schooling as other students and it is clear that currently they do not.

- » There are problems with students and parents being made to feel unwelcome when seeking enrolment in some schools, and once enrolled.
- » Support available for some of these students is highly fragmented or almost non-existent.
- » Support takes a long time to arrive.

### Our recommendations in brief

The Ministry of Education's new Learning Support delivery model and the draft Disability and Learning Support Action Plan will hopefully provide much needed coherence and increased funding and accessibility for these students and their parents. In addition, we need to ensure that:

- » The Ministry of Education continues to lead national strategy and policy work as well as ensuring that national priorities are regularly reviewed.
- » The Teaching Council works with Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers to ensure better preparation of teachers/kaiako regarding learning needs and inclusion.
- » Every school has a learning support coordinator.
- » The Education Hubs employ specialist staff, Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLBs) and some teacher aides and coordinate work with local health and other agencies.
- » The Education Hubs would apply to national funding pools to reduce the burden on parents and schools.
- » Effective practices, innovations and localised responses are shared across Education Hubs and the Ministry of Education.

## 5

## Teaching

The quality of teaching is the major ‘in school’ influence on student success but our teacher workforce strategies lack the necessary support, coherence and coordination.

- » The process of recruiting, preparing, and supporting new teachers/kaiako as they begin their careers lacks any obvious national strategy.
- » Mechanisms to provide professional support to teachers/kaiako through their careers including advice and PLD are fragmented and limited.
- » The Teaching Council mandated model of teacher appraisal as professional development, while working well in some schools, has created a compliance ‘tick the box’ culture in others.
- » While the current Kāhui Ako model of school collaboration is beginning to show evidence of success in some places, it is too inflexible and can restrict local innovation.
- » There are not enough incentives and mechanisms through which teachers/kaiako can collaborate or develop meaningful career pathways.
- » The status and the roles of paraprofessionals in schools are limited and represent a significant lost opportunity for national schooling workforce development.

### Our recommendations in brief

It is important to ensure:

- » We recruit a diversity of teachers/kaiako which matches the diversity of students as closely as possible.
- » Development of more flexible initial teacher education pathways to registered teacher status.
- » Guaranteed employment for newly trained teachers.
- » Viable pathways for the development and enhanced status of paraprofessionals.
- » Provision of proven national professional learning and development (PLD) programmes and local advisory services working with the Ministry of Education Curriculum, Learning, Assessment and Pedagogy Unit to support the work of teachers/kaiako.
- » Options for secondment between schools and Education Hubs and the Ministry of Education and Teaching Council.
- » More flexible guidelines for the Kāhui Ako approach.
- » More flexible guidelines for teacher appraisal.

# The 8 Key Issues:

## 6 School Leadership

Leadership is central to school improvement and yet we have few formal and planned structures to develop and sustain school leaders. In this section we concentrate on the role of the principal/tumuaki because of its vital importance in schooling success.

- » The role of principals/tumuaki is extremely demanding, and principals/tumuaki can find themselves spending too much time and energy on matters not directly related to the core business of teaching and learning.
- » There are no established mechanisms to identify leaders early and encourage/support them into leadership roles.
- » Principal appointment and performance management processes are not always robust, or even credible, because boards do not always have the capability or capacity to carry out such a task.
- » Ensuring good quality people apply for principal positions remains a key issue, particularly in rural areas and lower decile schools.
- » There are few established mechanisms for principals/tumuaki to access leadership related PLD.
- » There are few opportunities for principals/tumuaki to move into leadership positions outside and across schools and for them to see this as a next professional step in their career.

### Our recommendations in brief

The Teaching Council's Leadership Strategy and Leadership Capabilities Framework provide a sound basis for developing and improving effective leadership. In addition, we need to ensure:

- » Establishment of a dedicated Leadership Centre within the Teaching Council that will champion a coherent, research based approach to developing leadership capabilities at all levels of the system and establish guidelines for eligibility to apply for principal/tumuaki positions
- » Appointment of leadership advisers in Education Hubs to work closely with principals/tumuaki. They will also:
  - › Identify leadership potential and create diverse talent pools.
  - › Work with Boards to appoint principals/tumuaki.
  - › Ensure that schools in challenging circumstances get leaders with recent proven leadership experience.
  - › Provide connected processes for the induction and ongoing mentoring of newly appointed principals/tumuaki.
  - › Provide ongoing regular support and professional learning and development for all principals/tumuaki.
  - › Ensure that effective principals/tumuaki contribute to leadership support and growth across the Education Hub.

## 7

## School Resourcing

The overall resourcing for the compulsory schooling sector is currently inadequate to meet the needs of many learners/ākonga and those who work in it.

- » Our current decile-based equity funding to schools is too imprecise and not fit for purpose.
- » The amount of equity funding that is delivered to New Zealand schools is approximately half that of comparable OECD countries.
- » Primary schools receive about half the management staffing that secondary schools receive.
- » The current funding formula disadvantages small schools.

### Our recommendations in brief

We need to ensure that:

- » The proposed equity index is implemented as soon as possible and prioritised for the most disadvantaged schools.
- » Equity resourcing is increased to a minimum of 6% of total resourcing and applied across operational, staffing and property formulas.
- » Management and staffing entitlements are reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose.
- » Best practice in the use of equity funding by schools is shared across Education Hubs.

# The 8 Key Issues:

## 8

## Central Education Agencies

A number of significant structural issues and policy settings make it difficult for the agencies to be as effective as they might be.

- » Political imperatives too often take short term priority over the long term best interests of children.
- » Because schools are self-governing, agencies have lost the capacity and capability to deeply influence schools in their core business of teaching and learning.
- » The agencies have not been adequately funded for what they have been asked to do.
- » The agencies are not able to be sufficiently responsive to the overall potential and/or needs of schools.
- » Current methods of evaluating schools and the schooling system are inadequate and may lead to negative unintended consequences.
- » There are overlaps in function across different agencies.

### Our recommendations in brief

In order to achieve both the cultural and the structural transformation we are seeking, it is vital to ensure:

- » Significant reconceptualisation and reconfiguration of the system stewardship function of the Ministry of Education. The reconfigured Ministry would monitor and work closely with Education Hubs and have a strong national leadership role in curriculum, learning, assessment (including NCEA assessment) and pedagogy, as well as advisory services for teachers, educational research, policy development, and data analysis for system improvement.
- » The creation of a new independent Education Evaluation Office reporting directly to Parliament which:
  - › Reports regularly on the performance of the education system.
  - › Evaluates the performance of the Ministry of Education and Education Hubs.
  - › Is responsible for all quality assurance functions currently carried out by NZQA.
- » The Teaching Council should include a new Leadership Centre to operationalise the Leadership Strategy and Capabilities Framework.
- » The disestablishment of the Education Review Office (ERO) and New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA).

# Concluding comments

The recommendations in this report signal that it is time for cultural and structural transformation in our education system.

Too many of our Māori and Pacific students, and too many of our students from disadvantaged backgrounds, are not succeeding as they should, are not reaching their potential, and have not been doing so for far too long.

When we address these issues the social and economic benefits for these groups and for all of us will be enormous.

We have listened to the multiple voices of those who have experienced schooling as learners/ākonga, as whānau, as teachers/kaiako and as leaders and we have considered the research.

As a result, we are convinced that the totality of recommendations in this report, when fully implemented and integrated, will contribute significantly to bringing about the cultural and structural transformation in schooling that is required. In the schooling system we envisage, everyone works together and continues to learn from each other so that all children and young people in Aotearoa New Zealand are well positioned to succeed.





**Kōrero**

**Mātauranga**

**Me kōrero tātou**

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