

## MEDIA RELEASE

Northern Wairoa Principals Association Responds to Government's Rapid Curriculum Changes Date: 20 August 2024

The Northern Wairoa Principals Association (NWPA) joins with other Principals' Associations and the New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) in expressing serious concerns over the Government's proposed changes to the national curriculum. The speed at which these changes, particularly around structured literacy and structured maths, are being pushed is alarming and places significant strain on schools and educators.

While we acknowledge the importance of continually evolving our education system to meet the needs of all students, the current pace of implementation is unrealistic. The tight timelines set by the Government do not account for the practical challenges faced by the schools in our communities. Staffing shortages already pose a significant hurdle, and now schools are expected to undertake extensive professional development and curriculum adjustments without adequate support.

The data that has been used to justify these changes is being misrepresented, suggesting a crisis that does not reflect the realities of our schools. This misuse of data undermines the hard work and progress that many schools have made. It also adds unnecessary pressure on teachers who are already thinly stretched. The lack of sound pedagogy in the proposed changes further exacerbates the situation, raising concerns about the long-term impact on teaching and learning.

The principals of the Northern Wairoa region join colleagues from across Aotearoa in expressing deep concern about the absence of Learning Support provision from recent government education policy announcements. The changes being proposed in their current form do not specifically have our 3 national priority learner groups of Maori learners, Pacific learners and children with additional learning needs at their heart. Therefore they don't help schools and their communities meet the needs of these groups as we are expected to through current MOE planning and reporting guidelines.

The Prime Minister has referred to small group interventions for literacy and numeracy but funding to support this has been missing from the rhetoric. Our schools need more teacher aides to help address a range of learning and wellbeing issues arising from inequity, and to support students with additional needs. A plan for training staff in trauma, anxiety, behaviour management and support for neurodivergent learners and other disabled learners is urgently required if we are ever to lift the achievement of struggling students. Students cannot progress in their literacy and numeracy until their wellbeing and neurodevelopmental needs are addressed.

The NWPA reiterates the Taitokerau Principals' Association in echoing the sentiments expressed in the recent media release from the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI). We are concerned about the lack of facilitators available to support the professional development needed to implement these changes effectively. Without proper guidance and resources, schools are left to navigate these complex transitions on their own, which is neither fair nor sustainable.

It is also troubling that the messaging being communicated to the public does not align with the reality in many schools. Communities are being led to believe that these changes are widely accepted and easily integrated when, in fact, they are causing significant disruption.

These plans reflect the unique needs and aspirations of their students and families, yet the fear is they will now be ignored in favour of a one-size-fits-all approach from the Government. The NWPA urges the Government to reconsider the pace and approach of these curriculum changes. We call for a more collaborative process that respects the professional judgment of educators and the voices of our communities. Our primary focus should be on providing a quality education that meets the needs of every child, not on hastily implemented changes that threaten to undermine the stability of our schools.

Todd Warmington

NWPA  
President