

5 November 2014

Hon Hekia Parata
Minister of Education
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Partnership Schools-Kura Hourua: Evaluation Programme

Tēnā koe Minister

On behalf of the Partnership Schools Kura Hourua Authorisation Board ("the Board"), I am writing to recommend changes to the scope, approach and timing of the external component of the evaluation programme approved by Cabinet to examine the impact and effectiveness of the Partnership Schools initiative.

Consulting firm Martin, Jenkins and Associates ("Martin Jenkins") has been appointed to undertake the external evaluation, which is currently scheduled to proceed in three phases commencing in July 2014 and concluding in November 2017.

Martin Jenkins issued its draft report on the first phase of the evaluation in October 2014. The Board was not consulted by Martin Jenkins in the preparation of this document. On reviewing the plan the Board was concerned to note the following points:

1. The way in which the Partnership Schools initiative is described in several parts of the report is misleading. For example, the outline of the design intention misconstrues the priorities. There is a lack of focus on the primary intent of PSKH, which is to raise achievement levels among the priority group of students.
2. The report proposes a snapshot in time review of the processes and institutional supports around the initiative. However these are, rightly, still evolving and revisions to a number of the structures and processes are currently underway. These include the roles of the various institutions involved, support for potential applicants, application and evaluation, performance assessment and the funding formula.
3. Much of the immediate assessment activity proposed in the Martin Jenkins plan is required to be undertaken by the Board, ERO and the Ministry working together. Duplicating this work raises important questions around efficiency and will divert school resources unnecessarily.
4. There is also an impediment to MartinJenkins' ability to assess the impact and effectiveness of the first schools in their first year of operation. To date, due to the newness of the schools and the fact that the performance evaluation framework being developed by the Ministry is still work-in-progress, insufficient data has been collected from the schools to enable an assessment of either absolute educational performance results in applicable year groups or of progress over the year.

5. Some of the outcomes the plan proposes to assess defy measurement over the three year time frame it covers, for example, the expectation that young people are to become lifelong learners.
6. With regard to stakeholders, the plan states that at the output level 'change will be most evident among parents and students.' Emphasis is placed on parents understanding what the kura has to offer, high aspirations for their child, and engagement. While this should be an outcome of the initiative, it is not something which, in terms of evaluation, should be regarded as a measure of whether the programme is succeeding.
7. The Cabinet paper requires an evaluation of the establishment phase. This would involve a review of the RFP process, including the Ministry and Board evaluations, the interview and selection process, contract negotiation and execution. The important issue of the time between Ministerial approval and the opening of the schools should also be evaluated. None of these issues are addressed in the Martin Jenkins plan.
8. The plan proposes a complex 'intervention logic model' which contains numerous components that are incidental to the PSKH initiative – for example, universal skills needed for work and for life, and security of culture, language and identity. Very considerable work would need to go into measuring such outputs. To be meaningful the period of assessment would need to be at least a decade.
9. The plan contains a significant component of work in developing a framework (using international literature, focus groups etc) for assessing innovation. That framework will then be administered to schools to assess the quality of their delivery. This is one of a number of areas where the plan emphasises inputs over outputs. It would be misleading to conclude the policy is failing if, notwithstanding improved educational outcomes, schools have not applied the innovation framework Martin Jenkins designs.

A number of other aspects of the Martin Jenkins evaluation plan cause us concern, and we are happy to discuss these with officials.

The Board supports the objectives of the evaluation of Partnership Schools as set out in Cabinet minute (12) 26/6 and amplified in the paper you submitted last year to the Cabinet Social Policy Committee. The Board's view is that the plan proposed by Martin Jenkins goes beyond the scope of the Cabinet paper, and as currently framed will seek to evaluate outcomes that are not essential to the success of the PSKH initiative, but be unable in the short term to evaluate those that are essential, ie educational performance results. Based on practical experience with the model it is clear now that the evaluation will need to extend beyond late 2017 to produce meaningful results.

In point 7 above reference is made to the timeframe between Ministerial approval of new Partnership kura and their opening date. The Board has reached the view that the current timeframe of approximately six months is too short, and we anticipate that the external evaluation will reach the same conclusion. To address this issue we recommend that an application process be commenced in 2015 to ensure that successful applicants have sufficient time to open their schools in February 2017. An added advantage of this recommendation is that it ensures that the PSKH initiative maintains momentum. It is possible that one or two applications, notably those from existing Partnership kura wishing to expand or open additional schools, may be sufficiently advanced

that they could commence in 2016. This would of course be subject to Cabinet approval of funding and the Ministry and Board being satisfied that the applicants are in a high state of readiness.

In summary, we recommend that:

- I. the Martin Jenkins review be re-scoped to better reflect Cabinet's intent
- II. the current phase be deferred until that re-scoping is complete
- III. the Board be consulted to ensure there is alignment between the scope of the review and the approach the Ministry of Education and the Board are taking in executing the PSKH initiative, and
- IV. the timing of the next application round be reviewed in the light of experience with rounds 1 and 2.

I would be happy to meet with you and the Under-Secretary to discuss this recommendation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Isaac', written in a cursive style.

Catherine Isaac
Chair, PSKH Authorisation Board

Cc: Mr David Seymour
Under-Secretary for Education



Office of Hon Hekia Parata

Minister of Education

10 DEC 2014

Catherine Isaac
Chairperson
Partnership Schools Authorisation Board
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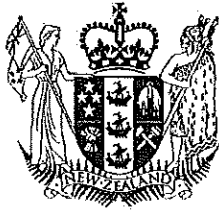
Tēnā koe Ms Isaac

Thank you for your letter of 5 December 2014 about the evaluation of Partnership Schools | Kura Hourua, which the Ministry of Education has contracted to Martin Jenkins and Associates.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Mr David Seymour, will be following up the Authorisation Board's concerns on our behalf.

Heoi anō

Hon Hekia Parata
Minister of Education



Office of David Seymour MP

MP for Epsom

Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the

Minister of Education

Minister for Regulatory Reform

24 March 2015

Catherine Isaac

Chair

Partnership Schools | Kura Hourua Authorisation Board

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Dear Catherine

The Minister of Education, Hon Hekia Parata, has asked me to follow up on the Authorisation Board's (the Board's) concerns about the external evaluation of the Partnership Schools | Kura Hourua model, as outlined in your letter to her dated 5 November 2014.

Firstly, I would like to thank you for sharing the Board's concerns and advice. I am committed to having a world-class evaluation programme for the model and recognise and appreciate the value the Board's expertise can bring to this.

As phase one is nearly complete, I do not consider it workable to re-scope this phase of the evaluation. However, I have asked the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) to work the Board to fine-tune the focus and methodology for phase two of the evaluation, prior to its commencement in July 2015. I understand that the Ministry will share a draft of the phase one evaluation report with the Board in May 2015.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Seymour'.

David Seymour

Parliamentary Under-Secretary
to the Minister of Education