



Briefing Note: Meeting with the New Zealand Principals' Federation –
Wednesday 7 April 2021

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| To: | Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education | | |
| Cc: | Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education | | |
| Date: | 6 April 2021 | Priority: | Medium |
| Security Level: | In Confidence | METIS No: | 1254782 |
| Drafter: | Talia Pollock | DDI: | s 9(2)(a) |
| Key Contact: | Ben O'Meara | DDI: | |
| Messaging seen by Communications team: | No | Round Robin: | No |

Purpose of Paper

This paper provides background information for your scheduled meeting with Perry Rush, National President of the New Zealand Principals' Federation – Ngā Tumuaki o Aotearoa (NZPF). The NZPF represents more than 2,000 principals from state and state-integrated primary, intermediate, middle and secondary schools. The meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 7 April 2021.

Summary

We understand Mr Rush is interested in discussing support for schools that have been directed to enrol children with challenging behaviour. He would also like to discuss expansion of the Te Tupu Managed Moves pilot initiative, legal advice NZPF has received on directed enrolments, the plan for provision of guidance counselling in primary and intermediate schools, and agencies supporting young people in crisis.

Proactive release

Agree that this Briefing will not be released at this time because it includes information that is still under active consideration.

Agree / Disagree


Ben O'Meara
Group Manager
Education System Policy


Hon Jan Tinetti
Associate Minister of Education

06/04/2021

6/4/2021

Background

1. You are meeting Perry Rush, National President of the New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) on Wednesday 7 April 2021.
2. Mr Rush started in the role as President in January 2020. He has previously been the Principal at Hastings Intermediate, Island Bay School in Wellington and Discovery School in Christchurch.
3. You previously met with Mr Rush on 10 December 2020, to discuss Te Tupu Managed Moves, learning support, and behavioural issues in schools [METIS 1235768 refers].
4. Mr Rush is also meeting with Minister Kelvin Davis, Associate Minister of Education (Māori Education) on Thursday 8 April to discuss challenging student behaviour and Te Tupu Managed Moves, addressing racism in schools and Te Hurihanganui, teaching Aotearoa New Zealand Histories, and Te Ahu o te Reo Māori [METIS 1252464 refers].

Topics for discussion

5. We understand Mr Rush is interested in discussing:
 - a. Challenging student behaviour and the Government's response to principals' concerns;
 - b. Te Tupu Managed Moves and the outcome of NZPF's 'budget bid';
 - c. Legal advice that NZPF has received on directed enrolments;
 - d. Counselling services in primary and intermediate schools;
 - e. Dysfunction of agencies supporting young people in crisis.

Challenging student behaviour

6. Mr Rush is interested in discussing resourcing and support for schools that have been directed to enrol children with challenging behaviour. The NZPF has expressed frustration about the current level of support available to schools, and in February wrote to its members advising them to consider refusing Ministry of Education directions to enrol these children unless they are certain they will get appropriate support.

Correspondence from principals

7. Subsequently the Ministry has received over 100 letters from principals about students with behaviour that challenges others, including fighting, hitting, kicking, biting, intimidation, threatening harm, weapons, and damage to property. The most common age groups referred to were 5-year olds and 11-12-year olds.
8. The most common reason stated for student's behaviour was trauma. Principals referenced family and social factors such as family violence, parental mental health, poverty, abuse, neglect, drugs, alcohol, and gang involvement. Most of the letters specifically acknowledged the effect of social issues and society on student behaviour. Some identified specific diagnoses affecting student behaviour.
9. Principals reported that teachers feeling pressure to resolve these situations is resulting in burn out and lack of job satisfaction, with some leaving their roles. They claimed that other students are feeling stressed and unable to learn, and that in some instances, other families have left the school because of the student's behaviour.

Suggested response

10. The Ministry has already sent out a common response to letters from principals, as well as calling each principal who identified specific students to discuss their concerns and ensure they were receiving the appropriate support available from the Ministry and other parts of the Government.
11. You may wish to say that the Ministry is working to continuously improve our service offering by reviewing and evaluating existing supports, including the Expanded Behaviour Service, Positive Behaviour For Learning – School Wide (PB4L-SW), and the Early Intervention Service. The Government is also trialing new initiatives (for example Te Tupu), investing in new initiatives (counsellors in schools and self-regulation in early learning services), and working to identify gaps in service provision. We have increased our focus on prevention and early intervention, shifting away from exclusively focusing on responding to challenging behaviours with individual ākonga, and towards more preventative and collaborative culturally enhancing practices.
12. As you know, Budget 2021 will reprioritise funding to expand intensive support options for primary school students with wellbeing and behavioural needs by expanding Te Kahu Tōī, the Intensive Wraparound Service (IWS) [METIS 1255185 refers]. You may therefore wish to advise Mr Rush that the government is continuing to consider options to address his concerns.
13. While the Budget 2021 changes will alleviate some of the immediate pressure schools are experiencing, you may wish to say that more work is needed on our broader system level response across the universal, targeted, and individual tiers to promote positive behaviour in schools.
14. As part of Priority 4 of the Learning Support Action Plan, the Ministry is scoping a review of our interventions for high and complex learning support needs, including IWS and the Behaviour Service. Getting the right flexibility in our services will be part of this review. You may wish to advise Mr Rush that this review is getting underway.
15. Supports for ākonga with behaviour and wellbeing needs are more effective when they are provided as a component of wider, well-integrated wellbeing supports. We need to focus on supporting inclusive learning environments where diversity is valued and planned for, as well as building the confidence and capability of teachers to understand and address the relational and environmental factors that influence behaviour.
16. Behaviour challenges are influenced by the environments in which they occur. When faced with challenging behaviour, we can help support teachers to partner with ākonga and their whānau to understand contributing factors. Plans can then be implemented to address unmet needs by supporting ākonga and their whānau.

17.

9(2)(g)(i)

Te Tupu Managed Moves

18. NZPF have proposed an expansion of the Te Tupu Managed Moves (Te Tupu) pilot currently operating in Napier. The pilot supports primary and intermediate students who are in crisis and display wellbeing and behavioural needs that may be challenging to others and that are difficult to manage within a classroom environment.

19. Te Tupu provides wrap-around support to students in Years 3-8 who are disengaged from education or at risk of disengaging and their whānau. It is a community-led initiative based in Napier and is governed by school leaders, iwi, health and social services providers and the Ministry of Education. It has been underway since 2019, and early indications suggest that participating students are experiencing positive education and wellbeing outcomes to enable their transition back to school. We expect to receive the final evaluation next year.

20. s 9(2)(f)(iv)

21. On 22 March, Hon Chris Hipkins wrote to Mr Rush to say that the Ministry is exploring how best to support the development of local initiatives that support the wellbeing and educational needs of students with behaviour that may be challenging to others, which could include Te Tupu. He noted that the success of Te Tupu has been dependent on the desire of the community to work together to find solutions, the strength of local relationships, and the disposition and skills of the individuals involved.

22. Following this, NZPF has written to its members to request information on their ability to set up a Te Tupu service in their community, with the intent to provide this information to Minister Hipkins.

23. 9(2)(g)(i)

NZPF legal advice on directed enrolments

24. NZPF has stated that it has received preliminary legal advice saying that the Ministry cannot direct a school to enrol a child without fully considering the impact on health and safety.¹ The Ministry has not seen this advice.
25. In 2020, there were 704 instances of exclusion of students (aged under 16 years) from school and 207 directed enrolments of students who had previously been excluded. Use of the power to direct is a very last resort and one that is not used lightly.
26. **We recommend that you** say that you are not willing to discuss legal advice that you have not seen.

Counselling services in primary and intermediate schools

27. Budget 2020 included \$44m over four years to contract community organisations to provide guidance counselling to primary and secondary students.
28. The Ministry is currently undertaking a procurement process to allocate this funding. We have received 69 responses to our request for proposals. These are currently being evaluated by a panel including the Ministry of Health, NZ Association of Counsellors and Ministry of Education.
29. The panel will identify preferred suppliers based on their capability to provide the greatest range of age-appropriate and evidence-based counselling practices for children, and their experience of working with Māori and Pacific ākonga and ākonga with disabilities.

¹ <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/438871/principals-get-legal-advice-over-violent-students>

30. We will determine the schools who will receive counselling services by matching the locations where the preferred suppliers can operate to the schools with the greatest need according to the Ministry's Equity Index and attendance data. The Equity Index estimates the extent to which each child grows up in socio-economically disadvantaged circumstances and has a strong correlation with indices that measure mental health needs and the impacts of COVID-19.
31. We are currently designing how the services will be delivered and implemented with collaborative input from sector peak bodies, counselling bodies, schools and other government agencies, including the Ministry of Health.
32. The Ministry is working to ensure that the counselling services can commence during Term 2.
33. 9(2)(g)(i)

Agencies supporting ākonga in urgent need of safety and wellbeing supports

34. There is substantial interagency work underway at both a national and regional level to respond to major socio-economic issues for children and young people and their families and whānau, including child poverty, family violence, inadequate housing, mental wellbeing, and improving the early years.
35. These are complex problems that require Government, communities, and families to work together to solve. The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy provides the framework for the work of Government agencies, non-government agencies and communities to work together to improve child and youth wellbeing.
36. Schools and school principals have a role to play in the response. There are existing resources that schools can use, and part of the Ministry's role is to help school principals understand what those are. There is also an opportunity for schools to work together and share good practice about supporting children and young people in crises. We acknowledge that some schools will already do this.
37. **We recommend that you** acknowledge that effective cross-agency work is essential for supporting ākonga who urgently need safety and wellbeing support, and that schools cannot be expected to handle this alone. Social sector agencies are working together to align what they are doing to support children and young people, and to align with community action.