MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
TE TĀHUHU O TE MĀTAURANGA

Briefing Note: Options for addressing the impact of COVID-19 on learning in schools

To:	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
Cc:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	5 August 2022	Priority:	High
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Purpose of Paper

This note provides initial, indicative costings for a range of options to support additional learning opportunities for students in response to the disruptions to learning caused by COVID-19 in 2022. This is to support a discussion at Monday's Agency meeting.

Summary

- We have estimated indicative costings for the following five options to support additional learning opportunities for students in response to the disruptions to learning caused by COVID-19 and other winter illnesses in 2022. These include:

  o Tutoring;

  o Topping-up schools' operating grants to enable extra staffing;

  o Expanding Te Kura summer school enrolments for secondary students;

  o Summer learning programmes for primary students; and

  o Community learning hubs and homework centres.

- The options are focussed on providing support across the end of this year and the start of 2023, for senior students to 'catch-up' on specific aspects of their learning targeted to attaining NCEA credits, or literacy and numeracy skills. We have costed options for extension to years 9-10 and the primary sector where appropriate.

- Providing a combination of these proposals may be needed to ensure that at least some support is available to all target students. For example, expanding existing services may not provide equitable coverage or might take time to scale up across regions.

- In addition to the immediate focus for this year and 2023, we could also develop options to be put in place for the medium term, to support ongoing recovery from the impact of COVID-19. This could be focused on younger cohorts, who have more time in their schooling to make up for the learning opportunities they've missed since the start of the pandemic.

- Following your direction on Monday, we can provide further alternative approaches to the design and delivery of these options.

Proactive Release Recommendation

Agree that the Ministry of Education release this briefing in full once final decisions have been made.

Agree / Disagree

Ben O'Meara
Group Manager
Te Puna Kaupapahere
05/08/2022

Hon Jan Tinetti
Associate Minister of Education

06/08/2022

Background

1. In the Agency meeting on 19 July 2022, you asked for options to support additional learning opportunities in response to the disruptions to learning caused by COVID-19 in 2022.

2. This briefing note provides options with our initial, high-level costings, to support a discussion on next steps.

Options to support additional learning opportunities

3. As outlined above, we have estimated indicative costings for five options based on a range of assumptions that will need to be tested further following initial discussion with you.

4. For this paper, we assume that it will be feasible to stand up the options this year, however, there are risks about the availability of staff and services that may mean we cannot guarantee implementation at sufficient scale or speed to meet the needs of target schools and students.

5. We considered other options being used by some other jurisdictions, including targeting the curriculum or extending the school day, but did not pursue these as we did not consider they would be desirable or feasible in the New Zealand context. Targeting certain curriculum areas, such as mathematics or literacy, could mean learners miss out on other learning areas that they enjoy. Extending the school day is not viable, given the levels of stress and tiredness already being reported among both teachers and learners.

6. Further work is needed to confirm the feasibility of the options presented, as well as to confirm the detailed costs and implementation approach. This would include consideration of how options might work in combination to achieve the best results, as well as allowing co-design for Māori-medium and Kaupapa-Māori settings. We have costed options for both primary and secondary students.

Tutoring services for primary and secondary students

7. This option would provide funding for small-group tutoring for students. We could go to the market to recruit and use existing private tutoring services to begin provision in term 4.

8. Existing private providers are likely to be well set up to support senior secondary students at NCEA level, although they may not have been operating widely in Māori-medium or our most at risk-student populations.

9. We would expect tutors to engage closely with schools to ensure they are providing support that aligns with the school's programme and the specific learning needs of each student.

10. We cannot be certain that there will be sufficient tutors immediately available to guarantee national coverage and scaling up could take time to recruit or identify sufficient tutors with the right mix of knowledge and skills.

11. In addition to existing private tutoring services, tutors could be tertiary students, teacher trainees, retired teachers, apprentices with appropriate secondary school quals, community members or registered teachers. It may be that Te Kura is able to provide tutoring to some students, but we have not explored this option with Te Kura yet. Given

3

the importance of ensuring tutors have the necessary skills and knowledge, we would need to test the feasibility of the supply of tutors that have the necessary subject-matter expertise and language to work in Māori-medium or Kaupapa-Māori settings.

12. Evidence suggests tutoring can have a positive impact on student learning, over the medium term, when done right – i.e. tutors are well trained, there is sufficient frequency and intensity, and small group sizes: "[s]hort, regular [tutoring] sessions (about 30 minutes, three to five times a week) over a set period of time (up to ten weeks) appear to result in optimum impact."[1]

13. Although one session a week can help students, a substantial positive difference can be measured when that amount increases, particularly when students engage in at least three sessions per week.[2] Larger effects on more 'at risk' students are consistently being found. Tutoring groups of 2 to 4 students are less expensive to run than one-on-one tutoring but retain many of the benefits. Once tutoring sessions expand to include more than four students, research begins to show diminishing returns on results. The UK's National Tutoring Programme (NTP) was designed using an evidence-based approach, but it has faced implementation challenges.[3] This overseas experience shows that any attempt to introduce system-wide tutoring needs to be done with great care to avoid difficulties, and we consider that it's important to take time to develop an approach that will produce the best benefits.

14. It would be preferable to ring-fence the funding for this option so it is only used for tutoring and configured in ways that will best support positive impacts. Work is needed on how this could be done, while providing schools appropriate flexibility to manage tutoring in a way that meets their local circumstances. Work is also needed on how to evaluate the impact of a tutoring programme.

15. There are different options for which cohorts might receive tutoring:

    a. Students in Years 11-13 seeking to attain NCEA;

    b. All secondary students across Years 9-13;

    c. Students from Years 4-13, with a focus on literacy and mathematics for Years 4-8 and subject specific offerings for Years 9-13.

16. The implications of lost learning are most immediate for students in Years 11-13 as they will be seeking to attain NCEA and have less time in their remaining schooling to catch up. For students in Year 13, this will be the final opportunity for them to do so. However, given the level of disruption students in Years 9 and 10 will have experienced over the pandemic, coupled with the existing risks of disengagement during a transition into a secondary schooling environment, we recommend making tutoring available to all secondary year groups if possible. This would help mitigate ongoing issues for the younger cohorts as they progress through NCEA in years to come, particularly with the introduction of the literacy and numeracy corequisites due to take place in 2024.

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[1] Education Endowment Foundation. (2021). *One to one tuition: High impact for moderate cost based on moderate evidence.* Retrieved from https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/one-to-one-tuition

[2] Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab. (n.d.). *Designing an evidence-based tutoring program: A guide to core principles.* Retrieved from https://ccee-ca.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/MIT-JPAL-Tutoring-Best-Practices-for-California_.pdf

[3] Schools Week. (2022). *Long read: How the flagship tutoring programme is slowly sinking.* United Kingdom: News article. Retrieved from https://schoolsweek.co.uk/long-read-how-the-flagship-tutoring-programme-is-slowly-sinking/

17. Tutoring could also be extended into Years 4-8 with a focus on literacy and maths. Evidence from our national monitoring studies shows that even prior to the impact of COVID-19, many students do not make sufficient progress during these year levels. This approach could help mitigate ongoing issues for the younger cohorts as they progress through the schooling system.

18. However, we recommend that the immediate focus for tutoring is on the senior secondary cohort, 9(2)(f)(iv)

19. There are alternative delivery mechanisms that can be considered in this option. The Ministry could either provide funding to schools to purchase services appropriate to their needs, or directly employ tutors at a regional level.

20. We have not considered the cost of accommodation, as tutoring could take place in schools or online. Learners and tutors will need access to appropriate devices, Internet connectivity, and a study space. Note that we have separately estimated costs to run community learning hubs/homework centres which could provide venues for tutoring services if needed.

21. More work is needed on how learners would be identified to access tutoring. One option would be to identify schools with larger proportions of learners likely to have been heavily impacted by COVID-19 disruptions, and allocate tutoring to those schools, who would then identify the students they believe most need it. One way to identify such schools would be to use the equity index.

22. This costing is based on tutoring being made available to 20% or 40% of learners overall, and on the following assumptions:

    a. Dosage – We have assumed tutoring sessions will be offered in 60-minute sessions, 3 times a week, for 10 weeks;

    b. Ratio of 1 tutor to 4 learners;

    c. Tutor pay-rate – we anticipate this will cost between $35 to $45 per hour. This rate is based on the current Adult and Community Staff collective agreement. We would need to test whether this rate is sufficient to meet the existing private provider market expectations. We know that some tutoring services charge $60-$70 per hour.

23. The table below shows our costing for tutors based on these assumptions:

Eligible Year range	% of eligible learners participating	Indicative cost
Years 4 to 8	20%	$17.0m-$21.8m
Years 4 to 8	40%	$34.0m-$43.7m
Years 11 to 13	20%	$7.2m-$9.3m
Years 11 to 13	40%	$14.4m-$18.5m
Years 9 to 13	20%	$13.6m-$17.5m
Years 9 to 13	40%	$27.2m-$35m
Years 4-13	20%	$30.6m-$39.4m
Years 4-13	40%	$61.2m-$78.7m

Topping up schools' operating grants in Term 4 2022

24. This option would provide a one-off top up to schools' operating grants, so that schools can employ suitable staff such as teacher-aides or relief teachers if available, to provide additional lessons or enable more small group teaching for students during Term 4 of this year, and potentially over summer or during Term 1 of 2023. For senior secondary students, this would mean the traditional Term 4 study break could be used for supplementary lessons to cover material they've missed out on. Many secondary schools already use the study break in this way, but this additional resourcing would enable them to do more, for more students, while mitigating workload for their regular teaching staff.

25. Topping-up operational funding can be done through existing systems and processes that schools are familiar with so this option could be implemented relatively easily, i.e., through the relief teacher allocations.

26. This option is based on the assumption that enough additional people with suitable knowledge and skills, will be available in Term 4. Potentially the abatement of the current Omicron outbreak and other winter illnesses will expand the available pool. However, it is likely that there will be considerable pressure on the supply of relief teachers that schools can employ, so there is some risk to the feasibility of this option.

27. While the intent of this option is to provide for additional staffing to work with students that need help to 'catch-up', schools would have considerable flexibility as to how they use that funding. For example, schools could purchase on-teaching resources and supports for learning. This could be particularly suitable in Māori-medium and Kaupapa-Māori settings, where it is difficult to get registered relief teachers.

28. The risk with this flexibility is schools may spend the additional funding in less effective ways or decide to retain the funding to use next year. This can be mitigated to some extent with very clear messaging about the intent of this top-up funding, however schools have a high degree of autonomy over the use of their operations grant.

29. It will also be very difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the spend given the range of ways the funding could be used and the lack of a way to track the specific use and impact.

30. Below are our estimated costs for a one-off top-up for schools' relief teacher allocation for secondary students, and for all year levels. As with tutoring, we could use the equity index to concentrate the additional resource on schools with students facing more socio-economic barriers.

Year range	Percentage top-up of regular relief teacher funding allocation	Cost
Secondary students (Years 9-13)	20% (equivalent to approx. 420 relief teachers employed full-time for 2 terms)	$13.9m
All year groups (Years 1-13)	20% (equivalent to approx. 1000 relief teachers employed full-time for 2 terms)	$32.8m

Expanding Te Kura summer school enrolments for secondary students only

31. This option proposes to expand the cap on Te Kura Summer School enrolments for students in Years 11-13. This option would provide a partial solution that is potentially appropriate for students that understand their learning and subject needs and have access to devices and spaces to complete relatively self-managed learning. It would support students who need to achieve a small number of credits to attain NCEA.

32. There is an existing gateway into Te Kura that enables short-term enrolments over the summer break between Terms 4 and 1 for students who need to earn additional credits or specific internal standards to complete an NCEA Level. Students may register for a maximum of 12 credits at any one time through this gateway. This gateway is normally limited to 1000 students per year.

33. The cap on this gateway was expanded in 2020 as part of the initial response to the pandemic, but uptake was lower than anticipated. This option relies on students knowing what standards they need to enrol in to pursue their pathway and having the technology, time and space to do so. This means it could pose greater barriers to access for disadvantaged students.

34. However, there was less overall disruption of learning time in 2020 than has been the case this year, so demand could be greater this year. In addition, ERO's evaluation of the pandemic response for Auckland students found that "availability of a back-up plan, like Summer School, can help reduce anxiety."[4] This option could work in conjunction with community learning hubs if they were extended into the summer period to offer suitable study spaces and access to devices and connectivity.

35. The ERO evaluation referred to above also found that "approximately 40 percent of all the students enrolled in Summer School for the 2020 academic year attained NCEA results while enrolled with Te Kura. This is a slight decrease from 48 percent of all Summer School students in the 2019 academic year. However, more than 90 percent of standards submitted to Te Kura from Summer School students received a result of achieved or higher. This is a similar pass-rate to previous academic years."[5]

36. We have estimated costs based on enabling an additional 1000, 1500 or 2000 places in the Summer School. Enrolments take place in term 4 and Te Kura could signal to us if they were about to reach the limit in each case and we could revisit if necessary.

37. Below is a summary of the cost to expand Te Kura Summer School enrolments for students in Years 11-13:

Number of students	One subject	Two subjects
1000	$0.4m	$0.7m
1500	$0.5m	$1.1m
2000	$0.7m	$1.4m

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[4] Responding to the COVID-19 Crisis: Supporting Auckland NCEA students most at risk. Evaluation Report. Education Review Office – Summary, page 4

[5] Responding to the COVID-19 Crisis: Supporting Auckland NCEA students most at risk. Evaluation Report. Education Review Office, page 20

38. This is the cheapest option and would potentially meet the needs of a specific group of senior secondary students, but we consider it would not be sufficient on its own to meet the needs of many students who have experienced more extreme disruption to their learning.

Support for summer learning for primary students

39. There is good evidence that summer learning programmes can be effective in reducing the loss of learning that happens over the summer period. There is an existing programme operating in New Zealand (Summer Learning Journeys) which uses a digital platform that is active and available for wider access. It has been tested in over 40 low decile schools with more than 500 students, and possible further deployment and scalability during COVID-19 has been discussed, using existing teacher education students to provide the online collaborative guidance. This programme and others have been used mostly with students up to Year 9 (and the evidence is strong for Years 4-8) so this is likely to be most suitable for primary students.

40. Further work is needed to better understand how a summer learning programme could be implemented and for whom. We have not provided costings for this option, but it could be further developed prior to the summer holidays.

Community learning hubs and homework centres for secondary students

41. This option would fund the establishment of community learning hubs. These would be spaces for students to work independently, with their peers or with some additional support outside of school hours (after school during the week and on weekends). The services would also provide safe spaces where students can meet to work together on projects and assessments that require collaboration. There would be teachers or tutors on site to supervise and provide support where appropriate to help students learn.

42. This option could also include expansion of existing homework centres. We know of some that are working effectively with Māori and Pacific students. We could gather further information from our regional teams about the availability and feasibility of expanding these and other homework services.

43. We have only costed the provision of community hubs for secondary students as they are more likely to be able to self-manage learning in a less supervised model.

44. We anticipate that around 10% to 20% of secondary learners in Years 9-13 (around 27,000 to 53,000 learners) would access the hubs.

45. Based on some broad assumptions, we estimate that providing learning hubs for two terms, 25 hours per week in 200 schools would cost around $22 million. Actual costs would depend on the degree of targeting and the level of service provided – such as the ratio of teachers to students and the proportion of students provided with devices.

46. As with tutoring, this costing does not allow for any additional Ministry staff time in supporting the establishment and running of hubs.

Risks

47. There are a number of risks with the options presented in this paper. These include:

   a. The relief teacher top-up funding is provided through schools' operational grants. Schools have considerable flexibility in how they use their operational grants so there is a risk that the resource will not match the intent of the initiative. On the

other hand, in some circumstances such as for kura, this flexibility can better enable Kaupapa-Māori approaches to supporting ākonga.

b. Determining the effectiveness of relief teacher top-up funding and monitoring what it is used for will be very difficult.

c. There may be challenges removing this additional funding once it has been provided as schools and students may commit to activities that are beneficial and be unwilling to forgo those benefits.

d. The supply of relief teachers and tutors is unknown at this time. We know that there are challenges in the supply of relief teachers, which may be exacerbated by the increased demand we have presented in these options.

e. There is the possibility that targeted students may not engage with the offerings that are provided and benefits may accrue to students who do not need them as much.

f. We have limited data about the level and nature of the need we are planning to address. Further engagement with peak bodies at a regional level is being undertaken to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on learning.

g. We have reasonable evidence that tutoring, when done well, is an effective intervention, but we have limited evidence to support the other options.

Next Steps

48. We propose discussing the options and costings in this paper at the Agency Meeting.

49. 9(2)(f)(iv)

9