



Briefing Note: Meeting with 9(2)(a), 9(2)(a), teacher aides and 9(2)(a) of NZEI on Wednesday 15 December

To:	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
Cc:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	13 December 2021	Priority:	Low / Medium / High
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Drafter:	Nicky Hampshire	DDI:	04 463 8547
Key Contact:	David Wales	DDI:	04 463 7669
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Purpose of Report

This briefing provides information to support your meeting on Wednesday 15 December with 9(2)(a), teacher aides and 9(2)(a) of NZEI. They wish to discuss matters relating to:

- Learning support for students
- Collection of data on children with learning support needs
- Job security for teacher aides

Proactive Release

It is recommended that you:

agree that the Ministry of Education release this briefing as per your expectation that information is released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

☒ **Agree** ☐ **Disagree**


Dr David Wales



Poutohu Matua | Te Hāpai ō Rāngai
National Director Learning Support Delivery
Te Pae Aronui

13 /12 / 2021

Hon Jan Tinetti



Associate Minister of Education

19 /12 / 2021

Background

1. 9(2)(a) is a teacher aide 9(2)(a). She notes that her position ends this year, and her skills and experience will be lost to the system. She wants to understand whether her skills are needed but has struggled to find information to do this.
2. 9(2)(a) is a teacher aide at 9(2)(a). She is a NZEI Te Riu Roa (NZEI) worksite representative and is also a member of the National Leadership Group for support staff.
3. 9(2)(a) is a NZEI field officer who has previously worked as a teacher and teacher aide. She states that her role in this discussion is to support 9(2)(a).
4. NZEI commissioned *Puaotanga*, an independent review of staffing in primary schools, and released it in June 2021. This review calls for a centrally funded model for teacher aides, proposing that all schools receive a core roll-based entitlement based on a formula of 1 FTE for every 50 students and rising incrementally over time. The report also recommends better professional learning and development provision for teacher aides.
5. NZEI also launched the *Ngā Aukaha- All in for Tamariki* campaign in May 2021. This campaign calls for funding for a dedicated Learning Support Coordinator or SENCO in every school and early childhood centre; expanded ORS criteria and funding based on need rather than a fixed amount of funding; dedicated teacher aide funding in early childhood centres and schools; more specialists to meet student need, and improved Professional Learning and Development (PLD) and career pathways for educators to develop their understanding of learning support.

Meeting topics

6. The group wishes to put forward two key questions to you. A copy of their request is provided in Annex 1.

Question 1: To make quality decisions for our children and young people who have learning support needs we must make decisions from a solid data/statistical foundation. Why is this not a Government priority in 2021?

7. 9(2)(a) has struggled to find data to help answer questions about her employment. She also notes that without a central data system we cannot gauge the demand for learning support or make data informed policy decisions. She notes that data is required to address key questions such as the percentage of students who require ORS funding, the support needed for students with mental health challenges, truancy, and the impact of inadequate support on student outcomes.
8. In response, you may like to say:
 - I, and the Ministry of Education, agree we need to have centralised data capability to gauge the scale of need and demand for learning support, and to support planning and data-informed decision making. Since 2019, the Ministry has been working towards this through the development of a national-level standardised learning support register in conjunction with Te Rito, a national repository of learner data.

- The standardised Learning Support Register has been developed and is being trialled in four kahui ako or clusters. The trial has identified data security and privacy considerations that need to be addressed before all school student data management systems can be incorporated into Te Rito. We are working through these so we can be assured the system meets international standards for data security, and deployment of this nationwide. In the meantime, the Ministry will continue to work with schools and clusters of schools to tailor learning support to local needs.
- At a local level there are tools and processes that provide solid information bases about needs to the Ministry's Managers Learning Support and Resource Teachers Learning and Behaviour (RTLb) Cluster Managers. For example, RTLb Cluster Managers undertake a cluster needs analysis as part of their strategic and annual plan process.
- Also, a review of interventions for children and young people with the highest needs (the Highest Needs Review) is underway. The review is focused on children and young people that currently receive individualised supports, those who have an unmet need for individualised supports, and those in settings that have inequitable access to individualised supports.
- As part of the Highest Needs Review, the Ministry is analysing data on current services and supports that reflects need and unmet need as well as looking at health and disability data to understand the prevalence of conditions which require learning support, to better prepare the Ministry to meet learner needs.
- The Highest Needs Review is also working with the Social Wellbeing Agency to examine data in Statistics New Zealand's Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) that links information from health, education, and social services, to get a better understanding of need in the population and provide insights into barriers to accessing learning support.

Question 2: Why is it that Teacher Aides continue to have to “beg” to have any real value in the eyes of the Ministry (MOE)?

9. 9(2)(a) is concerned that teacher aides are undervalued and experience precarious employment as their roles are often tied to external funding sources that may be short term. As a result, valuable skills and experience may be lost and children may not get the support they need.
10. In response, you may like to say:
 - Teacher aide funding has increased in recent years. Budget 2020 provided an additional \$163million for teacher aide support for students with high and complex learning needs who are verified under ORS.
 - This included an increase of \$132million over four years to boost the average teacher aide hours per week from 10 to 13 hours for high needs students and from 17 to 20 hours for very high needs students. This will continue into outyears.
 - It also included a further \$31million for the ORS Covid-19 Respond Fund for one year only, to provide additional, time-limited teacher aide support to ORS verified students who require extra support with their attendance, transition back into school and post Covid-19 wellbeing challenges.

- As part of the Teacher Aide Pay Equity Claim Settlement Agreement and the Accord signed between the Ministry of Education, NZEI and the Post Primary Teachers Association Te Wehengarua, (PPTA), Accord partners agreed to review how schools are funded for teacher aides.
- The review aims to:
 - develop a fairer, streamlined and more equitable funding system that works for ākonga Māori and better supports all ākonga (particularly those with additional needs), and has the confidence of principals, other educators, parents and whānau
 - improve schools' resourcing so that this is more predictable and better reflects the level and extent of need within the school/kura
 - reduce precarity of employment and remove systemic barriers to help develop and support a well-trained, skilled, and secure workforce of teacher aides able to plan and develop their careers.
- A sector reference group (SRG) has been established, made up key stakeholders including principals, educators, teacher aides, boards of trustees, education sector agencies and others, to progress this work. NZEI is represented by Andrew Casidy and Shannon Walsh and has a strong voice on this group.
- The SRG is chaired by Hon Tracey Martin. It has met seven times and the work is progressing well. Subject to approval from the Accord governance group (NZEI, PPTA and MoE), the SRG expects to undertake wider sector consultation and engagement on a preferred option in April/May 2022 before reporting back to the Accord with final recommendations in July. If approved by the Accord governance group, these recommendations will be provided to Ministers in September 2022, for their consideration.
- Through the Teacher Aide Pay Equity Settlement, an additional \$1.5 million has been added to the pilot PLD fund that was established in November 2019 through the Support Staff in Schools' Collective Agreement. This will increase the fund from \$790,000 to \$2.29 million over 18 months, to support the professional learning and development of teacher aides.
- The Ministry is also progressing work on establishing career pathways for teacher aides.

They have also asked: **Does the Government/MOE have a plan to ensure that every child in NZ, regardless of need, will have access to quality free education?**

In response, you may like to say:

- All learners have the right to access free education.
- The Ministry has a vision for inclusive education system where every child feels like they belong, are present, participating, make progress and where their wellbeing is safeguarded and promoted.

- This vision is captured in the Learning Support Action Plan 2019-25, which places the learner at the centre of everything we do and sets out how children and young people with learning support needs must get the right support at the right time.
- A substantial amount of learning support is delivered to drive towards an inclusive and non-disabling schooling system, through for example, improving universal practices and building teacher capability.
- Over \$1 billion is invested annually in Learning Support. This includes around 85 different programmes/services provided by the Ministry, schools and contracted providers. Some are for one-off needs, others for medium term, others long term and ongoing support across the education pathway. Supports are focused on whole learner communities, targeted to groups with a similar support need, or specifically tailored to the needs of an individual.
- We know that there is more work to do to address the fact that some students aren't getting the right support they need when they need it. This is why the Highest Needs Review is underway. It is also why the Government made a focus on neurodiversity an explicit priority in the LSAP and why steady progress is being made particularly on supporting increased supports and confidence for teachers working with a range of learners in their classrooms.