



Briefing Note: Developing a National Languages Strategy

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
c.c	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education Hon Kelvin Davis, Associate Minister of Education Hon Aupito William Sio, Associate Minister of Education		
Date:	18 June 2021	Priority:	Medium
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Purpose of Paper

This Briefing Note provides information regarding our proposed plan and process for developing a National Languages Strategy.

Summary

- As a result of the Education (Strengthening Second Language Learning in Primary and Intermediate schools) Amendment Bill (the Second Languages Bill) not being progressed, you have asked the Ministry to provide advice on how and when a National Languages Strategy for schools could be developed.
- The development of a National Languages Strategy would provide an overarching framework for teaching and learning languages in Aotearoa New Zealand and set the direction for the refresh of learning languages in The New Zealand Curriculum in 2023.
- We propose to undertake the necessary policy work and development of a draft strategy through the rest of this year. We recommend a 12 week period of public consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, starting during Term 1, 2022. Following analysis of feedback, we anticipate that a finalised strategy would come to Cabinet for approval in August/September 2022.

- 9(2)(f)(iv)

Proactive Release

Agree that this Briefing Note will be proactively released once decisions on the development of a strategy have been made.

Agree / Disagree



Ben O'Meara
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Education System Policy

18/06/2021



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

25/6/2021

Background

1. The Education (Strengthening Second Language Learning in Primary and Intermediate schools) Amendment Bill (the Second Languages Bill) was terminated at its Second Reading. At the Second Reading, Government members expressed support for second language learning but considered the Bill was flawed because it:
 - a. did not recognise the special significance of te reo Māori in New Zealand;
 - b. did not recognise the importance of Pacific languages and the Realm country languages in New Zealand;
 - c. did not recognise the significant resource that would be required to upskill our teaching workforce in ten or more languages, or the potential impact on the delivery of the rest of the curriculum; and
 - d. did not recognise that there may be many communities within a school who need support to protect their family or heritage languages.
2. The Education and Workforce Committee, in its report back to Parliament on the Second Languages Bill, recommended the development of a National Languages Strategy. You have asked the Ministry for advice on how and when such a strategy could be developed.

Why a National Languages Strategy for schools?

3. A National Languages Strategy would provide the overarching framework for teaching and learning languages in Aotearoa New Zealand schools.
4. Amongst other objectives, a National Languages Strategy would:
 - a. prioritise the place of te reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), as official languages of New Zealand in language learning;
 - b. set out the Government's strategy for supporting Realm country languages in New Zealand schools, and help recognise and promote the importance of other Pacific languages in New Zealand schools;
 - c. support the teaching and learning of first, home or heritage languages and the acquisition of new languages, as well as support learners of English as a second language;
 - d. consider how the capacity and capability of the teaching workforce can be aligned with demand for language learning;
 - e. address resourcing for schools for additional language learning, and how such resourcing could be aligned with the overall approach to funding schools;
 - f. set the direction for the refresh of learning languages in The New Zealand Curriculum in 2023.

Process and timelines for developing a National Language Learning Strategy

5. Your Office has indicated that you wish to progress policy work through this year and seek Cabinet approval to consult on a draft strategy to begin in term 1 of 2022.
6. Accordingly, we propose the following timelines, including a 12 week period of wide public consultation on a draft strategy.

Table 1: Timelines for developing a National Languages Strategy

Date	Stage
Remainder of 2021	Policy work and development of a draft strategy and engagement with targeted stakeholders including language learning specialists in the education community. During this period, we will start engagement with iwi, hapū and whānau as is required under the Te Ture mō te reo Māori Act 2016.
February 2022	Cabinet approval for consultation on a draft strategy
March-May 2022	12 weeks of public consultation
June-July 2022	Analysis of submissions and review with key stakeholders, revisions to draft strategy
September 2022	Cabinet agreement to a final strategy
9(2)(f)(iv)	
2023	Refresh of learning languages in The New Zealand Curriculum to align with the Strategy

Initial policy development - remainder of 2021

7. We recommend allowing for an initial period of policy development. This would include initial engagement with targeted stakeholders, including iwi, hapū and whānau as well as language learning specialists in the education community, on key questions to inform the development of the strategy.

Consultation on a draft strategy – March to May 2022

8. Both the development of a national languages strategy and the curriculum refresh will be a collaborative process involving the education sector, school leaders, language specialists and the wider community.
9. Following the initial period of policy development, we recommend allowing for a 12 week consultation process to take place between March and May 2022. As part of this, we would seek to hear from a wide range of stakeholders, including:
 - parents, teachers, schools;
 - iwi, hapū, whānau and Māori communities;
 - the New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) community;
 - Pacific communities;
 - other diverse language and cultural communities in New Zealand.

Refresh of National Curriculum to align with the Strategy

10. The development of the National Languages Strategy is closely linked to the recently announced programme to refresh the National Curriculum. As part of the refresh, the National Curriculum (which includes both *The New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*) will be updated to provide greater clarity on the learning all students need access to, and the progress which needs to be supported over their time

in schooling. While the refresh will still retain flexibility for schools and kura to deliver learning in ways that make sense for their students, families, iwi and communities, this is a shift towards tighter curriculum expectations.

11. Current planning is for the 'learning languages' learning area of the NZC to be refreshed during 2023. This provides an opportunity to reset expectations for language learning in English-medium education, including making minimum expectations clearer. The development of a National Languages Strategy will set the direction for the refresh of the learning languages area of The New Zealand Curriculum in 2023.
12. Language learning specialists in the education community, having engaged in the development of a National Language Learning strategy, would then participate in a process to set clearer curriculum expectations on language learning. While this would increase workload for these specialists, having a national strategy in place would mean that the infrastructure to support language learning has been set, allowing people to focus more on the technical aspects of curriculum through the refresh process.

Alignment with Māori medium education and Pacific bilingual and immersion education

13. The Government has programmes in place to strengthen Māori medium education and is developing a policy on Pacific bilingual and immersion education. These programmes will be increasingly important elements of its approach to learning languages at school.

Resourcing implications and trade-offs

14. The development of a Language Learning Strategy will need to consider system-wide impacts on workforce development, resourcing, and curriculum time. This is particularly relevant given the work to develop literacy, mathematics, te reo matatini and pāngarau strategies.
15. Literacy, mathematics, te reo matatini and pāngarau are foundational for learning and wellbeing, and there are significant and persistent inequities that need to be addressed. These strategies are likely to require the investment of additional resources and work to upskill teachers. The development of a language learning strategy in addition to these strategies will need to balance the effort, time and resources devoted to each individual strategy.
16. The Government has recently strengthened expectations for teachers and schools to increase their knowledge and use of te reo Māori, through Tau Mai te Reo and the NELP. In addition, work is underway on a proposed target of 30% of ākonga Māori learning in level 1 Māori immersion by 2040. To make these expectations a reality will require significant sustained investment in teachers' te reo competence. A languages strategy will need to consider the capacity of the workforce to support the learning of additional languages on top of this expectation.
17. Commitments have also been made through the Action Plan for Pacific Education to strengthen Pacific language learning and Pacific bilingual education. As with the commitment to supporting te reo Māori availability in schools, these commitments could be sustained and supported within a wider language learning strategy. However, if a strategy were to reach beyond Pacific languages and te reo Māori, there would need to be significant additional investment in specialist language teaching.

Next steps

18. The issues covered in the development of a National Languages Strategy touch on matters relevant for all Education Ministers and the Minister for Diversity, Inclusion and Ethnic Communities. Accordingly, you may wish to forward this briefing to Hon Priyanka Radhakrishnan in her capacity as the Minister for Diversity, Inclusion and Ethnic Communities.
19. The Ministry will also contact the Office of Ethnic Communities, Te Puni Kōkiri, and the Ministry for Pacific Peoples to discuss what involvement those agencies would like to have in the development of the strategy.