



Briefing Note: Investing to Measure Student Experiences in Learning through the Student Wellbeing Measures Project

To:	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
Cc:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education; Hon Kelvin Davis, Associate Minister of Education (Māori Education); Hon Aupito William Sio, Associate Minister of Education		
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Purpose of Report

This report provides an update on the Ministry's current ability to measure student experiences in learning through existing measures as well as an update on the Student Wellbeing Measures project.

Summary

- The Ministry has invested in understanding student experiences in learning through the Student Wellbeing Measures Project, "The Project". The Project is gaining an understanding of students' engagement in learning through a wellbeing lens. When complete this project will provide a set of practical and useful measures of students' lived experience/s in the education system. These measures can be used in multiple ways – to support shifts at a system, school and student level.
- We have made significant progress towards meeting the key deliverables of the scoping phase of the Project and we expect to complete the direct engagement phase with ākonga, whānau and community stakeholder groups by the end of Term 2 with an initial report of the potential indicators and trends available at the end of Term 4.
- By December, we will have the outline of the design of the measurement tool which is currently being led by students participating in a conceptual design competition.

- Existing initiatives and measures do not meet the information needs due to limitations including data representativeness, content coverage, timeliness, consistency across data collections, and data access.
- A purposefully co-designed tool that captures student's experiences of education will provide a mechanism by which schools and the Ministry can receive the real-time input and voice of students to understand student's experiences in their local learning environment. This direct student report information will provide a common-language and standardised view that enables data monitoring, planning, action and evaluation over time and analysis of student reported experience in relation to student educational wellbeing, learning and engagement. This information is not currently available to students, whānau, schools or the Ministry.
- Notwithstanding the limitations and challenges with the current available measures and data on student wellbeing and experiences in education, we will use a variety of these data sources to create a picture of student wellbeing, which we intend to augment with the Project over time. This mahi will be used to contribute to the development of the Attendance and Engagement Strategy.
- The Project was unsuccessful in receiving budget funding through Budget 2022. The Ministry will continue to work towards the goals of the Project with the aim of developing a set of reliable and valid measures that can be used at student, school and kura, kāhui ako and Ministry level to understand, inform and improve the experience of students in their learning environments from late 2023.
- A key of the student wellbeing tool development process is to bring student voice to the forefront. We do not currently have access to a consistent and reliable tool that supports and amplifies the *voice of students* in their learning context. Nor do we have a mechanism that allows us to access this voice in a timely or frequent manner.

Proactive Release

- a **Agree** that the Ministry of Education release this briefing once it has been considered by you, with the information in section 23 withheld due to potential commercial sensitivity and the Next Steps section 31-35 withheld due to the possibility that further funding, including through Budget 23 may be required, that some potential commercial activities are noted and that proposed release dates are indicated.

☒ Agree ☐ Disagree.

Sean Teddy

Hautū Te Pae Aronui / Deputy Secretary

27/05/2022



Hon Jan Tinetti

Associate Minister of Education

31/05/2022

Background and Position

1. The Project was initiated to deliver the intent outlined in An Education Report: Design of Student Wellbeing Measures (METIS No. 1252367). The Ministry's Wellbeing & Equity Board released initial funding until June 2022 for the scoping phase of the Project which aims to work alongside students across Years 7-13 to achieve three initial key deliverables:
 - to develop with ākonga a set of reliable, valid and easy-to-use student wellbeing measures for common use that are culturally appropriate and demonstrate te ao Māori concepts of wellbeing
 - to co-design and propose a mechanism/s for collecting, storing and use of the measures; and
 - to develop a recommended plan for the safe and respectful protection and use of the data and information that comes from the measures over time.
2. You received an update report (METIS No. 1275086) in December 2021. This outlined a delay in the student engagement phase underlying the co-design process to Term 1 2022 due to COVID-19.
3. In the initial engagement phase, we are using student voice to help us to understand and define the experience of 'wellbeing' from a New Zealand student perspective. Longer term, the development of a measurement tool will provide a mechanism of direct access to the voice of ākonga in understanding their personal experience in their local learning environment. This gives schools (and the Ministry) the enriched opportunity to learn to view the learning world through student personal experience and use this knowledge and insight to support improved service design, check assumptions, pre-empt policy impact and ultimately co-create improved learning environments where ākonga are valued and inspired to engage, learn and succeed.
4. A budget bid to cover the full costs of the Project was not successful at Budget 2022. Given the importance of student wellbeing to educational outcomes we will continue work towards the goals of the Project, albeit on a smaller scale, using internal funding mechanisms.
5. The intention of the Project is that, from late 2023, Yr 7-13 students will have access to a digital tool that will enable them to record their wellbeing experience in their school context. The development of a robust tool requires that this experience is captured in observable and/or objective terms. Unlike a number of available wellbeing measures, this tool is intentionally designed to minimise subjective or emotional expressions of wellbeing based on 'feelings' as these reduce the reliability of the tool and can obstruct the application of effective interventions. Instead, students will record their agreement with indicators that have been statistically validated as measures of their state of wellbeing. Examples of this include: to what extent can they access support for learning when required; experience a reciprocal respectful relationship with teachers; have opportunities to contribute to school leadership and decision-making; and, have the opportunity to exercise choice.
6. The tool is intended to be positively 'aspiration' focused and provide students with an in-time experience score, feedback and self-help suggestions and links to support personal wellbeing improvement. Schools will be able to use aggregated information to understand the experience of students in their schools, plan and implement local responses and measure changes based on students' reports. Using common-language, schools will also be able to develop and share evidence-based initiatives

across schools and kāhui ako. The Ministry will be able to use aggregated data to gain a picture of the state of student experiences across New Zealand, at a national, regional and school-based level, and within and across different demographic groups. We will be able to use this to inform prioritisation of resource distribution and provide evidence around the impact of initiatives designed to improve student wellbeing, equity and engagement.

7. The outcomes from this work have relevance to the goals in the National Education Learning Plan (NELP), the Māori Education Strategy Ka Hikitia – Ka Hāpaitia, the Pacific Action Plan and the Learning Support Action Plan as well as in initiatives such as the Attendance and Engagement Strategy. The outcomes also contribute towards Te Mahau key priorities and principles of delivering better services and supports, establishing effective feedback loops, giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and using our data, insights and evidence to make decisions to improve equity. We want to ensure that our goal of developing equitable and excellent outcomes is validated by the reported and lived experience of students and ākonga. The focused data from this Project helps us to have confidence in our progress towards achieving these goals

Strategic context

We have an opportunity to give students greater voice and contribute significantly to ākonga outcomes

8. In *Shaping a stronger education system with New Zealanders*, we committed to asking student learners, ākonga, parents, student family and whānau about student wellbeing more regularly.
9. Our mahi is built on a commitment to hold ākonga and students at the centre of our work and seeks to uphold key rights of children and young people through working with them, and their families, to determine ownership, choice and use of the personal information and data that will be collected. The output tool can be envisioned as an app or digital tool that is attractive and engaging for students and that can be used by them to evaluate and record their own learning experience.
10. At a school level, use of the student wellbeing measurement tool provides insights from students on their experience in the classroom, that can be used to identify areas of strength and areas for further improvement. The willingness of ākonga to share information about their wellbeing experience will create enhanced expectations that schools, and the Ministry will listen, understand and act to improve the experience for all learners. It provides a focus for school leadership and Board members in considering collective staff capability and development goals and in planning and prioritising timely and flexible school-wide responses with families and whānau and the local community.
11. A key of the student wellbeing tool development process is to bring student voice to the forefront. For example, students have indicated in engagements to date that the issue of 'safety' in the learning environment is as much related to relationships with teachers as it is to relationships with peers. This is information that schools will be able to use and respond to in their own context.
12. Feedback from the sector and stakeholders has told us that a practical measurement tool needs to be easily accessible, use common language, be easy to use, be able to be regularly applied, be free to schools, give quick access to data and uphold the values

that are inherently important to the community, whilst also respecting the privacy and use of student personal information.

13. The measures themselves will not create change but the knowledge they create can be used to support meaningful action. Providing a mechanism that promotes and focuses the local and regional voice of ākonga will enable schools, and Te Mahau, to be responsive and deliberate in the design and improvement of integrated services and supports, enable feedback and input and give practical effect to te Tiriti o Waitangi and Ministry action plans. For example, the information that the measures will provide schools and the Ministry will assist with actions that can keep learners firmly in the centre and use their collective voice and input to–
- ensure that places of learning are safe and are places where students want to be
 - identify, challenge or remove barriers to learning and engagement in learning
 - support schools and school communities including families to work together to develop an education experience that meets individual learner's needs, enhances, sustains and stretches learning potential
 - contribute to students experiencing
 - nurture and care (manaakitanga)
 - connection (whakawhanaungatanga)
 - respect (mana enhancing) and
 - enablement and empowerment (kotahitanga) in the education system.
14. Our system needs to support ākonga and whānau to experience learning that is reflective of their diverse needs, their identity, their hopes and their ambitions. A reliable, valid and New Zealand contextualised measure of student wellbeing experience will provide an important and consistent feedback loop to hear the voices of students and consider their experiences. This information will improve our capability to understand how students experience wellbeing in their learning environment and how this experience impacts engagement, participation and achievement; monitor trends; design and deliver services that respond to ākonga and whānau need, aspiration and experience and continue to support schools to facilitate the development of educationally powerful connections between ākonga and students, parents, whanau and school leadership.

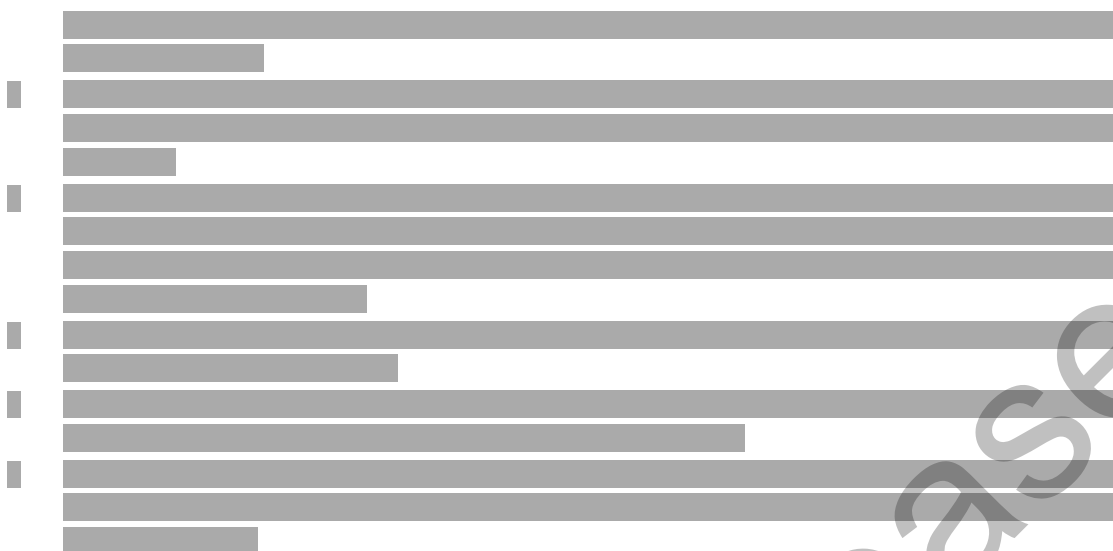
Progress Made

15. Significant progress has been made towards delivering the three key deliverables of the Project scoping phase.
16. The Project is underpinned by significant stakeholder engagement including:
- school, kura and education principal peak bodies
 - community and non-government organisations and groups representing target student groups
 - youth advisory groups: Oranga Tamariki and Ministry of Education
 - other government departments working with youth, wellbeing and/or target groups
 - internal and cross-government stakeholders who may use the information (for example policy makers, researchers, commission representatives) and
 - industry advisors as relevant.
17. By December 2023 we will have developed a reliable set of measures through direct engagement with ākonga, parents, families, whānau and community groups to define and understand key concepts of wellbeing from their perspectives. We are asking these stakeholders to tell us what concepts of wellbeing and engagement in learning look like

for young people in a school context. This engagement is underpinned by inquiry using the full set of wellbeing domains across the Child & Youth Wellbeing framework, an approach informed by te ao Māori and advocated by the Office of the Children's Commissioner and the Mental Health & Wellbeing Commission.

18. The initial focus of the engagement phase is on amplifying the voice of students and their families with specific attention to typically under-served groups including:
 - Māori ākonga, their whānau and local hapu, iwi and community groups
 - Pacific students, families and community groups
 - disabled learners and those identifying as having additional learning needs,
 - learners from migrant and refugee backgrounds and their support networks
 - learners identifying as Rainbow and gender diverse and
 - parents, caregivers and family of all learner groups.
19. Despite the initial delay due to COVID-19, engagement has been high. As at the start of Term 2, schools have committed to the engagement of over 15,425 students through teacher-facilitated workshops across the country. A further 36 schools are inviting students to use an individual engagement module developed by the team. We have received more than 750 responses from individual parents and are working alongside regional Ministry teams and community networks to support more than 30 hui for whānau, Pacific people and community groups. The engagement phase runs until the end of Term 2, 2022.
20. We are delivering this work through a Te Mahau kaupapa, engaging target schools and strengthening national, regional, community and sector co-ordination. To date, we have received overwhelmingly positive responses and support for the engagement opportunity from students, teachers, schools and community groups. Schools, parents and community facilitators have reported an appreciation of the Ministry's reinforcement of the value of wellbeing as a focus for learners. Schools also report a significant desire to see a tool developed that can aid school leadership, staff and the Ministry to support students' wellbeing experiences and engagement in the learning environment.
21. The phase of co-designing the tool or mechanism of data collection has commenced in the form of a conceptual design competition. This stage is being led by students. Student input into design solutions acknowledges the superior digital capability of our young people and will provide critical information for future options of tool build – whether novel or as adaptations of business-ready available product. An industry advisory panel has been convened and is in the process of finalising a design brief. The industry advisors will also form a judging panel and will determine judging parameters and finalists. This competition opens in June 2022 with a closing date at the end of Term 3 and a prizegiving in December 2022.
22. The Project is operating under strict privacy protocols in gathering the voice of students and their families and has a principle of upholding the rights of students to understand and make informed decisions about the use and sharing of their personal wellbeing information. We are using the student and community engagements to scope initial stakeholder views to formulate a plan for the safe and respectful protection and use of data and information that comes from the measures. This plan will be subject to ongoing Ministry work around data sovereignty and the Data Use & Protection policy.

23. 9(2)(f)(iv)



How existing surveys may contribute to our understanding of student wellbeing

24. The Government has made significant investment to improve the wellbeing of ākonga with an expectation that this will contribute to enhancing outcomes for learners and engagement in education. However, there is considerable evidence that challenges remain. We know New Zealand has high rates of bullying behaviour compared with other countries, that mental distress amongst youth has sharply increased during the pandemic, that high levels of bias and racism remain issues in our educational environments and that wellbeing disparities persist for many including those that are under-served in the education sector: Māori, Pacific peoples, those who are disabled and those who identify as rainbow.
25. Due to limitations with currently available measures, New Zealand has comparatively weak evidence and knowledge around student wellbeing and wellbeing experiences. These knowledge gaps reduce the ability of schools, kura, and the wider sector to make informed decisions to improve student wellbeing experiences. These knowledge gaps are also a barrier to supporting Māori learners to enjoy and achieve success as Māori, to Pacific learners being equipped to achieve their education aspirations and to other learners who are underserved in the current education environment.
26. Across the world, there are numerous measures available that have links to the concept of student wellbeing. Internationally, New Zealand contributes to existing high-level comparative and educationally relevant surveys, for example, PISA, PIRLS, TIMMS and PIACC, that all include varying indicators of student wellbeing. These indicators have been developed from a range of different baselines, including health, educational or more general wellbeing perspectives.
27. Schools or families may also contribute to surveys that inform a national understanding of aspects of the wellbeing of our youth e.g., Ministry of Social Development's *Growing Up in NZ* survey, the Health Research Council et al's *Youth2000* survey and Ministry of Social Development's *WhatAboutMe?* survey. It is noted that these surveys do not have data available or accessible at school level to inform understanding or support responses.
28. At a local level, many schools have embarked on efforts to improve student wellbeing and are keen to evaluate this in a local context. Schools have access to wellbeing

measures designed to inform school-based planning, for example, NZCER's Wellbeing@School survey and AskYourTeam's school solution - a commercially available product previously piloted in schools by ERO. In addition, there are numerous other commercial surveys, products and supports that are available through purchase, for administration by individual schools to help them understand the wellbeing of their students.

29. A high-level analysis of key New Zealand wellbeing measures was commissioned and undertaken in 2021 by Kōtātā Insights Ltd as a reference document to inform the scoping report of the Project. It surmised that, despite considerable overlap in wellbeing domains and the presence of features that are of value and inspiration, the range of wellbeing surveys and tools that are generally available do not provide a reliable set of measures that are applicable to students in a New Zealand educational environment. An investment in one, or a selection of these available products as they currently exist, would not provide the level of benefits or actionable insight that the tool under development will. For example, significant issues were found in relation to representativeness, content, consistency and validity of the concept of wellbeing, timeliness and data access of available measures.
30. Notwithstanding these limitations, we will use a variety of these data sources to create a current picture of student wellbeing. Over time, we will augment this information with the richer evidence of the Project. We will consider the utility of current and future measures and data as part of the work plan that will inform the Attendance and Engagement Strategy due to the synergy between engagement and wellbeing indicators.

Next Steps

31. 9(2)(f)(iv)

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35.9(2)(f)(iv)

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- | Government | Percentage |
|---------------------|------------|
| Current government | 85% |
| Previous government | 15% |

Proactively Released