



Education Report: Enabling students to access online teaching and learning

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education Hon Grant Robertson, Minister of Finance		
Date:	25 March 2020	Priority:	High
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1224603
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Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round Robin:	No

Purpose of report

This paper requests your approval for immediate funding of \$36.440 million in 2019/20 and 2020/21 to provide 100,000 students with access to online teaching and learning now that their schools have temporarily closed as part of the emergency response to COVID-19.

Summary

- 1 The Ministry of Education estimates that over 100,000 students in about 50,000 households do not have access to the Internet and or fit-for-education devices at home. This is a significant barrier to these students' ongoing learning.
- 2 Schools will be temporarily closed as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These school closures will significantly disrupt the education of students. This can be mitigated if students are able to access suitable online teaching and learning from home.
- 3 On 23 March 2020 Cabinet authorised the Minister of Finance and Minister of Education to approve the provision of immediate funding of \$36.440 million in 2019/20 and 2020/21 to ensure students can access teaching and learning online if their school is temporarily closed [CAB-MIN-20-0136 refers].

- 4 This funding will provide:
- Students' families with Internet connections if they currently lack Internet access
 - Students with fit-for-education devices if they do not have these already
 - Implementation and ongoing technical support to maintain Internet access and ensure students can use their devices for effective learning.
- 5 The Ministry can begin implementation as soon as you approve the funding.

Recommendations

The Ministry of Education recommend that you:

- a) **note** that the Ministers of Finance and Education are authorised to approve the immediate funding of \$36.440m in 2019/20 and 2020/21 to ensure that students can access online teaching and learning if their school is temporarily closed [CAB-20-MIN-0136 refers]
- b) **approve** the following changes to appropriations to give effect to Cabinet's decision referred to in recommendation a), with a corresponding impact on the operating balance and net core Crown debt

Vote Education Minister of Education	\$m – increase/(decrease)				
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 & Outyears
Multi-Category Expenses and Capital Expenditure:					
Improved Quality Teaching and Learning MCA					
Departmental Output Expense:					
Support and Resources for Teachers (funded by revenue Crown)	0.500	0.800	-	-	-
Non-departmental Output Expense:					
Curriculum Support	3.700	21.440	-	-	-
Non-departmental Output Expense:					
Schools Managed Network Funding	1.500				
Non-departmental Capital Expenditure:					
Schools Furniture and Equipment	8.500	-	-	-	-
Operating	5.700	22.240	-	-	-
Capital	8.500	-	-	-	-

- c) **agree** that the proposed change to appropriations for 2019/20 above be included in the 2019/20 Supplementary Estimates and that, in the interim, the increase be met from Imprest Supply
- d) **note** it is still to be determined how the expenses and capital expenditure incurred under recommendation b) above will be charged, and a subsequent paper will be prepared for Joint Ministers to approve over the coming weeks
- e) **note** that you will be provided with regular progress updates on implementation
- f) **note** that if the routers and devices purchased for schools under the non-departmental capital expenditure appropriation above, and allocated to homes under this initiative, are ultimately gifted to the families then such gifting of Crown assets will require a non-departmental other expense appropriation with a corresponding impact on OBEGAL

Proactive release recommendation

- g) **agree** that this Education Report is NOT proactively released at this time because it contains information that is Budget Sensitive

Minister of Finance

Yes/No

Minister of Education

Yes/No

Damian Edwards
Associate Deputy Secretary
Education System Policy
 Ministry of Education



__25__ /03__ / __2020__

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

Hon Grant Robertson
Minister of Finance



26/03/2020

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Background

Significant numbers of students cannot access digital learning when their school is closed

- 6 The Prime Minister has announced that New Zealand is moving to COVID-19 alert level 4. As a result of this schools will be temporarily closed.
- 7 These school closures will significantly disrupt the education of students. This can be mitigated if students are able to access suitable online teaching and learning from home.
- 8 The Ministry of Education estimates that over 100,000 students in about 50,000 households do not have access to the Internet and or fit-for-education devices at home. This is a significant barrier to these students' ongoing learning.

Cabinet has approved measures to ensure continuity of learning for students while their schools are closed

- 9 On 23 March 2020 Cabinet agreed to approve immediate funding of \$36.440m in 2019/20 and 2020/21 [CAB-MIN-20-0136 refers]:

Funding (\$m)	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 & outyears	Total
Operating	5.700	22.240				27.940
Capital	8.500					8.500
Total	14.200	22.240				36.440

- 10 Taking action now will address digital exclusion by providing:
 - Students' families with Internet connections if they currently lack Internet access
 - Students who need them with fit-for-education devices
 - Implementation and ongoing technical support to maintain the Internet access and ensure that students can use their devices for effective learning.

11 The table below shows how the approved funding will be spent.

Component	2019/20	2020/21	Total
<i>Operating (in \$m)</i>			
Internet service costs for up to 50,000 households	2.100	12.000	14.100
Leasing 10,000 student devices...	1.200	4.440	5.640
Communication software for teachers to use	0.400	-	0.400
Technical support	-	5.000	5.000
Upgrading Network 4 Learning infrastructure	1.500	-	1.500
Implementation support and logistics	0.500	0.800	1.300
<i>Capital (in \$m)</i>			
Purchasing 50, 000 home routers	3.500	-	3.500
Purchasing 10,000 student devices	5.000	-	5.000
Total	14.2	22.240	36.440

12 We have worked with the Treasury's Vote Education team in drafting this Education Report and incorporated their feedback and advice, including on the wording of the financial recommendations.

The initiative will create other benefits too

13 As well as ensuring all students can digitally access education from home if needed, this initiative will create other benefits and opportunities for learners, parents and schools, such as:

- removing barriers to accessing other online services and products, including those provided by government agencies and local government, by providing Internet access and digital skills training for families
- enabling schools to adopt a wider range of pedagogical approaches for all learners.

14 This initiative will also have a positive impact on child poverty, now and longer-term. It reduces inequity of access to digital learning for students, and increases their families' access to other online services and products.

Implementation can begin immediately

15 The Ministry submitted a new spending initiative on Equitable Digital Access (EDA) for Budget 2020 as part of the Digital Transformation Package. This initiative sought funding to provide Internet access and digital devices to 100,000 students estimated to lack these at home. It also included providing support to families to leverage this new digital access to increase their engagement in their children's education.

16 Because of this implementation planning is well advanced and the Ministry can start implementation as soon as funding is available.

17 The Ministry has engaged Telecommunications Forum (TCF) and Wireless Internet Service Providers Association (WISAP) – the two main industry bodies for telecommunication service providers – to confirm the best type of connectivity solution and get the household connected. This could include a

fixed Internet connection, which would help reduce pressures on cellular networks, although that is the quickest available option.

- 18 Internet connections will take place from 6 April 2020, and the first devices and routers will begin to be shipped direct to families the following week.
- 19 The Ministry will ensure devices are configured in line with school requirements and we are arranging for families to be able to access technical support if needed from school IT providers.
- 20 This will mean that most affected students are unlikely to be able to access online teaching and learning until after the start of Term 2 now that this has been brought forward to 15 April.
- 21 Schools know their communities and students well, and have been distributing learning/activity packs in hard copy to those they know lack digital access. These packs provide them with core educational materials and resources they need to continue their studies, at home. This will help mitigate the disruption of students' education until they can access teaching and learning online.
- 22 Implementation will be coordinated and monitored by the Ministry's Chief Digital Officer, and we will report progress regularly to Ministers.
- 23 If the devices and routers purchased for schools and allocated to households under this initiative are ultimately gifted to the families then the equipment may have to be written off

Proactive release

- 24 We recommend that this Education Report is NOT released at this time because it contains information that is Budget Sensitive.