

Briefing for the incoming Minister



Contents

Our Vision	4
Summary	5
Key issues	7
The Teaching Workforce	9
Education Sector Issues	12

Introduction

PPTA Te Wehengarua is the unwavering voice of the secondary teaching profession and champion of public education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

We represent more than 21,000 teachers engaged in secondary education in New Zealand, including secondary teachers, principals, manual and technology teachers and community education teachers.

All of our activities are guided by the following constitutional objectives:

- to advance the cause of education generally and of all phases of secondary and technical education in particular;
- to uphold and maintain the just claims of members individually and collectively; and
- to affirm and advance Te Tiriti o Waitangi.



The national executive is the governing body of the association and is made up of members elected from 24 regions, plus Māori and Pasifika representatives. Members also elect the PPTA Te Wehengarua president and vice-presidents.

Our Māori executive, Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake, is elected on an iwi geographical basis by Māori members of the Association. Te Huarahi annually elects three of its current members to serve on the national executive.

Many countries have improved the effectiveness of their education systems. These improvements did not happen by chance but through deliberate, thoughtful, systematic and evidence-based approaches. It is crucial that any changes proposed by the new government are undertaken with support from the profession, reflect our context in Aotearoa, and are supported with funding and time to ensure sensible implementation by teachers and school leadership.

The short-term approach to educational reform and policy lurch needs to stop. Successful reform has a ten-year timeframe. A five-year-old starting school next year won't arrive at secondary school until 2033. This is the timeframe the new government needs to be working with. This document gives you an overview of the key issues facing secondary education and how teachers would like to see them addressed for the benefit of all ākonga.

Naku noa nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Abercrombie'. The signature is stylized and cursive.

Chris Abercrombie
Acting-President

Our Vision

Our vision is for a teaching profession that is highly paid, trained to a high standard, continuously supported, culturally responsive, and properly resourced for both curriculum delivery and pastoral care.

Schools must be places for all students to get ahead, and for teachers to experience the surprise and delight of watching learning unfold.

Teachers want their jobs to be rich in experiences, exciting, and fun. Teaching by its nature will at times be challenging, but that challenge should not come from excessive workload demands. There must be time, not just time to do the job, but time to enjoy it, and time to learn and grow in teaching practice.

Classrooms should be designed to meet the needs of pedagogy, not the other way around, and classes should be diverse in the broadest meaning of this term. Schools should reflect a commitment to Te Tiriti, through which staff and students are supported to be bilingual and at home in Te Ao Māori.

Teaching should be secure, permanent, highly respected employment. It should be seen as a first-choice career that can last a lifetime.



Summary



Key Issues

- PPTA Te Wehengarua supports public education that meets the needs of our rangatahi. There should be no barrier to a quality, public education, and we support a flexible, well-resourced, and innovative system.
- PPTA Te Wehengarua supports the growth of a culturally responsive secondary education system that promotes and enhances Māori success as Māori. Schools should be places where ākongā Māori and their whānau feel a sense of belonging and connection.
- For change to be successful in the education sector it needs to be backed by strong research and developed and implemented alongside teachers.



The Teaching Workforce

- Recent research by the Secondary Principals' Council¹ indicated that secondary schools were under-staffed by an average of five full time teachers. There is a very clear need for a workforce strategy to address the ongoing and future needs of the teaching workforce.
- The teachers' pay equity claim has the potential to value and recognise the unseen and uncelebrated mahi that teachers do to improve outcomes for learners in Aotearoa New Zealand, and to ensure that any undervaluation of the profession due to its female-dominated nature is rectified.
- PPTA Te Wehengarua sees benefit in working with government to develop a five-year sector plan for recruitment and retention, which could incorporate the findings of the pay equity review and utilise an alternative approach to collective agreement negotiations in 2025.
- A more structured and systemic approach to supporting leadership must be developed by the Ministry of Education.



Education Sector Issues

- Throughout the country kaiako are leading the development of resources and programmes that are part of the NCEA Change Package and Curriculum Refresh (Te Mātaiaho) Initiatives. PPTA Te Wehengarua supports the intent of both initiatives and the one-year delay in the implementation of the literacy and numeracy co-requisites and NCEA Levels 2 and 3.

¹ <https://www.ppta.org.nz/past-events/the-staffing-summit/>

- The government needs to invest more in redesigning alternative education and providing an end-to-end system of support for children and young people at risk of disengaging from education.
- PPTA Te Wehengarua wants to see well-resourced learning support in all schools for learners with high needs. The multi-teacher model of secondary education makes inclusion challenging and complex. We need adequate funding, resources and time allowances to enable schools to provide flexible, mana enhancing options in meeting increased need.
- PPTA Te Wehengarua calls on the government to close the digital divide and the Ministry of Education and the NZ Qualifications Authority to provide direction and advice to ensure the rigour and validity of our national qualifications given the increasing use of digital technologies.
- PPTA Te Wehengarua's vision is for every school in Aotearoa New Zealand to provide quality, science and Mātauranga Māori-based climate change education.



Key issues

Public education

PPTA Te Wehengarua supports public education that meets the needs of our rangatahi. There should be no barrier to a quality, public education, and we support a flexible, well-resourced, and innovative system.

The opportunity for schools and kura to be designated special character provides further innovation within a system that is already very highly devolved. Special character designation still allows effective oversight of the expenditure of state funding and checks to ensure ākongā receive a high-quality education.

We support considered, resourced, well implemented, evidence-based change which improves the outcomes for students in the public education system. The Association generally endorses the recommendations in the report of the Review of Tomorrow's Schools.

Under the Tomorrow's Schools model, competition between schools was intended to improve access to good quality schools through parents exercising choice. There is no evidence that such competition or exercise of choice has improved overall school performance or learner outcomes. What it has done is made it harder to share good practice across schools and has led to spending on things other than teaching and learning, such as marketing.

Competition has also made it harder for a significant minority of schools to meet their learners' needs because it has exacerbated ethnic and socio-economic segregation and in so doing has weakened the social capital of these communities.

Te Tiriti relationship

PPTA Te Wehengarua supports the growth of a culturally responsive secondary education system that promotes and enhances Māori success as Māori. Schools should be places where ākongā Māori and their whānau feel a sense of belonging and connection.

We support the requirement in the Education and Training Act 2020 that one of a board's primary objectives in governing a school is to ensure that the school gives effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This requirement has the flow on effect of expecting mana whenua to engage with schools on this work when they may not have the resources to do this.

Mana whenua should be supported by the Ministry of Education so they can engage with schools to develop resources that will ensure mātauranga Māori is authentic and endorsed. School leadership should be able to access professional learning and advice on how best to partner with mana whenua to achieve an authentic Te Tiriti relationship.

Cultural responsibilities within schools are most often placed on kaiako with the cultural capacity to lead integration of tikanga and te reo Māori into school practices. The NZ Council for Educational Research National Survey Report 2021 indicates that this additional strain may impact the retention of kaiako Māori, with data showing 'Māori were also more likely to want to change schools or leave the profession entirely before retirement, compared with non-Māori teachers².'

² [NZCER National Survey Report 2021.pdf](#), p.29

Ongoing work is needed to address recognition and provision for kaiako with expertise in language and tikanga and to support the additional cultural workload they carry.

Working with the profession

For change to be successful in the education sector it needs to be backed by strong research and developed and implemented alongside teachers. PPTA Te Wehengarua is the professional voice trusted by secondary teachers to work with government and its agencies to further the interests of the sector.

A cooperative approach has been effective in the past to introduce new initiatives to the sector, such as the NCEA qualification, Kāhui Ako, Networks of Expertise, and the Equity Index for resourcing. When the resources and capacities of the Association and the government are aligned, enduring and constructive change can occur.

An area of periodic tension that we are keen to pre-empt is in the process of future collective agreement negotiations. The independent Arbitration Panel (2023) provided guidance to PPTA Te Wehengarua, the Ministry of Education and the government on alternative approaches for negotiations. We believe that these approaches offer an opportunity for constructive and purposeful engagement and look forward to pursuing discussions on these proposals as a matter of priority.



PPTA Te Wehengarua Executive 2023

The Teaching Workforce

School staffing

The way in which secondary school staffing is allocated has not changed significantly since 2012. However, schools now face new and increasing pressures, including:

- greater needs in student pastoral care and guidance
- an increasingly complex management environment
- greater expectation of differentiated learning and learning pathways
- greater expectation for community and whānau liaison
- a shift away from streaming and towards integration of students with greater learning needs
- the use of innovative learning environments
- the accelerated development of blended and asynchronous teaching and learning practices
- increasing recognition of the impacts of workload on the wellbeing of principals, senior leaders, middle leaders, pastoral care teachers and classroom teachers
- the loss of international student income that has masked under-resourcing.

Recent research by the Secondary Principals' Council³ indicated that secondary schools were under-staffed by an average of five full time teachers in terms of meeting both the mandatory requirements in curriculum, pastoral care and administration and community expectations which have become core parts of school life (such as extracurricular activity). The research particularly highlighted under-resourcing of pastoral care and guidance staffing.

There is a very clear need for a workforce strategy to address the ongoing and future needs of the teaching workforce.

Recruitment, retention and workload

Secondary and composite (Years 1-13) schools face increasing difficulty in recruiting and retaining trained and qualified teachers. School-level recruitment data that we collected earlier this year was the worst on record. These problems are exacerbated in male-dominated disciplines.

As application rates for teaching jobs continue to drop, schools face quality as well as quantity issues in supply, which has implications for the work of school leaders and for the quality of education received by ākonga.

Decreasingly attractive work-life balance, alongside falling relative wages, are major contributors to the problems. PPTA Te Wehengarua is hopeful that the pay equity review process which the sector is engaged in will provide robust evidence of the degree to which salaries are or are not competitive.

PPTA Te Wehengarua sees benefit in working with government to develop a five-year sector plan for recruitment and retention, which could incorporate the findings of the pay equity review and utilise an alternative approach to collective agreement negotiations in 2025 to address the problems in a sustainable way.

³ <https://www.ppta.org.nz/past-events/the-staffing-summit/>

Supporting leadership

School leadership opportunities and responsibilities are wide ranging and complex, yet there are no clear or recommended pathways for becoming a leader.

A 2023 Education Review Office (ERO) report on preparing and supporting new principals⁴ found that there are still areas of the role in which new principals feel unprepared, and where they are not confident to carry out their responsibilities once in the role.

An NZCER report on Wāhine Māori in Leadership⁵ found that cultural leadership was hidden and unrecognised in many circumstances. It recommended specific support mechanisms for new and aspiring leaders along with professional learning and development opportunities crucial to fostering the growth of wāhine Māori in leadership positions.

PPTA Te Wehengarua provides significant support to leadership through our professional learning and development centre and advocacy from our Secondary Principals' Council. We are saddened by ERO reports that principals' enjoyment of their role plummeted during the COVID pandemic and has not bounced back as much as teachers⁶. We strongly advise that a more structured and systemic approach to supporting leadership is developed by the Ministry of Education.

Pay equity

The teachers' pay equity claim has the potential to value and recognise the unseen and uncelebrated mahi that teachers do to improve outcomes for learners in Aotearoa New Zealand, and to ensure that any undervaluation of the profession due to its female-dominated nature is rectified.

A settlement for this claim would likely affect more than 90,000 workers, including secondary and area school teachers and leaders), and some community education workers.

PPTA Te Wehengarua has been working collaboratively with the Ministry of Education, NZEI Te Riu Roa, early childhood providers and the Ministry of Education to seek evidence for the claim. This work started in late 2020, after the Equal Pay Act Amendment Bill was passed, with unanimous support from all political parties.

The assessment process has involved more than 250 interviews with teachers and education workers across the sector, led by Ministry analysts and union members. PPTA Te Wehengarua encourages the incoming Minister of Education to support the ongoing process of the claim.

Initial teacher education

With teacher supply at a critical level and the number of people choosing secondary teaching decreasing each year, it is no surprise that some initial teacher education providers are struggling to keep their programmes going.

⁴ https://ero.govt.nz/our-research/category/preparing-and-supporting-new-principals?fbclid=IwAR0SqWWkmfPsm7FtRK0eBM_vkQ8iFD0s-GRUQsELpcmWABp7wqbLV_Nmc4

⁵ <https://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/wahine-maori-leadership>

⁶ <https://ero.govt.nz/our-research/long-covid-ongoing-impacts-of-covid-19-on-schools-and-learning>

The burgeoning of in-school/field-based teacher education programmes to address the teacher supply issue only exacerbates existing inequities between those schools that have extra funds, and those that don't - in this case funds to 'sponsor' a trainee.

A recent PPTA Te Wehengarua survey which revealed the following concerns about initial teacher education:

- Lack of support for mentors of teacher trainees – time allowances and payments are woeful for such an important task;
- Lack of specialist subject knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge;
- Inequities in access to funded teacher education programmes (some can receive stipends and even have course fees paid);
- Burden on teacher trainees (financial, academic workload vs practicum workload);
- Questions around the appropriateness of those trying to complete a teacher education course while also being employed on a Limited Authority to Teach basis.



Education Sector Issues

NCEA and curriculum change process

Throughout the country kaiako are leading the development of resources and programmes that are part of the NCEA Change Package and Curriculum Refresh (Te Mātaiaho) initiatives. PPTA Te Wehengarua supports the intent of both initiatives and the one-year delay in the implementation of the literacy and numeracy co-requisites and NCEA Levels 2 and 3. This extra time is crucial to enable the profession to embed key changes to the teaching, learning and assessment programmes in secondary schools. It also allows for some of the critical Te Mātaiaho mahi to 'catch up'.

The deliberate attention to Te Tiriti o Waitangi across both work programmes is overdue and must be allowed to continue. Resourcing and support for this national system shift must continue to be provided to ensure successful implementation.

PPTA Te Wehengarua agrees that attention must also be paid to improving literacy and numeracy but disagrees with any attempt to legislate specific pedagogical approaches.

Every secondary school student should be taught by subject specialists. PPTA Te Wehengarua acknowledges the enormous support given by subject associations to subject specialists in developing and sharing their expertise. We continue to assert that ALL subjects are deserving of funded support, through reinstating senior subject advisors and ensuring ALL subject associations receive funding such as that from the Networks of Expertise (NEX) programme.

Attendance

The issues around school non-attendance are wide-ranging and complex and there is no easy fix. Internationally there has also been a decrease in school attendance.⁷

Schools cannot raise attendance rates on their own. PPTA Te Wehengarua considers there is an urgent need for support from the Ministry of Education, both locally in the form of support for whānau on the ground and nationally in the form of a targeted campaign informing parents about the importance – and their legal responsibilities – of schooling. We need more pastoral and guidance staff in our schools to help identify students who are struggling, for a variety of reasons, and to work with these rangatahi and their families to keep them engaged at school before we lose them. Relationships with students' whānau and caregivers are hugely important.

The government needs to invest more in redesigning alternative education and providing an end-to-end system of support for children and young people at risk of disengaging from education. Funding is needed urgently for more learning support coordinators across the school sector.

Learners with high support needs

PPTA Te Wehengarua wants to see well-resourced learning support in all schools for learners with high needs. The multi-teacher model of secondary education makes inclusion challenging and complex. We need adequate funding, resources and time allowances to enable schools to provide flexible, mana enhancing options in meeting increased need.

⁷ [ERO release of their latest report on attendance](#)

We call for the complete roll-out of learning support coordinators (LSCs) so that all secondary schools have at least one. This would remove the inequity of less than half of schools and students being able to access this resource. PPTA Te Wehengarua is committed to improvements in outcomes for Māori students with highest needs. The disproportionately high numbers of Māori being labelled with ‘behaviour’ problems and the data on exclusions for Māori learners reinforce the view that the system does not provide appropriately for Māori.⁸ The effects of colonisation and racism can be seen in additional [high] need data that has not improved for Māori over the last several decades.⁹ We want to see effective, culturally responsive, professional development available for all teachers.

PPTA Te Wehengarua firmly believes that workload is currently a barrier to providing best support for learners with highest needs. More staffing and more manageable workloads will enable teachers and principals to do their work in a sustainable way.

Teaching with digital technologies

The rapid development of digital technologies and the globalised nature of economic systems are creating an entirely new set of educational challenges for the world to adapt to.^[1] Making the most of digital technologies (emerging, advanced, GenAI) will require trust, inclusion, workforce capability, data capability, and systems and processes to manage these. It certainly demands the removal of barriers that mean access is not available to all.

The current and increasing digital divide must be addressed. PPTA Te Wehengarua calls on the government to close the digital divide and the Ministry of Education and the NZ Qualifications Authority to provide policy direction and advice to ensure the rigour and validity of our national qualifications given the increasing use of digital technologies.

The provision of quality professional learning for teachers is vital, and we advocate for the supports required to ensure teaching with digital technologies is pedagogically sound, inclusive, and equitable for all. We want teachers to be confident in their digital knowledge and understanding, and able to make best use of the opportunities these technologies provide.

These supports can include (but are not limited to) funded quality professional development for teachers, sound policy direction and advice ensuring the rigor and validity of our national qualifications as well as an appropriate structure to evaluate the quality, usefulness, and relevance of digital technologies in education.¹⁰

Climate justice

PPTA Te Wehengarua’s vision is for every school in Aotearoa New Zealand to provide quality, science and Mātauranga Māori-based climate change education.

Learners should feel empowered with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that are needed to act as agents of change. Tamariki must be supported to engage with their local communities and take part in actions to improve their environment. Our schools can role-model sustainable and low-carbon actions for their communities.

⁸Massey University (2021). Children with Additional Needs: Report to the Accord. Final Report. (June)

⁹ Massey University (2021). Children with Additional Needs: Report to the Accord. Final Report. (June)

¹⁰ [Educatingforthefuture.economist.com](https://educatingforthefuture.economist.com)

While some climate change resources are currently available, these can be piecemeal, and it is difficult to access these and know how they fit into the curriculum. The onus is currently on individuals and teachers to locate resources and ensure these are fit for purpose.

The Ministry of Education must create a clear climate change education action plan that outlines the provision of climate change education across all levels of education in Aotearoa New Zealand and must include Mātauranga Māori.