

PPTA

NEW ZEALAND POST PRIMARY
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION
TE WEHENGARUA

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Teach First New Zealand

Update to members February 2014

The Teach First NZ programme

Auckland University is receiving funding from the Ministry of Education to pilot a new form of secondary teacher education which is essentially an apprenticeship model. The pilot is being run in Northland and Auckland only, and involves only a small number of students. A non-profit organisation, Teach First NZ, has been set up to support the programme with recruitment, the initial six-week intensive, and ongoing support.

Teach First “participants” are students in a two-year Postgraduate Diploma of Secondary Teaching run by the University of Auckland. At the end of the two years they will graduate as trained teachers eligible for provisional registration. To teach in their initial two years in schools as “participants” on the field-based programme, they will need to have a Limited Authority to Teach granted by the Teachers Council.

The government funding is for a 4-year pilot for up to 20 students per year. The funding is for three two-year intakes across the four years of the pilot. Cohort 1 began in February 2013, Cohort 2 February 2014, and the final Cohort, 3, in February 2015. They will finish the programme at the end of 2016.

Cohort 1 participants are supernumerary in their schools, and schools are receiving extra staffing. The two subsequent cohorts, from Cohort 2, have to either fill existing vacancies or be funded through locally raised or operations grant money. PPTA has recently been told, however, that because the participants are required to have only 12 contact hours, the Ministry has agreed to provide supplementary staffing to schools to make the positions up to full-time. This was not in the original documentation.

The Ministry also funds host schools with 0.2 FTE per participant for mentoring. In addition to this, the university has promised a minimum of 25

visits from their university lecturing staff to each participant over the two years of their programme.

The government funding is conditional on the participants being placed in secondary schools with high Maori and Pasifika rolls in Auckland and Northland, and that these schools be mainly, but not exclusively, decile 1 and 2. At the time of writing this appears to be happening.

The programme is being evaluated, with the costs for this shared equally between the University of Auckland and the Ministry of Education. One of the aspects evaluated is the retention rate of graduates of the programme. There were 16 participants placed in schools for Cohort 1, and one of them dropped out at the end of the first year. In Cohort 2, the full complement of 20 have been placed across 14 schools in Auckland and Northland. PPTA has a representative on the reference group for this evaluation, which ensures that we can provide input about what should be looked at over the various stages of the work, and keep an eye on problems that develop.

The PPTA position

Auckland University and the Teach First Trust made an effort to keep PPTA informed and to seek our support for the programme from its inception. There was considerable dialogue about what the union would see as necessary requirements for the programme to have any chance of succeeding.

In February 2012 Executive set its 'bottom-line' requirements about Teach First NZ as follows:

- a. That schools be funded so that Teach First students have no more than 12 hours class contact in Year 1 and 2.
- b. That schools be funded for 0.2 FTTE mentor time per student for the two years.
- c. That all requirements set by the Teachers Council's approval panel for the course be met; and
- d. That members be reminded that PPTA will support them should they feel pressured to act as mentors for Teach First participants.

Because the university was able to meet all those requirements, our position had to be, while not one of enthusiastic support for the programme, one of professional co-operation and suspension of judgment.

It would be fair to say, however, that PPTA has not been kept as well-informed by the university as we would like to be as the scheme has rolled out. There are aspects of the placement process for Cohort 2 that PPTA is far from happy about, and we are pursuing this further to ensure that Cohort 3 placements are more consistent with good employer obligations. We have also raised concerns about the process to be used for the out-of-school practicum placement that all

participants must do in their second year, and at the time of writing have still not had an opportunity to sit down with the university and thrash this out.

It also has to be said that this approach to teacher education is considerably more expensive, perhaps half as much again as conventional teacher education. We cannot help but note the irony of the government, on the one hand, endorsing this more expensive Teach First NZ preparation for teachers (albeit partly funded by the private sector) while at the same time fully funding privately run charter schools that are to be free from any responsibility to employ trained, qualified and registered teachers.

PPTA's position was arrived at after commissioning a literature review, conducted by researchers at Murdoch University, Perth, on fast-track training schemes around the world. That literature review can be downloaded from the PPTA website.

The literature review criticised the marketing of these schemes as providing an opportunity for successful graduates to “do their bit for students in poor areas” and then move on to their real careers in business and the like, and this kind of marketing is very obvious with this scheme – see <http://www.teachfirstnz.org/>.

On the other hand, the reviewers did not conclude that the scheme would necessarily produce poorer teachers than traditional initial teacher education programmes. The small amount of research that did exist which compared outcomes from the two types of programmes was somewhat equivocal.

Issues for PPTA Branches in Auckland/Northland

The ‘away practicum’

A number of schools have signed up to this programme, either to take a “participant” in a teaching role, or to host a “participant” for a practicum away from their home school. Teachers Council requirements mean that a student on a field-based course must do 8 of their 14 weeks practicum away from their home school. These students do their away practicum in a range of ways over the two years, including one three-week block during the second year in a school that is different from their host school in terms of decile and location.

PPTA is concerned that at the moment the intention appears to be for teachers in host schools for the ‘away practicum’ to ‘swap’ with a Teach First participant and do a three-week stint covering their classes in their low-decile school. We are really concerned to ensure that this is entirely voluntary, and does not have negative impacts on the students of the teachers who agree to a swap. For a teacher in a mid- or high-decile school, teaching for three weeks in a low decile school could perhaps provide a useful professional

learning opportunity, but that cannot be guaranteed, and we can envisage all kinds of problems about this.

The mentors

Branches need to ensure that members are not pressured to act as mentors for Teach First participants, and that if they do agree they receive their full entitlement of time.

Being a mentor for this scheme would be a much bigger role than being an associate teacher for a normal teacher education student, because they are fully in charge of three classes for the whole year, despite having had only 8 weeks preparation over the summer break. This is why 0.2 staffing per participant for mentoring was a minimum requirement for the Teachers Council and for PPTA.

The university's Faculty of Education is offering a professional learning programme to prepare mentors for carrying out this role.

Collective agreement coverage

Because these "participants" will be employed in teaching positions on LATs, they must be offered coverage under the STCA by their school, and are entitled to full PPTA membership. PPTA Field Officers speak to each cohort while they are in their six-week intensive preparation, and so far the take-up of membership has been high. Branches should make the same effort to welcome them and ensure they are signed up as members as you do with other newly appointed teachers.

Conclusions

PPTA will be watching the outcomes of this course with considerable interest. Branches in the Auckland, Counties-Manukau and Northland regions are asked to keep PPTA National Office informed as follows:

- If your school is involved, and in what capacity (i.e. to host a "participant" in a teaching role, or as an away school – called in the scheme an Affiliate School - for practicum from 2014);
- Teachers' observations about the "participants", the conditions in which they are working, the course they are enrolled in, the impact on your school, and the support provided to your school and to the "participants" by the University of Auckland; and
- Any issues that arise in your school about the course.

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