

14 November 2025

Hon. Erica Stanford
Minister of Education
Freepost Parliament
WELLINGTON 6140

Email: erica.stanford@parliament.govt.nz

Tēnā koe Minister Stanford

We are writing as members of, and on behalf of the other members of the Middle Leaders Advisory Committee (MLAC) of PPTA Te Wehengarua. Each MLAC member represents one of the twelve regions of the Association.

Middle leaders in secondary and area schools across Aotearoa New Zealand are under increasing pressure due to the pace and complexity of the proposed assessment and curriculum rewrite changes. These changes are occurring within a context where middle leadership roles are already demanding and multifaceted. The wellbeing of staff is being compromised as middle leaders are stretched between supporting current programmes and students, while also being expected to manage the transition to new systems.

The workload for middle leaders has been steadily increasing. This is due to a combination of factors:

- The rapid rollout of curriculum and qualification reforms.
- The broad scope of middle leadership roles, which often span teaching, curriculum oversight, staff development, pastoral care, and administrative duties.
- A lack of clarity and resourcing, currently and in the long term, around subject-specific support, including the role of subject associations and the Ministry of Education's capacity to provide targeted assistance.
- Inconsistent support structures, including the diminishing presence of experienced advisors (e.g., NIFS), and uncertainty around the effectiveness of newly proposed roles.
- Middle leaders are facing pressure to maintain high-quality delivery of existing programmes and student support, while simultaneously preparing for significant systemic changes. This dual burden is unsustainable and risks burnout should the proposed changes go ahead.

This situation affects middle leaders such as Heads of Department, Deans, Whānau Leaders, and subject leaders—those who sit between classroom teachers and senior management. It also impacts the wider school community, including:

- Teachers who rely on middle leaders for guidance, mentoring, and curriculum leadership.
- Students whose learning outcomes are shaped by the effectiveness of teaching teams led by middle leaders.
- Schools that depend on middle leaders to align departmental goals with strategic direction and ensure compliance in specialist learning areas.

enquiries@ppta.org.nz

What needs to be done?

To ensure the success of curriculum and qualification changes, and to sustain the wellbeing and effectiveness of middle leaders, the following actions are needed:

- Acknowledgement of the complexity and scope of middle leadership roles.
- Increased resourcing, including time allowances and funding, to support middle leaders in managing change.
- Clear and consistent support from the Ministry of Education, including subject-specific and regionally responsive advisory roles.
- Strengthening and resourcing of subject associations to ensure they can continue to provide vital support without being overwhelmed.
- A collaborative approach that includes middle leaders in decision-making and implementation processes.
- A commitment to staff wellbeing, including realistic timelines, manageable expectations, and support systems that prioritise the health and sustainability of the workforce.

In summary, the proposed curriculum changes will place significant additional demands on Teachers in Charge (TiCs), particularly those without the support of a Head of Department. These educators are expected to lead planning, programme redevelopment, and assessment alignment while maintaining full teaching loads and administrative duties, often without extra time or remuneration. Without targeted resourcing and recognition, the cumulative pressure of these responsibilities will continue to impact workload and wellbeing.

We urge the Ministry to provide immediate and meaningful support to ensure these changes are implemented successfully without compromising staff wellbeing or educational quality.

Nāku noa nā



Chris Abercrombie
TE AMORANGI/PRESIDENT



Shannon-Mae Read
EXECUTIVE MEMBER/MLAC CHAIR