



PPTA TE WEHENGARUA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2021

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# REVISITING OUR VISION FOR EDUCATION



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## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 That the report be received.
- 2 That PPTA Te Wehengarua use the vision outlined in this paper as the frame by which to promote the 2022 Collective Agreement claims.

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. PPTA Te Wehengarua members have always held clear goals and aspirations for the teaching profession. These are visible in our strategic planning, our industrial strategy, and our previous collective agreement campaigns.
- 1.2. Our current industrial strategy is organised accordingly under the headings of: Te Tiriti, Workforce, Wellbeing, The New Teaching and Learning Landscape, and Promoting Equity.
- 1.3. After more than a year of Covid-19 disruptions it is time to return to these themes and see if they still align with our vision for public education in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- 1.4. This work is part of our claims development process, and will ensure that the provisions in our collective agreement actively work towards our hopes for education not just in this bargaining round, but looking to the future.
- 1.5. Accordingly, the industrial strategy conference paper (HX21/052) is a companion paper for this vision.

## 2. THE PROCESS

- 2.1. The information summarised in this paper has come from a range of member engagement avenues including digital surveys, branch meetings, regional meetings, and national conferences. Members were asked three questions about how they would like teaching to be in ten years' time:
  - What do you want teaching to be like for new graduates going into their first year?
  - What are the good things about the current system that you hope will still be there in ten years?
  - What needs to be changed about the current system to achieve this vision?
  - We received around 100 responses to these questions, many of which represent the answers of a group such as a branch or committee.

## 3. THE VISION

- 3.1. PPTA members want the teaching profession to be highly paid, trained to a high standard, continuously supported, culturally responsive, and properly resourced for both curriculum delivery and pastoral care.
- 3.2. Teaching and learning must be more than just surviving the school year for teachers and students. Schools must be places for all students to get ahead, and for teachers to experience the surprise and delight of watching learning unfold.

- 3.3. Teachers don't want their jobs to be merely sustainable and manageable, they want them 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.
- 3.4. 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, in which staff and students are supported to be bilingual and at home in Te Ao Māori.
- 3.5. Teaching should be secure, permanent, highly respected employment. It should be seen as a first-choice career that can last a lifetime: a career with a future.

## 4. HOW TO GET THERE – WHAT TO KEEP

- 4.1. To achieve this vision, we need to protect the things we have that are most valued by teachers: flexibility and autonomy of curriculum and assessment, support for PCTs, holiday and sick leave entitlements, face-to-face time with students, and the collegiality that teachers feel towards one another.
- 4.2. Timetabled non-contact time and time allowances for PCTs are vital if teachers are to have time to thrive and grow in teaching. These must be protected. The same can be said for provision of study leave and sabbaticals. Finding joy in teaching comes in part from having time away from the classroom to learn and refresh.
- 4.3. Teachers are professionals and should be treated as such. A member of parliament sits in the house three days a week, 30 weeks a year. There is no suggestion, however, that they work part time. This visible part of their work is supported by many hours of work that take place where and when they are needed. So it is with teaching.
- 4.4. Timetabled teaching and learning time sits at the heart of what teachers do, but in order for 20 hours of contact time per week to take place, many more hours of work are required. Teachers are, and should remain, free to decide where and when much of this preparation, planning, assessing, and administrative work takes place. Flexibility in hours of work and the decision of how to use term break time is highly valued.
- 4.5. The relative autonomy and flexibility of curriculum and assessment is another element of the profession currently highly valued by teachers. Subject-specific skills and knowledge are important, and teachers wish this content knowledge to be recognised and respected. The New Zealand curriculum, and in many ways the NCEA assessment system, allow teachers and learners the flexibility to tailor teaching and learning to specific contexts and needs. New Zealand teachers do not wish to lose this responsiveness to a system that favours the highly prescriptive curricula and standardised testing that is a feature of the British and US American education systems.
- 4.6. The existence of Māori medium education in New Zealand is valued by the profession as a whole. While there is an expectation that the understanding of te reo and tikanga Māori will grow in English medium schools, this is not seen as being in competition with Kura Kaupapa Māori, Ngā Kura a Iwi o Aotearoa, or any of the other ways in which Māori medium education is provided.

- 4.7. Teachers feel a strong sense of collegiality in the profession. The challenging nature of the job is partly eased by support of other teachers who are willing to extend their help in many different ways, big and small, every day. The most often cited of these is the willingness to share resources, but it includes the less tangible but equally important aspects of emotional support and friendship. How do we protect collegiality? By protecting against the initiatives that would erode it, such as performance pay, bulk funding, and charter schools, and by reducing as much as possible inequities in the system.

## 5. HOW TO GET THERE – WHAT TO CHANGE

- 5.1. We need to improve access to quality professional development, address inequities in the system, increase salaries, reduce class sizes, reform the Teaching Council, and increase links between schools and their communities.
- 5.2. A highly valued, highly trusted, thriving teaching workforce requires a pay scale that reflects the skills and experience of teachers, and the realities of the socio-economic situation we find ourselves in. The housing crisis and its effect on skyrocketing rents and house prices are putting members under unforeseen financial pressure. All levels of the base scale must be enough for teachers to support themselves, otherwise we face a very real retention crisis.
- 5.3. Working conditions must be safe in every sense of the word. Workload reduction is crucial, as is the reform of the profession's regulatory body the Teaching Council.
- 5.4. Teachers are told they must continuously improve their practice through professional development but are increasingly dissatisfied by what is available to them. It needs to be more than just sessions "tacked on to your days as meetings". The PLD fund that was won in the last collective agreement bargaining round has allowed teachers financial assistance to attend professional development of their choice and has allowed PPTA to provide a greater range of professional activities. While this is a positive change in recent years, it has underscored how valuable effective professional development can be in terms of inspiring teaching excellence, and how unsatisfactory access to meaningful professional development has become. Teachers want ongoing, teacher-led, subject-specific, easily accessible professional development. They want established systems of ongoing support and mentorship for both establishing and experienced teachers. They want this because they are professionals committed to improving their practice and because genuine joy and inspiration comes from this learning.
- 5.5. Appropriate, effective, and well-resourced professional development will be key to achieving the elements of the vision in which teachers and schools are supported to be genuinely bilingual and bicultural. This will require significant time allowances to be made if we are to prioritise this learning.
- 5.6. The same can be said for fostering genuine cultural responsiveness to the wide range of diverse learners teachers enjoy in their classes. Resourcing is key to avoiding tokenism in these areas, and to ensuring that this important work does not increase overall teacher workload.
- 5.7. The growing sense of inequities in the profession is a problem that is easily identified but complex to address. We can begin by addressing those areas where a solution is clear and meaningful, such as parity of non-contact time for part- and full-time teachers. If we are to retain the collegiality that is so valued by teachers, we must commit to addressing these inequities wherever we can.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of what matters to teachers or what problems exist in the current education system. It is a synthesis of what was most widely felt and deeply held when we asked members what their aspirations for the teaching profession are. It will not be used to exclude any concerns not captured here and will naturally change and grow over time. It is intended to guide the direction of our industrial work and specifically our claims development, so that we can be sure we are working towards the future that our members want.