

PPTA

NEW ZEALAND POST PRIMARY
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

TE WEHENGARUA

www.ppta.org.nz

SUBMISSION

to the

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

On

**CURRICULUM, PROGRESS AND
ACHIEVEMENT**

November 2018

About PPTA

PPTA represents the majority of teachers engaged in secondary education in New Zealand, including secondary teachers, principals, and manual and technology teachers.

Under our constitution, all PPTA activity is guided by the following objectives:

- a) To advance the cause of education generally and of all phases of secondary and technical education in particular;
- b) To uphold and maintain the just claims of its members individually and collectively;
and
- c) To affirm and advance Te Tiriti O Waitangi.

This submission is from the PPTA Executive and is on behalf of all of our members, but recognises that many of them, as individuals or through their branches, regions, and interest groups, will also be making submissions, some of which may differ from this.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. PPTA was not in favour of the National Standards introduced under the last government, and have been watching with interest and concern to see what would replace them. The Conversation Document published by the Curriculum, Progress and Achievement Ministerial Advisory Group has done little to alleviate our fears.
- 1.2. In this submission we have addressed each of the emerging ideas.

2. Commit to a system that learns

- 2.1. In the secondary sector the ways in which achievement and progress are assessed are many and varied. There a number of assessment tools available to schools:
 - Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs) are standardised tests used to assess students' Mathematics, Listening Comprehension, Punctuation and Grammar, Reading Comprehension, and Reading Vocabulary.
 - Science: Thinking with Evidence are standardised tests which identify specific aspects of thinking in science rather than attempting to measure overall achievement in science. They can be used to develop individual profiles that illustrate relative strengths and weaknesses in the domain of using evidence in science.
 - asTTle is an assessment tool, developed to assess students' achievement and progress in reading, mathematics and writing.
- 2.2. These tools largely work as diagnostic aids, providing information about the next steps for teaching and learning.
- 2.3. Schools may also choose to assess students based on NCEA-style marking to help prepare them for NCEA in the senior school.

- 2.4. Traditionally, to evaluate learning a student's performance is compared to peers of the same age or year level. This can be extremely problematic as it does not necessarily take into account their progress; it simply compares them to others. This was a significant issue with National Standards. A student assessed as 'well below expectations' may have made considerable progress.
- 2.5. Secondary teachers are already overwhelmed with the demands of summative assessment at Years 11 to 13. NCEA is acknowledged widely as a significant contributor to both teacher and student workload. In fact, there is evidence that some secondary schools have become overly focussed on assessment at the expense of developing innovative approaches to teaching and learning. To add a further layer of assessment, using an entirely different system, would exacerbate this problem.
- 2.6. While we recognise that the ministry has developed PaCT to support professional judgements in reading, writing and mathematics, this was initially designed for use in a primary or intermediate school. Here, a teacher is likely to have a single class to assess, made up of say 30 students. If we consider its use in the secondary context, the scale becomes untenable. A teacher may now have 30 students in each of three or four junior classes, who they teach for three hours a week. To expect a teacher to make the levels of judgement seemingly required within PaCT for that many students would leave many teachers burnt out.
- 2.7. Additionally, the development of the PaCT was achieved because of the wealth of research, both local and international, into progressions in reading, writing and mathematics. This work has not yet been done for other subjects, and as such it is difficult to see how such a tool could be developed and be credible.
- 2.8. In his recent paper, Geoff Masters (2018)¹, CEO of the Australian Council for Educational Research, wrote about the importance of evidence in teaching. He identified three points in a teaching cycle where evidence is critical: identifying starting points for teaching and learning, informing teaching strategies and interventions, and evaluating student progress and teacher effectiveness. All of this is subject-, and sometimes context-specific. It relies on the teacher having the time to, for each unit of work, establish a personalised programme of work for each learner, based on their individual needs. This is challenging in any setting, but even more so in secondary schools, where a teacher may have three or four different Year 9 and/or 10 classes, that they are timetabled to teach for three hours a week each. The class may contain 30 or more students.

3. Design a process for evolving national curriculum in Māori and English

- 3.1. While PPTA supports the aspirations of a regular review of Te Marautanga o Aotearoa and the New Zealand Curriculum, this must be tempered with considerations of teacher workload. Secondary teachers in New Zealand have faced constant change in

¹ Masters, Geoff (2018). The role of evidence in teaching and learning. Australian Council for Educational Research. https://research.acer.edu.au/research_conference/RC2018/13august/2/ (retrieved 1 November 2018)

recent times, and with this constant change has come a considerable increase in workload.

- 3.2. We accept that change is sometimes necessary. However, New Zealand has a history of not supporting some of the change made with proper implementation. Teachers have been poorly supported in changes to curriculum, assessment, appraisal to name but a few. This was highlighted in the Secondary Teachers Workload Working Group Report². In a secondary context, where our senior assessment system (NCEA) is so connected to the curriculum, a 10 yearly review cycle would exhaust already overworked teachers.

4. Clarify pathways for ākonga progress and Support the design of responsive local curriculum

- 4.1. These two ideas seem to be somewhat discordant. In the pathways idea the document describes development of a shared understanding about learning that really matters for learners at each curriculum level. The implication of this is a national level description of learning and progress. However, in a responsive local curriculum, this may not reflect the learning that matters in that community. In a subject that is more skills based, like English, this may be less of an issue than in a content-heavy subject like Science.

5. Design and trial rich records of student learning

- 5.1. PPTA has advocated for an enhanced digital CV or portfolio platform for some time for secondary students. This could connect to the students' Record of Achievement (ROA) for NZQA, link to school reports or be linked to employers. At the heart of such a tool is its long-term support and the ability for students to curate the information in it. While documents like the ROA and reports are official records and cannot be changed, there is no reason why the student could not curate the information used, leaving out details that, for example, were not relevant for a particular job application.
- 5.2. Such a tool would require considerable support, both in terms of money and time for PLD. There is no reason why it could not be introduced in the early years of education so that students are well versed with its use and capabilities before they reach secondary school.

6. Build assessment, inquiry and evaluative capability

- 6.1. PPTA believes that a critical part of ongoing teacher development is access to relevant and timely professional learning and development. One of the challenges of the system currently is that teachers are struggling to access the PLD that they need, want

² <https://www.ppta.org.nz/dmsdocument/479>

and should be able to access. We would support easier access to 'high-quality, high-impact professional learning, and for as such we support the formation of an advisory service, seeing this as an obvious starting place for some of this PLD need.

- 6.2. Having said that we are troubled by the idea that teachers need to be micro-credentialled in this area. Already in the system there exists large numbers of data-literate teachers. Investment in supporting teachers and schools in what to do with the data rather than investing in a micro-credential qualification seems a more prudent investment.
- 6.3. Wellbeing@Schools is an example of this. The survey has been offered free to schools to use. However, many schools struggle with what to do with the data that they gather, not in terms of analysis, but in terms of application. Investment in both aspects, the survey and its application, are essential to make the investment realise its potential. The same can be said for assessment in schools. If we just invest in tests, digital tools and other evaluation processes, and not in supporting teachers around the next steps for students, the investment both in dollar terms and time is meaningless.

7. Strengthen collaborative inquiry networks

- 7.1. PPTA supports the strengthening of collaborative inquiry networks. For a number of years PPTA has funded and hosted the Subject Association Forum, bringing together teachers from subject associations across the country to share ideas. Many of these organisations have run on goodwill and volunteer labour for many years.
- 7.2. For this to achieve what is hoped requires resourcing. The system cannot continue to rely upon teachers' goodwill. We would support the expansion of the current Networks of Expertise and associated coordinator roles to allow this to happen.

8. Grow learning partnerships with parents and whānau

- 8.1. Teachers and schools already report on the progress of students. This reporting can take many different forms, depending on the school and the subject. For example reporting on English and Mathematics could be by curriculum level. This is not possible in subjects like science, where the contexts and content are different at different levels of the curriculum. Many schools are also reporting based on cross curricular units of work.

9. Establish an Institute of Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment

- 9.1. There is a significant question for us around the establishment of an Institute of Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment. There are already proposals to establish an advisory service and leadership college. What is the relationship between these three entities?

9.2. New Zealand already has the New Zealand Assessment Institute. We have the Networks of Expertise, working across both curriculum and pedagogy. We have difficulty seeing the value in establishing yet another entity to do similar work. For teachers, navigating the seemingly increasing number of entities in this area will become increasingly difficult and time consuming. Teachers are already time poor, and any benefits from the work these groups are doing will be lost by the time teachers take to find useful information and support.