

Advice to Branches for Submissions on the Tomorrow's Schools Review

March 2019



Our Schooling Futures: Stronger Together

[Report by the Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce](#)

Making a Submission

The following information is to assist PPTA regions, branches and individuals who wish to participate in the consultation process. Online submissions are due on March 31 and can be accessed here:

[Survey](#)

Other submissions are due in on **Thursday April 7**

Background

A review of Tomorrow's Schools has been on the cards for some time and was first advocated by PPTA, over ten years ago. The need for some reflection on the NZ model of schooling was prompted by concerns on a range of issues including:

- Achievement – especially for Māori and Pacific Island students, children of immigrants and learners from poorer communities. Despite the promises made that Tomorrow's Schools “will lead to improved learning opportunities for the children of this country” (Right Hon David Lange 1988) evidence of improvement is patchy.
- Inequity and unfairness. Parents are legally compelled to send their children to school in this country. They have a right to expect that their child will be taught in a well-resourced, local schools staffed by sufficient trained and qualified teachers. This is simply not the case in many communities. Parents are expected to shop around to find a school that will meet their child's needs.
- Underfunding: (Choose your own examples).
- Compliance as a substitute for practical support.
- Duplication, waste and excessive workload.
- Use of expensive consultants to fill structural gaps.
- Inadequate provision for special needs.
- Competition as a system lever, at the expense of cooperation and collegiality.

For a more detailed summary of the background to the Review and PPTA's expectations around it, see [The Tomorrow's Schools Review](#) (2018 PPTA Conference Paper).

Guidance on the Recommendations, Section by Section

1. Governance: Recommendations 1, 2, and 3

How do you get collaboration?

The first three recommendations of the Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce (TSIT) establish the shape of the changes. Basically, the Taskforce has determined that a more collaborative structure is required in order to address the problems caused by the separation (and sometimes isolation) of schools. It proposes the establishment of a structure that operates in the gap between the centre and schools, called a hub¹.

Who runs it?

It would be managed by a board of directors appointed by the Minister of Education, at least half of whom would be practising educators. Iwi representation would be required. Since an election process carries the risk that some groups in the community will not be represented (particularly Māori and Pasifika) and that some schools are over-represented, the Taskforce proposes that there be a ministerial appointment process to ensure genuine and balanced community representation.

What tasks could be better done by a regional agency?

This body would provide regional coordination and support for schools. Some of the functions currently performed by boards of trustees would be undertaken by the hub, including property maintenance and buildings, human resources, procurement, digital technology services, accounting, financial reporting. It would also operate as a professional service centre for schools, offering support for teaching and learning, leadership and special needs. More controversially, it would oversee principal appointments and employ principals² and teachers (though in the latter case, the employment of staff would be delegated to the principal, as happens currently). It would also oversee suspensions and operate a complaints service.

Zoning

It would be charged with organising enrolment schemes for all the schools and, because ERO will be disestablished, with monitoring and reviewing the performance of schools. The implication is that schools should no longer be left to sink into a spiral of decline before assistance is belatedly given.

One stop shop

The hub would also be charged with integrating other government services that schools need and use, for example MSD, Housing NZ, DHBs. This aligns with PPTA policy calling for support for secondary schools dealing with the consequences of drug and alcohol addiction and mental health concerns.

¹ The Taskforce Report says there would be around 125 schools per hub but in response to representations has since said that there might well be fewer schools depending on geography and local practice.

² It was originally thought that principals would be appointed on 5 year contracts but the TSIT has clarified that appointments would be permanent but the location would be reviewed every five years.

Would it reduce workload for boards and principals?

The centralising of some board functions may help eliminate duplication and reduce purchasing and auditing costs. Board and principal workload may be reduced and schools reoriented away from an emphasis on accountability and compliance to a focus on teaching and learning.

Is the hub the right model?

PPTA Executive is keen to see changes that better support teachers and principals, encourage collaboration and address the inequities and unfairness in the system. **It does not support the hub model in its current form largely out of concern that it appears too similar to the District Health Board structure and the lack of clarity about employment arrangements.** Executive needs greater assurance that this will not be yet another agency intent overseeing teachers while building a local empire and raising their own salaries. In fairness, the stated intention that hubs will be staffed, at least partly, by practising seconded teachers mitigates the risk that these will become management enclaves divorced from the reality of schools. It may also restrain the use of consultants in schools by creating a much-needed mechanism that enables practising teachers to share their expertise.

In summary, PPTA Executive endorses the concept of a regional body that provides the support and coordination that the system currently lacks but awaits considerably more detail before it can approve the hub model as proposed. PPTA will recommend that the group commission an investigation into the range of possible legal structures for the hub and the advantages and disadvantages of each. It would also like to see a group of industrial experts brought together to advise on the industrial implications and complications that may arise from changes in employment arrangements.

2. Schooling Provision: Recommendations 4 - 10

The recommendations in this section are designed to create a more coherent national network of schools, a policy that PPTA supports.

Māori and Pasifika education

Recommendations 3 and 4 which call, respectively, for a consultative Te Tiriti o Waitangi-led, future focussed, state schooling network planning strategy and a dedicated national education hub for Kura Kaupapa Māori, are consistent with PPTA policy over a number of years. PPTA policy also supports any structure that enables Pasifika students to learn and use their heritage languages and culture.

Seamless transitions?

While PPTA does not have specific policy relation to Recommendation 6 which calls for seamless transitions between schools, it seems common-sense and in many cases probably common practice.

Middle Schools – no thanks.

PPTA is **opposed to** Recommendation 7 in which the Taskforce makes a declaration about the schools structures it prefers which are 1-6 or 1-8 primary schools, middle schools, senior colleges,

composite schools and 3-9 secondary schools. The ostensible reason given in the report is to improve transitions by eliminating intermediate schools but, oddly, the number of school transitions remains the same.

The Taskforce seems to be advocating this position because intermediate principals welcomed it. Other than some lightweight statements about “providing greater stability for their students and enable (ing) better support for their learning and wellbeing,” the report provides no evidence for what appears to be a plan for the dismantling of traditional secondary schools. The Taskforce seems to have little idea of how fraught this process would be in reality.

In general, the structure of schools is of little importance to learning outcomes so the historical and geographical patterns should probably be left as they are. It is clearly going to be considerably more expensive if junior high schools are to duplicate all the specialist rooms and equipment that is available in the local secondary schools – unless it is the Taskforce’s view that New Zealand students are to continue in general education until the end of year 10. This is unlikely to be associated with improvements in educational outcomes, particularly in STEM subjects.³

Most New Zealanders’ knowledge of middle schools comes from American television programmes. They are probably unaware of the staffing ratios that give these schools a range of specialist staff in, for example, sport, technology and music. It seems unlikely that a New Zealand government will want to expand the staffing entitlements in order that middle schools can run an adequate specialist programme and, in any event, specialist teachers are in short supply in New Zealand and likely to remain so for some time.

Change for change’s sake, particularly when it is disruptive and expensive is unwise but particularly so in this case when the Taskforce has set aside its overarching concern with equity to propose a model that risks entrenching inequality. Currently, most well-off communities in New Zealand are served by popular 7 or 9 to 13 secondary schools. There will be little desire to alter that model so the Taskforce risks establishing middle schools as a second-best choice in poor communities where students will be offered a modified and limited curriculum taught by (often female) non-specialists.

Further, the Taskforce acknowledges that its proposals are unlikely to work in rural communities but is untroubled by the educational consequences of increasing the incoherence of the school system. Nor does it give any consideration of the impact on nation-wide sporting and cultural events that are reliant on a secondary school structure. The Taskforce needs to properly consider the consequences of further fragmentation of the school network.

If the Taskforce wants to get rid of intermediate schools, the cheapest and least disruptive option is to merge them with secondary schools to form 7-13 schools.

Full service schools

Recommendation 8 about the development of schools as full-service sites is consistent with PPTA policy outlined in the 2013 conference paper, [Schools as community hubs](#)

³ The same difficulty arises with the proposed expansion of 1 to 6 primary schools to 1 to 8.

The future is always better

Recommendation 9 requiring hubs to design “flexible curriculum, assessment and timetable offerings” needs to be treated with the usual caution that teachers apply when enthusiasts are encouraged to undertake blue sky thinking about how to “fix” schools. Inevitably, as in the case of Modern Learning Environments, the research is skimpy, teachers’ concerns are dismissed, there is never enough money to do it properly and implementation is either non-existent or inadequate.

The 2018 PPTA conference asked that “PPTA urge the Minister to ensure any changes be carefully planned, implemented and properly-resourced.” Members could propose an additional bullet point asking that any change be thoroughly costed (including the cost of teachers’ time) and accompanied by a manageable implementation plan.

How does Te Kura fit in?

Recommendation 10 proposes an investigation into the role Te Kura will play in the new model. This is consistent with PPTA policy which, in 2006, called for a full public consultation to define the national role of the Correspondence School (Te Kura). It will be important that teachers both in Te Kura and outside are properly consulted.

3. Competition and Choice: Recommendations 11 and 12⁴

PPTA has consistently opposed those aspects of Tomorrow’s Schools that have created winner and loser schools, inequity and racial polarisation. Consequently it supports recommendation 11 which encourages:

- better management of the network,
- fair access for students with disability and learning support needs,
- enrolment schemes that do not deliberately exclude some students, and
- restrictions on donations and foreign fee-paying students.

Integrated Schools: Recommendation 12

PPTA supports this recommendation which puts integrated schools on a more even footing with other public schools. In 2008, PPTA Conference asked that integrated schools be incorporated within the Education Act in a way that “preserves their special character but avoids undue privilege.”

⁴ The booklet has an error in that there are 2 recommendations labelled 10. This has been fixed on the online version. The paper follows the correct numerical sequence so numbers 10 and 11 in the book are referred to as 11 and 12 and so on.

4. Disability and Learning Support: Recommendations 13,14, 15

There are few areas that have been more subject to ineffectual policy tinkering and the consequences of inadequate funding than special needs. Recommendations 13, 14 and 15, between them, zero in on the problems; poor leadership from the ministry, not enough specialised staff, not enough money and insufficient coordination and support.

PPTA policy wholeheartedly supports any improvements in this area

5. Teaching Recommendations 16 - 20

The five recommendations under this heading address concerns teachers have raised over a number of years; workforce planning (better late than...) more flexibility in Kāhui Ako, less compliance around teacher appraisal, support for new teachers/kaiako, use of paraprofessionals, better access to PLD – including teacher-to-teacher PLD and the addition of teacher wellbeing as a category in the evaluation of the quality of PLD. It is timely that the system be reoriented to better support classroom practice rather than governance, management, administration, compliance and blame. This section is weakened by not acknowledging the role played by salary, workload and classroom conditions in attracting and keeping teachers.

Workforce planning

Tomorrow's Schools handed workforce planning over to the market. Where there had once been national quotas for entry into teacher education based on data about teacher shortages, teacher education providers were empowered to take all comers. There has been some movement away from the extremes of this approach but management of teacher supply remains inadequate. PPTA is entirely supportive of the need for workforce planning but it will be a worthless exercise if it does not recognise the relevance of teacher salary and conditions. Similarly, paraprofessionals will always be welcome in schools but if there is limited funding, the priority needs to be supporting the teacher workforce not creating cheaper support positions. Paraprofessionals are icing on the cake but at the moment there is no cake.

Curriculum and PLD support: Recommendations 17 and 19

PPTA policy endorses the need for enhanced support for teachers.

Kāhui Ako: Recommendation 18

PPTA supports the need for changes in the operation of this initiative. See the 2018 conference paper, [Improving the communities of schools model](#)

6. School leadership (Recommendations 21, 22, 23)

Supporting principals; protecting schools: Recommendation 23

Ineffectual principals can destroy a school and damage the educational opportunities of a whole cohort of children. For that reason, they cannot be appointed to jobs that are beyond their capacity nor left isolated in schools without support, advice and guidance. Given this, PPTA is in favour of the proposal to move some tasks from the principal into the hub/regional body to reduce principal workload allowing them to concentrate on professional leadership. The creation of leadership adviser positions in the Hub/regional body will assist with this process. These people will have the additional task of identifying potential leaders and encouraging their development. PPTA supports this proposal providing the definition of leadership is broad enough to encompass all the leadership roles that exist in secondary schools including senior managers and middle managers who are so critical to effective curriculum delivery.

The Teaching Council: Recommendations 21 and 22

Ensuring our schools are led by competent, ethical, collegial leaders with a broad understanding of teaching and learning and children, is essential. The Teaching Council may be the appropriate body to undertake this work though PPTA policy is that the Council should not be distracted from its primary responsibilities around registration and that teachers must not be expected to pay for any additional tasks it assumes.

7. Resourcing; Recommendations 24 - 27

PPTA strongly supports recommendation 24 and 26. The current funding system is unfair and inequitable. Schools that have a disproportionate number of the most disadvantaged students with the most complex educational needs do not receive sufficient funding and appropriate support. For too long governments have refused to acknowledge how difficult this challenge is and have resorted to blaming teachers for what is largely economic inequality.

Is more management staffing for primary schools really the major staffing issue in New Zealand schools?

PPTA does not, however, support recommendation 25 which proposes that the unit formula for primary should be the same as secondary. Given the extensive range of problems with staffing and workload in New Zealand schools, it is bewildering that the Taskforce has chosen to privilege one very small element while ignoring issues such as class size, non-contact time, understaffing of large schools and curriculum breadth. It seems to have assumed that secondary staffing is already sufficient and has failed to grasp that secondary and primary staffing formulae are different because specialist delivery requires more staff. The Taskforce should set this proposal aside and undertake a full review of staffing so it can prioritise expenditure more appropriately.

Network reviews

Recommendation 27 shifts, to the hubs, responsibility for aligning the school network which may well be necessary. PPTA is not opposed to some rationalisation of the school network providing the

process is fair and well-managed and the outcome is an improvement in the quality of educations for students.

Since 1989, politicians have found it difficult to resist the temptation to gain political fame and electoral favour by opening new schools, most often in areas where there are stable or falling rolls. Integration, special character provisions and most recently the charter school push have added small, fragile schools to the network which have, in turn, undermined the viability of surrounding schools. The result is a mishmash of schooling options characterised by small size and consequent difficulties in offering a comprehensive curriculum. While rural schools are small by necessity and need extra funding and support to compensate for the challenges of remoteness, many other small schools have sprung up in urban areas where there was no need for additional sites. This wastes scarce educational dollars.

It may be preferable to have the hub/regional body manage the opening and closing of new schools given politicians tend to have short timeframes that precluded them thinking about the long-term view of the needs of the network. They are far too keen to open schools than they are to make the hard call about closing them.

8. Central Education Agencies: Recommendations 28 to 32

What to do with ERO and NZQA? Recommendation 28/29/ 30 and 32

It has been PPTA policy since 1999 that ERO and NZQA should be reintegrated into the Ministry, in the hope that this will allow synergies and in policy development and reduction in red tape. ERO will no longer have a role in schools as the hubs/regional bodies will undertake evaluation and the more limited functions of national monitoring and reporting to parliament will be done by a proposed new body, the Education Evaluation Office. Few teachers will weep at the demise of ERO.

The prospect of a Ministry of Education that includes a focus on curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, is to be welcomed and is consistent with PPTA policy. Schools need better leadership in these areas and would probably prefer to deal with a single central organisation.

Expansion of the Teaching Council: Recommendation 31

This recommendation gives effect to the proposal in recommendation 21 about the leadership centre. As mentioned earlier, PPTA has some concerns about this because while teachers are funding the Council, they do not want see a range of constantly expanding functions without a very clear indication of who is paying and how that will affect the Council's other roles.