

**Submission to the Ministry of Education on the  
SCHOOLS PLUS discussion document**

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organisation representing 46 nationally organized societies. NCWNZ has 26 branches throughout the country attended by representatives of those societies and some 150 other societies. The Council's function is to serve women, families and the community through research, study, discussion and action. This submission is based on NCWNZ policy on schools and education and responses to the Schools Plus Questions which came from more than 100 members.

### **SCHOOL PLUS QUESTIONS**

**1. What key factors have the greatest impact on student's participation, engagement and achievement in school?**

The key factors relate mainly to the home and the school.

- In the home there needs to be parental, caregiver and community positive support and encouragement, a stable family life, adequate financial resources to support good health and provide a safe and effective learning environment from an early age.
- In the school there need to be effective, encouraging, well trained, inspiring and enthusiastic teachers. Students need to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance. They need to experience success in learning that comes from having a sound grounding in the basics and learning challenges that are at an appropriate and stimulating level. They need to be deeply involved. They must enjoy learning and the learning environment and culture. Teachers must have high expectations of their students and enable them to meet those expectations.

**2. To ensure that students develop a stake in their own learning, what should be included in an education plan?**

The Education Plan should include:

- The students' aims for themselves in the world of work with information about the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values related to their career choices.
- Students' assessment of their basic literacy and numeracy skills, learning strengths and weaknesses and preferred learning styles.
- Students' aims and goals for their life-long learning as self-directed learners.
- Parental and community input.
- Written contracts with relevant teachers to clarify, establish and help achieve goals.
- Suggested work experience or leadership training in appropriate school pursuits such as coaching or being involved in school clubs or other leadership opportunities.

### **3. How can the school system be made more responsive to Maori students and increase participation and achievement?**

The school system could be made more responsive to Maori student by:

- Provision of appropriate programmes and pedagogy,
- Appropriate social interaction with the Maori community,
- Genuine appreciation of Maori culture through curriculum, demonstration and visual displays in school grounds
- Provision for learning needs which may not be met at home, for example through learning centres, a school or local marae.
- Attention to the research of Professor Russell Bishop which has shown that the greatest need is for teachers to learn how to interact with Maori students and their communities, have high expectations and cease thinking of Maori students in deficit terms.
- Strong links forged with the earliest Maori education facilities such Kohanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa so that a seamless educational system is seen to work strongly.

### **4. How can the sector increase engagement and achievement for Pasifika students?**

Most respondents suggested that what would work for Maori students would work for Pasifika students e.g:

- Involvement of the parents and community groups such as churches.
- Showing appreciation of Pasifika culture
- Providing more Pasifika teachers to teach appropriately interesting and relevant curriculum courses.
- Acknowledging and celebrating the general appreciation of Pasifika parents for education.
- New immigrants should have appropriate educational support remembering that many parents may have had minimal formal education themselves and an almost complete lack of understanding of the workings of NZ schooling system.

### **5. From a school's perspective, what are the critical factors in establishing and strengthening partnerships with students, families, whanau, other schools, tertiary education organisations and community organisations?**

On the positive side:

- Fostering partnerships by providing pastoral care opportunities, parental involvement in BOTs and PTAs, encouraging support at sports, cultural events, open school days or tertiary institution days and career days.
- Most schools try to keep an open door policy and encourage parents to visit the school, help in classrooms and attend report evenings.
- Providing newsletters or other ways of communicating with parents and communities.
- School administrators have contacts with contributing schools and encourage visits from tertiary institutions.
- In some situations schools work with tertiary institutions to offer tertiary courses to senior students.
- Schools also contribute to the community by offering adult education courses on school premises.
- Communities offer work experience, advice on management, guest speakers and often fund raise for a local school.

On the negative side:

- It is harder to establish partnerships with parents of secondary school students than with parents of junior school parents.
- Time is a critical factor for schools in establishing partnerships with the above groups which are comfortable, realistic and workable.
- Senior schools are constrained by examinations systems which require teachers to focus on particular curricula and achieve standards on a national stage largely outside parent and community involvement.
- Teacher workloads are such that many find it hard to interact too much with parents and communities.
- Parents also find it difficult to give time to school demands because in many families both parents work.
- Funding and competition for students poses a problem for schools and tertiary organisations.

**6. What do employers see as the key barriers to providing ongoing learning and training opportunities to young employees?**

The key barriers are:

- Lack of experience and understanding of teaching/training at this level.
- Time and costs due to loss of productivity.
- Having experienced staff whom they regard as providing poor role models.
- OSH requirements that make it difficult to take on a young employee in dangerous work situations.
- The expectation that the new employee will leave for another position as soon as trained.
- As a small business there is a lack of capacity to provide appropriate work for young employees.
- Fear that young women will require leave for child-rearing at their expense when they have children.
- Fear that employees with disabilities will produce less and require special facilities.
- Employers require a level of experience which young employees lack.
- Bad experiences with previous young employees. Some young people have a poor understanding of regular, routine and boring work, have poor work habits and time management skills, lack an overview of a whole business and everyone's role, including their role, in creating a successful business, resent low beginning pay, lack motivation, self-discipline, want instant gratification and do not see work as a process of learning on the job and climbing the ladder.

**7. From a business perspective, what is the best way to deliver on-going learning and training opportunities to young employees?**

On site education

- Mentoring and monitoring, supervision and appraisal for formative education and learning.
- Clear, unambiguous, written guidelines and benchmark standards.
- Encouragement, patience and incentives for young employees.
- Training for supervisors.
- Employer attitudes. Businesses must recognize the investment they are making in young employees and take all steps to ensure success for both parties.

- Experienced employees need to recognize the importance of modeling good worker behaviour. That means that all employees are involved in the on-site training regarding work ethics.

#### Off site education

- Sponsored courses relevant to the business at a nearby tertiary institution or by distance learning. Combining theoretical learning and practice requires substantial investment.
- Costs could be recovered by contracting the young employee to remain with the business for a set period of time.

### **8. What is the role of employers in ensuring a young employee's education plan is acted upon?**

- Employers need to understand the concept of an employee's education plan.
- Employers need to take an interest, provide encouragement, and make suggestions so that the plan fits the employment situation.
- Employers need to give practical support e.g. allow day release for tertiary courses.
- Employers need to set a specific period to review the plan and monitor progress toward agreed outcomes.

### **9. From the employers' perspective, what are the critical factors in establishing and strengthening partnerships with schools, families, whanau, tertiary education organisations, and community organisations?**

#### Critical factors from the employer perspective for strengthening partnerships

- Network with educational organisations in formal and informal ways.
- Make public the needs and possibilities of business and industry. This could be by way of having weekend careers 'road shows' for schools, students, parents, whanau and community groups as well as careers advisors at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> year, attending school and tertiary open days and inviting students to business introductory days.
- Employers should be involved in their own learning and professional development at or involving tertiary institutions in site-based learning or research and alert to the future needs of their businesses.
- Employers should liaise with schools and tertiary organisations to make these future needs known. They should have action plans setting out ways by which they can help students to understand their needs and standards.
- Employers need to offer work placement for students at tertiary institutions. Unwillingness to do this can impede training, e.g. Waiariki Institute of Technology has 300 applications for the Bachelor of Nursing and yet, because of the confines of industry, they struggle to give practicum placements in the workplace which restricts the intake to one hundred when there is a worldwide shortage of nurses.
- Employers need to be able to communicate easily with the educational groups listed above perhaps by using the internet, TV and print media.

Comment: At the same time, it is important to note that the most talented of secondary and tertiary students can be put under huge pressure by employers, both local and international, to make career choices in the employer's favour before it is in the best interests of the young person to do so. Universities and businesses are known to seek out young people of rare talent and offer scholarships with strings attached.

**10. How can tertiary education organisations and schools work together to offer high quality and relevant learning opportunities for senior secondary students?**

- Tertiary organisations provide much professional knowledge and skills for the professions, business and industry. Therefore they should see that schools are informed about their courses in terms of the foundational learning required from the school end and the pre-employment training required by employers.
- They should have specialist personnel and departments to ensure that the knowledge required for careers and qualifications is available when it is required. Open days and so on as mentioned above are relevant here.
- Competition for top school students and 'patch protection' should be limited for the greater good of society.

**11. How can tertiary education organisations and schools work together and best support young people in making good decisions about their options in education?**

Tertiary education organisations and schools should:

- Provide easy access by being open, encouraging contacts and taking a stance that avoids selfishly promoting their own interests.
- This will require specialist facilities, programmes and dedicated personnel available for easy access, publicity through readable material presented by all means of distribution by both schools and tertiary education organisations.
- Schools might do well to focus more on learning for work and life rather than on learning to gain qualifications.

**12. From the tertiary perspective, what are the critical factors in establishing and strengthening partnerships with schools, whanau and community organisations?**

For the tertiary sector, the critical factors in establishing and strengthening these partnerships are:

- Having the communications line open and making a determined effort to identify problems related to the learning needs of different groups of young people and contributing to solutions. A good example of positive involvement in this direction is the research into teaching and learning done by Auckland University School of Education working with schools in South Auckland. (Strengthening Education in Mangere and Otara)
- There must be dedicated personnel with responsibility for these contacts for long term communication and two-way interaction.
- Providing scholarships for students from disadvantage areas.

**13. How can families, whanau, iwi, and communities best support young people to participate and achieve in education?**

Best support by:

- Becoming informed about 21<sup>st</sup> century education especially by attendance at school open days, functions, report days.
- Providing them with a good stable home environment especially homework facilities and keeping track of learning progress.
- Contacting the school when they become aware that the young person is becoming disengaged.

This also applies to the students when they become learners through employment or tertiary education.

**14. What types of social services do young people need to overcome barriers to participation in education?**

Types of social services:

- Effective truancy control and prevention.
- Remedial and catch-up learning opportunities.
- Specialized counseling
- Health checks especially as regards nutrition, hearing and sight checks plus checks for abuse.
- Coordinated social services with exchange of information.
- Units for teen-age parents attached to secondary schools or tertiary institutions.
- Special learning centres for disengaged youth and/or special apprenticeships through WINZ
- Provision of courses at little or no cost to students.

**15. What services and assistance would help families, whanau, iwi and communities support their young people to continue in education and training?**

Services and assistance:

- All of 14 above.
- Providing scholarships for students from disadvantage areas.
- Some NCWNZ members mentioned the provision of low cost accommodation for young people who can no longer live at home.
- WINZ benefits.
- Study link.
- Specialist help for young people with disabilities such as Workbridge
- Help for young people with second language difficulties and recent immigrants.
- The gang problem needs to be solved from the point of view of finding substitutes for the feeling of belonging which makes gang membership appealing.
- It appears that education is not linked to developmental stages of children and young adults. Maybe adolescents should start school later in the day to fit with their body clocks.

**16. Which students are likely to need additional support to remain in education, skills or structured learning? What support should they get, and from whom?**

Students who need additional help:

- Students with disabilities and those suffering from various forms of dyslexia, autism and behaviours which affect learning
- ESOL students
- Students who have not had regular contact with basic education either through truancy or the transitory nature of the parents work.
- Students from abusive and dysfunctional homes

What support?

- Whatever is relevant to the problem being faced; such as financial, pastoral care, professional counseling, medical or educational.

From whom?

- From all groups relevant to the problems; school personnel, professional service groups, social welfare, public health personal, community, whanau, iwi and extended families of all ethnic groups.

**17. What are some good examples of schools and non-government organisations working together for young people?**

Some of the examples suggested are:

- He Haurariki Tamariki – second chance education for young teenagers with children who have dropped out of the mainstream schooling system, Te Puke Ngakakano,
- AIMHI for schools in disadvantaged areas.
- CYPS also provides assistance. Though AIMHI and CYPS are Government organisations they draw in non-governmental organisations.
- Some non-government agencies provide help such as Literacy Aotearoa, Youth Centres, ITOs and churches which have Youth Groups.
- Sports clubs are important community organisations which help young people.

**18. The government wants *Schools Plus* to meet the needs of all students of all abilities. How much flexibility should *Schools Plus* provide? Who should decide?**

Flexibility?

- The flexibility should be applied where it will solve identified problems and operate as a cost effective solution.
- Schools Plus is an important and much needed move from the 19<sup>th</sup> century type of schooling which we all know. To meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a move to individualized learning programmes to suit the needs of every senior secondary student is timely.

Decision-makers?

- The decision will probably have to be made at Government level because too many interests are likely to put the needs of secondary schools and tertiary organisations before the needs of individual students who are disengaged at present.
- This decision will need to be made with much consultation with all concerned parties. The needs of rural communities will need special consideration but flexibility should suit them.

**Additional comments**

The responses indicated a strong feeling that there is no point in keeping reluctant learners in the school system. Reluctant/disruptive students cause problems for teachers and disrupt classes for the students who want to learn. NCWNZ members see it as essential that young people receive training and life-skills of some sort but believe that the academic secondary school is not the best environment for this learning for all students. However some stressed forcefully that if schools were adequately funded they would be able to do much more with students who had problems and caused problems.

It would have been useful if the Schools Plus document had acknowledged much more the effective programmes already in existence such as SPELD and Remedial Reading in schools, Gateway and

New Start programmes at tertiary institutions, Breakfast Clubs and other community based efforts to assist young people. Schools Plus will build on what is already happening.

NCWNZ members raised the following questions:

- (1) Some students need a break from formal learning before coming back to it. Would this be permitted under the Schools Plus suggestions?
- (2) Some parents cannot afford to keep their young people at home. Would the Scheme allow for low cost accommodation and part-time work?
- (3) Some students want to work for a salary as quickly as possible. They would be in paid employment but would they also need to be involved in education?
- (4) The biggest question was: Will the Government pay for the education of the young people who are in alternative education in the same way that they pay for students who remain at school until the January after their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday as specified in the Education Act 1989, Part 1, (3).?

NCWNZ applauds the intentions of the Schools Plus Discussion Document and looks forward to this courageous and timely attempt to solve some problems, not just of the NEETS but of the social and economic welfare of New Zealand.



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