

OUR POLICY: EDUCATION

Our kids of today are our economic guardians of the future. Investing in quality education will ensure stronger communities for today and the future. Social outcomes and economic outcomes are interconnected.

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Background

New Zealand's education system is failing our children and our families. We need to ensure our country is high in OECD rankings in literacy, maths, and science, and not in ideological issues. We need to look at absentee rates and truancy, identify the cause of these - and solutions to deal with the effect this will have on education achievements.

Our school curriculum is being developed by bureaucrats and doesn't serve our children's best interests. Our health and science curriculum need to be based on facts, not ideology. Parents and caregivers have told us they don't feel informed about what their children are being taught, and are concerned that children are being exposed to politicised agendas at the expense of learning core skills.

Additionally, taxpayers are not getting the best return from their investment as school spending is not always targeted to programmes achieving good educational outcomes.

We need to address teacher vacancy levels, and ensure that we retain and support existing teachers. Recruitment and training of new teachers needs to match the levels of those leaving the profession.

Our solution

We need to refocus education on getting the basics right in our schools – reading, writing, and maths. Alongside this, key technical and life skills need to be offered that children need in modern workplaces.

Students need to be prepared for employment, not unemployment. Therefore, high schools need to have more involvement with tertiary providers, so both professional and trade skills can be offered.

We also need to ensure that parents, caregivers, and the community play a key role in education and are to be consulted on the curriculum.

Tertiary education, such as polytechnics, need to be decentralised - and local governance councils need to be re-established to oversee their governance and operation.

The Government's recent reforms aren't working, with courses being dropped and staff laid off. We need to better involve local business leaders in the initial formation of polytech governance councils, and in developing tailored polytech programmes.

Education spending needs to be targeted at programmes that are delivering results, and dedicated funding is needed for teacher aides and ongoing teacher training.

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We also want to support parents and caregivers to exercise their choice to educate their children at home, or to send their child to integrated or charter schools.

1. We will involve parents, caregivers, teachers, and the community in education policy and delivery to achieve positive changes for young people.

We have seen the Ministry of Education dictating education policy for too long, without consulting parents, caregivers, and teachers. NCEA changes in our literacy, numeracy, new histories New Zealand, health, and science curriculums are being influenced by political agendas rather than education data. In a changing world, education decisions should not be left to policy makers, but should involve parents and caregivers, the wider community, and real-world experts.

We will:

- Better involve parents and caregivers in developing and reviewing the education curriculum, and NCEA.
- Make schools free from political influence and ideology bias, and places that encourage critical thinking.
- Ensure Boards of Trustees continue to be made up of elected parents or caregivers, teachers, and students, not government appointments.
- Not support any legislation requiring iwi or gender diverse appointments to school, and tertiary governance or management positions.

2. Implement programmes that are proven to lift education outcomes and meet the needs of schools and institutions. This includes providing resourcing for more counsellors, teacher aides, and specialised training for teachers.

We need to prioritise school funding to support improvements in reading, writing, maths, and core skills. There must be greater accountability around the use of government funding. Programmes which are not achieving good results, need to be revised and changed. Additionally, schools should not be required to follow Ministry of Education ideology to access funding – for example by introducing open classrooms.

More teacher aides are needed to support students who need literacy and numeracy support. Teachers should receive the support and training they need to deal with challenging students, and for both staff and students to stay safe. Teacher training should be more practically oriented rather than just based on theory.

We will:

- Refocus schools on equipping young people with good literacy and numeracy skills, and on becoming healthy, well-rounded citizens.
- Ensure schools teach relevant life skills from primary school onwards to provide students with the skills needed for active employment, not state dependency. Life skills include cooking, home management, family care, and understanding and managing finance (as examples).
- Require more accountability and transparency around results achieved by school programmes. We will remove funding from programmes not achieving desired outcomes.
- Introduce a programme to promote 'happy and safe places', dealing with positive mental health, and general wellbeing of children. This will also emphasise affirming positive rather than negative behaviours.

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- Introduce a positive student higher attendance programme, with the aim is to reduce school truancy and absenteeism.
- Prioritise teacher training to cover basic counselling, different learning needs of students, and behavioural management skills. We would also establish health and mental wellbeing support for all school staff.
- Strengthen the ability of schools to discipline students and introduce consequences for bad student behaviour.
- Encourage schools to consider introducing restrictions on student cell phone use at school.

3. We will remove the ideology of gender identity and sexual orientation teaching from the health curriculum, and ideologies from science and other curriculum subjects.

The introduction of changes to the sexual health curriculum in pre-schools, primary and high schools, has many parents, caregivers and teachers concerned. Teachers may be required to deliver content at odds with biology or gender identity, and against their personal beliefs.

Many parents and caregivers are not aware of what is being taught to their children. There needs to be more transparency and parental input into agreeing on what is age-appropriate material for children on gender and sexuality. Schools should be focused on teaching core skills rather than being used to indoctrinate children into Government sanctioned ideologies.

Many teachers and parents are alarmed at the ideology changes to the science curriculum.

We will:

- Remove gender identity and sexual orientation from the health curriculum in pre-schools, primary, and high schools.
- Review the health, and science curriculums for all ages, with input from parents, caregivers, and teachers.
- Require that school staff don't offer medical advice on any health issue including gender identity.
- Require that more information be provided to parents and caregivers on what is being taught to their children about gender and sexuality, and personal health issues.
- Require that parents and caregivers be better included in discussions around helping support the needs of their children.

4. Review the threshold for eligibility for student allowances for jobs with an established skills shortage. We will also consider offering debt reductions on student loans, for students studying in fields with recognised and established skills shortages, who work in New Zealand in their field of training for a total aggregate of five years after graduation.

We need to reward and encourage young Kiwis to join short-staffed professions and stay in New Zealand. This includes recruiting more nurses, doctors, teachers, farm workers, and people to work in trades.

Young people have the option of going onto the benefit currently after school. We need to incentivise young people to join the workforce to fill critical roles needed to keep core services operating. The current means-testing of tertiary students is too narrow, and young people from lower to middle income families may not be eligible for a student allowance. We want to see

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students develop the skills to join the workforce and contribute to New Zealand society. Our Government is willing to keep young people in a state of poverty rather than helping them to obtain a better future.

We will:

- Review the eligibility criteria for student allowances.
- Review how to encourage people to study in fields affected by skills shortages and remain in New Zealand following graduation. This would include reviewing the feasibility and the cost of offering student loan debt reductions for tuition costs for students training in areas with established skills shortages.
- Graduates would need to complete five years of employment in New Zealand after graduation to be eligible for debt reductions.

5. We will re-establish local Polytech Councils at a regional level, to make governance and financial management decisions. This will allow courses to have more input from local business/industry and be tailored to meet local or regional needs.

The Government's current focus on centralising tertiary education means that less money is available to spend on educating students, as it is funding the creation of a new tertiary education body. We're seeing tertiary education providers having to lay off staff because of these changes, and courses being cancelled.

To ensure young people can easily move from tertiary education into employment, courses need to be tailored to fit local and regional business and industry needs. To achieve this, we need polytech councils to include local business, city and district council, and trade organisation representatives. Elections could be held for these to coincide with local body elections.

We will:

- Re-establish local governance councils for polytechs. These will include business, industry, and local government representatives.
- Redirect Government funding away from centralising tertiary education and back into directly supporting local or regional tertiary education providers to deliver courses.

6. To support parents and caregivers' right to choose education options, we will review the status of non-state schools. The aim is to ensure 'special character' integrated schools are free to function, and consider improving funding and access for home-schooled, and 'school at home' children.

We're seeing an increasing number of parents and caregivers decide to educate their children outside of state schools – either by home-schooling, school at home, or by sending them to integrated or private schools.

We support the right of parents and caregivers to decide how and where their children are educated.

We will:

- Review funding for home schooled, and school at home children, including tax credits.

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- Ensure integrated schools can function and uphold their special character without central government interference.
- Review the regulations around charter schools, which were transitioned into integrated schools in 2018, to enable these to be re-established with input from the community.

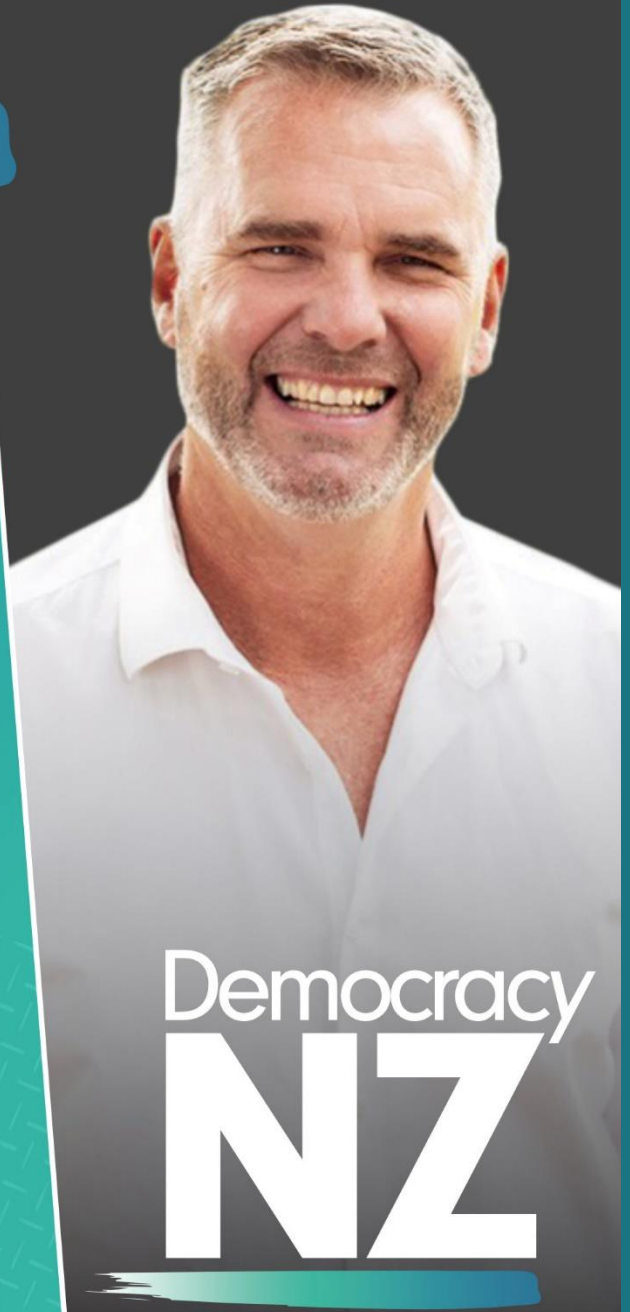
OUR EDUCATION POLICY FOR ALL NEW ZEALANDERS

We will:

1. Involve parents, caregivers, teachers, and the community in education policy and delivery.
2. Lift education outcomes to meet the needs of schools and institutions, including more resourcing for counsellors, teacher aides, and specialised training for teachers.
3. Remove the ideology of gender identity and sexual orientation teaching from the curriculum.
4. Review the threshold for eligibility for student allowances for jobs with an established skills shortage.
5. Re-establish local Polytech Councils at a regional level to make governance and financial management decisions.
6. Review the status of non-state schools to support the right of parents and caregivers to choose education options that are best for their children.

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