



KEEPING POLITICIANS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR EDUCATION POLICY

The Role of the New Zealand Principals' Federation

An important role of NZPF is to argue for the best education policies that will support every young person's learning and give each equitable opportunities to enjoy a prosperous future. Education is the cornerstone of a successful and equitable society. Every three years, voters decide on the shape of those policies through the general election process.

NZPF has stated, in their own [education manifesto](#) for the 2023 election cycle, a set of principles which we believe should guide any elected Government's education policies.

Principle 1: Equitable Treaty-based Public Education

A successful public education system must uphold the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, New Zealand's founding document. This commitment to honouring the Treaty emphasises the importance of biculturalism and creating an education system that reflects and respects the unique cultural heritage of New Zealand's indigenous people, the Māori. An equitable public education system is the cornerstone of a prosperous and harmonious nation.

Principle 2: Collaboration and Constructive Relationships

Positive, collaborative, and constructive working relationships between the education sector, Tangata Whenua (Māori people), and the government are imperative for effective policy implementation. Collaboration fosters an inclusive approach that ensures all voices are heard and considered when shaping the future of education. Such relationships promote transparency and help build trust in the decision-making process.

Principle 3: Equitable Resourcing

State and state-integrated schools, Kura Kaupapa Māori, and Kura a Iwi should receive fair, equitable, and adequate resourcing to achieve their educational aims and outcomes. Ensuring that resources are allocated fairly is essential to bridge educational disparities and provide every student with a chance to succeed, regardless of their background or location.

Principle 4: Lifelong Competencies

The education system must equip students with the necessary lifelong competencies and skills to thrive in a fast-changing world. This principle acknowledges that education is not merely about preparing students for standardised tests but about fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, adaptability, and creativity. Students should leave school with the tools to navigate an ever-evolving landscape.

Principle 5: Local Governance

The governance and management of New Zealand schools should be vested in local communities and Boards of Trustees. Empowering local communities to have a say in how their schools are run ensures that education remains responsive to the unique needs of each region. Local governance promotes accountability and fosters a sense of ownership among stakeholders.

Principle 6: High-Quality, Inclusive Education

New Zealanders can rightfully expect teachers to provide a high-quality, relevant, inclusive, and culturally appropriate education system. Every student should feel valued and included, and teachers should have the necessary resources and support to deliver the best education possible. This principle places the focus on the student's experience and their right to a comprehensive and empowering education.

Before you go to the voting booth this year, you can use these six principles as a moral compass for evaluating the education policies of the main six parties, competing in this year's General Election. Here are summaries of the six parties' policies for education as outlined on their publicly available websites:

LABOUR PARTY

The Labour Party's education policy focuses on several key highlights and objectives, including:

- **Pay Parity in Early Learning:** The party aims to achieve pay parity between teachers in early learning centres and those in schools and kindergartens.
- **Fairer Funding with Equity Index:** They plan to replace the decile system with an Equity Index to allocate funding more equitably to schools and early learning services.
- **Free and Healthy School Lunches Program:** The Labour Party intends to expand the Free and Healthy School Lunches program, ensuring that one in four school-aged children has access to a free healthy lunch every day, particularly targeting schools with high levels of disadvantage.
- **Completing Vocational Education Reform:** They are committed to completing the reform of the vocational education system to make it more responsive to industry needs and learner aspirations.

The party acknowledges that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted existing inequities in the education system and emphasises the importance of supporting the public education system. Their education plan is built around five key objectives:

Objective 1: Learners at the Centre

- Establishing an independent mechanism for resolving complaints about learning.
- Enhancing cultural competency in the education workforce, particularly for Māori and Pacific learners.
- Implementing a 10-year Early Learning Action Plan.
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Objective 2: Barrier-Free Access

- Expanding the Free and Healthy School Lunch program.
- Replacing the decile system with the Equity Index to allocate funding.
- Addressing the digital divide by ensuring access to technology and online resources.
- Expanding adult and community education.
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Objective 3: Quality Teaching and Leadership

- Working towards pay parity for education and care centre teachers.
- Developing tools to track and support students' learning progress.
- Strengthening the focus on te reo Māori (Māori language) in schools.
- Supporting a qualified early learning workforce.

Objective 4: Future of Learning and Work

- Providing free access to apprenticeships and trade training courses.
- Completing the vocational education system reform.
- Strengthening youth transitions and career advice in schools.
- Expanding the Creatives in Schools program.
- Supporting the international education sector's recovery.

Objective 5: World-Class Inclusive Public Education

- Establishing a new Education Service Agency for school support.
- Upgrading existing schools and building new ones.
- Investing in school maintenance and improvements.
- Introducing a managed network approach for early learning services.

The fiscal summary outlines the estimated costs of these initiatives over a four-year period, totaling \$1,720 million. These initiatives are meant to improve the quality, accessibility, and equity of education in New Zealand. For a copy of Labour's full policy visit their website:

<https://www.labour.org.nz/release-stronger-fairer-education-system>

NATIONAL PARTY

The National Party's education policy, aims to prioritise fundamental skills in reading, writing, maths, and science. Their plan, known as "Teaching the Basics Brilliantly," includes the following key points:

- **Minimum Teaching Hours:** National proposes that all primary and intermediate schools allocate an average of one hour per day for reading, one hour for writing, and one hour for maths. This measure seeks to ensure consistency in teaching these essential skills across schools.
- **Curriculum Rewrite:** They plan to rewrite the curriculum to specify what must be taught each year in reading, writing, maths, and science for every year group in primary and intermediate schools. The goal is to provide clarity and accountability in the curriculum.

- Standardised Assessment: National will implement standardised assessments in reading, writing, and maths, conducted at least twice a year for students in Year 3 to Year 8. These assessments aim to measure student progress and provide clear reporting to parents.
- Teacher Training: The policy focuses on improving teacher training by introducing an exit exam for teaching graduates to demonstrate expertise in teaching reading, writing, maths, and science. Existing teachers will also undergo professional development to enhance their teaching of the basics.
- Educational Targets: National sets ambitious targets, aiming for 80% of Year 8 students to achieve or surpass the expected curriculum level for their age in reading, writing, maths, and science by 2030. They also aim to bring New Zealand students back to the top 10 in the world in maths, reading, and science, based on OECD's PISA rankings, by 2033.

National's education policy seeks to address what they perceive as a systemic failure in New Zealand's education system, emphasising the need for strong foundational skills and clear accountability. They criticise the current curriculum for being too vague and the lack of standardised assessments. Their goal is to improve student outcomes, particularly in the basics, and restore excellence in education. For a copy of National's full policy visit their website:

https://www.national.org.nz/teaching_the_basics_brilliantly

ACT PARTY

The education policy of New Zealand's ACT Party focuses on several key principles and initiatives:

- **Reducing Government Influence:** ACT emphasises the need to reduce politics and bureaucracy in the education system. They advocate for high standards in attendance and learning while treating the teaching profession with respect.
- **School Choice:** ACT believes that parents should have real choices in education. They argue that when all schools offer similar educational approaches, parents lack meaningful choices. They also highlight concerns about the lack of differentiation for gifted and special-needs students.
- **Partnership Schools:** ACT supports the partnership school model, which offers flexibility to schools to innovate and deliver different educational models. They argue that partnership schools should have greater autonomy and accountability, with struggling schools facing potential closure.
- **Alternative Qualifications:** ACT proposes allowing secondary schools to opt out of the NCEA system and instead offer internationally recognized qualifications, such as Cambridge or International Baccalaureate, with funding provided at the same rate.
- **Reforming the Ministry of Education:** ACT aims to reform the Ministry of Education to focus on negotiating collective agreements, monitoring student and school progress, setting minimum standards, and accrediting schools. They suggest that many functions currently held by the Ministry should be devolved or opened up to competition.

- Teaching Excellence Reward Fund: ACT proposes establishing a fund administered by school principals to recognize and recruit teachers for teaching excellence. This would provide incentives for teachers who excel in their roles.
- Student Education Accounts (SEAs): ACT suggests the introduction of SEAs, a funding model that puts education funding directly into the hands of parents. This system would allow parents to choose from a range of registered educational institutions, public or private, that accept their child's enrollment.
- Attendance and Truancy: ACT plans to develop a traffic light system for tracking unjustified absences, redirecting funding from centrally controlled truancy services to schools, and extending the B4 School Check to include education progress.
- Curriculum Standards: ACT seeks to establish minimum criteria for curricula taught in primary schools, ensuring that all schools follow these standards while allowing for multiple curriculum versions.
- Standardised Testing: ACT aims to implement standardised testing twice a year in schools, with results reported to parents and the creation of an online league table for comparing school performance.
- Reforming Failing Schools: ACT proposes using attendance and educational progress data to prioritise ERO school inspections, improving the intervention process for under-performing schools, and allowing successful schools to take over the governance of failing schools.

In summary, the ACT Party's education policies focus on reducing government influence, increasing school choice, reforming the Ministry of Education, introducing SEAs for parents, and addressing issues related to attendance, curriculum standards, standardised testing, and failing schools. These policies reflect a preference for decentralisation, accountability, and innovation in the New Zealand education system. For a copy of ACT's full policy visit their website:

<https://www.act.org.nz/education>

GREEN PARTY

The Green Party's Education Policy is built on a vision of fostering lifelong learning and developing the skills needed for a sustainable, equitable, and peaceful future, with a strong focus on incorporating Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Here are the key points of the policy:

Vision: The Green Party envisions a future where all children and young people develop their skills and talents and learn to use them for the betterment of society.

Values and Principles: Their education policy is guided by several core values and principles, including:

- **Honoring Te Tiriti o Waitangi:** Education should recognize the significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and give Māori control over their education.
- **Ecological Wisdom:** Education should promote respect for the natural world and the protection of the environment.
- **Social Responsibility:** Education should encourage lifelong learning and meet the diverse needs of individuals and the community.

- **Appropriate Decision-Making:** Education should empower people to take responsibility for their learning.
- **Non-Violence:** Education should uphold children's rights, celebrate diversity, and teach conflict resolution and cooperation.
- **Contribution:** Education should equip individuals to participate fully in society and contribute to creating a healthy and sustainable society.
- **Strategic Priorities:** The Green Party outlines strategic priorities to achieve inclusive education for all, including:
 - Trialling alternative models of school governance to enhance inclusivity and self-determination.
 - Providing support for implementing the National Curriculum in local contexts.
 - Promoting the universal teaching of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori in all public schools.
 - Ending classroom streaming or grouping by perceived ability.
 - Ensuring that schools and early childhood services foster inclusive cultures and address prejudice, racism, bullying, intimidation, and violence.
 - Establishing a unit within the Ministry of Education to listen to and respond to the voices of children.

Connected Policies: The Green Party's education policy is aligned with their broader policies related to children, youth, and inclusion. They emphasise preparing students for lifelong learning, including tertiary education, and supporting inclusive education with appropriate resources and support.



In summary, the Green Party's education policy emphasises inclusivity, honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi, ecological responsibility, and social equity in education, with a focus on creating a holistic and inclusive learning environment for all children and young people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

For a copy of Greens full policy visit their website:

https://www.greens.org.nz/education_policy

NEW ZEALAND FIRST

A Better Educated New Zealand (Compulsory Sector)

New Zealand First believes that New Zealand needs a quality public education system and acknowledges the importance of principals, teachers, support staff, parents, boards of trustees and the community in the delivery of a full and rich education for our young people.

New Zealand First is committed to a quality public education sector where the principles, values and key competencies of our New Zealand curriculum documents are at the centre of all teaching and learning.

- Enforce compulsory education and address truancy
- Focus on doing the basics better through emphasising the 'Historic Three R's' Reading, Writing, Arithmetic.
- Provide better pathways and funding for STEM subjects
- Remove gender ideology from the curriculum

- Review the New Zealand curriculum to remove critical race theory and de-colonialism.
- Conduct a Select Committee Inquiry into the future NCEA to see if it is delivering for students, parents and employers
- New Zealand First is going to focus on education and not parent-unmandated indoctrination.
- Deliver the final and full tranche of Learning Support Coordinators across New Zealand to all schools.
- Build on the recent pilot of access to counsellors for primary students and progress counsellor/student ratios at secondary schools.
- Review the representation on the Teachers Council in line with requests from sector representatives and remove certain tasks that have increased costs and should be the responsibility of Government.
- Review Section 156 Designated Character Schools in the Education Act 1989 to recognise schools such as Hohepa and the education they deliver for a certain number of our students.
- Complete the creation of consistent School Entry Assessment tools and practices that teachers and school leaders use to identify those students with learning needs.
- Continue to work with the sector to develop screening tools, funding and resourcing models to best meet the needs of children challenged by dyslexia, dyspraxia, Asperger's and autism.
- Continue to advocate for increases in the Ongoing Reviewable Resourcing Scheme (ORRS) to cover the three percent of the school population identified by the Ministry of Education as high needs.

MĀORI PARTY

The Māori Party's Education & Training Policy aims to address the existing challenges within New Zealand's education system, particularly for Māori students. Their policy focuses on three key pillars:

1. Resourcing and Valuing Kaupapa Māori Education:

- Ensure equitable funding for all Māori medium education, equal to mainstream equivalents.
- Establish a \$200 million fund to support whānau, hapū, and iwi education and training initiatives, including hapū-based wānanga.
- Implement the Te Kōhanga Reo settlement claim, increasing operational funding for kōhanga, recognizing kaiako qualifications, and ensuring pay equity.
- Increase scholarships for young Māori to become teachers of Te Aho Matua and for reo Māori speakers to become teachers.

2. Overhauling the Mainstream Education System:

- Allocate a minimum of 25% of the education budget to Māori models of delivery and pastoral care.
- Make te reo Māori and Māori history core curriculum subjects in primary up to Year 10 at secondary schools.
- Establish an independent Māori Standards Authority to oversee Māori language funding and audit providers for cultural and reo Māori competency.
- Fund free digital devices and internet access for children from Year 4 to Year 13.

- Remove the power of schools to expel students below the school leaving age of 16.
- Ensure all schools have Māori representation in their senior leadership teams.
- Fund schools to hire additional well-paid Māori support staff.
- Establish a Māori-led taskforce to transform how Māori students with disabilities and learning differences are taught and supported.

3. Creating Pathways for School Leavers:

- Establish a \$276 million fund to expand STEM and STEAM academies, such as the Pūhoro STEM Academy.
- Double Māori and Pacific trade training and cadetship placements.
- Permanently remove fees from apprenticeships.
- Develop advanced apprenticeship schemes in various sectors.
- Fund hapū and iwi-led initiatives supporting youth employment, particularly in conservation and clean energy.

The Māori Party's policy written and published in August 2021 emphasises the need for a comprehensive overhaul of the education system to better serve Māori students, promote cultural inclusivity, and provide pathways for success beyond school. They aim to address inequities, improve representation, and ensure that Māori culture and heritage are celebrated and integrated into the education system. For their full policy go to their website at:

https://www.maoriparty.org.nz/education_training

Irrespective of the outcome of the general election, NZPF will continue to apply the six principles outlined, to evaluate all education policies that become Government policy. Our role is to ensure that every child, regardless of their background, receives the highest quality education possible to prepare them for the world of opportunities and challenges that awaits them.

In a rapidly changing world, where knowledge and skills reign supreme, the importance of an effective and equitable education system cannot be overstated. The future of our nation rests on the shoulders of our youth.
