



4 September 2024

The Canterbury Primary Principals' Association (CPPA) aligns with the New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) in expressing deep concerns regarding the Government's proposed national curriculum changes. The rapid push for these reforms, especially in structured literacy and maths, is alarming and places undue pressure on schools and educators.

While we recognise the need for ongoing evolution in our education system to serve all students, the current pace of these changes is unrealistic. The tight deadlines set by the Government fail to consider the practical challenges schools face, particularly in rural and isolated regions. Staffing shortages already present significant difficulties, and now schools are expected to undertake extensive professional development and curriculum adjustments without adequate support. The impact of an inequitable and under-resourced learning support provision unfairly targets schools with additional resourcing load; something that has not been addressed in any of the recent government achievement commentary and will continue to negatively impact the outcomes for a number of children.

The data used to justify these changes is being misrepresented, painting a crisis that does not reflect the actual conditions in our schools. This misuse of data undermines the hard work and progress made by many schools and adds unnecessary pressure on already overburdened teachers. The lack of sound pedagogy in the proposed changes further aggravates the situation, raising concerns about the long-term impact on teaching and learning.

It is also concerning that public messaging does not accurately reflect the realities in many schools. Communities are being led to believe that these changes are widely accepted and easy to implement when, in reality, they are causing significant disruption. Schools in Canterbury have developed strategic plans in close consultation with their communities, reflecting the unique needs and aspirations of their students and families. However, these plans are now being disregarded in favour of a one-size-fits-all approach imposed by the Government.

The CPPA urges the Government to reconsider the pace and method of these curriculum changes. We call for a more collaborative process that respects the professional judgement of educators and the voices of our communities. Our primary focus should be on providing a quality education that meets the needs of every child, rather than on hastily implemented changes that risk destabilising our schools.

We urge the Government to:

- Reduce the pace of change to give schools the necessary time to implement reforms effectively.
- Ensure sufficient resources and support are provided for professional development and implementation.
- Engage in meaningful consultation with principals and teachers to shape the reform process.
- Reassess the data used to justify the changes, ensuring it accurately reflects the realities in schools.

- Consider the effectiveness of top-down change and its unwelcomed outcomes. These outcomes include, but are not limited to: autocratic decision making which is based on partial information, a disengaged sector and a system void of innovation.

We must acknowledge that we have a profession under immense pressure, one that is at risk of collapsing. The wellbeing of our principals, teachers and students must remain a top priority. We cannot afford to push through major curriculum reforms without careful consideration, planned and well-resourced support.

We strongly urge the Government to reconsider the speed and approach of these curriculum changes. We advocate for a more collaborative process that values the expertise of educators and the voices of our communities.