

TO: HON ERICA STANFORD, MINISTER OF EDUCATION

Call for clarity, partnership, and a Te Tiriti-based schooling curriculum.

We, the undersigned principals, support the goal of a coherent and high-expectation curriculum for Aotearoa New Zealand. However, we are deeply concerned that current reforms are being implemented too quickly, with limited clarity, consultation, or local grounding. We seek transparency and true partnership to ensure change strengthens – not undermines – our public education system.

We urge the Government to:

1. Engage in genuine co-design with principals, teachers, Māori, and inclusion experts.
2. Pause current rollout deadlines until clarity and full resourcing is in place and the projected impact on workload has been measured and mitigated.
3. Publicly commit to a fully funded, high-quality, Te Tiriti-based public education system designed in Aotearoa for Aotearoa by suitably qualified experts respected by, and working with the education sector.

Why is this important?

Clarity and credibility:

“Knowledge-rich” has become the reform’s defining phrase, yet neither the Ministry nor Cabinet papers have published a clear, Aotearoa-specific definition or design framework. Without evidence or shared understanding, we risk replacing sound pedagogy with imported ideology.

We ask for the release of all underlying research, design papers, and frameworks for public review before further mandates proceed.

Honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi:

Recent policy moves—such as removing the centrality of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its principles in the limiting Māori kupu in early readers—signal an erosion of te reo and mātauranga Māori. A Te Tiriti-based curriculum must embed Māori knowledge and local histories by design, not as an afterthought.

We seek a clear statement on how mātauranga Māori is integrated across all learning areas and how Māori voices are shaping curriculum governance.

Trust in professional judgment and learner diversity:

NZEI Te Riu Roa surveys show the majority of principals and teachers find the pace unmanageable and reject one-size-fits-all mandates—especially in literacy. Effective teaching depends on professional trust, flexibility, and the ability to meet individual and neurodiverse learners' needs.

We ask for a phased rollout of fully funded professional learning, and the retention of teacher judgment at the heart of practice.

Protecting public ownership and local authorship:

Educators are increasingly concerned about the outsourcing of curriculum design to overseas models and consultants. To safeguard public trust, all curriculum development should be transparent, publicly funded, and locally authored.

We call for assurance that curriculum materials will remain open, free, and non-commercialised and locally sourced.

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NZEI TE RIU ROA PRINCIPALS' COUNCIL

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Te Akatea; New Zealand Normal & Model Schools (NAMSA);
New Zealand Area Schools Association (NZASA);
New Zealand Catholic Primary Principals' Assn (NZCPPA)**