Briefing Note: Ministerial Youth Advisory Group – Meeting two insights 2019

To: Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education

Date: 10 June 2019
Priority: Low

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Drafter: Pirihira Hollings, Programme Director (Acting)

DDI: 5 9(2)(a)

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DDI: 5 9(2)(a)

Messaging seen by Communications team: N/A
Round Robin: No

Purpose of Report

This report provides you with the advice and notes from the Ministerial Youth Advisory Group (YAG) meeting held on 16 and 17 May 2019.

a. note the YAG approved notes from the meeting (Annex 1)

b. note the Secretary of Education attended on your behalf and sent a letter to the YAG (Annex 4)

c. note that we have confirmed with your office that you will meet with the Youth Advisory Group at the next meeting on Friday 22 August, from 11:00am – 12:00pm at Mātauranga House

d. note that we will provide the draft agenda for the August meeting by 7 August for your approval

e. proactively release this Briefing Note.

[Signatures]

Rose Jamieson
Deputy Secretary (Acting)
Parent Information and Community Intelligence

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

Release/Not Release
Summary

1. The YAG met on 16 and 17 May at Mātauranga House. The agenda included presentations by the Ministry of Education on a variety of topics. Following each presentation there was time for discussion and feedback on:

   a. The Ministry’s approach to supporting rainbow youth. The YAG agreed that there is a need for more information for learners and teachers to support rainbow communities. They also agreed that safe spaces be established within schools to normalise rainbow communities.

   b. Improving Alternative Education. The YAG supported Minister Martin’s vision on Alternative Education (Annex 2). The YAG provided recommendations on how to keep young people engaged in education and support those who are no longer engaged with the education system.

   c. Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet presented design concepts and a metaphor for the framework. The YAG wanted to ensure the designs and imagery were representative of a diverse range of children and young people.

   d. Children and Young People are free from racism, discrimination and stigma. The YAG supported the objectives proposed but recommended that the statement ‘Ensure all emotional and physical spaces are safe, supportive and inclusive’ was stated first.

   e. National Education and Learning Priorities. The YAG agreed with the priorities proposed and suggested simplifying some of the language used and offering translations for te reo Māori.

   f. Employability skills young people need for the world of work. The YAG provided additional skills they thought were necessary to develop in education so they can be successful in employment.

   g. Tertiary Education Strategy. The YAG identified barriers that youth face when moving into tertiary education which should be considered when developing the Strategy.

2. Iona Holsted, Secretary for Education, met with the YAG on your behalf. The YAG shared their insights on the presentations held over the two days, (excluding Tertiary Education Strategy), the ‘Voices of Young People’ report, and the ‘NCEA change package’.
Background

3. The second YAG meeting for 2019 was held on 16 and 17 May at Mātauranga House. The agenda included presentations by the Ministry of Education that allowed for discussion and feedback on:

   a. The Ministry’s approach to supporting Rainbow Youth
   b. Improving Alternative Education
   c. Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy
   d. Children and Young People are free from racism, discrimination and stigma
   e. National Education and Learning Priorities
   f. The employability skills young people need for the world of work
   g. Tertiary Education Strategy

4. On day two the YAG met with the Secretary for Education, Iona Holsted.

The Ministry’s approach to supporting rainbow youth

5. The Ministry of Education’s Learning Support, and Curriculum Design and Assessment team, presented the Ministry’s approach to supporting rainbow youth. They shared a number of activities the Ministry is undertaking:

   a. Providing the LGBTIQA+ guide for schools.
   b. Engaging with LGBTIQA+ school providers to make some of their online resources available to schools.
   c. Establishing a ‘Rainbow Network’ to help increase the Ministry’s capability to hear the voices of rainbow youth.
   d. Participating in and leading anti-bullying campaigns.

6. The YAG members shared that the bullying of rainbow youth is common in their schools. One member indicated that verbal and physical bullying towards rainbow youth is visible during years 7-10. This then turns into isolation/exclusion from year 11 onwards.

7. A common issue amongst the members was having their friends denied from being able to use the bathroom where they felt most comfortable. There is a lack of access to gender neutral bathrooms in schools.

8. Members provided suggestions on the types of supports that should be available for rainbow youth, these included:

   a. More information needed in schools so students understand what it means to be rainbow youth.
   b. Consideration given to making rainbow information available at schools for children and young people as early as primary.
   c. Improved support needed for teachers or people who are responsible for providing support for rainbow youth to be understand their needs.
   d. Teachers being considerate and accepting by using the correct pronoun students identify with.
   e. Making schools accountable for any negative behaviours or actions which it or its students undertake towards rainbow youth.
f. Removing accessibility barriers to support for rainbow youth in rural areas. Access to a counselling session for a rural student would mean a full day off school compared to an hour for an urban student.

g. Schools to create opportunities to talk about rainbow youth in open settings.

9. The YAG agreed the key to normalising rainbow communities was to establish safe spaces in schools. The members suggested introducing 'zero tolerance of hate' policies, recruitment of diverse staff and gender natural bathrooms. They also recommended cultural change where teachers and students call out bad behaviour when it is directed at rainbow youth as well as having champions that promote positive behaviour.

**Improving Alternative Education**

10. The Wellbeing and Learning Support team presented Minister Martin’s vision for Improving Alternative Education (Annex 2). The YAG agreed and supported the vision.

11. The YAG recommends that the schools identify student needs as early as possible and providing the necessary supports with involvement from whānau and communities. This is based on forming strong relationships between parents, schools and the Ministry. In the governance of a school, board of trustee representation and other decision-making bodies should be reflective of the current school population.

12. The YAG also highlighted the need for students to determine their own learning curriculum and ensuring schools offer subjects to their students. They saw the need to invest in communities, so they can to develop approaches and programmes for their own children and young people.

13. Removing barriers that cause students to become isolated and providing additional supports for these students, was seen as important by the YAG. The YAG also noted it is hard for students to concentrate on their education when they are facing other issues, such as hunger and homelessness.

**Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (CYWS)**

14. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet presented the design concepts for the CYWS to test on the YAG. The working title of the framework was ‘Tamariki Tū, Tamariki Ora’ and included a tree of life image as the logo. The YAG made the following recommendations:

   a. Adding ‘rangatahi’ or ‘taiohi’ in the title to include youth because tamariki is a translation of the word children.

   b. Including Aotearoa alongside any reference to New Zealand.

   c. Photographs accompanying the CYWS Outcomes Framework to be representative of a variety of ethnicities, including minority groups in situations they are not normally visible e.g. studying sciences.

   d. Having an accessible format of the framework accompany the finalised Framework. For those visually impaired this can be achieved by using neutral colours.

   e. Using a font that is readable and choosing uplifting colours.

   f. Making sure those who aren’t Māori understand the Māori designs used within the tree of life image.
15. The YAG agreed that more work was needed to ensure the Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework was well structured, understood and resonated with those it was intended for.

**Children and Young People are free from racism, discrimination and stigma**

16. The Investing in Wellbeing team presented the revised set of proposed objectives for their contribution to the CYWS 'Children and Young People are free from racism, discrimination and stigma'. The revised objectives ensure all emotional and physical spaces are safe, supportive and inclusive as well as building an understanding of racism and discrimination, power and privilege. The objective also highlighted the need to transform the way government operates to be equitable and anti-discriminatory.

17. The YAG would like to see safe and inclusive spaces for children and young people as essential because it enables them to flourish as themselves and realise their full potential. They thought that people who believe that everyone can exist in the same place as one, tend to be those who have never experienced racism, discrimination or stigma.

18. The YAG supported the proposed objectives and appreciated being able to see their voices reflected.

**National Education and Learning Priorities**

19. The Quality Teaching and Learning team presented the draft National Education and Learning Priorities (Annex 3). The YAG agreed with the priorities overall and provided feedback on them:

   a. Making sure translations were available for te reo Māori.
   
   b. Making the language consistent with the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. Tagging ‘discrimination and stigma’ on to racism.
   
   c. Referencing 'safe spaces' which is something the YAG feels is required in order to be safe.
   
   d. Shared that the term ‘achieve’ implies to them that there is a standard that everyone needs to get to. They were unsure if this was the intention but didn’t think it should be.
   
   e. The term ‘educationally powerful relationships’ may not be well understood by learners. This phrase needs to be simplified.

**The employability skills young people need for the world of work**

20. A representative from the Business Industry and Employers team presented the skills that The Foundation for Young Australians identified as being important for employees to have. The YAG agreed with these skills and their relevance in the New Zealand context:

   a. Communication
   
   b. Teamwork
   
   c. Digital literacy
   
   d. Financial literacy
   
   e. Creativity
f. Critical thinking
g. Problem solving
h. Presentation

21. The YAG also identified relationship building, numeracy and literacy, self-management, and resilience as other skills that should be developed in education.

Meeting with Secretary for Education

22. The YAG had the opportunity to share their insights from the last two days with Iona Holsted, Secretary for Education. They also discussed the 'Voices of Young People' report which was a summary of the key findings of youth from the Kōrero Mātauranga survey.

23. The YAG agreed with the report's findings and believed it was representative of the views they shared with the Ministry of Education in 2018. A recommendation was made by a YAG member not to conflate mental and physical wellbeing in the report as they are two different matters that require different responses.

24. The YAG asked for clarification on the NCEA change package and they thought that at first read it was quite hard to understand. The YAG asked questions about the changes and Iona was able to clarify their understanding.

25. Iona wrote to the YAG thanking them for welcoming her and sharing their perspectives (Annex 4). Iona said that the Ministry needs to do a better job at reflecting the input they receive from YAG, and other young people, in their work. The Ministry is currently looking at how to share the YAG insights with all Ministry groups.

Tertiary Education Strategy

26. The Graduate Achievement, Vocations and Careers team presented the focus areas that are being considered for the Tertiary Education Strategy. The YAG agreed with the focus areas:
   a. Equity for all learners; including Māori, Pacific peoples, people with disabilities, and those experiencing economic deprivation.
   b. Supporting life-long learning and pathways through the system; including transitions into tertiary education and effective careers advice.
   c. Responding to the changing future of work; including responding to technological and societal change and the transition to a zero carbon economy.

27. The YAG identified barriers youth face when moving into tertiary education that should be considered when developing the Tertiary Education Strategy:
   a. Moving away from the safety and security of home can be overwhelming for first year students. More support and information needed before students move away, on travel/public transport, budgets and accommodation.
   b. Public transport to travel to and from campus is expensive (in particular Auckland) even with discounts.
   c. Imagery used by tertiary institutes needs to be gender and ethnic diverse. It is hard to see yourself in careers that depict certain genders or ethnicities.
   d. Tertiary education environments need to be accessible and resourced to cater for students with disabilities or impairments.
e. Better support systems for families and whānau so they can make informed decisions with their child. This is important for first generation tertiary students whose parents know very little about tertiary education, yet play an influential role in their child’s future.

f. The high costs associated with tertiary education, such as course fees, books, devices, travel and accommodation.

g. Continuity of support provided in secondary school for disabled or impaired students. Students have to re-apply for support or support options are limited when moving onto tertiary studies.

Annexes

Annex 1: YAG meeting notes: 16 – 17 May 2019
Annex 2: Minister Martin’s vision for Alternative Education
Annex 3: National Education Learning Priorities
Annex 4:* Letter to the YAG from Secretary of Education
Annex 1: YAG meeting notes: 16 – 17 May 2019

YOUTH ADVICE ON EDUCATION – ADVISORY GROUP MEETING NOTES

Date: Thursday 16 - Friday 17 May 2019
Venue: Day 1: Te Papa Tongarewa | Level 3 | Angus Room
        Day 2: Ministry of Education | Ground Floor | Room 1.01
Facilitator: Serena Curtis-Lemuelu
Coordinator: Natasha Maraku
Secretariat: Opal Soutar (Ministry of Education)
Participants: Adrienne Hunt, Brodie Cross, Costa Blackman, Geniqua Samupo, Hadassah Wharawhara, Kate Morris, Liam McLeavey, Moeka Koyama, Nathan Farr, Okirano Tilaia, Shaneel Lal, and Watene Campbell.

DAY 1

1. MINISTRY’S APPROACH TO SUPPORTING RAINBOW YOUTH

Members participated in a discussion led by Kieron Mottley and Stephen Raynes regarding the Ministry’s approach to supporting rainbow youth. Kieron and Stephen used a power point presentation to provide a brief overview of:

- What it means to be a rainbow youth (and introducing the ‘genderbread person’)
- Rainbow youth statistics
- Bullying in schools
- Classroom and the school community
- Family and whānau (a video of interviews with some rainbow youth).

Kieron and Stephen explained that the Ministry is undertaking a number of activities to support today’s rainbow youth. These activities included:

- Providing a LGBTIQA+ guide for schools
- Engaging with LGBTIQA+ school providers to make some of their online resources available to schools
- Establishing a ‘Rainbow Network’ to help increase the Ministry’s capability to hear the voices of rainbow youth
- Participating in (or leading) anti-bullying campaigns.

Most members said that bullying of rainbow youth is prevalent in their schools. One member commented that bullying was particularly obvious in the junior school however as students became seniors, bullying turned to isolation whereby students who were considered different, were excluded from common or ‘popular’ peer groups. Another member said that the teachers in their school seemed ‘disinterested’ in wanting to support the LGBTIQA+ community (and they felt that their teachers did not tend to ‘act’ until someone was or was close to being hurt).

Another member remarked that although their school said that they were accepting of rainbow youth, the actions of the school appeared to be quite different (e.g. students who wished to wear the gender-based school uniform which best reflected their identities were not usually allowed, and similarly rainbow youths’ requests to use the bathroom that they were most comfortable using, were often turned down or had to use a disability bathroom).

Some members said that they were aware of a number of students who were turning to the internet to source information, as there was limited information about rainbow youth available to them through school. This was sometimes detrimental as the information being sourced was demeaning or not always accurate.
Other comments made by members were noted as follows:

- School values foster behaviours – removing any stigma associated to rainbow youth and the rainbow community needs to be a priority for schools (and the wider community)
- Consideration should be given to making information about rainbow communities available to children and young people early on in their education.
- Better/more support is needed for those teachers or people who are responsible for providing support to rainbow youth (such as student advisors or nominated staff)
- Terms used by many teachers (and displayed on many school forms) are not diverse – i.e. only girl/boy terms are referred to or offered as an option for selection – gender neutral options are required so that students do not have to compromise their own identities to ‘fit in’
- Schools need to be held accountable for any negative behaviours or actions which it or its students undertake towards rainbow youth.
- Support for rainbow youth living in rural locations is needed just as much as those who live in urban areas – access can sometimes be a barrier.
- Conversations about rainbow communities should be out in the open (rather than ‘behind closed doors’)
- Serious thought must be given as to how mental health conditions can be addressed as a result of youth identifying as rainbow (and in particular those youth who are already part of a minority population such as Māori or Pacific Islands)
- Being heterosexual/straight is not the ‘default’ – rainbow youth should not be expected to ‘come out’ (no explanations are necessary).

YAG agreed that

- The key to ‘normalising’ rainbow communities was education (for both students and teachers).
- There was an opportunity for the Ministry to look at how the current sexual health curriculum could be extended to include education on rainbow communities.
- Safe spaces need to be established for rainbow youth within schools – this could include:
  - Introducing ‘zero tolerance of hate’ policies
  - Recruiting teachers and educators with diverse backgrounds to reflect student populations
  - Identifying student champions/leaders to promote and nurture positive attitudes and open minds
  - Providing specialised support for students who were not part of the rainbow community, but whose parents are
  - Encouraging all teachers and students to ‘call out’ bad behaviours.

Members look forward to Kieron and Stephen returning in the future to provide further updates on activities which the Ministry is progressing to support rainbow youth.

2. IMPROVING ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Clare Old and Jessie Smart (from the Ministry’s Well Being and Learning Support Team) advised that Minister Martin is looking to improve alternative education. Members were given time to review the Ministry’s vision and supporting statements.

Members split into small workgroups to discuss and formulate their views and comments. Each work group used ‘post-it’ notes and flip charts to record their views on the following questions:

a) What did they think about Minister Martin’s vision?

b) What did they think will keep young people engaged in education?

c) What supports could be offered if young people become disengaged with education?
Question (a)
YAG agreed with the vision as stated: ‘There are no alternatives to education, there are different needs for learning.’

Question (b)
Members comments regarding keeping young people engaged in education were noted as follows:
- Identifying students’ needs as early as possible (from early childhood onwards) so that any learning aids can be put in place before more comprehensive support may be needed (or it is too late and students have lost interest in education)
- Allowing students to determine their own learning curriculum/personalised plan and subsequently their own career paths
- Creating more opportunities for correspondence students to engage and communicate face-to-face with other students
- Ensuring student enrolments and resources are coordinated/managed in a timely and efficient manner
- Acknowledging that respect is two-way (between teachers and students)
- Ensuring education/subjects are relevant to students (e.g. prioritising NZ history over ‘Egyptian medicines’ and enabling students to learn their own whakapapa and cultural identity etc.) and including more practical learning across all standards
- Changing how consequences for students who are not following rules are delivered – excluding students from school (or putting students in seclusion) is often easier than working through any underlying issues that may be causing bad behaviour
- Removing barriers that cause students to become isolated (e.g. social factors such as homelessness and poverty makes it hard for many students to go to school) – taking time to identify and provide additional supports for these students would help
- Ensuring board of trustee representation and other decision-making bodies are reflective of the current school population, (i.e. having more parents and students on these groups)
- Investing in social sector trials which encourage communities to work together to develop approaches and programmes for their own children and young people.

Question (c)
Members comments regarding supports for young people who become disengaged with education were noted as follows:
- More teacher aids are needed particularly for students with impairments
- Extending opportunities for work experience (particularly for students with impairments or who are studying by correspondence) and ‘futures’ education
- Involving whānau and communities in identifying supports (and actually being supports if they have skills to be able to do so)
- More holistic approaches which balance behavioural management with support and other restorative measures are needed.

Other individual comments were noted as follows:
- The term ‘impairment’ was preferred over ‘disability’
- The format of the information presented was appealing to some members (as was the recognition of ‘whānau’ and ‘communities’ as essential components of flexible education settings – and in particular, identifying ways in which they can support student learning)
- There is support for alternative education being available to students over 16 years
- The vision for alternative education allows for flexibility; however, NCEA is very structured with little flexibility – this seems contradictory
- Alternative education provides 'safe environments to learn', but consideration needs to be given as to how students will continue to be supported once they exit alternative education and transition back to mainstream learning or on to other learning/training etc. (pastoral care)
- Schools that have teachers that genuinely care for their students are likely to have less students wanting to disengage from education
- Today’s education system is the result of colonisation and fails some students due to continued bias, racism and discrimination
- Some parents have not experienced secondary or higher education and so more information/knowledge building on education and career paths for their children would be good so that they can participate in decisions which their children are required to make regarding their future (some young people are having to make decisions on their own)
- Some students behave differently when at school compared to when at home (e.g. Pacific Islands students) and so trying to create environments where students feel comfortable to be themselves should be considered (e.g. providing alternative education on marae for Māori students if they so wish)
- Building trust between parents, schools and the Ministry needs to be a focus – media can be very influential in swaying parents as to what to believe (or not).

Members were asked how the Ministry and schools could improve their engagement with whānau. General comments included:
- Holding workshops and hui directly with communities (and wide-spread, not just in main centres)
- Using community leaders to share key messages (i.e. people who are part of the target audiences or who are respected by the target audiences) and spaces where those audiences feel comfortable (such as community hubs, halls or marae)
- Making face-to-face contact so that whānau can put faces to messaging and have open and honest discussions with people (rather than only having access to written materials)
- Enabling flexibility in terms of time (i.e. engaging with whānau at times that suit them).

YAG agreed that:
- It is important to ensure that adequate funding and resources to enable schools and other agencies to implement alternative education plans must be available
- Workforces must be remunerated according to their skills and comprise of diverse persons that are relatable/familiar to students and their whānau and communities.

Members’ interest now turns to how Minister Martin’s vision for alternative education will be implemented and measured.

3. CHILDREN AND YOUTH WELLBEING FRAMEWORK: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE FREE FROM RACISM, DISCRIMINATION AND STIGMA

An updated version of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework was presented to members by a representative from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC). Members had previously provided feedback on previous versions (as well as many other children and young people).

Members heard that DPMC is now considering design concepts for the Framework. A Wellington based creative design agency has been tasked with developing a compelling and engaging ‘metaphor’ that is representative of the domains referred to in the Framework using imagery that is relatable to a wide range of New Zealanders.

A working title has been proposed for the Framework: ‘Tamariki Tū, Tamariki Ora’ (children stand strong and children are healthy) and a whakatauki that represents the essence of the Framework
has also been drafted. Imagery of a ‘tree of life’ has been put forward as the potential brand/logo for the Framework.

Members were invited to provide feedback on the information presented. Comments were noted as follows:

- Using the Māori term ‘tamariki’ in the name of the Framework is limiting as its English translation of ‘children’ implies that it is only for children - it needs to also include young people (and so the addition of the Māori term ‘rangatahi’ or ‘taiohi’ would be more fitting)
- Children who stand strong and who are healthy, do so with the support of whānau and communities – it is important to acknowledge this so that the Framework is meaningful to everyone
- Aotearoa should be included alongside any references to New Zealand
- Some of the terms used to describe the intent of the Framework need to be clarified (e.g. healthy – what does this mean?)
- The tree of life imagery is good as it is a living thing that is continually growing and flourishing and is connected to the land – depictions of leaves, strong roots, trunk and branches to represent children and youth (placed at the centre) and whānau and communities (in the surrounds), all encompassed in a circle indicates togetherness and wrap-around support (the circle can also depict the shape of a badge – a ‘badge of honour’)
- The use of Māori designs to craft the tree of life is not an issue so long as the designs are easily understood/interpreted by people who are not Māori
- Incorporating leaf rubbings as part of the design concepts aligned well with the tree of life imagery
- Any colours chosen for imagery need to be uplifting and resonate with children and youth with fonts clearly displaying each letter properly (including graphical representations)
- Any photographs accompanying the Framework need to be representative of a variety of ethnicities and include minority groups in situations where they may not normally be seen (e.g. Māori and Pacific Islands faces studying chemistry and architecture etc.)
- Images need to connect with the words they are being attached to
- The finalised Framework needs to be available in an accessible format to cater for visually impaired people (i.e. using neutral colours).

YAG agreed that more work was needed to ensure the Child and Wellbeing Framework was well structured and resonated with those that it was intended for. While it is a Framework for children and young people, it also needs to have meaning for adults and parents.

Given the YAG meets every three months, the DPMC was advised that if they wished to continue to engage the YAG in the design aspects of the Framework outside of meeting dates, that they could consider setting up a secure social media page (via Facebook) where members can download material to review (and upload associated comments).

During this session, members also heard from Jennifer Fraser and Julian Tupai who are responsible for leading the Ministry’s racism, discrimination and stigma work stream (one component of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework).

Members were presented with a revised set of objectives and actions to consider and to identify whether they felt the objectives and actions were suitable. General views shared by members included:

- ‘Safe and inclusive spaces’ for children and young people are a vital component to ensuring students were free from racism, discrimination and stigma – these spaces enabled children and young people to flourish as themselves and realise their potential
- People who believe that everyone can exist in the same space as one, tend to be those who have never experienced racism, discrimination or stigma (the privileged few)
- The work programme needs to acknowledge the recommendations included in the recent Welfare Expert Advisory Group report (which puts the Treaty of Waitangi and bi-cultural partnerships forefront)
- Workforces must reflect New Zealand’s diversity
- Accountability measures are needed (as well as an evaluation approach to enable continuous quality improvements to be identified and implemented).

Members were told that the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy makes everyone collectively accountable. Furthermore legislation states that everyone must monitor the impact of the policies they implement and any changes they make.

**YAG supported** the objectives proposed (and supporting actions) and appreciated the work the Ministry team has undertaken up to date. Members reiterated that the provision of safe spaces was essential to achieving the vision of *A New Zealand free from racism, discrimination and stigma*.

### 4. NATIONAL EDUCATION AND LEARNING PRIORITIES

Members were told of a new mechanism that is being developed for the Minister of Education regarding a set of key education and learning priorities which early learning services and schools need to be cognizant of while undertaking their day to day activities.

Helen Walter and Sam Harris from the Ministry’s Quality Teaching and Learning Team advised that they have been reviewing evidence as to how the education system is currently performing for children and young people. They have held a number of engagement sessions with children and young people who fall into ‘minority groups’ such as rainbow youth, migrants, refugees, those with learning support needs or disabilities and those who are in the youth justice system etc. to identify a list of priorities.

Members were given the opportunity to review the priorities that have been drafted and provide feedback.

Remarks were recorded as follows:

**For Priority 1:** Every akonga and their family or whānau are safe and free at all times from racism and bullying in their place of learning
- This wording should align with that being used by the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy/Racism, Discrimination and Stigma workstream (for consistency purposes)
- There needs to be a reference to having ‘safe spaces’ for learners where they can be surrounded by positive behaviours
- This priority could be more progressive if it incorporated support for those who were subjected to racism and bullying.

**For Priority 2:** Every akonga has the opportunities they need in their place of learning to learn to relate and communicate effectively with other people and build sustaining relationships
- Opportunities for learners in rural areas tend to be fewer than those available to learners in urban settings (and the opportunities will look different)
- Include the term ‘healthy’ as part of sustainable relationships
- Mechanisms for building relationships need to be broad (e.g. cater for those learners who study by correspondence).

**Priority 3:** Every place of learning incorporates te reo Māori and tikanga Māori in the everyday practices of the place of learning
- While this priority is supported, further clarification is required as to what level of Māori language and culture is expected to be incorporated into each place of learning – resources to enable this are needed.
• Expecting every place of learning to prioritise this intent could be problematic - places need to want to do it rather than have to do it (so that it is genuine and authentic)
• This is positive and is one mechanism for ensuring our national language grows.

**Priority 4:** Every akonga and their family and whānau feels a sense of belonging and that they and their family and whānau are valued in their place of learning
• This priority could be incorporated within other priorities; however, it is important that the essence of belonging is not lost.

**Priority 5:** Every akonga has equitable opportunities to learn, develop and achieve across the curriculum with their family and whānau being integral to their learning
• The term ‘achieve’ implies that there is a standard that everyone needs to get to (and there is one standard that is to be met by all) – this may not necessarily be the intention.

**Priority 6:** Every akonga and their family and whānau have educationally powerful relationships with their place of learning focused on learning and achievement
• The term ‘educationally powerful relationships’ may not be well understood by learners - language needs to be simplified.

Other comments were noted as follows:
• The term ‘learner’ is preferred over the term ‘akonga’ as many people do not know what this means
• ‘Families’ and ‘whānau’ mean the same thing
• Some of the priorities appear to overlap (e.g. priorities 2 and 5 could both be incorporated under the term ‘equal opportunities’)
• Involvement of families and whānau needs to be via ‘partnerships’
• Minority success matters and should be considered as another priority.

Members were told that the intention is to link these priorities to new expectations that will be put upon schools (both state and private) as part of the planning and reporting processes which they enter into with the Ministry.

**YAG agreed** with the intent of the priorities proposed. Changes to wording are required.

Members suggested that the Ministry could inform communities of the priorities and any associated key messages by working with:
• Experienced and trusted agencies that communities know (and respect)
• Community leaders to channel communications (and provide translation services where needed)
• People who are able to use social media effectively
• Schools.

**DAY 2**

1. **THE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS YOUNG PEOPLE NEED FOR THE WORLD OF WORK**

Patrick McKibbin spoke to members about the work his team does with employers, business and industry to listen to their views and opinions on how the education system could be better for their business. They use this information to inform policy and direction of the Ministry work. The skills employers say are important are often called employability skills, soft skills or enterprise skills. These skills include:
• Communication
• Teamwork
- Digital literacy
- Financial literacy
- Creativity
- Critical thinking
- Problem solving
- Presentation

Members split into pairs to discuss their views on the following questions:

a) Did they think the skills identified are the right ones?

b) Are there any other skills that they think need to be developed whilst in education that could be useful for their future work or life?

c) In what situations are they currently developing the skills identified?

General comments were noted as follows:

- It is important that young people have an equal opportunity to build the skills identified -- locality is a big barrier to this (i.e. urban versus rural) -- there is a lack of access to relevant/desired employment for some young people
- There is often ‘selective offerings’ of employment opportunities (e.g. careers advisors may ‘shoulder tap’ students for specific roles rather than advising all students that there is an opportunity available) – shoulder tapping permeates stereotyping especially when certain students are approached for specific types of work (e.g. Maori and Pacific students only being offered trade/apprenticeship opportunities and smart/academic students being encouraged to attend university open days)
- There needs to be a strong emphasis on relationships and how young people can develop this skill
- Employability skill building needs to start early on in education (and it takes time)
- Sometimes young people are not aware that they are developing employability skills (when they are)
- Employability skills should not be measured and instead should allow young people to develop them in the way in which best suits them (e.g. through a cultural context) – it is not one way for everyone
- Foundational skills (i.e. basic numeracy and literacy) needs to be included
- Some young people may not be able to develop some of the skills listed to an expected ‘employable’ standard (e.g. communication) and so extra support may be needed
- Developing employability skills will be difficult if parents and teachers do not consider them to be priority (over standard subject learning)
- Having safe spaces and creating learning environments where young people have a sense of belonging is crucial to young people developing employability skills
- Employers, teachers and communities need to be held accountable. If young people are taking responsibility for developing employability skills then there have to be means by which they can and then build pathways to future employment
- Employers need to be willing to adapt their workplaces to accommodate young people with impairments (who may be able to do a job well and meet the desired goal, but in a way that is different to non-impaired counterparts)
- Independence and self-management needs to be included
- Young people mustn't be pressured into employment too early – young people do need time to be young people (and skills can be developed through relevant work experience, education and general socialisation etc.)
- Resilience and confidence skills need to be included (including knowledge of recruitment processes and experiences)
- Some employers judge potential employees based on appearance rather than the knowledge and skills they possess. For young people with impairments, this is a massive barrier to employment
Many employability skills are able to be developed outside of school (e.g. through cultural activities, sporting actions and participation in/contribution to different community groups and events).

YAG agreed with the skills identified and suggested additional skills for further consideration.

2. MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

Members met with Iona Holsted - the Secretary for Education.
Members had an opportunity to provide her with an overview of meeting discussions and the key messages and insights shared with Ministry staff.
General discussion points were noted as follows:

a) The Voices Report
   - Members felt that their views had been reflected in the report that was presented
   - ‘Equity’ was supported by members however one member commented that equity may not solve the problems that are currently present—they believed that the inequity that currently exists in education is due to colonisation (which has created a lot of minority groups that do need extra support in able to be on a ‘level playing field’ with everyone else)
   - Acknowledgement of ‘cultural connectedness’ was appreciated as was making mental health a core priority
   - The inclusion of 5 to 12 year old voices was commended.

Iona commented that there was a huge amount of commonality between the views expressed by the different groups of children and young people (regardless of age, gender and ethnicity etc.)

One member remarked that it was important to ensure that where mental health is referred to, that also physical health is also mentioned as there are many children and young people who may have a disability or impairment (without any known mental health issues).

Iona commented that the Ministry is about to publish a ‘style guide’. The ‘disability section’ has been sent through to the Office of Disabilities to check that the language being used is the way in which children and young people with disabilities resonate with.

b) NCEA Change Package
   - Members supported any actions which make NCEA more accessible – for example:
     - Removal of fees
     - Enabling Māori and Pacific students to achieve as Māori and Pacific students (i.e. being able to display ‘competency’ and practise what they know via a cultural lens)
   - Members sought clarity on a number of changes that have been released – particularly regarding:
     - Internal and external assessment processes
     - Credit appropriation
     - Vocational education training (and when students may be able to do this)
     - Criteria to have grades reviewed (resubmissions)

Members said that it would be difficult for many of their peers (who may not be as knowledgeable of the NCEA changes as they are due to their involvement in the YAG) to understand what is being proposed. The Ministry needs to take this into account when communicating changes (and also consider publishing the changes in multiple languages and formats – open, inclusive and accessible).

Iona commented that the wording of some of the changes may not have been framed correctly and wording will be refreshed (in accordance with feedback received and in consultation with the NCEA advisory group). The Ministry will not begin to implement the changes until 2020.
One final comment made by members was that a number of different 'adult' groups had been acknowledged as part of the NCEA consultation process. The YAG was not listed (and possibly should be so that other young people who are reading correspondence in relation to the changes, can see that youth voices were sought and included).

3. TERTIARY EDUCATION STRATEGY

Members heard from Grant Klinkum and Hannah Williams who are currently involved in developing a new Tertiary Education Strategy (TES). The TES sets out the Government's direction and priorities for tertiary education in New Zealand and is used by the Tertiary Education Commission, who is the funding entity for the system.

The TES is currently in a pre-draft stage and the Ministry is speaking with different stakeholders about what should be included in the new TES.

Members were asked for their views on what some of the barriers are that youth face when moving into tertiary education and how these barriers could be addressed. Individual comments were noted as follows:

- The term 'impairment' was preferred over 'disability'
- For Pacific people transitioning to tertiary education, a societal benefit is breaking stereotypes and setting examples and being role-models for other Pacific people who may aspire to higher education
- Many jobs require a tertiary qualification and higher education does offer many opportunities (however, it should not be the only 'thing' that is used to define success)
- It is hard for students who have to move away from the safety and security of whānau and relocate to continue study – having to deal with flatting, budgeting and travelling (in addition to studying) is a struggle if they have never done it before (some students may opt to discontinue study)
- Public transport is expensive in Auckland – there should be support (discounts) for students to enable them to travel to and from their places of learning
- Tertiary education environments need to be resourced to cater for students with disabilities or impairments
- Imagery used to promote tertiary education and career paths need to represent a diverse mix of people (e.g. careers which are thought to be 'more for males rather than females' need to be depicted differently so that females can see themselves in those roles too – and vice-versa)
- There needs to be better support systems to provide advice and information to students and their families and whānau so that they can make informed decisions – this is particularly important for first generation 'tertiary students' whose parents know little or nothing about higher learning, yet play an influential role in helping their children decide their future
- Tertiary education is expensive (and fees for international students in particular are extremely high) – why can't education be free
- Some tertiary institutions market their offerings quite aggressively, which can be overwhelming for many students. Learning is life-long and does not necessarily have to happen straight away. Using well-known or respected people within communities who have gained tertiary qualifications later in life may resonate with people who want to study but feel they may be too old to. Alternatively, young people who may not be able to progress to higher learning straight from school, through choice or circumstance
- The continuity of support for students with impairments or learning difficulties who are transitioning from secondary to tertiary education should be prioritised – students have to re-apply for supports (which are not always re-instated in a timely manner) or support options are limited (e.g. discontinuation of funding for assisted technology)
• Students need to be free to determine their own career pathway without educators/career advisors trying to 'talk' students into aspiring to do something different (or at a higher/lower level)
• Adequate funding to support tertiary institutions to provide quality and affordable education is needed
• Some courses are linked to jobs; however, students don't know what the job will be like until they've completed the course. Exposure to work experience early on in course work could help students to determine whether the course they have chosen to study will set them on the career path of their dreams
• Support associations within tertiary environments are seen as of benefit to many students (e.g. Māori student bodies and Pacific associations etc.) although they can also segregate and isolate groups of students. 'Expos' which inform students about these different groups and how they operate could help students decide whether they wish to be part of this type of network

Members said that as it stands, the system does not currently normalise and value a wide enough range of pathways and as a consequence New Zealand has a very competitive system where young people feel the need (around the age of 18 years) to enrol with a particular institution which it has argued is better than any others.

YAG agreed with the four focus areas that are being considered for the TES (those being: equity for all learners, supporting life-long learning and pathways, responding to the changing future of work and having a flexible, agile and responsive system that is more collaborative and less competitive).
Annex 2: Minister Martin's vision for Alternative Education
My vision for alternative education
There are no alternatives to education, there are different needs for learning

How do children and young people end up in alternative education?

Some causes of children and young people becoming disengaged from school include ...

- Social alienation
- Disadvantage
- Family dysfunction
- Cognitive / learning difficulties

These can lead to symptoms such as ...

- Disability
- Trauma
- Mental health concerns
- etc.

truanty   challenging behaviour

We need flexible settings that meet the needs of these young people by:

- Providing a safe place for the student
- Providing the supports the student needs to reach their personal best
- Establishing positive relationships between the student and a trusted adult

Going forward, I see the following features as essential components of these flexible education settings:

- Support from teachers and skilled youth workers/mentors, starting early to keep the student engaged
- Greater collaboration of community organisations, education, social and health services to provide for the needs of the student and their whānau
- Collaborative partnerships with families and whānau that keep the student at the centre
- Individual education plans that are flexible, engaging and focused on transition into positive pathways and successful outcomes

Hin Tūtū Māra, Associate Minister of Education
Ministry of Education
Supporting materials for the Alternative Education Hub
Annex 4: Letter to the YAG from Secretary of Education
5 June 2019

Youth Advisory Group

Kia ora koutou

Thank you for welcoming me to the Youth Advisory Group’s meeting on Friday 17 May. I really enjoyed the thought-provoking conversations and the varied perspectives that you shared with me, and I took a lot away from these. As I said at the meeting, I know that Minister Hipkins was very disappointed to have to miss this session with you.

One thing that was made clear to me from this meeting was that we need to do a better job as a Ministry to make sure that the input we receive from you, and from other young people, is genuinely valued and clearly reflected in our work. This is something that we will be working to improve.

On that note, I was pleased to hear that you felt that the Voices of Young People report had done a good job of capturing the views of children and young people, and that you found the report relatable and valued its focus on equity. That said, Brodie’s point about not conflating mental and physical wellbeing was a crucial one, and we are taking another look at the report to improve this. I know that the language we use is very important, especially when we are talking about the identities and experiences of individuals and their communities. While I know that we won’t always be able to get this right for everyone, I am determined that we will keep listening and learning and doing better at this.

On the subject of identity, Shaneel shared a story with us when we met about a friend who had filled out a form for university that did not include an option for identifying as gender diverse. I have looked into this, and I am pleased to let you know that we had already recognised that this needed to change, and had been working to fix our data systems to allow this. From 2019, students are now able to select gender diverse when they complete their application forms for tertiary study.

Thank you again for sharing your views and your insights with me, and I look forward to further opportunities to engage with you in future.

Nāku noa, nā

Iona Holsted
Secretary for Education