Education Report: Ministerial Youth Advisory Group – Meeting 3 insights and YAG 2019

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<th>Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education</th>
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Tēnā koe Minister,

Purpose of Report

This report provides you with the advice and minutes from the Ministerial Youth Advisory Group (YAG) meeting held on 2 and 3 August 2018. It also seeks decisions on the continuation of YAG for 2019.

Summary

1. The YAG meeting was held on 2 and 3 August 2018 at Mātauranga House. Your apology was received. The agenda included discussion and feedback on:
   a. the government’s draft Child Wellbeing Strategy (CWS) with Minister Martin;
   b. youth communication channels with the Ministry;
   c. the Ministry’s On-line Youth Forum (OYF);
   d. day-to-day experiences with the education system to the Tomorrow’s Schools Review Independent Taskforce and the Progress, Curriculum and Achievement Programme
   e. progress of the YAG in 2018 and continuation of YAG for 2019

2. Minister Martin attended the meeting on 2 August (11.00 am – 12 noon) and the YAG shared their views on wellbeing. To support this conversation, the members had reviewed the CWS (Annex 1) from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) prior to Minister Martin’s arrival.

3. The Ministry is currently scoping online channels for two-way discussions with young people. The YAG offered their insights and recommendations regarding the channels. Discussions also included the refresh of the StudyIt website - an online engagement tool that the Ministry fund to support students studying NCEA.
4. The platform of engagement for the Online Youth Forum (OYF) has not had the uptake we expected. Due to this and the Ministry investigating new digital channels of engagement with youth, we will close the OYF and leverage off the new channel that will be established.

5. The Independent Taskforce and Progress, Curriculum and Achievement Reference Group met with YAG in two different sessions to understand their day to day experiences in the education system and to discuss what the ideal system would look like. YAG identified that in their experience:

   a. Identity, language and culture is not valued in the education system
   b. Students are often ill equipped to manage their own wellbeing
   c. Educational pathways are disjointed
   d. Schools are often exclusive, not inclusive
   e. There are power imbalances between students and teachers/principals

6. They also described their ideal schooling system:

   a. School environments are safe and inclusive of all students
   b. Quality schools are accessible for all students within their own community
   c. Genuine relationships are valued where power is shared with students
   d. What students learnt at school could be applied in the real world.

7. Members reflected on YAG 2018 and unanimously agreed that this was an effective engagement channel for young people. They also shared their thoughts on what YAG 2018 could look like. This included a request to extend the term of appointment for membership to be longer than the current one year.

8. The terms of reference allows for up to 12 members aged 14 – 18 years with an appointment term of up to one year or at your discretion as Minister of Education. For YAG to continue in 2019 you could extend the tenure of current members or seek new members through an Expression of Interest application process.

9. We recommend you extend the tenure of the current members, using your discretion as the Minister of Education. This will allow a review at the end of 2019 linked to the progress of the Education Work Programme and consideration of tenure for the future.

10. Based on the current Terms of Reference, two members will no longer meet the criteria as they will be age 19 by 1 January 2019. The membership will therefore reduce to ten and there are two options for your consideration.

   - Option 1 – Do not replace the departing members, or
   - Option 2 – Undertake a recruitment process for two new members

11. Option 1 is the preferred option, as the YAG will still be able to perform the necessary duties with 10 members. However, if your preference is Option 2, then a high-level timeline of activities for recruitment is in Annex 2.
Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

a. agree to extend the tenure of the current YAG members for a further year

  Agree / Disagree

If you agree to recommendation a.

EITHER

b. agree to extend the tenure of the current members using your discretion as Minister of Education

  Agree / Disagree

OR

c. agree to extend the tenure of the current members by amending the Terms of Reference

  Agree / Disagree

d. note two YAG members will no longer meet the age criteria and will depart after the final 2018 meeting in October

  Noted

EITHER

e. agree that the two departing YAG members are not replaced

  Agree / Disagree

OR

f. agree to the recruitment process for two new members (Annex 2)

  Agree / Disagree

g. note that we propose to close the Online Youth Forum due to the Ministry scoping specific youth channels of engagement

  Noted

h. note the YAG notes from meeting three (Annex 3)

  Noted

i. agree to forward a copy of this briefing to Associate Minister Martin

  Agree / Disagree

j. proactively release this Education Report

  Release / Not release

Apryll Parata  
Deputy Secretary  
Parents Information and Community Intelligence

09/18

Hon Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education

18/7/18
Introduction

The third YAG meeting was held on 2 and 3 August 2018 at Mātauranga House. Your apology was received. The agenda included discussion and feedback on:

a. the government’s draft Child Wellbeing Strategy (CWS) with Minister Martin;
b. youth communication channels with the Ministry;
c. the Ministry’s on-line youth forum
d. day-to-day experiences with the education system to the Independent Taskforce and Progress, Curriculum and Achievement Reference Group
e. progress of the YAG in 2018 and continuation of YAG for 2019

This report provides you with the advice and notes from the YAG meeting. It also seeks decisions on the continuation of YAG for 2019.

Wellbeing Strategy

Child Wellbeing Strategy – Draft outcomes for all children, and potential focus areas for policy work (CWS) (Annex 1)

12. YAG discussed DPMC’s CWS and provided feedback to Minister Martin. They also considered how the Ministry’s contribution could align to the strategy.

13. YAG agreed that the domains, key principles and focus areas of the CWS were applicable to students and it was a good foundation document for the Ministry to develop our Wellbeing Strategy.

14. YAG identified the following areas for improvement:
   • include more child and youth-friendly, positive language
   • reconsider the use of arrows indicating progression for the domains because wellbeing is not a linear pathway
   • add another key principle "all children and young people in New Zealand have equal opportunity to succeed"
   • have a clear vision with aims, actions and outcomes that are connected and relevant to children and young people at different stages of their lives.
   • Separate the development domain into two areas:
     i. Self-development, and
     ii. Learning / educational development.

Ministry of Education’s contribution to the Child Wellbeing Strategy (CWS)

15. Focus areas were identified that the Ministry could lead in either a supporting or contributing role for the CWS. It was also suggested by a member that all education policies should reflect wellbeing.

Ministry in a leading role: While children and young people are in an educational environment, providers should be responsible for ensuring that:

• children are free from racism, discrimination and stigma
• children’s physical safety is protected during everyday activities like travel and recreation
- children's cultures are celebrated, and Te Ao Māori and te reo Māori are promoted
- children have improved opportunities for civic engagement and environmental awareness
- disabled children have improved opportunities and outcomes
- children's mental wellbeing is supported
- children are thriving socially, emotionally and developmentally in the early years
- all children have an equal chance to gain the skills, knowledge and capabilities for success in life, learning and work
- children are supported to behave in pro-social ways.

16. YAG identified that they would like families and whānau to be connected to the right social support and health services, through the education providers with the Ministry's support, to ensure that:

- children are safe and nurtured, in their whānau and their homes
- children have positive interactions with peers and others outside the home
- children and whānau are living in affordable, quality housing
- child poverty is reduced, in line with the Government's intermediate and ten-year targets
- children and whānau have equitable access to timely, good quality services
- children and whānau are empowered to maintain healthy lifestyles for children
- children experience the best development in their first 1000 days: safe and positive pregnancy, birth and parenting.

Youth Engagement

17. Since the Education Summits, the Ministry is looking to create a new digital engagement channel to have two-way conversations with youth. Ministry staff met with YAG to identify what they would like the Ministry to consider.

- **Channels of engagement**: Although the session was on youth digital channels, YAG identified that informal and formal face-to-face engagement with Ministry and Ministers was their preferred channel of engagement. This might include:
  
  i. YAG hui
  
  ii. regional ambassadors who meet with the Ministry regularly, or
  
  iii. Ministry-led youth debates with Ministers.
• However, they understand that digital engagement is equally important so that engagement is inclusive of all young people. YAG identified Instagram is their social media platform of choice; however:
  i. it would be unlikely that they would follow a Ministry page because they want to follow people, not organisations on social media, and
  ii. the Ministry might want to consider using a trusted third party to manage the page.

• Content delivery: YAG was clear that young people are interested in all areas of education. The issue is that it is often packaged in a way that excludes them. They would like to see the Ministry incorporate the following methods into their delivery:
  i. short and engaging video content
  ii. good humour
  iii. memorable people fronting the content – not Ministry staff
  iv. student political commentators
  v. online Q & A forums where students can pose questions to the Ministry
  vi. interviews with inspiring youth
  vii. visual, audio and sign language
  viii. memorable images, jingles or phrases (eg, like the Pak 'n' Save stick man)
  ix. blogs from Ministers
  x. Instagram stories
  xi. using social media influencers.

• School channels: YAG preferred the Ministry to communicate with youth directly and not through school channels exclusively, because teachers can:
  i. insert personal bias (about policies or opportunities)
  ii. distort the original intent of the communication, or
  iii. exclude some students from participating

18. The Ministry is also looking to refresh our StudyIt website; an online engagement tool that supports students doing NCEA through discussion forums, study advice, planners and tips. The Ministry wanted to know YAG’s thoughts on how to improve the site.

• Members learnt that the website:
  i. has approximately 20,000 visitors/users per month
  ii. focuses on NCEA levels 1 – 3 (maths, science and English)
  iii. enables students to ask questions via an online forum
  iv. will have an updated look and feel from May 2019 onwards
• Of the 12 members, only four had heard of StudyLT. Instead, the majority of YAG use StudyTime NZ; an easy to use website that offers similar support to StudyLT with additional learning resources available to purchase. YAG suggested that they contact the organisation that owns the site to identify collaboration opportunities for the Ministry, given the popularity amongst students.

19. The Online Youth Forum (the forum) was established by the Ministry to test the YAG insights and ensure we had a broad and diverse youth voice engaging in education conversations.

20. The platform of engagement for the forum has not had the uptake we expected. Due to this and the Ministry investigating new digital channels of engagement with youth, we will close the forum and leverage off the new channel that will be established.

21. The Ministry will consider the feedback from YAG within the scope of their digital channels for youth.

Tomorrow's Schools Review and Curriculum Progress and Achievement

22. Members from the Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce and Curriculum, Progress and Achievement Reference Group met with YAG in separate sessions to discuss their experiences of the education system. YAG's views will be considered along with other feedback received through the different fora like the Education Summits. Themes from the discussions included:

- **Identity, language and culture issues**: There was a strong sense that the education system is not inclusive and members felt they had to check their identity, language and culture at the school gate to be successful in education. They also reflected how their culture was not included in their learning.

- **Poor wellbeing**: Members talked about the overwhelming stresses they endure during NCEA and that they are ill equipped to manage it.

- **Disjointed pathways**: Members felt that transitions through the learning journey are not cohesive, particularly between secondary school and university.

- **School is exclusive**: YAG felt that school can be an exclusive space which "caters for the lucky few". If your ethnicity is in the minority, if you have a learning disability, if you have an impairment, your journey is more difficult than others because the system doesn’t cater for your needs.

- **Student representatives**: Members felt the power imbalance between student representatives and adults; particularly when they are significantly outnumbered by parents, teachers and principal on the Board of Trustees.

23. Members then described the ideal schooling system.

- **Safe and inclusive environments:**
  
  i. Students are at the centre of everything.
  
  ii. The strengths and weaknesses of students are supported without judgement.
  
  iii. Identity, language and culture is valued and incorporated into everyday school life.
  
  iv. The school is adaptable to meet the needs of all students.
• Accessibility:
  i. Quality schools are accessible for all students within their own community
  ii. Students have prompt access to external supports

• Genuine relationships:
  i. Principals actively engage with students.
  ii. Communication channels and processes are identified to the student voice can be heard and acted upon.
  iii. Whakawhanaungatanga is held in high regard

• Power sharing:
  i. Students are included in the decision making process, particularly when it is about them.
  ii. Students have power to decide what they need to succeed.

• Real life application:
  i. Schools balance traditional and modern teaching styles.
  ii. Students are taught real-life skills.

YAG Reflections on 2018

24. Members discussed the effectiveness of YAG as a channel of engagement and unanimously agreed that it was a beneficial mechanism which removes barriers and builds trust between young people and education. They are pleased you have confirmed that it will continue in 2019.

25. There were mixed views in terms of membership going forward. Some members believed the group make-up should stay the same (or as close as possible) for continuity of advice. Other members felt that it would be good to have new people on YAG who could offer new perspectives and opinions on matters which existing members may not be able to offer.

26. The members would like to continue to have two day hui as this gives them enough time to consider and discuss each topic fully.

27. YAG also mentioned that they preferred having independent contractors to facilitate their hui because it eliminates Ministry bias. They are very happy with how the facilitator runs the hui.

28. Some members said that it would be beneficial to consider having regional representatives that took responsibility for coordinating views within their own regions – and have those representatives make up YAG.

29. Members were supportive of setting up an ‘Alumni’ so that those members who would not be continuing their membership could remain in contact and continue to provide their views and opinions.

30. The above views regarding the future membership of YAG and the possibility of an alumni can be considered at the end of the next term, 2019.
YAG 2019

31. The terms of reference allows for up to 12 members aged 14 – 18 years with an appointment term of up to one year or at your discretion as Minister of Education. For YAG to continue in 2019 you could extend the tenure of the current members, either using your discretion or by amending the terms of reference, or seek new members through an Expression of Interest application process.

32. We recommend you extend the tenure of the current members, through your discretion as the Minister of Education. This would allow a review at the end of 2019 linked to the progress of the Education Work Programme.

33. Based on the current Terms of Reference, two members will no longer meet the membership criteria, as they will be age 19 by 1 January 2019. Membership of the YAG will therefore reduce to ten, which still falls within the Terms of Reference.

34. With regards to the membership, there are two options for your consideration:

- Option 1 - Do not replace the departing members, or
- Option 2 - Recruit for the two new members via an Expression of Interest application process.

35. Option 1 is the preferred option, as the YAG will still be able to perform the necessary duties with 10 members.

36. If you select Option 2, a high-level timeline of activities for recruitment has been included for your information in Annex 2.

Proactive Release

37. If agreed, it is intended that this Education Report is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Annexes

Annex 1: A3 Child Wellbeing Strategy Draft Outcomes Principles and Focus Areas
Annex 2: High-level timeline for YAG recruitment process
Annex 3: YAG Meeting notes: August 2 - 3