**Education Report:** Redesigning alternative education -- Summary of feedback from the September Hui

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**To:** Hon Tracey Martin, Associate Minister of Education  
**Date:** 10 October 2019  
**Priority:** Medium  
**Security Level:** In Confidence  
**METIS No:** 1201520  
**Drifter:** Sophie Smith  
**DDI:**  
**Key contact and number:** Ben O'Meara  
**DDI:**  
**Messaging seen by Communications team:** No  
**Round robin:** No

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**Purpose of report**

This paper provides you with a summary of feedback from the Alternative Education Hui (the Hui), held on 20 September 2019.

**Recommended Actions**

The Ministry of Education recommends that you:

a. note the summary of feedback received from attendees attached as Annex 1  

   Noted

b. agree to release the summary of feedback to Hui attendees  

   Agree/Disagree

c. agree that this paper is proactively released.  

   Agree/Disagree

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**Proactive Release Recommendation**

Dr Andrea Schöllmann  
Deputy Secretary  
Education System Policy  
10/10/2019

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Hon Tracey Martin  
Associate Minister of Education  
17/10/19

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Background

1. We have now collated and summarised the feedback received at the second Alternative Education sector Hui, held on 20 September 2019.

Summary of feedback received

2. Overall, attendees were in general agreement with the direction and components included in the proposed ideal future state for alternative education. However, attendees with a primary-school age student perspective noted that intensive provision will need to look different for younger learners.

3. An initial discussion about the ideal future state emphasised the importance of strong leadership, authentic relationships and a working culture of collaboration, shared responsibility and partnership as being essential to successfully implementing the proposal. Attendees see a need to recognise and empower the important strengths that different parts of a diverse workforce have to contribute.

4. In the first workshop, we focused on what is needed to support ākonga when they move into intensive provision. We asked participants questions about creating and maintaining the single plan of support and the criteria for entry into intensive provision.

5. Key themes in the feedback from this workshop included a need for a planned approach to intensive provision. This planned approach should focus on working together to support the needs of the child rather than meeting criteria, to take a more preventative approach. This will mean working together, sharing information and ensuring that ākonga have a holistic plan, with the right supports in place to achieve their goals.

6. In the second workshop, we focused on how ākonga can stay connected to school and how to design rich and engaging curriculum. Key feedback from this workshop was that schools needed to understand that they still had a responsibility for their ākonga, although practical barriers were acknowledged. Attendees believe this will take strong leadership from schools and the Ministry.

7. Attendees told us ākonga need access to a rich and engaging curriculum that is personalised to their interests and focuses on developing strengths and key competencies. When looking at ākonga achievement, holistic progress needs to be considered, focusing on the progress the ākonga has made, rather than a set standard.

8. A theme discussed throughout the day was that additional resourcing would be needed to make the proposed ideal state work in practice. Resourcing was discussed in relation to property, management and administration, workforce (including registered teachers and pastoral care specialists), technology, curriculum resources, learning supports and other supports to meet the needs of ākonga.

9. There were a number of questions around how the proposal would be implemented. These questions, while not included in the summary, will inform the work to redesign intensive provision as it moves forward.

Next steps

10. Once you have agreed to the release of Annex 1, we will send the summary of feedback out to Hui attendees.
Annex 1: Redesigning alternative education: Summary of feedback from the September Hui

Alternative Education Hui on 20 September 2019
Summary of feedback

October 2019
Introduction

This document summarises the feedback received from participants during the Alternative Education Hui held on 20 September 2019. There were 65 attendees who represented managing schools, Alternative Education providers, Activity Centres, Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu o Aotearoa, Whānau Ora, Youthline, Primary School principals, Learning Support staff, and Regional Health Schools.

Hon Tracey Martin, Associate Minister of Education presented her vision for the future of alternative education (now referred to as intensive provision until a new name is chosen) to the attendees. The attendees then had an opening discussion about this vision and what thoughts or questions they had in response to it, followed by two workshops on components of redesigned provision.

In the first workshop, we focused on what is needed to support ākonga when they move into intensive provision. We asked participants questions about creating and maintaining a single plan of support and the criteria for entry into intensive provision.

Workshop two focused on how ākonga can stay connected to school, how to design rich and engaging curriculum, and how to measure progress.

Overview of Hui feedback

Overall, attendees were in general agreement with the direction and components included in the proposed ideal state for alternative education. They supported national consistency, with flexibility for regions to leverage their strengths, and the supports available in their community.

Attendees supported a commitment to warm and safe environments, and keeping ākonga engaged by providing things like food and transport, which attendees noted stop ākonga from attending school or alternative education.

A theme discussed throughout the day was that additional resourcing would be needed to make the proposed ideal state work in practice. Resourcing was discussed in relation to property, management and administration, workforce (including registered teachers and pastoral care specialists), technology, curriculum resources, learning supports and other supports to meet the needs of ākonga.

There were a number of questions about how the proposal would be implemented. These questions, while not included in this summary, will inform the work to redesign intensive provision as it moves forward.

Opening Discussion

Key themes

Strong leadership, authentic relationships and a working culture of collaboration, shared responsibility and partnership are essential to successfully implementing the proposal

Attendees signalled the need for clear national direction with the flexibility to allow for regional variance. This would mean that the development of support for ākonga can leverage off the strengths of, and the supports available in, the local community.

They strongly agreed that relationships are key to supporting ākonga who are disengaged or at risk of disengagement. This was discussed both in relation to the current problems being experienced within alternative education, and as the solution to these problems. Successfully building strong relationships based on partnership and trust in all parts of the system will be essential to making the ideal state work.

Attendees stressed that the proposal would require everyone to work together collaboratively, taking shared responsibility for the support of ākonga who are showing signs of disengagement. This included government agencies beyond the Ministry of Education, whānau, communities, schools and intensive providers. Attendees noted information sharing would be an important part of this collaboration.
A diverse, skilled workforce that is appropriately resourced and recognised is needed

Attendees agreed that a diverse workforce was needed to support ākonga in intensive provision. Teachers, social workers and youth workers were all mentioned in the feedback received. Attendees stressed that more job security, recognition and support for those working in intensive provision is needed. Suggestions included changes to initial teacher education to build the capability of teachers to better support children and young people in their classrooms before they disengage (e.g. trauma-informed pedagogies).

We need to change attitudes, build school staff capability and improve learning supports for ākonga in schools as a priority

Attendees told us that there is a need for attitude change in schools, and for all adults around the ākonga to check their assumptions. Sometimes the ākonga has not disengaged from learning, but from their teacher and schooling environment.

Some attendees emphasised that more needs to be done to build the capability of the education workforce in schools to provide pastoral care and trauma-informed responses. This would help mainstream staff to engage and support ākonga who may then not need to be referred to intensive provision.

Attendees expect that, in the future, learning support will have been a part of the schooling life of ākonga before they are referred to intensive provision. They also told us that they expect this learning support to continue across settings into intensive provision. Some attendees noted this support is harder to get in rural areas.

Intensive support for primary aged ākonga needs to look different

Some attendees expressed concern that the ideal state did not clearly include appropriate options for support for primary aged ākonga. While there was agreement that the proposal was well designed for the secondary age, it was emphasised that there will be some differences in what will be needed for different age groups. Attendees believed this would mean primary aged and secondary aged students could not all be supported in the same place.

Attendees believed building and maintaining connections with mainstream school is essential. Because of this, attendees did not recommend off-site intensive provision for this age group of ākonga.

Workshop one: Moving in

In the first workshop, we focused on what is needed to support ākonga when they move in to intensive provision. We asked participants questions about creating and maintaining a single plan of support and the criteria for entry into intensive provision.

Single plan of support

Attendees were in support of having a single plan that was put in place as soon as the need for support was first identified in school or early childhood education. They agreed that the plan needs to follow ākonga when they move between settings, that there must be collective ownership and responsibility between the school, provider, ākonga and their whānau, and that the plan needs to be regularly reviewed and updated.

Attendees told us that for the plan to be successful, everyone needs to be at the table and in agreement about what was best, not just whānau. However, it was important for whānau to buy in and be on board. Attendees believe this could be achieved through communication and relationship building.

Attendees told us that information needs to be shared between schools and providers to ensure providers can plan for the young person effectively and to ensure support is in place before they arrive.

Attendees provided a range of suggestions for what should be included in a single plan, for example, holistic ākonga needs, how to work best with the ākonga, the wrap-around support required, realistic goals, pathways and transitions — including the move out from intensive provision. Some attendees believed a template based on these suggestions would be helpful, but noted it will still need to be flexible.

Attendees noted that for the plan to be successful, the support needs to be available to put it into action, for example technology, curriculum resources, learning support, other agency support. This would have funding implications.
Criteria for entry

Attendees said that the criteria for entry must be more flexible than they currently are. Some attendees suggested a shift to a professional judgement model supported by guidelines and indicators. Others suggested that entry into intensive provision should be an entitlement, based around a single plan and the need for support to achieve it, rather than as an outcome of ‘failure’. They were also concerned that there are not enough student places within the current system and thought that we needed to consider moving away from a limited place-based model.

Attendees told us that alternative education needs to become a preventative support, and to ‘shift from being the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff to the fence at the top of it’.

Attendees said it was critical that exclusion or expulsion was no longer a criteria, and noted that it should not be an option.

Some attendees believe ākonga and their whānau should be able to self-refer, and not have to rely on the school.

Workshop two: Moving through

Workshop two focused on how ākonga can stay connected to school, how to design rich and engaging curriculum, and how to measure progress.

Staying connected

Attendees noted that it is important to have strong connections between intensive provision and school. Some attendees believe that, at minimum, ākonga need to stay on a school roll. School staff need to come into the intensive settings to spend time with young people, and young people also need to spend time at the school. This was particularly important for ākonga who would be transitioning back to school.

Strong leadership from the school is needed to set expectations. School staff must know that learners are entitled to all the resources and experiences that come with school, even when they are in off-site settings. Schools should be doing everything they can to help make this happen.

Attendees noted that there would be practical challenges, including issues around safety, in relation to keeping ākonga connected to school, but that this was an important part of the ideal state.

Attendees focused on connections through sporting, art and cultural opportunities. Careers development support and opportunities from the school were also seen as critical.

Designing rich and engaging curricula

Attendees told us that to engage learners, curricula need to be personalised to their interests, project-based, aspirational, future-focused and flexible. This will help ensure student agency. Whānau voice will also need to be included.

Some attendees recognised that learners need to be “set up with the basics” starting with the curriculum competencies of managing self and relating to others to get the learner “classroom ready” before shifting to literacy and numeracy.

Attendees suggested that rich and engaging curricula would draw on local opportunities, connections and context, for example, opportunities to positively contribute to the community or participate in taster courses or work experience. Attendees noted barriers to accessing secondary-tertiary pathways.

There was a strong sense throughout this session that a teacher is needed to support the development and delivery of rich and engaging curriculum, which will require appropriate support (e.g. a registered teacher) and resourcing (e.g. curriculum resources). Some attendees suggested this teacher could be provided by the managing school.

Measuring progress

Attendees told us progress needs to be considered holistically and recognise and celebrate the success and distance travelled from where they were upon entry.