Briefing Note: What it would take to develop learning progressions for New Zealand Sign Language

To: Hon Tracey Martin, Associate Minister of Education
Cc: Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education
Date: 30 April 2019

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

Note possible options to develop learning progressions for New Zealand Sign Language.

Summary

- You have asked for advice about what it would take to develop learning progressions for New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL).
- Any development work will have significant cost and resource implications. We see two possible approaches.
- The first approach is to develop a new progressions framework. For this work we would expect significant costs which would require detailed planning, a budget bid, and prioritisation against other education initiatives. The development would need to align to other work currently underway to understand progress.
- An alternative approach is to review and update NZSL in the NZ Curriculum to reframe the content as progress indicators. There would be costs associated with this work and it would take at approximately two years to complete.
Pauline Cleaver  
Associate Deputy Secretary  
Early Learning and Student Achievement

Hon Tracey Martin  
Associate Minister of Education

2/5/19.
Background

1. You have asked for advice about what it would take to develop learning progressions for New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL).

2. In education, NZSL is primarily supported as the language for deaf and hard of hearing children, but it is also available as a second or additional language through the curriculum. The policy framework for NZSL is based in its status as, alongside te reo Māori, one of the official languages of New Zealand. These languages, along with English, may be studied as first or additional languages in New Zealand's education system, and may be the language of instruction.

3. Because of the different learning contexts, there are complexities to keep in mind when considering what progressions for NZSL might look like. The target learner group (deaf and hard of hearing students who use NZSL as their primary language, or hearing students who are learning NZSL as a second or additional language) could influence the framing and provision of learning progressions.

4. For the purposes of this briefing, we are looking at progressions as a way to measure and support the developing communication skills of deaf and hard of hearing students.

5. A framework of indicators demonstrating achievement at each curriculum level already exists within the *New Zealand Sign Language in the New Zealand Curriculum* (2006) document. This was developed prior to the current *New Zealand Curriculum* and the two may not align.

6. Other learning progressions in education include the *English Language Learning Progressions* (ELLP), and the *Learning Progression Frameworks* (LPF).

What it would take to develop progressions

7. Developing progressions requires a significant investment in time and resource. We see two possible approaches:
   a. Develop a new progressions framework.
   b. Review and update *New Zealand Sign Language in the New Zealand Curriculum* to reframe as progress indicators.

Develop a new progressions framework

8. To develop new learning progressions we need to consider budget, resourcing, and timing of the implementation. For NZSL we would expect significant costs which would require detailed planning and prioritisation against other education initiatives.

9. The first step would be to prepare a budget bid. Allowing time for the budget process, development would then begin during or after July 2020.

10. Design and implementation would need to align with other work currently underway to understand individual student progress (e.g., assessment at school entry; within level 1 of the NZC; and across the curriculum through the Curriculum, Progress and Achievement programme).

11. To ensure a quality product and the engagement of the Deaf Community, we would need to procure NZSL experts to develop the progressions. We would also recommend forming an advisory group made up of representatives from the Deaf Community and education. There is resourcing attached to this type of process including professional fees and interpreter costs.
12. Other aspects include mapping across the curriculum levels for both the NZC and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa, content development, design and publication.

Review, update and develop NZSL in the New Zealand Curriculum


14. As this was developed prior to the 2007 New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) it is likely that the documents do not align.

15. The Ministry could commission a review and update of this document to ensure it aligns to the curriculum levels and purpose of the NZC. From this we could conduct an analysis into whether further development would be appropriate to adapt the indicators into a progressions framework.

16. There would be costs associated with this work and budget would need to be sought. We anticipate it would take approximately 18 months to two years to complete.

Key Risks and Benefits

Risks

17. s 9(2)(g)(i)

Benefits and opportunities

20. Any action towards increasing the support and status of NZSL means that the Ministry delivers on its commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

21. This work would signal to the Deaf Community that their language is being recognised through the ability to formalise and benchmark learning and progress.

22. Progressions have the potential to develop robust approaches to the collection, analysis and reporting of language data for deaf and hard of hearing children.
Current provision of support for NZSL

23. The Ministry of Education (the Ministry) provides a range of supports relating to NZSL, particularly for deaf and hard of hearing children, at early learning and school. These include:

- The First Signs service (to children under the age of five and their families and whānau).
- The Advisors on Deaf Children (AoDC) service to children from birth to eight years old.
- Two Deaf Education Centres (DECs), which will merge in July 2020 to form one national school and network of services. The DECs include two schools, a number of satellite classes, and Regional Support services for students enrolled in regular schools.
- Resource Teachers of the Deaf (RTD).
- The Ministry’s Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS).
- NZSL@School, which provides support to children and young people in regular schools who have NZSL as their first/dominant language and access the curriculum and learning through NZSL.
- Some funding for the use of NZSL Interpreters, both by Deaf staff working in the DECs, and for Deaf parents who have children enrolled in regular schools.

24. The Ministry funds online NZSL resources available to children, families and schools, including:

- NZSL in the NZ Curriculum - https://nzsl.tki.org.nz
- Vocabulary videos and games - Turi TV https://turi.tv/ezystream.com/#
- Sign Ninja http://www.nzslsignninjaco.nz
- Learn NZSL http://www.learn.nzsl.nz/#/id/co-01
- Sign with your baby http://nzslbabysign.nz
- NZSL dictionary - https://www.nzsl.nz
- E Books – Ready to Read books in NZSL, Rhymes with Sign, Hairy MacLary

25. NZSL is available to study as a subject at NCEA, with achievement standards in levels 1 to 3.

26. The Ministry is developing a National Data Set and a Language Outcomes survey to better identify language capabilities for deaf and hard of hearing children, including children with NZSL as a first or dominant language.

27. The Ministry part-funds Deaf Aotearoa to deliver NZSL taster classes in schools and early learning services as part of our support for NZSL Week. The NZSL Board also part-funds the classes.

Challenges in the scale and distribution of NZSL support

28. There are approximately 3,100 school age children who meet the criteria for being identified as deaf and hard of hearing. The vast majority (95%) attend regular schools across New Zealand. The low incidence and widely dispersed cohort across the country provides a challenge in terms of providing NZSL support.

29. Supporting children and young people who have NZSL as their first/dominant language requires a high level of funding. For example, a student in a regular high school may require fulltime NZSL Interpreter support to access the curriculum for learning. The demand on these resources from various providers supporting deaf and hard of
hearing students is high. It can be difficult to access an appropriately qualified person to support children’s learning.

30. There is a limited pool of professionals with the level of fluency in NZSL to appropriately support children and young people who have NZSL as their first language. Lead in times to professional qualifications and proficiency for NZSL teachers and interpreters is very long, with two to four years of additional post-graduate study.

Opportunities and developments in NZSL and deaf education

31. The Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Early Intervention Programme has provided the opportunity for early identification of hearing loss and early support from birth. This may increase the demand for access to NZSL from an early age from families who choose NZSL as a first or second language for their child.

32. S 9(2)(g)(i)