



Last Thursday I was sitting on the couch with a coke in one hand, a bag of chips in the other, decompressing after a pretty full on day of meetings, wet lunch duty, a bit of PLD and a 5.30pm meeting with an anxious parent. So much for working to rule! My loving wife then decided to share her day with me and me being the highly engaged husband, I pretty much ignored everything she said, until she started reading out National’s aspirations for schools should they be elected.

This quickly turned into a wind up session as she went through the two lists which I have included over the next two pages for your reference purposes. Definitely stuff that scrunched my undies, left me squirming and caused the blood pressure to rise.


Now, I have have to admit that Mr. Christopher Luxon isn’t my favourite politician and, to be frank, I was really hoping that with him being an astute businessman, we might get more going forward in the future. Yeah right, not likely. How is it possible that after over a failed decade of National Standards, that he can now suggest we bring back National Standards + Science as a forward thinking strategic approach? Can he not read the room? Doh! I would also suggest Mr. Christopher Luxon spend less time blaming schools and teachers for a decline in outcomes and have a more detailed look at contributing factors like; changes in society, family contexts in 2023 and the reluctance of successive governments to truly value of teachers as a more likely cause.


Nationals 2023 Aspirations ‘Smells like National Standards Part 2’


Mmmmmm.... If it looks like crap, smells like crap and needs to be flushed, then it is still crap Chris.

Achievement has been declining for 30 years. One reason is that the New Zealand Curriculum is far too loose. Instead of clearly setting out what children should be learning and when, it focusses on "key competencies" which are vague, hard to measure, and impractical to report.

Under National, the curriculum will set out the non-negotiable set of knowledge and skills children will need to be taught each year.

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National will standardise assessment across schools in reading, writing, and maths. School will be required to measure each child's progress against the curriculum at least twice a year using the same robust assessment tool.

National will also require regular reporting, in a consistent format, so parents receive a clear and detailed understanding of how their child's education is progressing, where they might need more help, and where they can be extended.

Parents have a right to know how their child's education is going. We can't expect to turn around declining achievement if we're not even willing to measure how children are progressing and report it to parents.


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National will introduce an exit exam for teaching graduates to demonstrate expertise in reading, writing, maths and science instruction, and require existing teachers to undertake professional development in teaching the basics.

If we want to improve student outcomes, we must invest in our teaching workforce. The evidence shows some teachers schedule less class time for basics like maths because they lack the confidence to teach them. That's unacceptable.

Teachers have been let down by a system which clearly hasn't prioritised training them to teach the basics brilliantly.

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In New Zealand, one curriculum level can span several school years, creating a built-in excuse not to act when children fall behind. Without annual progress outcomes, it is too easy for students who are not making progress to become lost in the system. Students can easily fall several years behind in their learning before schools or parents realise and put in place additional support.

Fun Facts Mr. Luxon:

National released National Standards over the 2010-15 period by the much loved Anne Tolley and Hekia Parata, the caring and nurturing Ministers for Education at the time. (Sarcasm) They were originally promoted as ‘Optional’ to support schools in need. They then become mandatory for all without any true consultation, trial, or an explanation of why. Interesting to note 100’s of schools instantly highlighted their reluctance to participate but National still choose to ignore and proceed regardless of perspectives shared and to much obvious discontent at the time.

There was additionally already much global evidence to suggest ‘National Standards’ type programmes were detrimental to educative success for students.

As a result of National Standards Part 1 we got : Increasing levels of fragmented teaching, with more onus on teaching the three R’s in isolation, sitting students for longer, reducing time and impetus on the wider curriculum subjects, a narrowing of the curriculum, more time spent on assessment (cause that helps), a slow decline in teaching through inquiry, integration or via meaningful context and a reduction in scope for teachers to be creative, have fun and personalize learning. We also saw Hattie’s predicted decline in outcomes for learners come to fruition.

What is scary is that when you look back at the communications shared in the 2008-10 era by Principals there was everything in place to suggest that National Standards their innovative ‘Flagship’ learning platform was already doomed to failure.

The Principals’ and NZEI Responses continued

- Ernie Buutveld, President of the NZ Principals’ Federation that represents approximately 2300 schools throughout New Zealand, observed that:

“Britain is just realising its mistake in narrowing its curriculum and undermining its curriculum with testing. New Zealand does not want or need its curriculum undermined by short-sighted election promises. This is an area where the NZPF has grave concerns – concerns around how school data will be used by the media and in relation to performance based pay. These could become the shell holes in a no man’s land without winners.... Given the speed with which it is being pursued, the urgent will drive out the important.”

John Hattie’s critique of National Standards

- In early August Professor John Hattie — the architect of asTTle — launched a concerted attack on NS:
- They were likely to force teachers to teach students according to their school year, rather than their ability level.
 - The NS were at odds with a levels-based curriculum; that they would lead to a clash between age-based standards and ability-based learning; and this situation would encourage mediocrity because students who met a minimum standard would invariably move mechanically through all subjects at the same pace, as evident in the USA.
 - Concluded that most teachers would “teach to the test” and, in so doing, “set education back 50 years”.
 - Hattie’s views resonated with many educators, including school principals, the Principals’ Federation, teachers, and NZEI.



- Of the 1000 primary school principals surveyed 23% reported being opposed to NS with a further 72% expressing serious reservations about their introduction, the potential for the data to be captured in league tables, and the very short timeline allowed for their implementation.

But wait there’s more..... crap

If we want to improve student outcomes, we must invest in our teaching workforce. The evidence shows some teachers schedule less class time for basics like maths because they lack the confidence to teach them. That's unacceptable. Teachers have been let down by a system which clearly hasn't prioritised training them to teach the basics brilliantly.



In New Zealand, one curriculum level can span several school years, creating a built-in excuse not to act when children fall behind. Without annual progress outcomes, it is too easy for students who are not making progress to become lost in the system. Students can easily fall several years behind in their learning before schools or parents realise and put in place additional support.



- Require schools to assess student progress in reading, writing and maths at least twice a year every year from Year 3 to Year 8, using the e-asTTle assessment tool.
- Introduce a common reporting template, so every parent receives a detailed report on their child's progress in reading, writing, and maths at least twice a year.
- Introduce an age-appropriate skills check-in towards the end of Year 2 to assess basic skills such as counting, phonics, and letter formation.



teacher. Reprioritise professional development funding towards upskilling existing teachers in reading, writing, maths and science instruction, and the use of assessment, and make this a requirement for teaching certification.



How will teacher certification change? National will require evidence of professional learning and development in reading, writing, maths and science instruction in order to re-certify. This will ensure that all teachers have the necessary skills and knowledge to teach the basics brilliantly, and to use assessment to lift achievement. National will also scrap teacher

So, thanks for all your suggestions Chris but rather than pursuing the lists highlighted, how about **you consider the following:**

- Paying teachers and principals what they are worth.
- Return teaching and principalship to positions of merit, value and high community perception.
- Rather than blame truancy and lack of student engagement on schools and teachers, why not look at parenting and what their role is within this.
- Explore how National and Labour Parties could look at current educational research and come up with a consistent vision for education going forward, as opposed to using us as a political football or lever.
- Strategically look at implications for NZ Schools and Education, if we start to haemorrhage teachers at a similar rate to what we are experiencing with nurses. Information coming to us would suggest Australia is actively pursuing opportunities to make transition easier for our people and the 20-28% salary increase is also highly appealing.
- Stop harping on about how our teachers are lacking in knowledge around teaching the basics. This is miles from the truth and I think you would be hard pressed to find a school in NZ who has not prioritized Literacy or Numeracy PLD consistently over the last two decades.
- Rather than blaming schools for the decline National Standards accelerated, and consider how you could better fund support mechanisms for high needs kids and, therefore, allow class teachers to give time and onus to learning.
- Stop looking at education through a lens of one shoe fits all. Most great schools excel when they are given appropriate funding, autonomy, adequate staffing, facilities which align to need and support.
- Try acknowledging the great work that does happen in schools.

April Announcements- Nice try but no cause for celebration!

Today the Government announced both an improvement in year 4-8 ratios – expected to result in 320 more teachers in classrooms from 2025 – along with a wider review to recommend future staffing improvements.

The reduction from 1:29 to 1:28.5 in 2024 and then 1:28 in 2025 is the first movement to reduce ratios in this year grouping in more than a generation.

This historic step is the direct result of our collective efforts and campaigning as union members. The 1:29 ratio has been around since 1996. In 2000, a ministerial review recommended moving ratios for years 4-8 to 1:25, but this was never implemented.

A review will be conducted by a Ministerial Advisory Group, looking at how to address the "challenges our teachers and students currently face in the classroom and what our school leadership and management need". The Group will also look at "what further decreases to class sizes will cost and whether it is achievable".



I don't know if you were as excited about this class ratio announcement as the government was but I would suggest not. The increase of 0.5 of a teacher per year certainly didn't fill my heart with joy and, to be blunt, there are more holes in this strategy than in a Roman sandal. The cynical side of me would suggest that this is political lobbying without thought to the 1:25 that is truly needed or to where we would find additional teachers in a time where there is already a significant shortage? Unfortunately another band-aid as opposed to addressing a need.



1. Curriculum Refresh slow down, delay in NCEA changes, new emphasis on mathematics and literacy foundation skills

Due to three years of covid and the flurry of weather events affecting the start of 2023, NZPF has called for a slow-down to the implementation of the curriculum refresh. We also support our secondary colleagues calling for a slow-down to NCEA changes for similar reasons. We support both the need for and the execution of the curriculum refresh and at the same time recognize that principals and teachers are not yet ready to implement the important changes. Curriculum advisors have only recently been appointed and are also not yet ready to support us through the professional learning required to implement the changes successfully. No one wants this to fail.

I am pleased that the Minister has responded to our requests to slow down the process. Equally, NZPF applauds the Minister for the new emphasis on mathematics and literacy foundation skills. For many years, the distinction between the national (not negotiable) and localized curriculum has been blurred. In the absence of a curriculum advisory in the Ministry, approaches to the teaching of mathematics and literacy have become uneven across our schools and principals everywhere will welcome a return to defining those non-negotiable areas and supporting them with professional development for our teachers and leaders. Already the Ministry has shown a commitment to these subject areas holding a road show across the country last year, in partnership with NZPF, which proved most popular with principals and senior teachers.

It was pleasing to note that the government has decided to slow down the Curriculum Refresh and it would appear that they have demonstrated some listening skill. Unfortunately what this delay probably further highlights is that the last 6 years of Curriculum Rollout has been poorly planned, inadequately resourced and sprayed out, as opposed to carefully transitioned in. It would be reassuring to see if the government would now look at increasing schools access to Curriculum Advisers, providing more in-school support (more akin to what we had in the early 2000s) and potentially considering face to face cluster PLD opportunities, as opposed to Zoom Hui or Webinars. Let's be honest, time constraints and pressures in schools are not likely to change in the future and if the governments approach to roll out continues as it has for the last 6 years, then we are doomed to failure.



Principal Food for Thought & Fun:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arj7oStGlkU>

https://www.ted.com/talks/jose_bowen_a_new_3r_s_for_education

https://www.ted.com/talks/rita_pierson_every_kid_needs_a_champion