

Education Report: Ministerial Youth Advisory Group – Report from Inaugural Meeting February 2018

To:	Minister Hipkins		
Date:	7 March 2018	Priority:	Medium
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1109511
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Messaging seen by Communications team:	Yes	Round Robin:	No

Kia ora Minister,

Purpose of report

This report provides you with the insights and advice from the orientation and inaugural meeting of the Ministerial Youth Advisory Group, held on 8 and 9 February 2018.

The time delay is due to receiving the record of the meeting and circulating it to the Youth Advisory Group for ratification. We will explore options for improving this process.

Summary

- 1 The orientation and inaugural meeting for the Ministerial Youth Advisory Group (YAG) was held on the 8 and 9 February 2018 at the Ministry of Education's National Office, Mātauranga House
- 2 All 12 members attended both days and the programme was facilitated by Serena Curtis-Lemuelu.
- 3 The YAG met with you at Parliament on 8 February as part of their orientation, where they shared some of their thoughts on the education system.
- 4 During the inaugural meeting, there were three topics of discussion which were presented by specialists from the education sector. The topics were:
 - a. **National Conversation on Education** – presented by Ministry of Education. The key themes from the YAG included:
 - suggestions on how to engage youth in the Summits,
 - the importance of collaboration with youth,
 - effective pathways to further education and meaningful employment,
 - Policy reviews, and accessible and equitable support for children and young people.
 - b. **NCEA Review** – presented by the Ministry of Education and the NCEA Review Ministerial Advisory Group. Key themes included:
 - NCEA must be responsive to the learning journey, needs and aspirations of each individual young person,
 - addressing overassessment,
 - improving the visibility of their progression,
 - expression of interest of the YAG to be involved in the planning and delivery of the NCEA review workshops.
 - c. **NCEA Online** – presented by New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). The key themes included:
 - the benefits of NCEA assessments going online, such as the possibility of sitting exams throughout the year;
 - the possible disadvantages, such as the risk of software failure or system lockouts, and;
 - their expectations, such as reliable and functional software, that there will be no unfair advantage over those who choose to do their exam offline.
- 5 YAG also met with the Secretary for Education, Iona Holsted, on 9 February for afternoon tea and informal discussion.
- 6 The meeting closed with the YAG reflecting on their experience over the two days and provided their recommendations on improvements they would like to see for future meetings. Recommendations included, consideration of further meetings to be two days, using a closed Facebook page instead of Loomio for the Online Youth Forum, consideration to move the last meeting to December to avoid timetable classes with NCEA exams.

Recommended Actions

7 The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- a. **note** meeting notes from the orientation and meeting which have been ratified by the Youth Advisory Group (Annex 1)

Noted

- b. **note** document 'Characteristics of a good teacher' as described by the Youth Advisory Group (Annex 2)

Noted

- c. **note** that the Youth Advisory Group would like to be involved in the co-design and co-facilitation of the focus groups as part of the NCEA Review consultation, to encourage youth participation.

Noted

- d. **note** that we have confirmed with your office that you will meet with the Youth Advisory Group on Friday 11 May, from 10:30am – 12:30pm.

Noted

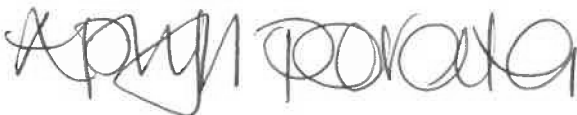
- e. **proactively release** this Education Report.

Release/Not Release

- f. **note next steps:**

- i. Secretariat to test the insights with the Online Youth Forum. We will report back to you if there are significant differences, and
- ii. Secretariat to socialise insights from the inaugural Youth Advisory Group meeting within the Ministry Leadership Team and other sector agencies, if appropriate.

Noted



Apryll Parata
Deputy Secretary
Parents Information and Community Intelligence

7, 3, 2018



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

11, 4, 18

Introduction

- 8 There were three topics of discussion for your Ministerial Youth Advisory Group (YAG) to consider.
- 9 The YAG did not provide specific advice on each topic; instead they shared their personal experiences and perspectives for consideration. The insights of the YAG have been themed and are summarised in this report. Meeting notes for each topic are attached as Annex 1.
- 10 On 9 February, the YAG had an impromptu discussion about the 'characteristics of a good teacher' by reflecting on their experiences and identified a number of attributes they thought made an effective teacher. These notes are also attached as Annex 2.

Topic 1: National Conversation on Education

- 11 The YAG was presented with the idea of having a national conversation on education to find out what New Zealanders need and want from the education system. They were asked for advice on how best to engage with young people and asked for suggestions on potential conversation topics with the sector, young people, parents, whānau, community and employers.
- 12 Topics of interest to shape a national conversation were identified by the YAG and grouped into key themes:
- 13 **Engagement:** In order for the National Conversation Summits to have good engagement with youth, it is important that there is a multiple channel approach, with consideration to:
 - a. the location of the Summits. They need to be held in places where young people feel comfortable, are accessible to them and is an inclusive environment,
 - b. face to face engagement - with adults and young people as facilitators.
 - c. utilising social media to engage young people, and
 - d. providing incentive to engage, one example being competitions that entice youth to participate.
- 14 The YAG noted they would like to be invited to attend the Summits. This has been conveyed to the organisers and will happen.
- 15 **Collaboration:** The YAG want conversations around children and young people having the opportunity to be able to co-design the local curriculum with their teacher and school so it reflects their unique interests, culture, 21st century skills, physical needs, health and wellbeing.
- 16 **Pathways:** They want an education system that transitions them from school into meaningful education or employment with the skills they require to thrive in the 21st century.
- 17 **Reviewing policy:** It was identified that creating and reviewing policies should be done in collaboration with students, particularly where it affects them directly.

- 18 **Support:** The YAG identified that they want a system that is supportive of learners and teachers. The access to support should also be equitable for priority learners with a specific emphasis on those with learning difficulties, physical impairments, mental health considerations, Māori and Pasifika.
- 19 From their conversations, an overarching theme for a national conversation could be **'What does an inclusive and equitable education system look like in the 21st century?'**

Topic 2: NCEA Review

- 20 The NCEA Review topic was presented by Ministry staff and a member of the NCEA Review Ministerial Advisory Group. They had three questions they wanted YAG to answer:
- What is the best way to ensure good engagement with NCEA students?
 - What aspects of NCEA will be most important to students?
 - What are key challenges and issues facing students as they completed NCEA?
- 21 The YAG gave consideration to these questions and their feedback has been grouped into the following themes:
- 22 **Responsive:** the YAG want NCEA to be responsive to their individual needs and aspirations through:
- introducing more vocational pathways that suit the learning styles and interests of all young people,
 - recognising identity, language, culture as valued skills and attributes across the curriculum,
 - assessments that take into consideration the students' physical impairments, learning difficulties, or wellbeing.
- 23 **Authentic learning:** They want to enjoy their learning journey and build on the knowledge they are gaining each year. Instead, they feel NCEA is about "gaining credits" or are "being taught how to pass NCEA" instead of building a robust foundation of knowledge and soft skills that will prepare them for post-secondary studies and the real world of employment.
- 24 **Over assessment:** This was a consistent topic of discussion throughout the two day meeting. YAG identified that the constant "credit farming" and over assessment doesn't add value to their educational pathway; instead, it impacts on the wellbeing of the young person and the teacher.
- 25 **Communication:** The YAG would like to see young people having a stronger relationship with teachers to help improve communication and coordination of assessments. They would also like collaborative environments where learners are encouraged to share ideas with others.
- 26 **Pathways and progression:** YAG talked about the achievement levels being so broad that it is difficult to see their progression in a meaningful way. They also want to see more vocational pathways into tertiary education, not just the academic route.

- 27 **Workshops:** They expressed their interest in wanting to be involved in the planning and delivery of the NCEA Review workshops. It is their opinion that young people would be more inclined to participate in the workshops if they were co-designed and co-facilitated with youth.

Topic 3: NCEA Online

- 28 New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) presented the topic of NCEA Online. YAG was asked to comment on having external NCEA assessments online.
- 29 **Benefits:** The YAG identified that moving exams online as an alternative option is beneficial for students, particularly if:
- a. it aligns with how your school is currently delivering the curriculum or if you are a student with learning support needs, and
 - b. there was the possibility of being able to sit exams throughout the year, instead of at the end of the year where they have to recall information they learnt months ago.
- 30 **Implementation:** The YAG liked the phased approach for implementation of NCEA online.
- 31 **Disadvantages:** Some of the students have been involved in the trial of online examinations and experienced software failure and system lockouts. This caused a lot of unnecessary stress. It is important to them that issues like these are addressed.
- 32 **Expectations:** The process to move exams online must be equitable for all students, regardless of socio-economics, physical impairments, locations or accessibility to the technology. They also expect that:
- a. Software functionality will be reliable.
 - b. Solutions are found for subjects that currently are not capable of being online because of software limitations.
 - c. Doing assessments online will not give an unfair advantage over those who choose to do their assessment offline.
 - d. The tertiary sector will also be able to deliver their exams online.

Secretariat comments

- 33 We have noted that you have indicated that you would like to spend at least two hours with the YAG at future meetings. We will make contact with your office to make sure this happens. The meetings will also include time for the YAG to collectively design and agree on advice to provide to you on each topic.
- 34 It became apparent during the meeting that the YAG do not always understand the role and responsibility of the Ministry, sector or schools. For example, the YAG assumed that the Ministry prevented their school from developing localised curriculum. We will design a workshop for the next meeting on this topic.

- 35 Academic achievement or aspirations were not a requirement to be a member of the Youth Advisory Group. During the meeting, all 12 YAG identified that they expected they would attend university after they finish secondary schooling. This does not reflect the pathway of the general population, because a proportion of young people choose to take a vocational pathway or go straight into employment. We will take that into consideration when we have new positions available to ensure a diverse range of viewpoints are taken into account.
- 36 The Secretariat has taken on board the YAG's recommendations, most of which can be accommodated. Further consideration is being given to moving the Online Forum to Facebook instead of Loomio.

Next Steps

- 37 The Secretariat will test the insights of the Youth Advisory Group with the Online Forum. A briefing will be provided to you by the end of March if there are substantially different insights.
- 38 We will socialise the insights of the YAG and results of the Online Forum testing with the Ministry and across the Sector.
- 39 The Secretariat will commence travel and logistical arrangements for the next Youth Advisory Group meeting, including confirming the arrangements for the YAG to meet with you on Friday 11 May 2018, from 10:30am – 12:30pm.

Appendix 1

Approved YAG notes on each topic discussion.

Topic 1 - National conversation

This session was led by Ross Clapcott, an MOE policy director.

YAG were asked to provide ideas and views on what questions could be asked as part of a National Conversation which the Minister is intending to have later in the year to find out what NZ's want and need the education system to do. They were told that a wide variety of sector/stakeholders and interested parties are targeted in terms of helping to shape the system including:

- Students (all ages including tertiary) and school leavers
- Teachers (across all levels) and training institutions
- Parents and whānau
- Community and iwi providers
- Employers etc.

YAG provided feedback in terms of potential 'conversation topics' that were of interest to them (and thus could form the basis upon which national conversations could be held):

- Transitioning from school to meaningful education or employment – providing high quality careers education.
- Engaging Pasifika in education and having programmes targeted for Pasifika student ('leaders of tomorrow').
- Supporting students with impairments to improve literacy and numeracy attainment levels.
- Supporting students with impairments to access the NZ curriculum without being marked down (i.e. due to their impairments interfering).
- Including 'student health and well-being' subjects in the standard school syllabus (e.g. how to manage anxiety or depression).
- Supporting international students to transition into the NZ education system – how can we address the wide fee gap between domestic and international students?
- Building positive relationships between teachers and students to increase student's chances of success.
- Encouraging co-design of the school syllabus (teachers and students working alongside each other).
- Understanding why tikanga Māori and values is important for Māori students and incorporating into the school syllabus.
- Supporting 'unsupported' and 'disadvantaged' youth so they can be included and fully participate in education (and thus reduce student disengagement and exclusions).
- Establishing and promoting student and teacher support systems – how to ask for help.
- Providing additional training for teachers and teacher aids that work with students with impairments via the involvement of external 'support specialists' (such as speech language therapists) in that training – it will enable teachers and teacher aides to be better equipped to undertake their roles.

Discussions then moved to what YAG felt were some of the challenges faced by themselves or other students they knew and what opportunities there were to alleviate those challenges. They said:

Challenges

- Staying motivated and interested in school.
- Keeping the education system 'engaging' and not 'draining' (due to over-assessing).
- Raising the achievement levels of disadvantaged youth.
- Introducing Māori curriculums that are not understood by Māori due to translation from English to te reo Māori (and the use of different dialects and language barriers).
- Reducing the stigma around mental health.
- Creating systems that are fair and enables students to demonstrate their abilities in ways which they are able to perform - adaption where needed of Standards and assessment criteria (e.g. allowing the use of assistive technology to achieve oral assessments and lowering the grade of performance music for candidates with fine motor skill issues)
- Improving poor relationships between education and employment providers.
- Introducing a school curriculum that everyone is able to access (consistency across all schools).
- Moving the focus away from 'gaining credits and getting the numbers' to quality learning and education.
- Making sure all students have adequate and appropriate support.
- Extending/broadening the 'core subjects' related to numeracy and literacy to include other subjects (e.g. drama).
- Changing the perception that 'going to university' is the only pathway after school - what about apprenticeships?
- Increasing resources for kura kaupapa.
- Being treated differently (international vs domestic students).

Opportunities

- Reviewing the 'Supported Learning Standards' so they can be implemented and used for assessments again.
- Co-designing new 'Life Skills Standards' alongside students with impairments.
- Increasing collaboration between agencies and educational facilities – increasing pathways and employment opportunities for students.
- Reviewing course fees for international students who are attending university so that they are more equitable (with those of domestic students).
- Bringing back the enjoyment of learning through teachers who care about students and the subjects they are teaching (so that it's 'not just a job').
- Reviewing the NZQA Fair Assessment policy alongside/in consultation with students with impairments.
- Teaching teachers to shift their focus to what students like and need and providing guidance on things like how students can study effectively or in different environments.
- Providing more support for young people (such as mentoring).
- Including the expertise of 'specialist teachers' in the training of mainstream teachers and teachers' aides who are teaching and caring for students with impairments (such as resource teachers of vision and speech language therapists).
- Broadening our learning about the history of our nation, the past, and current effects it has on students' lives and education.
- Using technology and things that young people are familiar with (such as x-box controllers) to engage.

Other comments recorded throughout the duration of the discussion included:

- Modern learning environments are failing due to overcrowding/high classroom numbers and how students are being taught
- In primary and intermediate most classrooms are set up so that desks are grouped together and students can talk and share ideas easily with the others in their group. Once students move into secondary and further education, desks are set up side by side (in single lines) so there is less opportunity for students to engage with each other and share opinions and debate (see below):
- The 'school house system' where everyone belongs to a 'school house' is good – it builds school culture and bonds
- There needs to be more school events that encourage collaboration
- 'Togetherness' needs to be fostered within schools and students shouldn't be separated out because they are different (e.g. students with impairments)
- The system should move away from emphasising just 'intellectual knowledge' and also look at preparing students for employment (alternative pathways)
- When students are forced to participate in things they don't want to (such as sport or cultural activities) they are more likely to disengage

YAG final message on this topic was that any National conversation targeted at young people, had to be had in places where young people go and where they feel comfortable. Furthermore the conversations should be fronted by faces that connect with the age or grouping being targeted (use our faces) and incorporate multiple forms of engagement (such as face-to-face and social media). Some young people like competitions and these can be draw cards for getting young people to participate/contribute.

Topic 2 - NCEA Review

This session was led by Kate Curtis an MOE senior advisor and a second policy colleague. They were accompanied by Jonathan Gee, a young member of the Minister's Advisory Group's (MAG) NCEA group.

Jonathan provided a brief overview of the role of MAG and then YAG heard from Kate how the MOE is undertaking a review of NCEA to ensure that its full potential as a national and international qualification can be realised. She advised that NCEA was introduced 16 years ago and had not been properly reviewed since then The MAG is developing a discussion paper which will be distributed in April for public consultation. The consultation process will take place between May and July and consist of workshops being held across NZ (up to 50) with multiple stakeholders - such as students, parents, whānau, teachers, community groups, employers and industry professionals etc. Once the consultation process is complete, the MAG will provide a list of recommendations to the Minister on how to proceed.

YAG were invited to draw on their personal experiences of NCEA and provide advice on:

- What is the best way to ensure good engagement with NCEA students
- What aspects of NCEA will be most important to students
- Key challenges and issues facing students as they complete their NCEA

Feedback from YAG was noted as follows:

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Ways to ensure good engagement with NCEA students

- Allow students to be involved in NCEA planning processes – ‘by students for students’.
- Connect what students are learning with what happens in the real world and include life skills in learning.
- Foster good teacher/student relationships.
- Include kinaesthetic work as part of learning – enable/create opportunities for students to put learnings into practise.
- Adopt fair assessment policies that are inclusive and not exclusive (in particular for students with impairments).
- Bring back Supported Learning Standards.
- Allow students the time to genuinely engage and appreciate learning material.
- Combine assessments and reduce the number of different components that make up an assessment.
- Improve communication and coordination of assessments between students and teachers.
- Relate what is being taught to the students, to the students themselves.
- Making it known who the people are setting NCEA standards and having them available (where possible) to answer any questions students may have.
- Establishing support and learning networks.
- Integrating subjects to enable ‘soft skills’/hands-on learning.
- Ensuring ‘first language’ assessments are translated correctly.
- Creating collaborative environments for students which encourage the sharing of ideas.
- Engaging students ‘school by school’.

Important things to students studying for NCEA

- Achieving the credits needed to get NCEA – passing.
- Reducing the number of assessments – students are being ‘over assessed’.
- Students should be taught material properly and not just ‘how to pass’.
- Subjects and things which interest students.
- Linking what is being learnt now (at school) with future learning (at university).
- Promoting fairness, consistency and equality (e.g. assessments and resubmissions).
- Knowing why I have to do certain things to qualify for scholarships.
- Allowing time to build strong understandings of material students are learning (and enjoying it).
- Student pathways.

- Relationships with teachers – if you have good relationships with them you are more likely to succeed.
- Introducing more vocational subjects and learning so that alternative pathways (that do not involve going to university) become acceptable.

Issues which face students studying NCEA

- Forming good relationships and connections with teachers.
- Lack of exposure to other pathways (such as apprenticeships).
- Too much focus on getting credits.
- Being forced to learn things that aren't of interest – no 'real world' application opportunities.
- Continuation of awahi and whakawhanaungatanga in new environments.
- Mental health and feeling of being undervalued.
- School fees being higher for international students compared to those for domestic students.
- Internal assessments not aligning with external assessments.
- Students may not understand what is required due to English to Māori translation not making sense or being of a different dialect '...o rātou reo, tērā pea kāore tātou e mārāma' (voices may not be clear).
- Fair grading – currently there are only 3 labels used to describe a range of achievements (the GCSE scale shows where a student sits and their level of achievement with grades ranging from A to F and achievement levels from 1 to 9).
- Missed opportunities to advance learning due to 'root-learning' being taught (e.g. being told the exact words to use to pass).
- Having enough time to do/fit everything in that we need to.
- Stigma associated to students who don't go to university – only smart people go to university.
- Over-assessment.

Topic 3 – NCEA Online

This session was led by Andrea Gray from NZQA.

YAG heard how NZQA has been working with a variety of education 'stakeholders' to better understand how to deliver external examinations (NCEA) on-line. NZQA believes that if students are doing the learning on-line then it makes sense that they be assessed on-line (i.e. digital external assessments).

YAG were asked to comment on the benefits of digital external assessments. They said:

- It's good to have an alternate option
- It's helpful for students whose handwriting is not good - it makes it easier (and it's easily editable).
- The phased approach to implementing and giving students the choice to opt in is good.
- Assessments are faster to complete for some students with impairments as assessments can be submitted electronically (rather than via 'snail mail').
- Once I complete a topic, I can do the exam straight away.
- It enables us to be able to interact with other digital mediums and apps such as 'Google' for researching.

- We can continue to engage with education without having to necessarily be in the classroom (e.g. if I am sick I don't have to wait for work to be sent home to me, I can access online).

YAG also acknowledged that there are disadvantages to having digital external assessments. They said:

- Bugs and faulty software when trying to do an assessment on-line would waste time cause stress and hinder/negatively impact students' potential achievement.
- Power cuts could cause assessment data to be lost.
- Resources may not be sufficient for students to be able to do assessments electronically (e.g. internet and laptops).
- Students may lose the ability to 'handwrite'.
- Misalignment of secondary education processes (which allows assessments to be done on-line) with tertiary education (which still requires paper form assessments).
- Some assessments may be set too high for some students with impairments (e.g. some students may not be able to draw straight lines).

YAG final messages on this topic were:

- The process and system needs to be easy, straightforward and accessible to all students.
- Software functionality must be good.
- There needs to be good solutions that will allow for different types of responses in assessments (e.g. formulae, graphs, diagrams and drawings).
- Any variations of the same question (of which a student will get one) must be fair so that students don't feel disadvantages due to incomparability (questions should be predictable – there should not be significant shifts).
- Consideration has to be given to solutions that will address the needs of students with impairments (e.g. visually and physically).
- There should be an on-line syllabus so that it is clear and students are only assessed on the syllabus – although there should also be opportunities for students to learn things that interest them which are outside of the syllabus.
- Online assessments need to be evaluated fairly alongside paper based assessments.

Serena allowed YAG time to consider what they'd seen, been told, discussed and learnt over the last two days. YAG were then asked what they thought of the two days and what could be done differently so that future meetings would be better. They said:

- ✓ The two day meeting worked really well given the amount of material and content that needed to be covered – all YAG agreed that future meetings should also be two days, to allow sufficient time to discuss and debate matters on hand and to ensure that sound and well-considered advice was always given (and it made travel worthwhile)
- ✓ Flying into Wellington the night before the meeting (for those YAG that lived outside of Wellington) was a good idea as it meant that the meeting could start first thing in the morning and they were fresh and able to contribute and participate in the meeting for the entire day. If they had flown in the day of the meeting, they would have had to be up early and would have been less likely to engage as enthusiastically in sessions being held in the afternoon due to drowsiness and fatigue.
- ✓ The accommodation was good for most of the group although the restaurant food was too fancy
- ✓ The agenda was well planned out and allowed sufficient time to discuss matters with adequate time for breaks
- ✓ The opportunity to 'do something outside of the meeting (i.e. Te Papa and Parliament)' was really good as they got to hang out with each other - there should be other opportunities in future meetings to do other team building type activities

- ✓ The snack bags were appreciated (and should be continued)
- × The one-page topic briefings included with the agenda need to include more background information so that we know what's
- × happened so far
- × The agenda and topic briefings need to be sent out at least one week in advance of the meeting to allow sufficient time to review
- × and start collating thoughts
- × The entry door in the selected accommodation's 'accessible suite' was too heavy and couldn't be opened by Brodie

It would be nice to be able to get out of the building more - especially when we are doing 9 – 4pm days

Appendix 2 – Characteristics of a good teacher

The Youth Advisory Groups' opinion of the characteristics of a good teacher.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD TEACHER

They interact with me and understand that every student is different.

They work with my parents and know my weaknesses

They are creative and cover course material comprehensively

They take the time to get to know me and build a bond with me

They aren't racist

They ask about me

They have a good relationship with the principal

They know me

They are an effective communicator and have good social skills

They create fun learning environments

They have a sense of humour

They can accept that they may be wrong sometimes

They are excited about what they are teaching

They manage stress well

They recognise and acknowledge that all students are gifted and talented!

They don't just treat me as job!

They design classes around our interests

They are easy to approach and are responsive to my needs

