

Canterbury

District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora o Waitaha

Submission on the National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP)

To: Ministry of Education

Submitter: Canterbury District Health Board

Attn: Kirsty Peel
Community and Public Health
C/- Canterbury District Health Board
PO Box 1475
Christchurch 8140

Details of submitter

1. Canterbury District Health Board is responsible for promoting the reduction of adverse environmental effects on the health of people and communities and to improve, promote and protect their health pursuant to the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000 and the Health Act 1956.

Details of submission

2. The Canterbury District Health Board (Canterbury DHB) contributed to the Education Conversation via a comprehensive submission outlining the importance of education to health outcomes and providing a public health perspective on the future of education. We welcome the opportunity to now comment on the National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP).
3. The Canterbury DHB is pleased to see the importance of equity, inclusivity and connection highlighted in the vision for education and supports the overall objectives for education, particularly the learner-centred approach, barrier-free access and focusing on learning that is relevant to the lives of New Zealanders today and throughout their lives.
4. We support some of the priorities in the NELP as being vitally important. We are concerned, however, that not all the issues that we think should be priorities are included in the NELP and that in some cases the language and descriptions obfuscate the issues or do not fully express our desires for the education system. We have provided examples of this below.

Priority one - make sure every learner feels safe, appreciated and included for who they are, including their identity, language and culture and learning needs.

5. This is a very important priority as a sense of safety and belonging is key to learning and the system needs to be inclusive of all learners.
6. This priority could go further and be more strengths-based. Feeling appreciated is not the same as being recognised as having unique strengths that can be drawn on and utilised by others. We recommend that the tone of this priority be changed to reflect the importance of recognising and building on the strengths of every learner and the value in recognising and encouraging diversity.

7. The last two paragraphs in this section should be moved earlier as they apply to everyone and are very important. This could then be followed by the specific examples relating to learners with disabilities (not disabled learners), diverse genders and sexualities and other cultures.

Priority two – include family and whānau as partners central to the learning and achievement of every learner

8. We support this priority.

Priority three - have high expectations of every learner and eliminate practices that limit access across the curriculum.

9. This priority is not clearly worded. It appears to be covering two priorities- one about delivering a full and rich curriculum to all and another about reducing bias.
10. This is the only priority that appears to link to delivering the two curricula (both Te Whāriki and the NZC), and its sentiment is not expressed in the priority statement, just the detail (as “every learner has equitable opportunities for rich and deep learning across the curriculum”). NZ curriculum documents are world class and the NELP needs to clearly reflect a priority to deliver these to all learners.
11. Paragraph two expresses issues that are important for all learners, not just “early learning” as it reads at present. All learners should be supported to “develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions that support lifelong learning”.
12. The issue of unconscious bias is mentioned in priority one (but only in relation to ethnic communities). This is a significant issue alongside institutional racism / structural bias; this needs to be highlighted as a key priority in relation to having high expectations of every learner, and this needs to be explicit rather than couched in the language of ‘practices that limit access’. The current wording entirely misses the issue of institutional racism in limiting access to the curricula.
13. At present, this priority mentions eliminating bias against boys and encouraging girls to “attempt” science; the language needs to be changed here to reflect higher expectations than only an ‘attempt’. Given the vital skills to be gained from participation in arts and humanities, where boys are generally under-represented, this is another inequity requiring redress.

Priority four – support successful transitions into, within and from places of learning

14. We support this priority.

Priority five – ensure financial and other barriers for learners and their whānau do not prevent equitable access to teaching, learning and participation in the life of the ELS or school

15. We support this priority but note that none of the Government actions refer to addressing physical barriers to learning. We support universal design when building or remodelling school environments.

Priority six – grow their workforce to strengthen teaching and leadership and to contribute to a stronger profession across the system

16. This priority is not clearly worded.

Priority seven – incorporate te reo Māori and Tikanga Māori in the everyday life of the place of learning

17. We support this priority.

Priority eight – ensure they offer learning that equips learners with an understanding of New Zealand’s cultural identities and our history

18. While we support this priority, it should not be the only priority to achieve the objective of learning that is relevant to the lives of New Zealanders today and throughout their lives.

19. This is another area where we look to the curricula, where literacy and numeracy, but also digital literacy, critical and creative thinking, and problem solving are vitally important to develop lifelong learners. Learners and educators also need to develop a growth mind-set (rather than a fixed mind-set).

Priority nine – develop relationships with their local iwi and hapū, and communities in align aspirations and strategic direction setting

20. We support this priority.

Other priorities

21. We wish to highlight several other issues we think should be priorities within the education system. These are:

- a) An education system that supports healthy environments through co-ordinated interventions that modify the physical, social and organisational aspects of the setting to promote the health and wellbeing of learners and teachers.
- b) Prioritising the importance of relationships between teachers and learners to improve learning outcomes and the wellbeing of all. These relationships shape the way learners think and act in school and can improve how well they do at school.
- c) Developing social and emotional literacy, and embedding wellbeing in the school environment. While the existing priorities reflect the need for social and emotional safety, learners also need the tools to build positive mental health and wellbeing, and to develop healthy relationships with others.

Implementation

22. The Canterbury DHB suggests that Boards and school leaders will need resources and support to implement these high-level and aspirational priorities. Canterbury DHB has developed resources like Sparklers, a wellbeing toolkit, that could be used to implement some of the priorities in the NELP.

Person making the submission



Evon Currie
General Manager
Community & Public Health
Canterbury District Health Board

Date: 21/11/2019

Contact details

Kirsty Peel
For and on behalf of
Community and Public Health
C/- Canterbury District Health Board
PO Box 1475
Christchurch 8140

P +64 3 364 1777

F +64 3 379 6488

kirsty.peel@cdhb.health.nz