



Business NZ recommendations to incoming Government: Secondary Education

Business NZ believes there is much to be proud of in New Zealand's schools. International surveys consistently show our top students are among the world's best. The new national curriculum and NCEA are opening up opportunities to better link school education and the world of business. There are however still some areas where improvement is needed including NCEA, teaching in specific subject areas, improved careers guidance provision and better links between schools and business.

NCEA - The strengths of the NCEA system include its ability to recognise talent wherever it exists, open up new learning and career pathways and treat academic and technical learners equally. Changes to NCEA in 2007 have, however, put these objectives under pressure. Under the 'endorsement' system, students who do well in the traditional school subjects (e.g. English, Science, etc) can have their certificates endorsed with an overall 'excellence' or 'merit' mark. Students who take non-academic subjects, such as trade courses, which are assessed against unit standards, cannot. This anomaly sends the wrong signal to young people, and reinforces longstanding prejudices against trade and technical education. It is also in conflict with efforts being made to encourage female students into non-traditional areas of work.

STEM - Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills are the backbone of an innovative and productive economy. New Zealand produces good numbers of scientists and mathematics graduates relative to average OECD rates, but very low levels of graduates with engineering, construction and manufacturing qualifications, and few technicians. Part of ensuring a good supply of technically-minded graduates is having a good grounding at school. This depends on having enough quality teachers and facilities. Young people's access to technology education is being put under pressure by teacher shortages and insufficient investment in classrooms and equipment.

Literacy and numeracy – Inadequate workforce literacy and numeracy are key issues for the New Zealand economy, with too many young people leaving secondary school ill-equipped in these skills. Business NZ supports the Post Primary Teachers' Association's call for stronger literacy and numeracy requirements in NCEA Level 1 and for the inclusion of literacy and numeracy requirements into NCEA Level 2.

Business NZ recommendations:

1. Review NCEA endorsement system
2. Review the technology curriculum for comprehensibility and fitness for purpose
3. Review remuneration for technology teachers (and other groups of teachers in short supply) to ensure pay levels and structures are sufficiently competitive to attract and retain high-performers
4. Review barriers to entry including the requirements for a bachelors degree and diploma of teaching - the loss of income associated with the off-job training requirement is a barrier to skilled tradespeople becoming teachers – and explore options such as paired teaching, where a qualified teacher is paired with a tradesperson, and pathways to registration based on on-the-job apprenticeships
5. Increase investment in STEM-related facilities and equipment
6. Expand innovative programmes such as Beacon Schools and Techlink
7. Introduce stronger literacy and numeracy requirements in NCEA Level 1 and include literacy and numeracy requirements in NCEA Level 2
8. Increase investment in high quality and relevant careers information

For information & dialogue contact Business NZ
Phil O'Reilly Chief Executive
04 4966555 poreilly@businessnz.org.nz
www.businessnz.org.nz