

Submission

By



To the

Ministry of Education

On the

Draft New Zealand Curriculum

30 November 2006

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**SUBMISSION BY BUSINESS NEW ZEALAND ON THE DRAFT NEW
ZEALAND CURRICULUM
30 NOVEMBER 2006**

1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

- 1.1. Business New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft New Zealand Curriculum. Although learning is increasingly a life-long exercise, schools continue to play a pivotal role in preparing individuals to participate fully in society, including the workplace. It is important therefore that schools are given clear guidance about the skills, knowledge, attitudes and abilities that the community expects young people to achieve or obtain.
- 1.2. Business New Zealand considers that the draft New Zealand Curriculum is a very positive document. We welcome in particular the draft Curriculum's emphasis on excellence, the importance placed on literacy and numeracy, and the new focus on learning languages other than English. We also support the move from key skills to key competencies and the inclusion of a Vision statement, outlining the high-level outcomes from school education.
- 1.3. We consider that the document could be further improved through some relatively small changes. More emphasis could be put on enterprise and financial literacy and on the role of business as an important and worthwhile activity and a partner for schools. The link between the high-level Curriculum outcomes (e.g. the vision, principles, values, key competencies) and the achievement objectives, student assessment and school monitoring systems could be made clearer. The achievement objectives could also be given a final check to ensure that they all provide a fair and consistent basis for learning and assessment.
- 1.4. Business New Zealand has chosen not to use the feedback questionnaire attached to the draft New Zealand Curriculum document as the basis for our submission, on the grounds that the questionnaire:
 - appeared to be designed primarily for schools and local community groups, rather than national organisations; and
 - did not provide sufficient scope for the sort of commentary we wanted to make on the draft Curriculum's content.
- 1.5. This submission is divided up into three main sections, broadly mirroring the structure of the draft New Zealand Curriculum:
 - Vision, Principles and Values

- Key Competencies, Designing a School Curriculum, Learning Areas and Achievement Objectives
- Planning for Coherent Pathways.

2. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Business New Zealand **recommends** that:

Vision

- 2.1. “Enterprising” and “entrepreneurial” be retained as key attributes in the Vision and that the differences between the two concepts be fully explained in the final Curriculum.
- 2.2. “Honest and responsible” and “aware of the work environment, their future career and learning options and pathways” be added to the list of key attributes in the Vision.
- 2.3. More clarity be provided in the Curriculum about:
 - The role of the Vision in relation to the Principles and Values; and
 - How students’ progression towards the Vision will be monitored.

Principles

- 2.4. The ‘Connections’ principle be amended to read:

“All students experience a curriculum that makes connections to their *current and future* lives and engages the support of their families and communities, *including businesses.*”
- 2.5. The ‘Coherence’ principle be amended to read:

“All students experience a curriculum that provides a range of coherent transitions and pathways to further learning *and work.*”
- 2.6. More detail be included in the draft Curriculum to explain how implementation of the Principles will be monitored or assessed.

Values

- 2.7. An additional value be added, along the lines of:

“enterprise, which means the readiness to identify, create, initiate, and successfully manage personal, community, business, and work opportunities, including working for themselves.”
- 2.8. More detail be included in the draft Curriculum to explain how students’ acquisition of the Values will be monitored or assessed.

Key Competencies, Designing a School Curriculum, Learning Areas and Achievement Objectives

- 2.9. A clear expression of minimum leaving standards or achievement be included in the final Curriculum.
- 2.10. The key competencies be amended to provide further guidance for schools and parents about what stage of development a student would be expected to reach at each curriculum level or broad age group (e.g. at year 5, year 9, and year 13).
- 2.11. Clear signals be sent in the Curriculum that:
 - Enterprise and financial literacy are key areas of skills, knowledge and competency for all students; and
 - Schools should factor enterprise and financial literacy elements into their learning programmes at an early stage.
- 2.12. These signals be in the form of either:
 - a ninth learning area, focused on enterprise, financial literacy and innovation; or
 - enterprise-related elements included in achievement objectives throughout all of the current eight learning areas.
- 2.13. The achievement objectives under the four Social Science strands (Identity, Culture and Organisation; Place and Environment; Continuity and Change; and The Economic World) and the 'Social Enquiry' headings be amended to give schools and parents a better sense of the expected progression in students' skill, understanding, complexity and cognitive ability that would occur across the eight levels.
- 2.14. Experiential learning be explicitly acknowledged in the Curriculum as a valuable pedagogical approach, particularly (but not solely) in the Technology learning area and the economics/Economic World achievement objectives of the Social Sciences learning area.
- 2.15. The achievement objectives be reviewed to ensure that all provide a fair and consistent basis for teaching, learning and assessment and/or explanatory material be developed that interprets the achievement objectives and outlines key expectations about what teaching programmes should cover.
- 2.16. Additional information be provided for schools and parents, outlining where and how individual subjects and activities such as career advice

fit into the Curriculum, so as to avoid any misunderstanding about the impact of the Curriculum's introduction.

Planning for Coherent Pathways

- 2.17. Language be included under the 'Learning in Years 5-10' heading clarifying that students in this age group – and particularly those at risk of not making a successful transition from school – should also be given career and life planning opportunities.

3. VISION, PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

Vision

- 3.1. Business New Zealand welcomes the explicit and upfront statement of the attributes that students should gain through their schooling that is encapsulated in the Curriculum's Vision. The Vision helpfully focuses the minds of readers on the sorts of outcomes that the community wants from school education, and reinforces the message that school education is not just about conveying skills and knowledge, but is also about transmitting values and creating responsible and engaged citizens.
- 3.2. The sorts of skills, values and attributes that business looks for in school students are not significantly different from those that the rest of the community seeks. Businesses want students who can read, write, count and calculate; who have good inter-personal skills; are able and willing to keep learning over their lives; and are trustworthy and hard working. We are therefore broadly supportive of the main attributes outlined in the draft Curriculum's Vision.
- 3.3. It is particularly pleasing from our perspective to see 'enterprising' and 'entrepreneurial' included as desirable attributes for young New Zealanders. New Zealanders are already a very enterprising and entrepreneurial people,¹ and it is appropriate that the Curriculum should reflect and support these national traits. Enterprise and entrepreneurship are also central to New Zealand's ability to enjoy high standards of living in the future.
- 3.4. We are conscious that the two terms convey similar concepts, and that this may raise questions in some parts of the community. For our part, we have interpreted 'enterprising' to mean a willingness and ability to identify, create, initiate, and successfully manage opportunities and challenges. We have read 'entrepreneurial' as focusing more on business-related attributes, and meaning having the knowledge and ability to establish a new entity or to offer a new or existing product or service into a new or existing market, whether for a profit or not-for-profit outcome. We would be grateful for clarification that our understanding of the two definitions is correct. We consider that the two concepts are distinct and important, and that both should be retained in the Vision.

Recommendation: that “enterprising” and “entrepreneurial” be retained as key attributes in the Vision and that the differences between the two concepts be fully explained in the final curriculum.

¹ As evidenced by such studies as the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor

- 3.5. We would recommend that two amendments be made to the Vision. The first is to add 'honest and responsible' to the list of attributes, as we do not think these are entirely captured by the current 'Motivated and reliable' heading.² The second would be to add "aware of the work environment, their future career and learning options and pathways." This would reflect goals made in similar national statements overseas (e.g. the MCEETYA Adelaide Direction on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century) and in the previous New Zealand Curriculum Framework³, and would reinforce the messages elsewhere in the Curriculum and wider education policy about the importance of ensuring smooth transitions from school.

Recommendation: 'Honest and responsible' and 'aware of the work environment, their future career and learning options and pathways' be added to the list of key student attributes in the Vision.

- 3.6. It is not clear to us from the current draft of the Curriculum how the Vision will be used, other than the introductory comment that the "vision, principles and values collectively guide and underpin curriculum decision-making." Further detail is provided about how the second two components of this trinity should be used – i.e. the Principles are designed to 'guide each school as it designs and implements its own curriculum' and students should be 'encouraged' to respect the Values. In comparison, there was no indication in the draft Curriculum how schools or parents should treat the Vision relative to the Values and Principles, or whether attention will be given to the outcomes expressed in the Vision in (for example) student assessments or ERO reviews.⁴
- 3.7. We would welcome more clarity in the Curriculum about how the Vision will be given effect. From our point of view, the Vision provides a good summary of the main outcomes of school education and could usefully serve as an overarching framework for the development of learning programmes, student assessment and school monitoring. It would be

² The 1993 New Zealand Curriculum Framework, for example, distinguished between 'honesty' and 'reliability.' (http://www.tki.org.nz/r/governance/nzcf/attitudes_e.php)

³ The 1993 New Zealand Curriculum Framework's Essential Skills stated that students will "make career choices on the basis of realistic information and self-appraisal." (http://www.tki.org.nz/r/governance/nzcf/ess_skills_e.php#work)

⁴ We note in this context the Education Review Office's comment in its 2001 review of the New Zealand Curriculum Framework that the "aspects of the curriculum that are most focused on the future are the essential skills and the attitudes and values. However, these aspects are not yet well-integrated into curriculum delivery in schools." Education Review Office, *The New Zealand Curriculum: An ERO Perspective*, April 2001 (Business New Zealand emphasis.) (<http://www.ero.govt.nz/ero/publishing.nsf/295d47d51a1b70b9ca25694e00210f28/bf6db3217375614dcc25704a0016a73a?OpenDocument#The%20New%20Zealand%20curriculum%20as%20a%20w>)

unfortunate if schools concentrated on the individual achievement objectives at the expense of the overall Vision.

Recommendation: that more clarity be provided in the Curriculum about the role of the Vision in relation to the Principles and Values, and how students' progression towards the Vision will be monitored.

Principles

3.8. We are supportive of the six principles, especially "Excellence", "Learning to learn", "Connections" and "Coherence". We recommend that "Connections" and "Coherence" be amended slightly, to emphasise the importance of links to careers and the world of work. Such amendments would recognise the community's broader interest in preparing school children well for adult life, and the important role that business can play as educational resources and partners. Amendments to this end would also reinforce other streams of Government policy work aimed at improving transitions out of school (esp. Gateway, STAR, careers advice) and would support the goals outlined in the Vision of having 'enterprising' and 'entrepreneurial' young people.

Recommendation: that the 'Connections' principle be amended to read:

"All students experience a curriculum that makes connections to their current and future lives and engages the support of their families and communities, including businesses."

Recommendation: that the 'Coherence' principle be amended to read:

"All students experience a curriculum that provides a range of coherent transitions and pathways to further learning and work."

3.9. As with the Vision, we would be interested in seeing more detail in the Curriculum about how schools' implementation of the Principles will be monitored or assessed.

Recommendation: that more detail be included to explain how implementation of the Principles will be monitored or assessed.

Values

3.10. As noted above, we welcome attention being paid to the sorts of values that school education should transmit. We are comfortable with the eight values proposed in the draft Curriculum, and particularly support the inclusion of "excellence", "innovation, enquiry and curiosity", "respect" and "integrity."

- 3.11. Given the emphasis in the Vision on school education supporting the creation of “enterprising”, “motivated”, “resilient” and “entrepreneurial” citizens, we believe that an additional value should be added reflecting the importance of valuing enterprise and initiative.

Recommendation: that an additional value be added, along the lines of:

“enterprise, which means the readiness to identify, create, initiate, and successfully manage personal, community, business, and work opportunities, including working for themselves.”

- 3.12. As with the Vision and Principles, we would be interested in seeing more detail in the Curriculum about how acquisition of the Values will be monitored or assessed.

Recommendation: that more detail be included in the draft Curriculum to explain how students’ acquisition of the Values will be monitored or assessed.

4. KEY COMPETENCIES, DESIGNING A SCHOOL CURRICULUM, LEARNING AREAS AND ACHIEVEMENT OBJECTIVES

- 4.1. Business New Zealand considers that the five main competencies and eight learning areas broadly reflect the areas of knowledge and abilities that school students should obtain. We particularly welcome the new and clear focus placed on students learning languages other than English. A greater uptake by New Zealand students of foreign languages would create new personal and career opportunities for young New Zealanders and could assist in enhancing New Zealand’s export capability.
- 4.2. While we agree absolutely that it is important to encourage school students to achieve to the highest levels, employers are also strongly of the view that minimum standards – especially for literacy and numeracy – should be established.⁵ Such standards can, amongst other things, serve to focus resources and attention on ‘at risk’ students. It is not clear from the current schema of achievement objectives and levels what would constitute the minimum level of achievement that all school children should reach before leaving school. This is especially important, given the proportion of students who leave school at 16 or with no qualifications.

Recommendation: that a clear expression of minimum standards or achievement be included in the final Curriculum.

⁵ 92.4% of employers in the Business NZ 2005 Election Survey agreed that schools should be required to ensure all school-leavers have achieved basic literacy and numeracy standards.

- 4.3. We agree that “competencies continue to develop over time” and that, for example, a 15 year old ‘Managing Self’ would normally display a higher level of responsibility, standards and resilience than a 7 year old. We also are pleased to see that schools will be expected to assess and provide feedback on students’ development of the key competencies (p.29). Yet the key competencies as they are currently drafted on page 11 appear to be set at adult or senior secondary school levels. It may be helpful to provide some further guidance for schools and parents about what stage of key competency development a student would be expected to reach at each curriculum level or broad age group (e.g. at year 5, year 9, and year 13).

Recommendation: that the key competencies be amended to provide further guidance for schools and parents about what stage of development a student would be expected to reach at each curriculum level or broad age group (e.g. at year 5, year 9, and year 13).

- 4.4. We welcome the focus in the ‘Designing a School Curriculum’ section on developing the knowledge, skills and attitude students need to address “real-life issues...in real-life contexts.” We also agree that ‘Sustainability’, ‘Citizenship’, ‘Enterprise’, ‘Globalisation’ and ‘Critical Literacies’ are important themes that schools should explore.
- 4.5. Rather than making enterprise and financial literacy optional themes around which schools could develop programmes, we consider that these themes should be embedded more centrally in the learning areas and/or achievement objectives. In our view, this would more closely link the learning areas and achievement objectives to the Vision, Values and Principles.
- 4.6. For example, the work undertaken by the Enterprise New Zealand Trust to raise levels of financial literacy amongst young people would seem to us to be an essential contributor to the Curriculum key competency of ‘Managing Self’.⁶ NZQA is currently facilitating the development of Personal Financial Management unit standards, which will support school teaching programmes. Similarly, the sorts of programmes led by the Enterprise New Zealand Trust and supported through the ‘Education for Enterprise’ projects have an important role to play in promoting ‘participating and contributing’ and also in building the sorts of ‘entrepreneurial’, ‘enterprising’ young people envisaged in the Vision.

⁶ This was recognised in the 1993 New Zealand Curriculum Framework, which stated that students should “develop a range of practical life skills, such as parenting, budgeting, consumer, transport, and household maintenance skills” as one of the essential Self-Management and Competitive Skills

Recommendation: that clear signals be sent in the Curriculum that:

- **Enterprise education and financial literacy are key areas of skill and knowledge for all students; and**
- **Schools should factor enterprise education and financial literacy elements into their learning programmes at an early stage.**

4.7. We acknowledge that there are a number of ways in which this recommendation could be achieved. One option would be to establish a ninth learning area, focusing on enterprise, financial literacy and innovation. This would provide a clear indication to schools and parents about the importance of these skills, competencies and knowledge areas. Another would be to include enterprise-related elements in achievement objectives throughout all current learning areas. This would reflect the fact that enterprise can be manifested in a number of contexts and subjects (e.g. as a mindset). Including enterprise-related elements in all the learning areas would also require less work, as in many cases it would involve only minor changes to existing achievement objectives.

4.8. Business New Zealand would be comfortable with either approach.

Recommendation: that either a ninth learning area be established, focusing on enterprise, financial literacy innovation or enterprise-related elements be embedded in achievement objectives throughout all of the current learning areas.

4.9. It could also be helpful to add appropriate language to the five key competencies along the lines that students who:

- manage themselves have “the ability to make informed judgements and effective decisions about the use and management of money”; and
- participate and contribute “understand the role that business, enterprise and innovation play in creating individual and national prosperity.”

4.10. We noted that achievement objectives listed under each of the four Social Science strands (Identity, Culture and Organisation; Place and Environment; Continuity and Change; and The Economic World) and the ‘Social Enquiry’ heading were identical across all eight levels. This contrasted with the Science learning area, which included progressively more complex competencies (Understanding about Science; Investigating in Science; Communicating in Science; and

Participating and Contributing) over the eight levels. It could be helpful to schools, teachers and parents if a clearer sense were given of the expected progression in skill, understanding, complexity and cognitive ability that should occur across the eight levels in these Social Science strands.

Recommendation: that the achievement objectives for the four Social Science strands and Social Enquiry heading be amended to give schools, teachers and parents a better sense of the expected progression in skill, understanding, complexity and cognitive ability that would occur across the eight Social Science levels.

- 4.11. Given the statement on page 26 about the importance of developing the knowledge, skills and attitude needed to address “real-life issues...in real-life contexts” and the focus on page 25 on ‘enhancing the relevance of new learning’, we also recommend that the economics/Economic World achievement objectives in the Social Sciences learning area explicitly encourage experiential learning (as occurs through such programmes as the Young Enterprise Scheme). This would allow students to apply economic knowledge and skills to real business scenarios, and support the broader Vision goal of enterprise and entrepreneurship. For example, a Level 7 or 8 achievement objective could be added to state that students should “devise, apply and evaluate strategies to realise economic value from consumption, production and/or distribution.”
- 4.12. There would also seem to be potential to recognise more explicitly the place of experiential learning as a valid and valuable pedagogical approach in other parts of the Curriculum, such as the Technology learning area (where creation and ‘learning by doing’ are essential components of the learning process). This would allow the Curriculum to recognise better the different learning styles and requirements of young people.

Recommendation: That experiential learning be explicitly acknowledged in the Curriculum as a valuable pedagogical approach, particularly (but not solely) in the Technology learning area and the economics/Economic World achievement objectives of the Social Sciences learning area.

- 4.13. There are a few changes to individual achievement objectives about which we would appreciate some further information. Why, for example, has the Level 8 ‘Regular Physical Activity’ objective in the Health and Physical Education learning area changed from “plan, implement and evaluate personal exercise programmes to enhance their well-being” in the 1999 subject Statement to “critically examine commercial products and programmes that promote physical activity

and relate this to personal participation in programmes intended to meet current well-being needs” in the current draft Curriculum?

- 4.14. We acknowledge that concerns were expressed through the Curriculum Stocktake process about the workload pressures created by the large number of achievement objectives in the previous Curriculum Statements. The approach taken in the new draft Curriculum to slim down and rationalise the number of objectives is therefore very sensible. But there are a number of achievement objectives in the new draft Curriculum where we feel some more detail might be needed, if the objectives are to effectively guide teachers and provide a fair and consistent basis for learning and assessment.⁷ For example, what would it look like to “make connections with known language(s)”? Which and how many “features, conventions and patterns of the target language” should a student “explain” if he or she is to achieve the Level 5-6 Learning Language objective?

Recommendation:

- ***that the achievement objectives be reviewed to ensure that all provide a fair and consistent basis for teaching, learning and assessment; and/or***
- ***explanatory material be developed that interprets the achievement objectives and outlines key expectations about what teaching programmes should cover.***

- 4.15. While we support the goal of streamlining the New Zealand Curriculum, we have also been approached by a number of education professionals who expressed disappointment that their subjects (e.g. accounting) or roles (e.g. careers advice) have been “dropped” from the Curriculum. In many cases, these professionals have reached this conclusion because their particular subject or role is not specifically mentioned in the draft.

- 4.16. It might be helpful to provide some additional information for schools and parents, outlining where and how subjects and activities such as career advice fit into the Curriculum.

Recommendation: *that, in the interests of avoiding misunderstanding about the implications of the Curriculum, additional information be*

⁷ We note in this context the comment from the Education Review Office on the previous Curriculum Statements that “Achievement objectives are often too broadly stated to indicate what can reasonably be expected of students.” Education Review Office, *The New Zealand Curriculum: An ERO Perspective*, April 2001 (<http://www.ero.govt.nz/ero/publishing.nsf/295d47d51a1b70b9ca25694e00210f28/bf6db3217375614dcc25704a0016a73a?OpenDocument#Question%202%3A>)

provided, outlining where and how individual subjects and activities such as career advice fit into the Curriculum.

5. PLANNING FOR COHERENT PATHWAYS

5.1. We welcome the clear focus in the draft Curriculum on the need to ensure that students have a range of learning and employment options open to them. As the labour market becomes more complex and dynamic, and careers are increasingly seen as a process rather than a structure, high-quality career information and guidance and opportunities for students to gain 'real' experience through work placements and training courses become increasingly important. The current draft of the Curriculum appears to suggest, however, that dedicated careers guidance and assistance should only really begin in Years 11-13. This is somewhat at odds with National Administration Guideline 1 (vi),⁸ and with the finding in the recent 'Innovative Pathways from School' final report that:

“One way of giving students the “big picture” is to increase the focus on career and life planning in the junior secondary school (Boyd et al., 2001). Teaching life/career planning models earlier, and offering the associated careers and transition support and “real” experience of options, could counteract some of the dissatisfaction expressed about subjects perceived to be irrelevant, and support students to make better-informed subject choices. These activities could also give teachers information about the interests of their class that could be incorporated into their programmes, thereby increasing their relevance.”⁹

Recommendation: that language be included under the ‘Learning in years 5-10’ heading stating that students in this age group – and particularly those at risk of not making a successful transition from school – should also be given career and life planning opportunities.

⁸ “Each Board, through the principal and staff, is required to...provide appropriate career education and guidance for all students in year 7 and above, with a particular emphasis on specific career guidance for those students who have been identified by the school as being at risk of leaving school unprepared for the transition to the workplace or further education/training.” (<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid=8187&data=1>)

⁹ Sally Boyd, Sue McDowall, Hilary Ferral, *Innovative Pathways from School: Taking the First Step – Final Report* (Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2006), p.143

APPENDIX 1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON BUSINESS NEW ZEALAND

Encompassing four regional business organisations (Employers' and Manufacturers' Association (Northern), Employers' and Manufacturers' Association (Central), Canterbury Employers' Chamber of Commerce, and the Otago-Southland Employers' Association), Business New Zealand is New Zealand's largest business advocacy body.

Together with its 63 member Affiliated Industries Group (AIG) which comprises most of New Zealand's national industry associations, Business New Zealand is able to tap into the views of over 76,000 employers and businesses, ranging from the smallest to the largest and reflecting the make-up of the New Zealand economy.

In addition to advocacy on behalf of enterprise, Business New Zealand contributes to Governmental and tripartite working parties and international bodies including the ILO, the International Organisation of Employers and the Business and Industry Advisory Council to the OECD.

Business New Zealand's key goal is the implementation of policies that would see New Zealand retain a first world national income and regain a place in the top ten of the OECD (a high comparative OECD growth ranking is the most robust indicator of a country's ability to deliver quality health, education, superannuation and other social services). An increase in GDP of at least 4% per capita per year is required to achieve this goal in the medium term.

The health of the economy also determines the ability of a nation to deliver on the social and environmental outcomes desired by all. First class social services and a clean and healthy environment are possible only in prosperous, first world economies.