

Ensuring Success for Every Child

**Labour's policy for
Schools
2008**

Introduction

Labour has always believed in the power of education to transform lives. The enlightened values of the very first Labour government, that every person, rich or poor, has the right to an education that enables them to fulfil their potential and that it is the role of the government to ensure sufficient focus and investment to make this possible, still drive our education policies today. Universal access to free, quality, public education is a fundamental Labour value.

The most important resources we can provide to schools are highly trained, effective teachers. Labour has prioritised improving teacher pay and professional development, upgrading school buildings, updating school assessment and curricula and other learning tools. The success of New Zealand's public education system is reflected in the achievements of our students. Our schools are amongst the best in the world.

The challenge for our compulsory school system now is to build on these successes so that students at all levels are provided with modern, relevant and personalised learning that provides the tools they will need to succeed in the 21st century.

A Quality Teaching Profession

International studies show what parents already know – that quality teachers in the classroom are our most important education resource. Inspiring young minds to learn, and tailoring teaching to the individual needs of each pupil, are the cornerstones of the New Zealand education system. The days of learning by rote are long gone. Today, teachers bring classrooms to life through a new school curriculum that links learning to everyday concepts.

The key to further improvement in educational attainment is to increase the number of teachers in the classroom and make sure those teachers employ the modern teaching methods research tells us have the greatest impact. Funding now allows schools to employ around 6,000 additional teachers, reducing class sizes. Teachers' pay has risen nearly 40 per cent over the last decade and better opportunities for professional development are helping attract bright graduates to a career in teaching while also helping retain experienced teachers.

Ten years ago... teachers were demoralised by industrial strife and the battle over bulk funding.

Today... funding allows for the more than 6,000 additional teachers in classrooms, and teachers are paid fairly for the vital work they do in preparing our young people to succeed in the 21st century.

Ten years from now... all schools will be sufficiently staffed by excellent teachers to deliver a personalised learning plan to students that develops their interests and aptitude.

Labour can be trusted to address the challenges ahead for the teaching profession.

A large number of teachers will begin to retire shortly. In order to ensure schools are able to employ suitably qualified teaching staff, we need to ensure entry standards into teacher training are robust and we need to provide better support in schools for beginning teachers.

Labour will ensure schools are properly supported to take on beginning teachers.

Ensuring teacher pay and conditions remain competitive is an important way to not only encourage graduates to begin a teaching career but to also retain experienced staff in the profession. The New Zealand Teachers Council also has an important leadership role in setting professional standards for teachers.

Labour will support the New Zealand Teachers Council to take a leadership role in setting professional standards for teachers.

The full implementation of the New Zealand Curriculum in 2010, and the implementation of Te Marautanga (the curriculum for Maori medium education) in 2011, is an exciting development in our schools. Investment in curriculum resources will be vital for the success of this major education initiative, as will ensuring that unit standards assessed under the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) fit with the new curricula and ongoing professional development.

Labour will support teachers, schools and kura kaupapa Maori to successfully introduce the New Zealand curriculum and Te Marautanga.

As learning becomes increasingly personalised to the individual needs of each student, teachers will need to more regularly draw on professional support and the latest research on what motivates children to learn. Now that programmes such as Te Kotahitanga, which help teachers to better respond to the needs of Maori students, and the Kiwi Leadership for Principals framework have demonstrated their effectiveness, our challenge is to support more teachers to use these programmes to refresh their teaching practice.

Labour will expand professional development and paid sabbatical opportunities for teachers.

Personalising learning fits well with our strategies to lift the overall educational achievement of Maori and Pasifika students.

This year we launched Ka Hikitia-Managing for Success, a strategy that aims to improve teacher, student relationships, as well as enhance the participation and achievement rates of rangatahi at school.

Labour will continue to ensure the successful implementation of Ka Hikitia (the Māori education strategy), and support professional development programmes such as Te Kotahitanga and other educational programmes that support a more personalised, community-orientated approach to the education of our tamariki.

We also need to work with Pacific families and communities as part of our plan to raise overall educational achievement. We will also encourage more Pacific peoples into teaching, while focusing on improving the capability of non-Pacific teachers to work effectively with Pacific students in the classroom.

Labour will encourage greater Pacific participation, retention and achievement at all levels of the education system.

Personalising learning also means actively supporting children and young people who do not fit within the stereotypical 'norm'. Gifted and talented students and pupils with dyslexia, for example, need the support of teachers trained to recognise and teach to their strengths, backed by quality professional development with curriculum support based on research about what works.

At present funding for this is provided on an application basis and for a fixed period of time. We intend to move the existing funding for organisations that deliver classroom and teacher development programmes for groups like gifted and talented students and pupils with dyslexia onto a more sustainable basis. This will help to spread best practice and develop centres of expertise for schools to draw on.

Labour will develop a more sustainable funding approach for organisations working to assist teachers to effectively support pupils with specific learning needs.

To enable principals to focus more on their role as educational leaders within schools, there is a need for additional support for administrative tasks.

Labour will ensure schools can get help with administration tasks so that principals can focus more on students and on providing educational leadership in schools.

Teaching has always been a valued profession worldwide. New Zealand-trained teachers are prize recruits in many parts of the English-speaking world, just as our schools attract staff trained in other countries. Kiwi-trained teachers who have worked overseas bring valuable educational experience when they return home. Better recognition of overseas experience and opportunities to keep up-to-date with developments in teaching and learning practice in New Zealand will help to attract more quality Kiwi teachers back home.

Our curriculum supports individualised, student-focused teaching practices. In some cases, schools may not be employing foreign-trained teachers now living in New

Zealand because of concerns they have would difficulty teaching in this country. Many of them, however, could take up positions in our schools after some professional development.

Labour will develop a bonded bridging development programme to assist foreign-trained teachers to gain registration and employment in New Zealand.

Schools Plus

New Zealand's school system continues to perform at the highest level. International studies such as the Programme for International Student Assessment show our students are performing near the top of OECD countries, ahead of countries such as Australia, Canada and the United States. For example, in the 2006 science literacy results, only students from Finland and Hong Kong were performing at a higher level than New Zealand students.

Student achievement has been steadily improving. In 2007, eight out of ten school leavers achieved at least NCEA Level 1 (a 22 per cent increase from 2002 when NCEA was introduced), and two-thirds of school leavers achieved at least NCEA Level 2 (a 36 per cent increase from 2002).

Our new school curriculum will enable teachers to enliven their teaching practice, drawing on real-world examples to better engage students to learn about the values and core skills needed to be successful in the 21st century. At the same time, new study options such as Gateway and Modern Apprenticeships are providing more choices for young people to continue learning while gaining valuable workplace experience that will lay the foundation for a career in the trades.

We know that young people who stay in school, complete their qualifications, and move into further education and training have the best chance of accessing the full range of opportunities life has to offer. They are more likely to be able to care for themselves and their families, and achieve future economic independence and security.

Labour will implement *Schools Plus*, our initiative to significantly reform our secondary school system by offering all young New Zealanders a stronger educational foundation.

To ensure all young people are engaged and supported to achieve their potential through education, students and their families will develop a personalised learning plan to guide their learning.

Labour will require a personalised education plan to be developed for every high school student to guide their learning.

To support a personalised approach to learning, more teachers and support staff and improved careers guidance services will be needed in schools. Closer links will need to be built with local businesses, training providers and social agencies.

Labour will provide more secondary teachers and other staff to improve careers guidance and increase the support available for young people in school and out in the community to remain engaged in learning.

Innovative programmes like Youth Apprenticeships, already available in twenty schools, are the key to engaging young people who currently leave school too early. Enabling more students to experience tertiary-level courses while still at school will also broaden the range of study options available to them.

Labour will make Youth Apprenticeships available to all secondary schools and increase the range of other education and training pathways available to students.

Ensuring that out-of-school education providers, such as the alternative education network, prioritise students' learning and achievement will keep the focus on learning irrespective of the setting in which it takes place.

Labour will strengthen alternative education and other out-of-school learning options to ensure young people are supported to improve their educational achievement.

Making the changes needed to successfully implement *Schools Plus* will take time and a careful focus on building support within the secondary schooling system. Matching investments will be needed as new course options, staff and closer links outside of school are phased in. We anticipate at least \$170 million per year in additional investment will be required to fully implement *Schools Plus*.

But we must also set goals and timelines. While the school leaving age will stay at sixteen, we have begun the process of removing the early leaving exemption for the under 16s. By 2010 all schools will be using the new New Zealand Curriculum, enabling them to provide relevant, innovative programmes which meet their students' needs.

Labour will introduce an education and training leaving age of 17 years in 2011 and 18 years in 2014.

Phasing in the education and training leaving age in this way will give schools time to develop the variety of programmes and options needed to engage the whole range of young people.

School Funding

Schools want to be able to deliver the very best education they can. Labour has substantially increased school operational funding over the last decade, even after accounting for inflation. Targeted funding has also been made available for schools electing to undertake school improvement programmes and other projects such as specialised professional development (for example, making the best use of computers in the classroom).

The environment in which learning takes place is also crucial. Funding for school property has been a major focus. Twenty-four new schools, 22 new Kura Kaupapa Maori schools, and over 1,500 new classrooms have been built, and large capital works projects have been undertaken at many existing schools.

But the focus on improving educational outcomes means schools will require new resources. In addition to the significant funding that Labour will provide to successfully implement *Schools Plus* in secondary schools, we know there are other pressing issues that it is important for the government to prioritise. Labour is committed to helping schools meet the demands that parents and the community place on them to deliver a quality education to every child. We know school funding is an investment for the benefit of our children and for the long term benefit of New Zealand's society and economy.

Labour will continue to increase operational grants for all state and state-integrated schools.

We have recently reviewed the funding allocated to schools. Work with schools has identified the cost of buying, upgrading and maintaining information and communications technology as a particular pressure point for schools. Computer-aided learning has significant potential to revolutionise education and Labour wants to see computer and interactive learning technology in every classroom.

Labour will enable schools to use their five-year property agreements to invest in computer and interactive learning technology.

Under current staffing rules a small number of rural schools are only entitled to a single teacher. Currently additional 0.3 FTE staffing assistance is provided to these schools to assist with the administrative and supervisory roles. Labour recognises there are educational benefits for teachers not to be working without peer support and will therefore adjust the staffing rules to ensure that schools have a minimum of two teaching staff.

Labour will adjust the staffing rules to ensure that all schools have a minimum of two teaching staff.

The small army of staff that work alongside teachers in the classroom are essential in making our schools function effectively: people such as school secretaries, teacher

aides, cleaners, librarians and caretakers. Yet many are paid the minimum wage, making it difficult for schools to recruit and retain these staff as they seek higher pay in other sectors. In the health sector, Labour has already shown it is prepared to take a lead in addressing low pay where the government is the major employer. It is time to do this for school support staff as well.

Labour will address low pay issues for the non-teaching workforce in schools.

Special Education

Early childhood education services and schools work to support children and young people with special education needs. Around 10 per cent of school-aged children face barriers to full participation in education.

Funding to support these students has increased over the last decade. The range of targeted support for particular special education needs has been expanded and the number of young people able to be assisted has been increased. Support for specific groups of students has also been introduced, for example for those on the autistic spectrum. Staffing resources have been improved for students who are vision impaired and blind. Special Education Services was merged with the Ministry of Education to reduce fragmentation of services and better support students with special needs to achieve their potential, irrespective of the educational setting in which they enrolled.

Focus has also shifted to early intervention, with hearing screening for newborns and B4 School Checks for children aged over 4 years old to help identify and address any impairment to learning as early as possible.

The goal of *Special Education 2000* was to develop a world class inclusive education system for New Zealand. Nearly a decade on, we have made significant progress but there is still more to do. In particular, with more children with special needs enrolling at their local school, the current system is struggling to adequately support all those who need assistance. Labour will address this with a series of connected changes.

We believe improvements can be delivered by investing more in specific-purpose funds which support students with moderate needs who at present are not deemed eligible for Ongoing and Renewable Resourcing Schemes (ORRS) support but whose needs are not being adequately addressed by supplementary assistance. In addition, our investment of increased funding to enable early intervention in a child's life will significantly improve educational outcomes.

A special education grant is also paid to all schools as part of the annual operations grant. This recognises that many students with moderate needs benefit from learning assistance and enables schools to invest in services they believe will impact positively on learning. Parents therefore have the right to expect all schools to provide a core

special education service, supplemented by centrally-funded and targeted support for those children with moderate to high special needs.

Schools do however face difficulties supporting students with moderate special needs because of issues such as teacher expertise and experience, available funding and the availability of specialist expertise. Some schools successfully pool their resources enabling them to deliver a more comprehensive package of support.

Just as schools working together is one of the principles of our *Schools Plus* initiative, Labour believes greater clustering of schools could significantly improve special education services and help spread effective teaching practice more widely. Funding and access to specialist expertise would then be available for all schools in the cluster to improve support services provided to students.

Labour will strengthen special education support by investing resources in special education funds for children with moderate to high needs, working with schools to ensure effective and accountable use of the special education grant, and supporting the development of special education clusters to improve services to students with moderate needs.

Teacher aides are an important part of the overall team assisting students with special needs. They are often paid the minimum wage despite their important work contributing to students' learning success. Labour has already shown it is prepared to take a lead in addressing low pay in other sectors where the government is the major employer. It is time to fairly reward teacher aides as well. As part of its commitment to address low pay issues for the non-teaching workforce, Labour will address low pay issues for the teaching support workforce in schools.

Safe Learning Environments

Young people need to feel safe and secure at school if they are to achieve their potential. Schools are receiving more support to manage difficult students and to promote safe schools. As well, the Education Review Office now pays closer attention to the strategies schools employ to combat bullying and harassment.

Labour intends to embed these developments in schools for the benefit of students, teachers and the wider community. Schools serve more diverse students these days and Labour accepts that schools need better guidance on how to keep all students safe.

Labour will provide guidelines, resources and best-practice examples for schools on combating bullying.

Schools are reporting that disruptive behaviour in the classroom and in the playground is on the rise. We have already provided schools with support to deal with this through programmes like Student Engagement Initiative, which helps schools to

address truancy rates, suspensions, exclusions, and early leaving exemptions, and the 'Interim Response Fund', which gives principals access to emergency funding to manage critical behaviour cases. We intend to build on this.

Labour will provide schools with additional resources to effectively manage disruptive behaviour.

Students at many schools have set up peer support groups as a way of promoting respect and offering support.

Labour will support the development of school-based peer support groups.