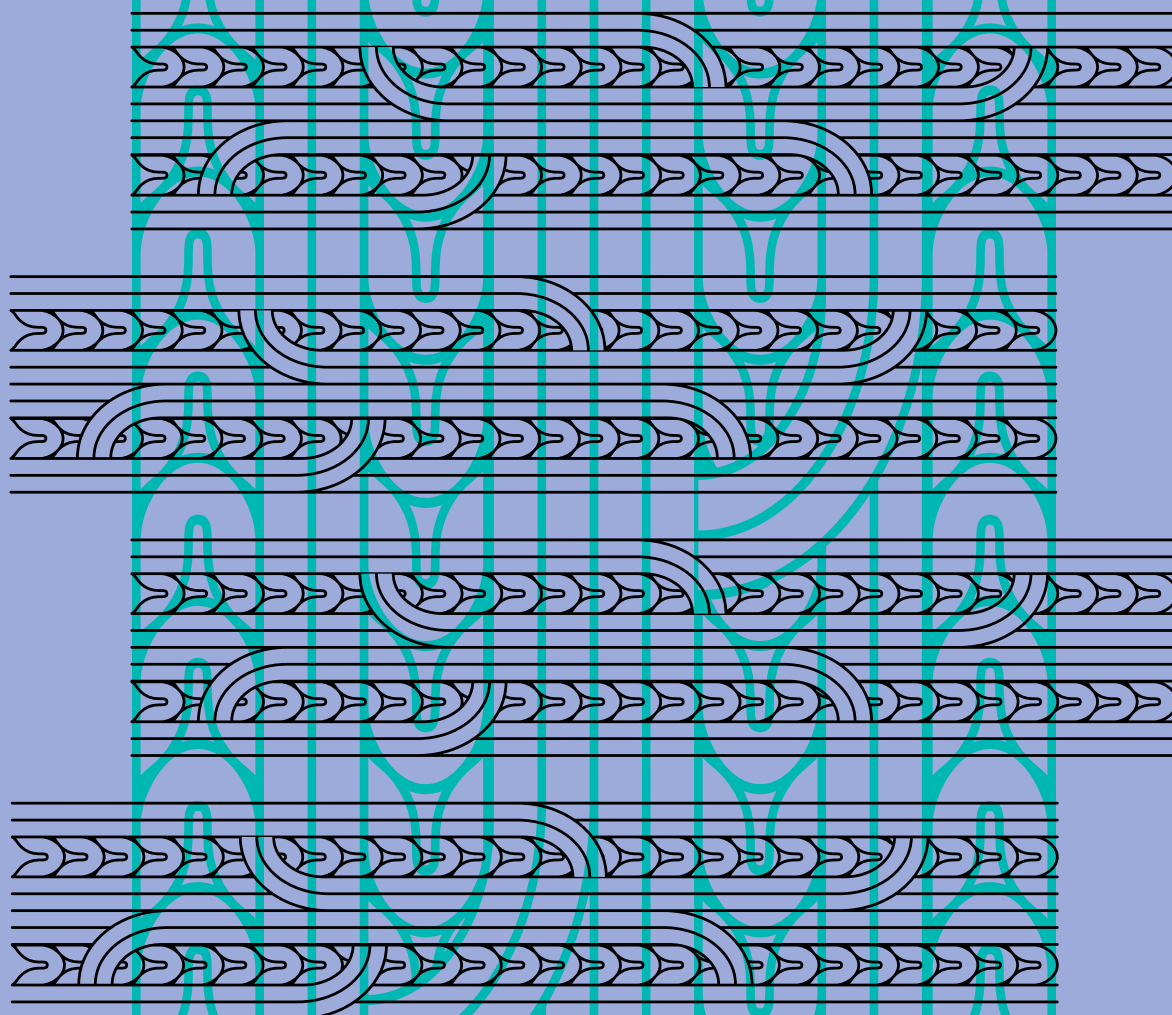


# Ngā Tohutohu mō te Minita Mātauranga Tomo Mai

## Briefing for the Incoming Minister of Education

November  
2023



## Tēnā koe Hon Erica Stanford

Tēnā koe i tō tūrangā hou hei Minita, hei mana whakahaere hoki mō Te Rangahau Mātauranga o Aotearoa.

Welcome to your role as Minister with responsibility for the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER). We look forward to working with you and supporting you in your role.

- NZCER is highly regarded as a trusted independent provider of research, evaluation, products, and services for the education sector.
- Our current work programme includes curriculum and assessment practices, student achievement, revitalising te reo Māori, equity in education, climate change education, monitoring, and evaluation.
- We look forward to discussing the priorities for education as set out in the coalition agreements, and to offer our support in areas where NZCER staff have deep knowledge and expertise.

Established in 1934, NZCER is an independent research and development organisation, operating under its own legislation since 1945. The New Zealand Council for Educational Research Act 1972 provides us with a mandate to carry out and disseminate education research, and provide independent information and advice. We operate for the public good of education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

To achieve our purpose, we have four strategic priorities, approved by the NZCER Board and Electoral College who represent the education sector. These priorities are:

- Decolonising education
- Upholding mana Māori, whakamana Māori
- Equity for ākonga and equity in education
- Influencing the future of education.

Our independence enables us to provide non-partisan research, evidence, and advice to government and we look forward to finding commonalities across our respective work programmes.

We work for a range of public and private organisations, we have a substantive work programme with the Ministry of Education, and we have strong relationships with kura, schools, peak bodies, education organisations, and agencies.

In brief:

- We aim to improve learning by influencing education policy and practice.
- We are actively committed to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi to help us uphold mana Māori, whakamana Māori.
- We strive for high quality research. Research is integral to the publications, resources, services, evaluations, and advice we provide.

We would like to meet with you to initiate discussions about achieving shared priorities.



Nāku noa, nā

**Graeme Cosslett**

*Tumuaki | Chief Executive*

*Rangahau Mātauranga o Aotearoa, NZCER*



### **This briefing sets out the following:**

- **Policy and practice**
- **Legislation and governance.**

## **Policy and practice**

NZCER contributes to policy and practice through contestable research contracts, a government grant for education research and advice – Te Pae Tawhiti, books and journals, assessments and surveys, and support and advisory services to schools.

Our Te Pae Tawhiti programme of research aligns with our strategic priorities and builds capability for the sector. We bid for contestable research where we are able to contribute our expertise and where we believe it will have an impact in education.

Our capability includes expertise in quantitative research (including statistical and psychometric analysis), qualitative research, kaupapa Māori research, mixed methods research, and evaluative capability. We also have expertise in curriculum and educational measurement, policy critique and development, EdTech/IT development, and developing education resources for teachers.

Some examples of our contribution to policy and practice include:

### **Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs)**

NZCER developed the suite of standardised tests called PATs over 40 years ago—now they are used by well over half the schools in Aotearoa. We are currently undertaking a refresh of these tests, taking an equitable approach to the design and content to ensure all ākonga are reflected in them. We currently administer PATs for mathematics, reading comprehension, vocabulary, punctuation and grammar, and listening comprehension. We also offer assessments in Science, Te Reo Māori, and Adult Literacy and Numeracy.

We see the primary purpose of PATs as supporting teachers to make informed decisions about teaching and learning, and to support conversations with parents about student progress and achievement. NZCER has developed some levels of aggregated reporting, and some initial system level reporting that we hope will inform future research and policy-making decisions. We note that such assessments are a key part of the education policy platform and we hope to engage with you further on this.

### **Opportunities and challenges for discussion**

- Being clear about intentions and the purpose/s of assessment is vital to effective use.
- Changing practice, lifting achievement, and improving outcomes is a complex challenge, and requires a complex systems thinking approach.
- In New Zealand, the assessment infrastructure and resourcing requires attention.

## A curriculum insights and progress study

For more than 10 years, NZCER has worked with the Educational Assessment Research Unit (EARU) from the University of Otago to measure student achievement at a primary school level. This initially took the form of the National Education Monitoring Project, and the recently-completed National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA).

Both of these were on contract to the Ministry of Education and we have recently been engaged to work on the latest iteration, a curriculum insights and progress study.

This study analyses a representative sample of students at Years 3, 6, and 8 across all major areas of the curriculum. Additionally, it assesses literacy and numeracy through cohort studies at these year levels. It is intended to be a clear picture of student achievement that provides insights into teaching practice and supports the ongoing rollout of Te Mātaiaho.

We anticipate the first reports from this study will be released in 2024, along with findings from a Rapid Response Research Panel of 40 principals and teachers.

### Opportunities and challenges for discussion

- This study is regularly used in education, politics, and the media as a measure of achievement, and forms a high-profile output from NZCER. We see real opportunity in strengthening the study's visibility, and it's potential to independently inform and influence effective evidence-based policy and practice.

## Revitalising te reo Māori in education

NZCER has long been a proponent of te reo Māori revitalisation, particularly since the landmark sociolinguistic reports on household te reo Māori use in the 1970s. We are proud to have continuously built on this work in the years since, delivering policy recommendations which informed the establishment of Te Ahu o Te Reo as a te reo Māori PLD programme for educators. Revitalising te reo Māori in Education continues to be a key focus, sitting with a broader kaupapa of upholding mana Māori, whakamana Māori.

All schools in Aotearoa have a legal obligation to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and our research supports kaiako to demonstrate this in their practice. We have seen excellent progress in the growth and status of te reo Māori, which is both important for ākonga Māori wellbeing and a fundamental part of our maturing national identity.

### Opportunities and challenges for discussion

- We hope to see the growth of reo Māori continue, particularly at a school level, and backed by government upholding its obligations to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- NZCER has developed a Te Reo Māori assessment tool which has the potential to show ākonga, learner progress.

## Structural inequities remain in education

As a nation, we are seeing growing success in Māori education. Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust, Te Rūnanga Nui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa, Ngā Kura-ā-Iwi o Aotearoa, Whare Wānanga, Te Akatea and more, are all organisations playing a crucial role in advancing Māori education, language revitalisation, and cultural preservation in New Zealand.

We know that what is good for Māori is good for all learners. We also know that when Māori have the opportunity to learn as Māori, this enables success as Māori. We can see this in leaver



attainment rates, which are higher for Māori learning in Māori-medium education than English-medium. We believe there is significant work that can be done to build on this, and to ensure our country moves in a direction that truly upholds the intention of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

For English-medium educators, to uphold their obligations as Tangata Tiriti, our evidence indicates that this work must begin at a leadership level, with tumuaki supporting ākonga Māori at a strategic level and working with whānau and iwi to implement those strategic aspirations.

In partnership with the PPTA, NZCER recently released a report *Me aro ki te hā o Hine-ahu-one — Wāhine Māori in leadership*.<sup>1</sup> One finding showed that most wāhine Māori undertake additional roles and responsibilities beyond their remunerated positions.

### Opportunities and challenges for discussion

- Funding towards Māori-medium education is not yet equitable. There is a genuine opportunity here to enable transformative change in our nation, and overall outcomes.
- We would like to see a strong commitment from government to this important issue. Support and investment for kaupapa Māori pathways and education options are vital, as is ongoing support for the provision of reo Māori teaching and learning in our schools.

## Climate change and education

NZCER's climate change research has been exploring what kinds of educational policies and practices are needed to ensure that education is fit-for-purpose for a low-emissions, climate-changing Aotearoa.

Our research shows that teachers and school leaders are concerned about climate change and worried about the impacts that climate change and other societal challenges are having on the wellbeing of our young people and communities.

We have a curriculum that allows for deep, community-engaged, place-based climate and sustainability learning, but doesn't require it. Teacher education and professional development in sustainability education is also inadequate both for pre-service and in-service teachers.

Sustainability and climate education in Aotearoa New Zealand must be grounded in upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi, recognising that many solutions about how to live sustainably exist in mātauranga Māori and localised knowledge systems and practices.

### Opportunities and challenges for discussion

- There is a need for support and investment in our educators so that they can meet the challenge of supporting our future generations through positive, solution-focused climate and sustainability education.
- A strategic, joined-up and future-focused approach to climate transitions, within and across different parts of the Ministry, in relation to all its roles and functions (e.g., school property and infrastructure, curriculum, assessment, learner pathways, teacher and leader development).
- Strong visibility of climate, environmental, and sustainability learning as a key learning priority across the curriculum.
- Clear guidance for principals and School Boards that helps to build their climate literacy and enables them to bring a climate governance lens to their existing roles and responsibilities under the Education and Training Act.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/me-arokiteha-o-hine-ahu-one-wahine-maori-in-leadership>

## Te Mātaiaho—a refreshed curriculum for English-medium state schools

Our research shows that while the key competencies have been challenging to implement well at the classroom level, they could be more effective when interwoven with Te Mātaiaho, making learning more engaging and meaningful for ākonga. Essentially, a key component of teaching the basics well is by more effectively incorporating key competencies into teaching.

NZCER has conducted several pieces of research to support the development of Te Mātaiaho, including work on the key competencies and the progressions approach. We highly recommend reading our papers on the progressions approach in particular,<sup>2</sup> which clearly articulate the benefits of these progressions for all learners. More broadly, Te Mātaiaho reflects our maturing national identity—it acknowledges we are not monocultural, and encourages schools' (and government's) obligations under Te Tiriti. We support the continued rollout of a refreshed curriculum and its corresponding Common Practice Model.

### Opportunities and challenges for discussion

- Additionally, we note that National's education policy includes the provision of a *“high-quality, online digital resource bank that is mapped against the curriculum. This centralised bank of lesson plans and resources will support the development of teacher expertise, reflect evidence-based practice and reduce teacher workload”*. We are pleased to note that much of this infrastructure is currently in place through the Assessment Resource Banks (ARBs), a resource with over 35,000 registered teacher accounts. We would welcome the opportunity to develop this resource further, as currently it is a resource in 'maintenance' mode.

## NCEA co-requisite requirements and unintended consequences

We are releasing an op-ed about the unintended consequences of NCEA's new literacy and numeracy co-requisite requirements to achieve NCEA. A copy will be sent to your office next week

A summary of the key points from this op-ed include:

- (a) Decouple the assessment of literacy and numeracy from NCEA to ensure fair recognition of what a student has achieved in their NCEA programme.
- (b) Offer literacy and numeracy assessments that students can opt into if they want to add a numeracy and/or literacy standard to their record of achievement.
- (c) Ensure that there is an appropriate assessment approach to literacy and numeracy certification for all students. Some students need appropriate accommodations to access literacy and numeracy tests, and others do not do well in formal test conditions. A wider range of assessment approaches would provide greater opportunity for students to demonstrate their competencies and have them recognised.
- (d) Provide online practice assessments that schools could use formatively. These could include assessments that use AI to automatically score the assessments and provide feedback to students.
- (e) Review the suite of other NCEA standards to ensure that appropriate literacy and numeracy demands are part of these standards. Students who achieve NCEA standards in mathematics and English | te reo Māori and pāngarau, for instance, should have foundational literacy and numeracy skills.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/Determining%20How%20Learning%20is%20Progressing-Options%20for%20Calibrating%20Teacher%20Judgements\\_0.pdf](https://www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/Determining%20How%20Learning%20is%20Progressing-Options%20for%20Calibrating%20Teacher%20Judgements_0.pdf)

## Opportunities and challenges for discussion

- There is a window of opportunity during the 2-year transition period we are in, to shape an education system that recognises success and high standards in ways that are enabling, and intrinsically motivating for all learners to strive towards.

## Legislation and governance

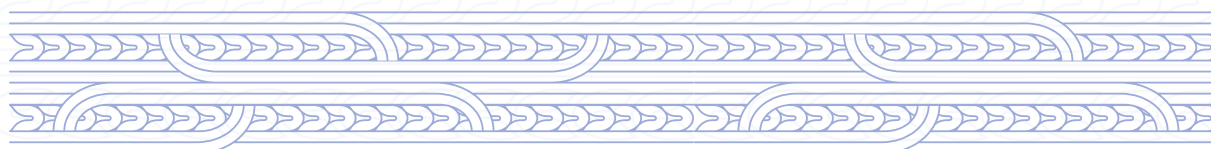
NZCER is an independent statutory body, operating under the New Zealand Council for Educational Research Act 1972. The Act sets out our official functions:

- (a) To foster the study of, and research into, educational and other like matters, and to prepare and publish such reports on these matters as may in its opinion be necessary or of value to teachers or other persons.
- (b) To furnish information, advice, and assistance to persons and organisations concerned with education and other similar matters.

As Minister of Education, you have some delegated responsibilities as set out in the New Zealand Council for Educational Research Act 1972. These include:

- appointing one council member
- approval of purchasing or selling land
- approval of granting leases
- remuneration of council member fees
- presentation of NZCER's annual report to Parliament.

The Board of NZCER has five elected council members (by an electoral college) and one member appointed by yourself as Minister of Education. The current Ministerial appointment is Dr Jodie Hunter. Her current term ends in November 2026. The Board can also co-opt up to three more people to be members of the Board and all terms are for 4 years.



***In conclusion, we look forward to establishing a professional relationship with you and your Ministerial team during your elected term. Congratulations once again on your new and tremendously important leadership role in setting the direction for education in Aotearoa New Zealand.***