

Teachers Matter



NZEI · TE RĪU ROA
NEW ZEALAND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE

Teacher Supply

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Teacher supply discussions are about ensuring there are enough teachers to meet demand and that they are appropriately supported so that effective and experienced teachers are retained. This necessitates a long term approach and teachers are the best people to identify how to do this effectively. Strengthening teacher supply has the potential to help address issues such as workload and also enhance teaching and learning generally.

NZEI

NZEI policy¹ sets out the reduction of pupil teacher ratios as a key goal. NZEI members consistently identify reducing class size as a priority issue. Generally speaking, reducing class size means reducing pupil teacher ratios. This means more teachers need to be employed in the primary sector. The current situation indicates there are already teacher supply issues.

Demographics

The birth rate in New Zealand is currently the highest it has been since 1990 according to Statistics New Zealand figures. Statistics also indicate a significant peak in the number of births in December 2007. The Ministry of Education has projected primary roll growth from 2012 and continuing for several years, reflecting the increased birth rate.

More teachers will be needed in primary schools just to maintain existing teacher pupil ratios let alone improve them. There is only a small amount of time to ensure there are enough teachers to meet increasing rolls, without increasing class sizes.

Supporting the Profession

We need to make sure teaching is an attractive career option and that teachers are supported to stay in the profession.

NZEI is working on developing a career path that supports effective teaching, offers opportunities and support for ongoing professional learning and career development, and provides recognition for effective practice and teachers who take on leadership roles. Supporting and recognising effective teachers contributes to retention and means that there is depth of knowledge and experience in the profession. This in turn means that new teachers can be well supported.

Career path planning is also important to help ensure that the right people are in the right place. This means that schools are able to employ teachers with the knowledge, skills and attributes that they require to meet the needs of students. A planned career structure will provide opportunities for teachers to undertake meaningful and relevant professional learning to meet the needs of all students.

¹See *Primary Teacher Staffing Priorities*. Report to NZEI Annual Meeting 2007 available at www.nzei.org.nz/annualmeeting/2007

Specific Issues

As well as general issues with teacher supply, there are certain parts of the primary sector that are experiencing additional supply pressures. In particular Māori immersion education, isolated schools and many schools in low decile areas struggle to recruit and retain teachers. There are many reasons for this. Any initiatives that are developed need to identify strategies to overcome these difficulties and to encourage and support effective teaching in those areas. NZEI is keen to hear teachers' views on what these strategies might include.

Conclusion

Teachers are an essential and valuable resource and we need to ensure that strategies are developed and implemented to support new and existing teachers. The goal must be to ensure that sufficient effective teachers are recruited and retained both to meet demand and, ultimately, to deliver improvements to teacher/student ratios.

Staffroom Discussion

Discuss the things that drew each of you into teaching, what keeps you in teaching and what things you think could make teaching a more attractive career option for others. Use your discussion to help you answer these questions:

- 1. In the context of the current economic climate, what does your school think would help with the recruitment and retention of teachers?**
- 2. As a staff group, identify strategies that you think could help with recruitment in areas that have additional supply pressures.**