

Draft Curriculum Years 0-10



New Zealand Council Of
Christian Social Services

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Tirohanga Whānui | Overview

The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on **the Draft Curriculum Years 0-10**. We do not support the de-prioritisation of Te Tiriti o Waitangi within the Draft Curriculum and make several recommendations to strengthen aspects of specific curriculum areas.

Taunakitanga | Recommendations

Our main points are:

1. Te Tiriti o Waitangi is upheld and foundational within education

NZCCSS notes substantial concerns raised regarding the extent to which the Draft Curriculum undermines commitments to upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi within education:

- Concerns raised by iwi and the New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa (NZEI) regarding the de-prioritisation of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, te reo Māori and the Aotearoa New Zealand Histories Curriculum within the Draft Curriculum.
- The granting of an Urgent Inquiry by the Waitangi Tribunal into the reset of Te Mataiaho and the removal of the requirement for school boards to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- The open letter signed by representatives of 34 educational organisations outlining concerns that the Draft Curriculum fails to uphold Te Tiriti of Waitangi, and has been developed without adequate consultation (NZEI, 2026a).

Upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi within the Curriculum requires a focus on reducing education inequities for tamariki and rangatahi Māori, and ensuring te reo, matauranga and te ao Māori is incorporated into all students' learning. The concerns raised above indicate a move away from progress in realising the Articles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi within our education system.

Recommendation 1: We recommend that:

- The requirement for school boards to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi is reinstated, and this requirement reflected within the Te Mataiaho Framework.
- The Aotearoa New Zealand Histories Curriculum is retained as a unique learning area, rather than integrated into the broader Social Studies Curriculum. This includes the requirement for students to engage in learning about national history within their own geographical context.
- Te Reo Māori is prominent within the curriculum as a central component of all children's learning, rather than as optional language learning alongside other languages.

2. Digital Safety/Wellbeing is embedded within all Phases of the Curriculum

The proposed curriculum does not introduce learning about online safety and digital wellbeing within the Health Education Curriculum until Year 4. Digital wellbeing is a prominent issue in relation to children's health, even at preschool age. Growing Up in New Zealand data indicates that:

- Around 80% of the research cohort at age four were regular media users, averaging more than two hours per day of screentime (Morton et al., 2017).
- 95% of the research cohort at age eight had access to a device, and screen use was greater than during preschool years (Morton et al., 2020).

We note that the Draft Curriculum does not specifically reference harmful online content until Phase 3 (Curriculum Years 7-8) despite evidence indicating that many children are exposed to harmful or inappropriate content, or experience something that upsets them online, at an earlier age (Makes Sense & Safe Surfer, 2025; Netsafe, 2020).

As digital citizens we believe students should be engaging with the topics of digital safety, wellbeing and harmful digital content earlier. It is important that children are equipped from a young age to understand the benefits and disadvantages of screen use in relation to physical and mental wellbeing, and how to seek help if they have concerning experiences online (Cullen et al., 2024).

Recommendation 2: We recommend inclusion of digital wellbeing education within the Health Curriculum from Phase 1 (Years 0-3) and specific inclusion of education regarding harmful online content from Phase 2 or earlier.

3. Greater prominence of social and emotional learning within Health & Physical Education

We are concerned that the recommended allocation of three hours per week to cover Technology, The Arts and Health & Physical Education is insufficient, given the significant social and emotional and physical developments occurring for children throughout the Year 0-8 period (Wilson et al., 2024). Social and emotional competencies, such as the development of self-control, have been found to predict quality of life in adulthood (Moffitt et al., 2013; University of Auckland, 2020). We believe greater emphasis is needed on social and emotional learning within the Curriculum to support children's development and positive future outcomes.

Recommendation 3: We suggest that the recommended hours for teaching the Health & Physical Education Curriculum be increased to reflect the importance of social and emotional development on lifelong outcomes.

4. Greater prominence of mental wellbeing within the Health & Physical Education curriculum

We share concerns raised by the Mental Health Foundation regarding the limited focus on mental wellbeing within the Draft Curriculum. These include:

- The removal of reference to holistic, cultural understandings of hauora and wellbeing, such as Te Whare Tapa Whā and models that are reflective of other cultures.
- The lack of recognition of community and societal factors that influence wellbeing.
- Uncertainty regarding 'whole school approaches' to the Health & Physical Education curriculum, noting the relevance of the school environment in reinforcing education regarding mental wellbeing.

We refer to the Mental Health Foundation [submission](#) for further detail on this topic. The Mental Health Foundation notes that children and young people themselves identify mental health as the most prominent issue for their generation and are seeking more information about mental wellbeing (Mental Health Foundation, 2026). This, alongside New Zealand's poor ranking for child wellbeing in the Unicef Innocenti Report Card 19 (2025), indicates that mental wellbeing is a critical component of the Health & Physical Education Curriculum and should be given greater prominence than the Draft Curriculum provides.

Recommendation 4: We recommend greater alignment of the Health & Physical Education Curriculum with the Mental Health Education Guide (Ministry of Education, 2022) and in particular:

- Inclusion of mental wellbeing as specific learning area, and direct reference to mental health and wellbeing, within the Health & Physical Education Curriculum.
- Inclusion of a holistic definition of mental wellbeing and cultural understandings of wellbeing, including Māori concepts of hauora, within the curriculum.
- Increased focus on mental wellbeing within this curriculum area.

5. Relationships & Sexuality Education is inclusive and timely

We refer to our submission on the [Relationships & Sexuality Education Framework](#), in which we recommended:

- Earlier inclusion of education about puberty, reflecting evidence that children in Aotearoa are reaching puberty earlier than in previous generations and are more likely to have begun puberty during primary school. Māori and Pacific children are more likely to experience puberty at a young age, and research indicates that children who have experienced disadvantage during childhood may also progress through puberty earlier in relation to other groups of children (Gluckman et. al, 2011; Marks et. al, 2023).
- A safe and inclusive curriculum to reflect diverse expressions of sexuality and gender. We note the lack of specific inclusion of gender diversity or sexual orientation within the Draft Curriculum.
- Resourcing for parents and caregivers to discuss Relationships & Sexuality Education with their children and young people.

Recommendation 5: In regards to the Draft Curriculum we recommend:

- Inclusion of education about puberty from Year 4, and menstruation from Year 5.
- Improving the inclusivity of the Relationships and Sex Education curriculum areas to ensure they are supportive of gender diverse young people and diverse sexual orientations.

Ngā Tohutoro | References

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Ko wai tātou | Who we are

NZCCSS has six foundation members; the Anglican Care Network, Baptist Churches of New Zealand, Catholic Social Services, Presbyterian Support and the Methodist and Salvation Army Churches.

Through this membership, NZCCSS represents over 100 organisations providing a range of social support services across Aotearoa. Our mission is to call forth a just and compassionate society for Aotearoa, through our commitment to our faith and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Further details on NZCCSS can be found on our website - www.nzccss.org.nz.

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