



## Briefing Note: Update on Work on Streaming

<b>To:</b>	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
<b>Cc:</b>	Hon Kelvin Davis, Associate Minister of Education Hon Aupito William Sio, Associate Minister of Education Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
<b>Date:</b>	6 April 2021	<b>Priority:</b>	Medium
<b>Security Level:</b>	In Confidence	<b>METIS No:</b>	1249545
<b>Drafter:</b>	Zsontell Levi-Teu	<b>DDI:</b>	9(2)(a)
<b>Key contact:</b>	Jennifer Fraser	<b>DDI:</b>	
<b>Approved by:</b>	Andrea Schöllmann	<b>DDI:</b>	
<b>Messaging seen by Communications team:</b>	No	<b>Round robin:</b>	No

### Purpose

This briefing provides an update on work that the Ministry of Education has been doing on streaming. It includes an overview of our approach with iwi, upcoming actions and considerations for future work.

### Summary

- The evidence shows that streaming contributes to inequitable outcomes, especially for Māori learners, Pacific learners and learners with disabilities and/or learning support needs who are disproportionately placed in lower streams.
- The Education and Training Act 2020 and recently published strategic documents set clear direction for a shift towards a more inclusive and equitable education system.
- The Ministry of Education is taking a supporting role in partnership with iwi to facilitate a national discussion about shifting towards more inclusive education practices and structures and away from streaming. As part of this approach, we are supporting the distribution of a forthcoming report *Ending Streaming in Aotearoa*, that Tokona Te Raki: Māori Futures Collective plans is releasing on 7 April 2021.

Proactive Release

---

**Agree** that this briefing be proactively released in line with publication of the report attached in Annex 1, scheduled for 7 April.

**Agree / Disagree**



Andrea Schöllmann  
**Deputy Secretary**  
**Education System Policy**

06/04/2021



Hon Chris Hipkins  
**Minister of Education**

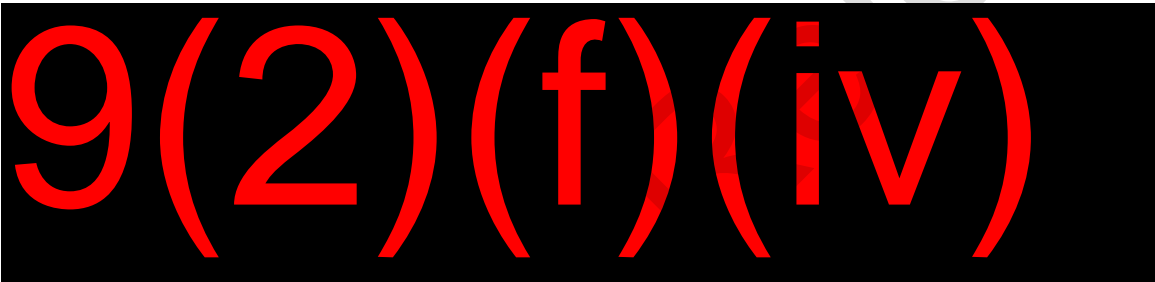
8/4/2021

Proactively Released

## Background

---

1. The Ministry of Education (the Ministry) defines streaming as grouping students within a school into different classes for some or all subjects based on perceived ability. This is often done based on past achievement results but can be subject to bias. Other terms for streaming include between-class ability grouping, tracking or setting.
2. Local and international evidence shows that streaming can limit learners' aspirations and engagement, creating low expectations and self-fulfilling cycles of lower academic achievement. Streaming contributes to inequitable outcomes which are negatively impacting Māori learners, Pacific learners, and learners with disabilities and/or learning support needs who are disproportionately placed in lower streams. This impacts lifelong wellbeing, including by limiting educational and career opportunities, further entrenching inequity.
3. Streaming is commonplace in our schooling system, particularly in secondary schools, and its outcomes are a manifestation of systemic racism and discrimination. Through Kōrero Mātauranga | Education Conversation engagements in 2018 and 2019 we heard a lot about negative experiences with streaming. However, opinions are mixed as we also heard voices of support for the practice. This is a complex issue that we need to work with iwi, the sector and communities to better understand.



## Education Settings Establish the Direction for Movement Towards More Inclusive Approaches

---

5. The Education and Training Act 2020 (the Act) sets out clear expectations for schools about the need to enable all learners to attain their highest possible standard in education achievement. Section 127(1)(b)(iii) states that one of the primary objectives of a board in governing a school is to ensure that the school takes all reasonable steps to eliminate racism, bullying, and any other forms of discrimination within the school. Section 127(1)(d)(iii) sets out the responsibility for school boards of trustees to ensure schools give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi by achieving equitable outcomes for Māori students.
6. Supporting the Act, the Government's Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP) provides clear guidance and direction to early learning services and schools to reduce barriers to education for all and ensure that all places of education are inclusive and have high expectations for every learner. Alongside this, the Ministry of Education provides guidance on how to support excellent outcomes for all learners in documents such as Ka Hikitia (the Māori Education Strategy) and the Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020-2030.
7. The Ministry recommends schools move towards alternative approaches to streaming that are more inclusive and benefit all learners. We recognise that collaboration is needed between the Ministry, iwi, the education sector and communities to support this shift, and that there may be other policy settings that drive behaviours and could incentivise change

## Local Evidence is Supporting a National Conversation about Streaming

---

8. In 2020, Waikato-Tainui, Tokona te Raki: Māori Futures Collective of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, The Southern Initiative and Business and Economic Research Limited (BERL) published a research report, *He Awa Ara Rau - A Journey of Many Paths*. The report found that streaming of Māori into low-expectation classes limits education and employment options and called for action to stop streaming.<sup>1</sup> At that time, you signalled that schools in New Zealand should not be streaming. Subsequently, Ministry officials have stated that the Ministry does not support streaming.
9. The Mātauranga Iwi Leaders Group took the call to action from *He Awa Ara Rau - A Journey of Many Paths* to iwi chairs and it was endorsed. This endorsement means there is now a mandate from 72 iwi to end streaming in schools in Aotearoa.
10. On 7 April 2021, Tokona Te Raki plans to release *Ending Streaming in Aotearoa*, a follow-up report to *He Awa Ara Rau - A Journey of Many Paths*. The forthcoming report features four case studies of secondary schools that have removed streaming from their mathematics classes. In Aotearoa, streaming is most prevalent in secondary mathematics. The report will be supported by a media campaign. We have attached an embargoed copy of the report at Annex 1.
11. Ministry officials have previewed the forthcoming report and support its content. Common findings from the four secondary schools that removed streaming in their mathematics classes include that:
  - a. academic achievement improved, especially for Māori and Pacific learners with increased numbers of Merit and Excellence grades in National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA);
  - b. self-belief, motivation and aspiration improved;
  - c. social and ethnic barriers declined; and
  - d. strong resistance was encountered from groups of parents and teachers.
12. The report highlights that the Education and Training Act 2020 has implications for boards and principals in terms of streaming, as mentioned earlier.
13. The report calls for collaborative action from whānau, educators, Government and iwi. It suggests that Government can “design policy that advocates for the removal of streaming practices from the education system and prioritise the issue at the highest level”. We are supporting the publication and distribution of the report as part of our partnership approach with iwi, outlined below.

## The Ministry is Partnering with Iwi to Support the Shift Away from Streaming

---

14. Ministry officials have been talking about the issue of streaming with Eruera Tarena and Piripi Prendergast from Tokona Te Raki since January 2021. Tokona Te Raki presented an offer to lead the work to end streaming in New Zealand schools. We agreed for the Ministry to take a supporting role in partnership with iwi to facilitate a shift towards more inclusive education practices and structures and away from streaming. See Annex 2 for key messages on this work that you may use as talking points.
15. We have a shared understanding that generating discussion that increases understanding will be more effective at encouraging change than punitive approaches. Several education organisations have shared statements of support for removing streaming in Aotearoa, including New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI) Te Riu Roa and the New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF). We are hoping to stimulate a conversation about this issue and how we can all work together to resolve it. There is

---

<sup>1</sup> Waikato-Tainui, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, The Southern Initiative, and Business and Economic Research Limited (2019). *He Awa Ara Rau: A Journey of Many Paths*. Retrieved from: <http://www.maorifutures.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/He-Awa-Ara-Rau-A-Journey-of-Many-Paths-Nov-2019.pdf>

potential for the new Curriculum Advisory Group to explore how to shift and grow teacher knowledge and understanding of more inclusive teaching approaches.

16. We agreed with Tokona Te Raki that a key next step would be a hui with key stakeholders including education agency leaders and young people and that we would support this with funding. Education agency Chief Executives will be formally invited to a stakeholder hui in Christchurch on 25 May 2021 with Tokona Te Raki to secure commitment to action and commence development of a multi-year plan to end streaming.

### **There is Further Work to Do to Support Movement Towards a More Inclusive and Equitable Education System**

17. Ending streaming will be a significant culture change and will require supports for the sector, parents, families, whānau and communities to facilitate a safe and sustainable shift. Teachers and leaders will need practical support to successfully change practice. There is potential to align this with other key pieces of work in the Education Work Programme such as the NCEA and Curriculum Reviews.
18. There are some parts of this issue that are more straightforward and others that we need to work through as part of the national conversation led by iwi. There are a range of ways teachers group learners within classroom programmes and before further engagement, we are further investigating the evidence to help us better understand how these impact on student wellbeing and achievement. This includes understanding the system settings and pedagogical practices behind them.
19. The Ministry could also consider how our policies and resourcing settings align with the shift towards a more inclusive and equitable education system. This will likely identify the resourcing required to make this change.

### **Annexes**

---

- |                |                                      |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Annex 1</b> | Report: Ending Streaming in Aotearoa |
| <b>Annex 2</b> | Key Messages on Streaming            |

## Key Messages on Streaming

---

- The Ministry of Education does not support streaming and recommends that alternative approaches be used.
- Streaming involves grouping students within a school into different classes for some or all subjects based on perceived ability. It is the most common form of ability grouping in our schooling system, particularly in secondary schools. It can manifest in a number of ways, with a number of names, and is a complex issue.
- We know from local and international evidence that streaming contributes to inequitable outcomes for learners, normalises low expectations and reduces opportunities for learning. Streaming has disproportionate impacts on Māori and Pacific learners and learners with disabilities and /or learning support needs.
- There are alternative approaches to streaming that benefit all learners and foster safe and inclusive school environments. These are being used in a growing number of New Zealand schools to achieve improved results for learners.
- The Ministry of Education seeks to work with schools, parents, families, whānau, iwi and communities to address streaming. We welcome the research report by Tokona Te Raki and want to support the national discussion about this issue.

## Background Information

---

- The general conclusion in research studies is that there are few benefits for some high-attaining students from streaming and disproportionately large disadvantages for learners placed in lower streams. In particular, evidence shows that streaming can limit learners' aspirations and engagement, negatively impacting academic, creating low expectations and self-fulfilling cycles of lower academic achievement.
- Streaming has disproportionate impacts on Māori and Pacific learners and learners with disabilities and/or learning support needs. It has been identified as a manifestation of systemic racism and discrimination.
- The Education and Training Act 2020 sets out clear expectations for schools about the need to enable all learners to attain their highest possible standard in education achievement. Supporting this, the Government's Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP) provides clear guidance and direction to early learning services and schools to reduce barriers to education for all and ensure that all places of education are inclusive and have high expectations for every learner.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> NELP Priority 1: Ensure places of learning are safe, inclusive and free from racism, discrimination and bullying, NELP Priority 2: have high aspirations for every learner /ākonga, and support these by partnering with their whānau and communities to design and deliver education that responds to their needs, and sustains their identities, languages and cultures, NELP Priority 3: Reduce barriers to education for all, including for Māori and Pacific learners/ākonga, disabled learners/ākonga and those with learning support needs. More information on the NELP can be found here: [NELP-2020-Schools-and-kura.pdf \(education.govt.nz\)](#)