

New Zealand Teachers Council

Submission on the Inquiry into 21st Century learning environments and digital literacy

Introduction

1. This submission outlines the work of The New Zealand Teachers Council ('the Council'), describes work underway to provide teachers with advice and resources on the ethical use of social media and outlines areas where the government should allocate further resources to up-skill the teaching profession in digital literacy.
2. The Council is the national professional and regulatory body for promoting and assuring the quality of the teaching workforce in New Zealand schools and early childhood education settings. Our operation is focused on levers and processes to support effective teachers and teaching, driven by our vision statement *Ū ki te ako tū tangata ai āpōpō - Excel in teaching so our learners will excel in the future.*
3. The Council:
 - a. registers teachers;
 - b. approves and monitors programmes for Initial Teacher Education ;
 - c. engages in research and other professional projects to support the teaching profession; and
 - d. supports the maintenance of professional standards through competence and discipline processes and judicial bodies.
4. The core values underpinning the Council are:
 - āwhinatanga
 - respect
 - manaakitanga
 - fairness
 - integrity
 - honesty
 - transparency
5. The principles and values embodied in the *Code of Ethics for Registered Teachers* govern the work of the Council and its teachers.

The inquiry into 21st century learning environments and digital literacy

6. The Council has a particular interest in supporting teachers and ensuring that they are equipped with the skills necessary to teach with confidence in all learning environments, whether those environments are virtual, online or remote. This means that the Council's submission will focus on the following areas of the inquiry:
 - options for facilities to support teaching and learning in 21st century schools;
 - options for the best technological infrastructure to support teaching and learning in 21st century schools;
 - consideration of how the roll-out of ultra fast broadband will affect teaching and whether additional resources may further enhance the affect of ultra fast broadband on teaching and learning outcomes; and
 - the investigation into what impact increased digital literacy has on learning.

7. The standard learning environment has changed dramatically in recent years and it is likely that even more changes will take place during this century. It is vital that we continually work to identify which tools teachers need to teach effectively in this evolving environment. We must also ensure that we allocate the resources necessary to train and up-skill teachers so that they can become not only digitally literate, but also role models for good cyber-citizenship.
8. The Council considers that efforts to increase teachers' digital literacy should focus on increasing both ethical and technical proficiency.

Increasing teachers' ethical proficiency in the use of social media

9. The Council is currently working on a project to provide teachers with information and resources on the effective use of social media. These resources will highlight the ethical issues teachers need to be aware of when using social media.
10. The New Zealand Teachers Council *Code of Ethics for Registered Teachers* provides the profession with an ethical framework that assists teachers to be aware of, and deal with, the ethical tensions that often occur when teaching. The social media project applies best practice in teachers' use of social media to the *Code of Ethics* by developing a set of guidelines to illustrate ethical considerations teachers should be aware of when using social media.
11. A reference group has been established that includes experts in the social media for educational purposes such as representatives from Netsafe, Core Education and members of the teaching profession. This reference group will guide and provide advice as the Council works to develop web-based resources for teachers on the ethical use of social media.
12. The project's key objective is to create a set of web-based resources for teachers. These web-based resources will be available on the New Zealand Teachers Council's website by the end of August 2012 and will include:
 - guidelines that show how the Code of Ethics applies to social media use;
 - scenarios that illustrate areas that commonly cause ethical issues to arise when teachers use social media; and
 - a presentation framework that provides a model for professional leaders to use when carrying out staff workshops on ethical issues related to social media use.
13. This project is one part of the Teachers Council's efforts to support a high quality teaching profession with teachers who are well prepared to teach and supported in their professional growth. The Council considers that by encouraging teachers to become good digital citizens, teachers will become role models for students and ultimately, this will result in students having the skills necessary to work effectively in the 21st century.

Increasing teachers' technical proficiency

14. Teachers also need to be supported to ensure they have the technical skills necessary to use the facilities and technological infrastructure that will be commonplace in 21st century schools. This means ensuring support and training to those entering into the profession during their initial teacher education programmes, and also to those currently in the profession through professional development. The digital literacy skills and confidence levels of the teaching profession vary enormously and it is important that a variety of training options are provided so that the even those who have not yet used the new

technological tools available, nevertheless understand them and are able to use them if necessary.

15. The Council supports the roll-out of ultrafast broadband to schools and encourages the Government to allocate the resources necessary to train teachers in how to use web-based teaching tools. If those training resources are not allocated, there is a risk that teachers will not be able to the tools provided and those tools will remain unused.

Summary

16. The Council supports the initiative by the Education and Science Select Committee to undertake this inquiry into 21st century learning environments and digital literacy. The Council is willing to participate in any forums that take place, and to make an oral submission if the Education and Science Select Committee would like the Council to speak to this issue.