

ACT Education Policy

Goal

All New Zealanders receive a quality education, not one that breeds failure.

Background

The current education system is failing too many students. Whilst it can be quite good for the academically able, many children are not even learning the basics and are achieving poor qualifications. Despite rising expenditure, New Zealand's education standards are falling and we have now been overtaken by other developed countries. The worst performing schools are in poorest areas and parents have limited choice as to the schools they send their kids to. Too much is spent on the bloated bureaucracy that could be spent on schools. Teacher morale is low and many secondary schools suffer poor discipline.

In the 1940s the major disciplinary problems were running in halls, chewing gum, littering, cutting in line and talking out of turn. In 2008 the major disciplinary problems in schools are drug use, littering, pregnancy, suicide, assault and robbery.

Principles

Equality

Every child regardless of family income should have the right to a quality education. No child should be left behind just because of where he or she lives or their parents' financial position

Child - Central

Education is first, last and always about children, it is not about government or bureaucrats.

Parental Involvement

We need to increase the role of parents and decrease the role of Wellington. Parents have the right to send their children to the school of their choice. After all, it is their money, their children and their future.

Teachers

The role of teachers and the opportunities open to them should be increased while the role of the Ministry of Education bureaucrats in Wellington should be replaced by an Education Authority (education's equivalent of the Reserve Bank).

Open marketplace

Schools like any business should be responsible for managing their own affairs within the laws of New Zealand that apply to them. Regulatory issues would be dealt with by the Education Authority.

Safety

Children have the right to a violence free, drug free environment. Children who are afraid will not learn.

A commonsense approach to implementing these principles would involve the following:

- Support those educational approaches that work and either fix or end those that have failed.
- An educational system that teaches children how to think and how to succeed.
- An educational system that teaches our children right from wrong, one that teaches them respect, and decency.
- Allowing more money to flow into the classroom and not the bloated bureaucracy in Wellington.
- Recognise that more government and more bureaucrats are not the answer for better education. The answer lies in teachers replacing bureaucrats at the centre of education and more parental involvement. We must search for every reform proposal that does this.

Policy Detail

- An opportunity scholarship equivalent to what the government currently spends on children's education will be provided directly to parents or by way of direct payment by the government to the school of the parents' choice. Scholarships will be inflation proofed.
- Parents able to spend the scholarship at any approved school they wish, public, independent, non-profit or for-profit.
- Any part of their yearly scholarship left will be held in a special account. The amount in the account can be spent by them at any time on the child including university education.
- Schools will be licensed by the Education Authority in the same way the Reserve Bank licenses banks. Evidence that parents wished to send their children to a particular school would be clear evidence that the school should be licensed except in extreme circumstances.
- Schools can be of any size e.g. a sole teacher school or a chain of secondary schools.
- Schools, like any business, will be responsible for managing their own affairs within the laws of New Zealand and any educational regulations, specified by the Education Authority.
- The Education Authority will establish guidelines of expected standards to be reached at various age levels (similar to inflation targets of Reserve Bank). All schools would be assessed against those guidelines based on results for schools in similar socio economic areas.
- A move back to basics will be a standard requirement of the curriculum.

If you believe that every New Zealand child deserves a quality education regardless of how financially well off their parents are, then **give ACT your Party vote, for a smarter New Zealand.**