



THE BUDGET 2012

Govt technology move 'huge blow' to schools

By ELLIE CONSTANTINE

THE Government launched a "sneak attack" on technology teachers in the Budget, inflicting a "huge blow" on the nation's intermediate sector, Tahuna Normal Intermediate principal Tony Hunter says.

In the Budget, the Government cut the majority of teacher to pupil ratios from 1:29 to 1:27.5, eliminating the technology teacher ratio of 1:120.

In a letter to schools, Ministry of Education secretary for education and chief executive Lesley Longstone said: "As part of the changes to teacher-student ratios, technology staffing for year 7 and 8 learners is now incorporated into the years 2-10 curriculum staffing ratios for English-medium schools and in the years 7 to 8 staffing ratio for Maori-medium schools."

This change gives the technology staffing back to the school where students are enrolled and gives those schools greater say over its use. Provider schools with a technology centre will no longer automatically receive technology staffing resources for those learners that come from client schools.

The changes meant about 90% of schools would either gain, or have a net loss of less than one full-time teacher equivalent, though changes would not be known until provisional rolls were set in September.

Mr Hunter said "at least three" teachers from his school would be affected by the changes, and "more than 800" nationally.

"It's been a sneak attack. They have not been open about it and it's just come in in the Budget, under the radar, and caught schools off guard. It's a huge blow to intermediate education and all year 7 and 8 education."

He was unsure how technology, which commonly comprised information communication technology, woodwork, metalwork, music, art and food technology, would be delivered at Tahuna in the future but would "try very hard to sustain the programmes that we've got".



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— Tahuna Normal Intermediate principal
Tony Hunter

"But it's going to be very difficult without the staffing to support that. It's not a good situation to be in and I think, overall, the Government has lost its way when it talks about improving education achievement by raising class sizes. It's just a nonsense."

"We are not happy and I think there will be a fair bit of action being taken by the intermediate sector about trying to reverse this decision."

Dunedin North Intermediate principal Ross Leach described the changes as a "savage attack" which "narrowed" the New Zealand curriculum.

"The specialist staffing elements

have been removed from the funding formula provided to all year 7 and 8 students in New Zealand. This puts at risk advanced programmes in the arts, technology and sciences.

"The choices schools appear to be faced with at present are either keep the specialist teachers and run our class sizes up close to 40 students or lose some or all of our specialist teachers and programmes can be kept similar to the levels we have now," he said.

Oamaru Intermediate principal Mary Healey said the changes would mean there was no funding for four or five teaching staff at the school.

The school also provided technology classes to 11 client schools. While she was yet to discuss the issue with their principals, she did not expect continuing staffing for technology classes to be their highest priority.

"Schools will be expected to continue to teach the technology programme but without funding for specialist teachers. The new technology curriculum was revised in 2007. It is no longer the old manual training programme but one that looks to develop technological understanding, which leads to developing future products and systems meeting the changing needs of a progressive society."

"The message given by these staffing cuts is that this learning area is not important or that anyone can teach it and it does not require specialist knowledge or understanding before students are in year 9," she said.

NZEI Te Riu Roa president Ian Leckie said the responsibility of teaching technology subjects may "fall back on the responsibility of the classroom teacher".

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29th May 2012

Dear Parents/Caregivers

As most of you will be aware by now, the Budget has been delivered and there has been some controversy over class sizes, teacher ratios and technology. But what does this really mean for your children and for the future programmes run at Intermediates?

Firstly, for us at Tahuna to be able to continue with all programmes we currently run, we would need to increase the present size of classes to 36 children per class. Something, I am sure you would agree is far from satisfactory.

Secondly, if we keep our class sizes at 28-29 children per class, then we will need to make significant cuts not only to the Technology programme offered, but also programmes such as Music, Dance, Reading and Numeracy extra support, sports, Kapa Haka, Science, extra Computing, Orchestra to name a few. Once again, an unsatisfactory situation.

Thirdly, we would need to cut the jobs of 3 teachers at Tahuna and nationwide this will equate to 880 jobs. Can any more people really afford to unnecessarily lose their jobs?

If you were to ask your children what they really love about Tahuna, it would include many of the above listed programmes. And when you ask your children who have left Tahuna, what they enjoyed most when they were there, they will talk about the Technology programme and many of the extra programmes that they were offered. When you think back to what you liked most about your Intermediate (if you happened to attend one) I'm sure that you too will recall with great fondness the time spent doing technology.

We want to be able to continue providing an excellent and high quality programme which prepares children for the future and instils a passion for creating and designing. To do this we need your help. These are desperate times and we need your support to have any hope of challenging this situation that has been given to our schools without consultation and without any thought to what is good for our children and education.

How can you give your support? Firstly, you can get in contact with your local MP's, the Minister of Education (Hekia Parata) and our Prime Minister, John Key. You can write to them, email them or make a statement in any other creative way that you can think of. To help you on your way, here's the email addresses of: - John Key john.key@national.org.nz and Hekia Parata hekia.parata@national.org.nz

Secondly, can you please support any action that Tahuna and other schools decide to take in relation to this situation.

Thirdly, can you please spread the word and explain to other people who do not have children at Intermediates what all the fuss is about. It's not teachers complaining again, it's actually something that will have a profound effect on our children's education and I believe in the long term, a huge impact on the future of this country.

Thank you for your support

Jacquie Tonks
BOT Chairperson