

# Guidance Note on the Draft Health and Physical Education Curriculum

*The purpose of this Guidance Note is to equip principals and key stakeholders to provide clear, constructive submissions on the draft Health and Physical Education learning area for Years 0-10.*

**Submissions close Friday, 24 April 2026.**

## Who should read this

Principals, senior leaders, boards, Health and Physical Education leaders, kura champions, whānau representatives, regional partners, and providers who will be affected by the final curriculum.

## Why this matters now

The Ministry of Education has released the draft Health and Physical Education curriculum (Years 0–10) for consultation.

In its current form, the draft separates Health from Physical Education, elevates performative and measurable skill acquisition, and prescribes specific sporting contexts. It also narrows Physical Education to learning in movement (technique and performance), while largely removing learning through movement (for example collaboration, problem-solving, relationships) and only lightly addressing learning about movement in later years. The effect is a curriculum that is mainly about how to move, rather than how movement shapes identity, relationships, wellbeing, and culture.

- It **reduces curriculum time** available for Health and Physical Education to approximately one hour per week each, which is not feasible.
- It also removes the socio-ecological perspective and **diminishes the positioning of Te Ao Māori**, weakening connections to holistic, culturally responsive practice.
- Partners across the sector highlight concerns that the draft **risks narrowing learning, reducing joy and play, eroding inclusion, and increasing inequity.**

This pack outlines key messages, high-level concerns, time pressures, resourcing impacts, and a coordinated advocacy plan.

## Ngā uara | Our values

We advocate for a curriculum that is inclusive, locally responsive, and grounded in hauora.

We back teacher capability and leadership, and we want tamariki to experience rich, joyful learning in, through, and about movement.





### **Teacher-centred clarity, not central prescription.**

Guidance should support teacher decision-making and local curriculum design, without undermining hauora, Te Ao Māori, or the socio-ecological perspective.

**Example:** *Our kura serves a small rural community where multiyear classes and strong whānau connections mean teachers design learning that reflects local realities and relationships.*

### **Balanced movement learning.**

Movement skills, movement concepts, and Outdoor Education should be valued alongside conceptual learning, play, and cultural responsiveness.

**Example:** *Our school integrates movement concepts through place-based learning in local environments rather than relying on standardised sporting contexts.*

### **Knowledge that builds wellbeing, not just performance.**

Learning should deepen understanding, identity, and wellbeing, rather than narrowing success to measurement and performance outcomes.

**Example:** *Akonga demonstrate learning through collaboration, discussion, reflection, and problem-solving, not solely through observable performance.*



## What needs to change in the draft

### **Restore holistic foundations**

Reinstate hauora, including Te Whare Tapa Whā, and the socio-ecological perspective as core organising concepts across Health and Physical Education. These are central to whole-school wellbeing and current health practice.

### **Rebalance knowledge and skill**

Avoid a narrow, performative focus by restoring balance across learning in, through, and about movement, so conceptual understanding and critical thinking are retained.

### **Protect play and joy**

Play must remain a core learning approach.

**Example:** *In our school, play-based exploration, student-designed games, and cultural play practices support engagement and inclusion for a wide range of diverse learners.*

### **Position Outdoor Education clearly**

Outdoor Education should be explicitly structured to support learning in, through, and about the outdoors, including environmental connection and collective responsibility.

### **Set realistic time expectations**

One hour per week each for Health and Physical Education is not sufficient. Either increase recommended time or significantly reduce content (1 hour across two curriculum areas over five days is approximately 6 minutes per day).

### **Design for inclusion and equity**

Avoid ableist assumptions and rigid year-level expectations that ignore age-and-stage variability and non-linear development. Provide clear guidance for teacher adaptation.

**Example:** *Our school includes a significant number of neurodiverse learners who require flexible, non-competitive movement contexts to participate with confidence and dignity.*

### **Enable local curriculum and teacher leadership**

Reduce over-prescription of specific sports and allow schools to select culturally and contextually relevant activities, including ngā taonga tākaro, place-based learning, and local strengths.

### **Restore critical thinking and inquiry**

The draft reduces opportunities for inquiry and student sense-making. Critical thinking was a strength of the previous curriculum and supported akonga to question, analyse, and make meaning of health, movement, and wellbeing in relation to their lives and communities.



## Key themes

**Front end alignment:** The values in the front end are not carried through the content; the draft shifts practice toward compliance and technique.

**Example:** *Schools trying to honour wellbeing and local design are pulled back to checklists and drills.*

**Specialisation and mandated codes:** Prescribing specific sports narrows opportunity and reduces motivation for learners who do not identify with those codes.

**Example:** *Our school uses a range of context such as bikes in schools and archery and this curriculum does allow for the diversity.*

**Te Ao Māori:** The reduced presence of Te Ao Māori weakens cultural grounding, belonging, and identity. Example: Opportunities to embed mātauranga Māori in movement contexts become incidental rather than expected.

**Hauora and Te Whare Tapa Whā:** Removing these foundations breaks the connection to whole-school wellbeing and community health approaches.

**Example:** *We use Te Whare Tapa Whā across wellbeing both within teaching and learning and strategically.*

**Ableism and access:** A performance-heavy approach privileges some and excludes many; inclusion needs multiple ways to participate and show learning.

**Example:** *Fixed benchmarks will exclude many of our learners who use mobility aids or need sensory and pacing adjustments.*

### Structural barriers

Fixed year-level techniques, mandated codes, and performance-based assessment create barriers to participation and dignity.

**Example:** *We have ākonga that we support to succeed using different pedagogy and this curriculum does not allow for the time to support these ākonga.*

### Age and stage, not just year level

Progressions must reflect multiyear classes, developmental variability, and small rural contexts.

**Example:** *Our school has composite classes and cannot follow strict year-by-year lists without losing responsiveness.*

### Content load

Around 50–60 statements per year level is not workable, especially with separate Health and Outdoor Education demands.

### Progression gaps

Teachers need guidance on spiralling concepts and consolidation when expectations are not met in one year.

**Example:** *If a Year 1 focus is missed, teachers need direction on revisiting it meaningfully in Year 2.*

### Time allocation

One hour per week for each of Health and Physical Education is not workable for the volume and breadth expected.

### Resourcing

Many schools lack facilities, equipment, and staffing to meet expectations.

**Example:** *Our school does not have a pool and the nearby local pool is 45min away. Aquatics requires pools, transport, changing time, and supervision that exceed available time and staffing.*

### Workforce capability

Expectations must be realistic for generalist primary teachers, with explicit support for teacher learning.

**Example:** *The draft adds technical progressions, sport tactics, aquatics, Outdoor Education, and detailed knowledge without the professional learning, time, and resourcing teachers need, increasing the risk of outsourcing and fragmented learning.*