



Te Poutāhū Curriculum Centre - Ministry of Education.

Sport Whanganui is the Regional Sports Trust supporting the Whanganui, Rangitikei and Ruapehu region. Our vision is ; Whanganui, Ruapehu and Rangitikei are the most active communities in the motu and we work to ensure we activate, connect, and strengthen our communities to enhance their health and wellbeing. We work with a wide range of national, regional, and community partners.

A core part of our role is supporting primary and intermediate schools and kura through Healthy Active Learning. We also engage with secondary schools across our region through physical activity initiatives, connection to community sport, and advocacy for inclusive and responsive physical activity environments. This includes working alongside teachers and leaders to build capability, support local curriculum design, and strengthen inclusive, culturally responsive practice in Health and Physical Education. Through this work, we see how curriculum decisions play out in real classrooms and physical activity environments across both primary and secondary settings. We see what supports teachers and learners, and what creates barriers. While we support the intent to strengthen learning in Health and Physical Education, we have serious concerns that the draft curriculum, in its current form, risks narrowing learning, increasing inequity, and moving away from the holistic foundations that support wellbeing for tamariki and rangatahi.

From our perspective, strong Health and Physical Education programmes are grounded in hauora, local context, inclusion, and teacher professional judgment. They use movement to support wellbeing, identity, connection, and belonging. The draft curriculum moves away from this. It is more prescriptive, more performance-focused, and less flexible. It reduces opportunities for inquiry and sense-making, and it limits how well schools can respond to their learners and communities. In the secondary space, this has significant implications for the physical activity environment, where curriculum settings strongly influence who feels confident, welcomed, and able to participate. We are also concerned that the expectations of the draft do not match the reality of school settings, current time allocations, or the support available to teachers. Without significant change, this curriculum risks becoming compliance-driven rather than supporting rich and meaningful learning.

Key concerns - Loss of critical thinking

One of our key concerns is the loss of critical thinking and inquiry. These were strengths of the previous curriculum. Through the integration of both Health and Physical Education curriculum, it supported learners to question, think deeply, and make meaning about health, movement, and wellbeing in relation to their own lives and communities. This draft is highly prescribed. It focuses heavily on specific techniques, skills, and outcomes and separates out both curriculum areas. As a result, there is far less space for inquiry-based learning. From our work with schools and kura, we know that inquiry is essential. It supports learners to engage with complex issues such as wellbeing, body image, inclusion, power, identity, and belonging. This is particularly important in secondary settings, where students' experiences of Physical Education can strongly influence their ongoing participation in physical activity. Without this, Health and Physical Education risks becoming technical and task-focused, rather than supporting learners to understand themselves and the world around them.



Front-end intent not reflected in the curriculum

We acknowledge that the draft retains the whakataki and front-end as well as the purpose which both reflect positive feelings in the heart, will raise your sense of self-worth. However, these ideas are not consistently reflected in the content that follows. The strong focus on mandated contexts, and performative expectations sits at odds with the stated intent. How can akonga achieve a positive sense of self-worth if they do not have the student agency? This lack of alignment risks reducing Physical Education to “how to move,” rather than recognising movement as a context for wellbeing, connection, identity, and relationships. Greater coherence is needed between what the curriculum says it values and what it actually requires schools and teachers to do.

Reduced visibility of hauora and Te Ao Māori

The removal of hauora, Te Whare Tapa Whā, and the socio-ecological perspective as organising concepts is a significant concern. Through the Healthy Active Learning initiative, we see how these frameworks support coherence across Health, Physical Education, and wider wellbeing approaches. They are embedded in how many schools already work. They also support culturally responsive practice and strong connections to whānau and community. Their reduced visibility in the draft weakens these connections and moves the curriculum away from holistic wellbeing and Te Tiriti-aligned practice. Reinstating these concepts would strengthen the curriculum and better reflect practice that is already working well in schools and outside organisations that support tamariki wellbeing.

Inclusion and equity

The draft’s strong focus on performance, technique, and fixed year-level expectations raises equity concerns. Rigid progressions do not reflect how children actually develop. They are particularly challenging for disabled learners, neurodiverse learners, and those who develop at different rates. Inclusive Health and Physical Education requires flexibility. It requires multiple ways of participating and showing learning. It also requires guidance that supports teachers to adapt learning so all students can participate with dignity and success. As written, the draft does not do enough to support inclusive practice.

Time, resourcing, and teacher capability

There is a clear mismatch between what the draft expects and the time schools have. In many schools, Health and Physical Education are allocated around one hour per week each (30mins for each subject).

Within this time, the draft expects teachers to cover:

- Detailed movement progressions
- Prescribed sporting contexts
- Aquatics
- Outdoor Education
- A large number of knowledge and practice statements

This is not realistic without increasing time or significantly reducing content. We are also concerned about the impact on teachers. The draft increases the amount and specificity of content teachers are expected to teach, but gives little



recognition to the learning, time, and support teachers will need. Without this support, there is a real risk of reduced confidence, increased outsourcing, and fragmented learning experiences for students.

What we are asking for

Sport Whanganui recommends that the final curriculum:

- Reinstates hauora, Te Whare Tapa Whā, and the socio-ecological perspective as central organising concepts
- Restores critical thinking and inquiry as essential components of learning
- Reduces over-prescription and allows schools to design learning that reflects their learners and communities (through allowing a range of context to be taught based on needs of akonga).
- Provides clearer guidance to support inclusive and equitable practice
- Aligns expectations with realistic time allocations, or significantly reduces required content
- Explicitly recognises the professional learning and support teachers will need

Conclusion

Sport Whanganui works closely with schools and kura across primary, intermediate, and secondary contexts to support inclusive, culturally responsive, and wellbeing-focused Health and Physical Education. We are concerned that, without significant revision, the draft curriculum will make this work harder and reduce the positive impact this learning area can have for tamariki and rangatahi.

We urge the Ministry to revise the draft so it better reflects hauora, Te Ao Māori, inclusion, inquiry, and the realities of teaching in schools, and so it supports meaningful, sustainable learning across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Ngā mihi nui,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jen Bagshaw", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jen Bagshaw

Sport Whanganui

Our team supporting schools and kura across the region