

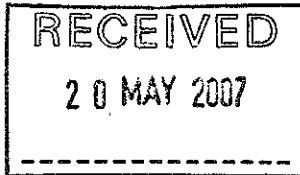
P Sub# 44  
QA-LNZ

**PPTA**

NEW ZEALAND POST PRIMARY  
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

TE WEHENGARUA

[www.ppta.org.nz](http://www.ppta.org.nz)



**The New Zealand Post  
Primary Teachers'  
Association**

**Submission on the**

**Draft Digital Strategy**

**May 2008**

# The Draft Digital Strategy

## Introduction

PPTA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to discussions around Schools Plus and looks forward to further consultation and engagement.

The PPTA represents some 18,000 members in state (including integrated) secondary, area and composite schools and manual training establishments.

There are four areas we wish to comment on in response to this document. They are:

- The shortage of skilled ICT practitioners;
- Delivering the New Zealand Curriculum Technology Learning Area;
- The Digital Divide, and;
- Copyright issues.

## 1 Addressing the shortage of skilled ICT practitioners

PPTA strongly supports the goal of reducing the shortage of skilled ICT practitioners in New Zealand but is bemused to see that an element for addressing the shortage is apparently through the Digital Technologies Framework.

One of the factors that is deterring secondary students from doing computing in the senior school and thus moving on to careers in IT, is there are no specific achievement standards for the subject and teachers find the Technology Achievement Standards unsuitable. Most use unit standards but they are seen by students as lower status particularly now it is possible to be awarded excellence grades in achievement standards. The consequence is that capable students do not choose the subject.

The PPTA ICT Task Force has been concerned about this state of affairs for a number of years and has even developed sample computing achievement standards to demonstrate to the Ministry and NZQA what is needed.

Neither the Ministry nor NZQA has been prepared to consider how the sector can address this problem. Instead, the Ministry has established the Digital Technologies Framework to undertake the procrustean task of

stretching the Technology Achievement Standards so that computing may fit within their ambit.

The teacher representatives on the Digital Technologies Framework group have endeavoured, in good faith, to develop appropriate resources to support New Zealand computing teachers in planning and assessing modules of work using existing achievement and unit standards, but their efforts have not met with success. The timeframe and workload imposed on full-time practicing teachers has made an already difficult task impossible. In the interests of health and safety, PPTA Executive has now strongly advised the teacher participants on the group to withdraw from the DTF group.

Moreover, a report commissioned by PPTA into the Technology Achievement Standards has concluded that they are completely unsuitable for the teaching of computing. This report is currently in draft but due to be released within a week or so. A final copy will be sent on as soon as possible.

In summary, it is completely untenable, and even irrational, to claim that the Digital Technologies Framework project will reduce the shortage of skilled ICT practitioners. The approach was always a second best one, designed by the Ministry of Education and NZQA to avoid the inconvenience of having to develop achievement standards for computing, rather than for the benefit of computing students. It is an interesting reflection on New Zealand's future as a "knowledge-rich, tech-savvy society" that the Ministry has managed to begin the process of developing achievement standards for Religious Studies but has resolutely refused to undertake a similar exercise with respect to computing. We can only conclude the Ministry officials are anticipating that their rewards will come in another life!

There is only one way forward here: **The Digital Technologies Guidelines process must be scrapped and work must begin urgently on developing Computing Achievement Standards.**

As well as making the subject attractive to capable senior students, the establishment of computing achievement standards will have another positive spin-off. It will mean that providers of pre-service secondary education will again seek to recruit ICT specialists for teacher training; currently they do not do so because there is no formal senior course available in schools.

## **2 Delivering the New Zealand Curriculum Technology Learning Area**

It is extremely optimistic to claim that the Technology Curriculum will "equip students to participate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century society..." The reality is there is such a shortage of technology teachers in New Zealand that

many secondary schools have silently ceased delivering technology at years 9 and 10.

It's not really possible in this submission, to go into the various factors that have created this disaster. The 2006 PPTA research *Technology: Theory without practice?* considered the range of factors impacting on Technology and is available at <http://www.ppta.org.nz/cms/imagelibrary/101893.doc>.

Suffice it to say, that as a curriculum area it suffers from a shortage of teachers, limited access to professional development, poor facilities in many schools and a lack of funding for what are quite expensive curriculum materials.

It is true that the Ministry has made some belated attempts to address some of these problems. The curriculum has been re-written in a form that technology teachers regard as more relevant to the classroom and the Ministry of Education has set up a purpose-designed pre-service course to train technology teachers. Unfortunately, graduates from that course will not appear in secondary schools before 2010 at the earliest and certainly not in the numbers that will be required to fill the present vacancies and those that are being created by an aging workforce.

Substantially more investment will be required before the statement that the Technology Curriculum is developing "digital literacy and confidence" can be truthfully claimed.

### **3 The Digital Divide**

There can be no doubt that all New Zealand schools struggle to provide students and teachers with levels of access to ICT that are common in business and government sectors. The school operations grant has never been funded to take account of the cost of the digital revolution and boards of trustees have not always been sufficiently well-informed to make strategic decisions about ICT spending. The increased role played by the Ministry in centrally managing some of the ICT purchasing and maintenance decisions has led to better quality decision-making. At the same time, the reluctance to challenge the New Zealand shibboleth of "self-managing schools" means that we must accustom ourselves to the reality that some boards will waste money on poor-quality ICT purchasing decisions and others will both waste money in the long term, and disadvantage students in the short, by refusing to do anything at all.

In spite of the progress that has been made in bridging the digital divide, students in rural and low decile schools do not always get the same access to high-quality ICT as those in urban, high-decile schools. For example, the pioneering use of high-speed loops has been in reasonably wealthy urban areas and it will be some time before these advances are available outside the main centres. If we are serious about eliminating the digital divide then this technology needs to be funded by the taxpayer for all schools. At the very least, the digital strategy must contain a goal which aims to see all schools with fibre-optic cabling by the end of 2009.

## **4 Copyright issues**

The Ministry has invested resources in ensuring intellectual property is recognised through copyright law and licensing and that schools and students are aware of this. PPTA would like to see a greater emphasis on collaboration through the promotion and development of a model intellectual property agreement for schools using creative commons licensing. PPTA believes this approach would lead to a greater sharing of resources and do more to encourage creativity within and between schools.

## **5 Conclusion**

The four actions PPTA would like to see built into the draft digital strategy are:

- 1 The development of Computing Achievement Standards as a matter of urgency.
- 2 Increased investment in the Technology Learning Area aimed at addressing shortages of teachers, professional development, plant and materials.
- 3 Fibre-optic cabling for all schools by the end of 2009.
- 4 Active promotion of Creative Commons licensing by the Ministry of Education.

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12 May 2008

Digital Strategy 2.0 Submission  
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Dear Sir/Madam

Enclosed please find a copy of the New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association submission on the Draft Digital Strategy.

Yours sincerely



**KEVIN BUNKER**  
**GENERAL SECRETARY**

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