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**The New Zealand Curriculum
Draft for Consultation 2006**

Submission by

**Community and Public Health
Canterbury District Health Board
P O Box 1475, Christchurch**

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BACKGROUND

This submission has been prepared by Community and Public Health (C&PH), a division of the Canterbury District Health Board. The Canterbury District Health Board is the largest DHB in New Zealand by geographical area, covering a population of more than 420,000.

C&PH is a provider of public health services in Canterbury, South Canterbury and the West Coast.

C&PH recognises that health and education are inextricably linked and that we need to work better together to achieve the best outcomes for infants, children and young people.

C&PH values the importance of education and the ability of the education sector to reach priority population groups, including the Ministry of Health's four key priority populations:

- (i) Tamariki Māori;
- (ii) Pacific children;
- (iii) Child with high health and disability support needs; and
- (iv) Children from families with multiple social and economic disadvantage.

A key focus of C&PH is to work closely with a variety of early childhood education settings, primary, intermediate and secondary schools, and tertiary settings, with an emphasis on promoting health and wellbeing. For example, the Ministry of Health's 'Fruit in Schools' campaign and the 'Canterbury Health Promotion in Schools Grants'. The success of these initiatives is dependent on a whole school community approach to creating a healthy environment that is also supported by education in the classroom.

C&PH supports Education's vision for young New Zealander's to be confident, connected, actively involved and lifelong learners. These are descriptors of happy, healthy children with outcomes leading to a healthier New Zealand society.

GENERAL COMMENTS

1. Early Childhood Education

We fully support the Ministry of Education's decision to incorporate early childhood education for the first time into the New Zealand Curriculum and the Ministry is to be commended for taking this approach.

Commend: *The Ministry of Education's decision to incorporate early childhood education for the first time into the NZ Curriculum.*

2. Key Competencies and Te Whāriki

The strands and principles used in Te Whāriki provide an excellent bicultural framework for learning. The educational key competencies outlined in the Draft Curriculum could be more clearly linked with this document. For example, the key competency of 'managing self' does not fit well with Te Whāriki strands. However, the Te Whāriki strands of wellbeing, belonging, contribution, communication and exploration – complement what the NZ Curriculum aims to achieve.

Recommend: *The educational key competencies are more clearly linked with Te Whāriki.*

The key competency of 'managing self' is replaced with a more appropriate term. 'Building resiliency' is recommended.

3. Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is identified as the foundation document of New Zealand (Orange, 1990). The Canterbury DHB recognises and respects the principles of partnership, participation and protection embedded in the Treaty of Waitangi within the context of the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000 (CDHB, October 2005).

It is noted that in places the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi are evident within the Curriculum i.e., within the values that focus on equity, diversity, respect and community and participation. However, the Curriculum would benefit by explicitly stating how the Curriculum is underpinned by Te Tiriti o Waitangi. In particular, to abate confusion as there needs to be greater transparency about what our responsibilities are and how we are to effectively meet these. A recent survey by the State Services Commission (2005) found that 57% of New Zealanders agreed that 'greater knowledge about the Treaty of Waitangi would help many New Zealanders have a better understanding of our country and of our history'.

It would be appropriate to make a clear statement about Te Tiriti o Waitangi at the beginning of the NZ Curriculum. Also, to incorporate the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the Principles of the Curriculum and also to reflect them accordingly within the Learning Areas.

Recommend: *Including a clear Te Tiriti o Waitangi statement at the beginning of the Curriculum, including explicitly stating how Te Tiriti o Waitangi applies within the context of operationalising the Curriculum.*

Incorporating the Treaty o Waitangi in the Principles of the Curriculum and also to reflect them accordingly within the Learning Areas.

3. 'Equity' Principle

It is recognised that education encompasses both the education system per se and the educational environment. Education is a key determinant of health and wellbeing, and improving education is a long-term goal for New Zealand. Education impacts not only on health but also other key determinants of health such as employment, social and emotional wellbeing.

As in accordance with Te Tiriti o Waitangi, we have a responsibility to reduce the current disparities evident in the education sector, for example, increasing the number of Māori teachers, improving educational outcomes for Māori students, engagement and retention of Māori students at school and enabling greater participation of whānau in local education decision making.

● It would be useful to include under the principle of 'equity' on page 9 - reference to all students being supported to reach their full potential. For example, for Maori students this is currently not the case.

Recommend: *Inserting under the principle of 'equity' on page 9 – reference to all students being supported to reach their full potential.*

4. 'Connections' Principle

It is recommended that the word 'positive' precedes the word 'connections' as defined under the principles on page 9.

Recommend: *Inserting the word 'positive' to precede the word 'connections' as defined under the principle of Connections on page 9.*

5. Health and Physical Education Learning Area

5.1 Holistic approach

● The ongoing commitment to Health and Physical Education learning area reflects the importance of these outcomes in children and young peoples learning and development. The four strands are well considered within the draft Curriculum and reflect holistic thinking about health (including Māori understandings and concepts). The curriculum also reflects the need to provide multiple opportunities to learn through formal and informal curriculum. The 'health promoting schools framework' provides a useful tool for schools to engage in providing this supportive environment.

Commend: *The holistic approach to the Health and Physical Education learning area, including the inclusion of Māori concepts of health and wellbeing.*

5.2 Home Economics

Childhood obesity and nutritional ill health are rising concerns in New Zealand with over 30% of New Zealand children being overweight or obese (Ministry of Health, 2003).

Home Economics is included as one of the three identified subject areas that encompasses food and nutrition.

Given that each school will develop their own curriculum and “take account of the diverse learning needs of their students”, the Curriculum is written in such a way that Home Economics is optional rather than being an essential subject area. Home Economic teachers have informed C&PH that this is the case in many schools with Principals frequently opting for food technology, which is a different subject area and not as fundamental to health and well being as Home Economics. C&PH regard Home Economics as fundamental to living as English or Mathematics and therefore its importance should be made explicit within the Achievement Objectives.

Recommend: *Level 2 Achievement Objectives for Health and Physical Education, to be reworded under ‘personal growth and development’ to ensure the teaching of food preparation skills are mandatory. The suggested rewording could be ‘describe their stages of growth and their development needs and demonstrate increasing responsibility for healthy self-care, including healthy food options and preparation skills’.*

The key elements of home economics are clearly identified in each of the four levels of the Achievement Objectives for this learning area.

The teaching of healthy practical food preparation skills to be mandatory in all schools and to see this reflected in all relevant curriculum documents.

5.3 Health Literacy

The four interdependent concepts outlined in the Health and Physical Education learning Area are central to achieving: numeracy, literacy and ‘healthy literacy’ (Nutbeam, 1997) and are the basis of the curriculum and would benefit from being more strongly reflected.

A more robust view of health literacy includes the ability to understand scientific concepts, content and health research; skills in spoken written and online communication; critical interpretation of mass media messages; navigating complex systems of health care and governance; and knowledge and use of community capital and resources, as well as using cultural and indigenous knowledge in health decision making (Nutbeam 2000; Ratzan, 2001; Zarcadoolas, Pleasant & Greer, 2002).

This perspective defines health literacy as the wide range of skills and competencies that people develop over their lifetimes to seek out, comprehend, evaluate and use health information and concepts to make informed choices, reduce health risk and increase quality of life (Zarcadoolas, Pleasant & Greer, 2006)

C&PH support ‘Health Literacy’ being defined as a discrete subject – along with Health Education, Physical Education and Home Economics - under Health and Physical Education Learning Area.

Recommend: *It is recommended that Health Literacy be included as its own subject area, along with the other three identified subject areas, under the Health and Physical Education Learning Area.*

5.4 Health and Physical Education Learning Area Title

The current title of this learning area – Health and Physical Education – does not adequately reflect the subject matter that sits under this title. Changing the title of the learning area to give equal weighting to the three current and suggested fourth subjects areas for this area. Therefore, it is recommended that this Learning Area needs to be re-titled appropriate, e.g., Health and Wellbeing.

Recommend: *The Health and Physical Education Learning Area is re-titled to better reflect the subject areas it encompasses. A suggested title is 'Health and Wellbeing'.*

6. Designing a School Curriculum

An importance aspect of designing of school curriculum is ensuring that there is a continuous supply of competently trained staff to deliver on the Learning Areas that have been identified in the Curriculum.

For example, there is a widespread concern about the lack of suitably qualified Home Economic teachers. Given that their numbers have dwindled considerably over the years and that few are currently training, this subject area risks being either neglected (schools may not prioritise this subject area if there are not suitable teachers) or alternatively this subject area maybe delivered by Health and Physical Education teachers (most of whom are not adequately qualified to teach home economics). Anecdotal evidence indicates that many Principals and Board of Trustees believe that anyone can teach food and nutrition (after all we all eat). However, as like other areas health economics is a specialised subject area requiring specialist expertise.

Recommend: *Under 'Designing a School Curriculum' and 'Some considerations' the following bullet point be added: 'Planning for a continuous supply of adequately trained specialist teachers for each of the key Learning Areas, including for the identified subjects selected'.*

7. 'Student focus' versus the 'whole school community' focus of the Curriculum

Throughout the draft Curriculum there is an emphasis on the student rather than the whole schooling community. For example, under Values it states that 'NZ students are encouraged to value...' C&PH regard the whole school community as responsible for holding the values as outlined in this document.

Recommend: *Under Values that it is reworded to include a whole school community approach rather than a 'student-based approach' i.e., 'New Zealand school communities are encourage to value...'. Also, for the whole school community approach to be included where appropriate throughout the curriculum.*

8. Highlighting the importance of Partnerships within the Curriculum

Healthy nutrition and physical activity for all children is a key Government priority. The importance of the Education sector to work collaboratively across sectors is crucial to meet this priority.

For example at a national level, there is a tripartite agreement between the Ministries of Education and Health and Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC). C&PH is the

Ministry of Health representative on the regional tripartite group for Canterbury. Such partnerships are crucial to improve outcomes for children.

The importance of working collaboratively has been highlighted by the recent launch of 'Mission On' by Prime Minister Helen Clarke in September 2006. 'Mission On' is an excellent example of the way that health, education and sport and recreation are intertwined. The ten initiatives that comprise 'Mission On' is a national example of partnership in action.

Recommend: *It is clearly stated at the beginning of the Curriculum document the importance of working collaboratively across sectors, including with community-based organisations, to improve outcomes for children aged 2-18 years.*

9. Ministry of Education Documentation Terminology

To enhance understanding and to provide greater clarity, it would be useful if the Ministry of Education documents use similar terminology and language across all key documents, that is Te Whariki, NZ Curriculum, and Tertiary documents. Currently this is not the case but would seem appropriate to strive for and we appreciate that this may be the Ministry's intent.

Recommend: *That Ministry of Education strives to standardise the use of terminology used across key documents to enhance clarity and understanding.*

KEY POINTS

Outlined below is a summary of the made points made, which includes key recommendations:

The Ministry of Education is to be recommended:

- for including Early Childhood Education into the Curriculum for the first time. Also, for the holistic approach to the Health and Physical Education learning area, including the inclusion of Māori concepts of health and wellbeing.

It is recommended:

- that there is a clearer linkage with the educational key competencies outlined in Te Whāriki;
- the key competency of 'managing self' is replaced with a more appropriate term. 'Building resiliency' is recommended;
- including a clear Te Tiriti o Waitangi statement at the beginning of the Curriculum, including explicitly stating how Te Tiriti o Waitangi applies within the context of operationalising the Curriculum.
- incorporating the Treaty o Waitangi in the Principles of the Curriculum and also to reflect them accordingly within the Learning Areas;
- under the principle of 'equity' on page 9 that reference to all students being supported to reach their full potential is included;

- the word 'positive' is inserted to precede the word 'connections' as defined under the principle of Connections on page 9;
- level 2 Achievement Objectives for Health and Physical Education, to be reworded under 'personal growth and development' to ensure the teaching of food preparation skills are mandatory. The suggested rewording could be 'describe their stages of growth and their development needs and demonstrate increasing responsibility for healthy self-care, including healthy food options and preparation skills'.
- the key elements of home economics are clearly identified in each of the four levels of the Achievement Objectives for this learning area.
- the teaching of healthy practical food preparation skills to be mandatory in all schools and to see this reflected in all relevant curriculum documents;
- emphasis is placed on the importance of 'health literacy' under the Health and Physical Education learning area;
- the Health and Physical Education Learning Area is re-titled to better reflect the subject areas it encompasses. A suggested title is 'Health and Wellbeing':
- under 'Designing a School Curriculum' and 'Some considerations' the following bullet point be added: 'Planning for a continuous supply of adequately trained specialist teachers for each of the key Learning Areas, including for the identified subjects selected';
- under Values that it is reworded to include a whole school community approach rather than a 'student-based approach' i.e., 'New Zealand school communities are encourage to value...'. Also, for the whole school community approach to be included where appropriate throughout the curriculum;
- it is clearly stated at the beginning of the Curriculum document the importance of working collaboratively across sectors, including with community-based organisations, to improve outcomes for children aged 2-18 years; and
- that the Ministry of Education strives to standardise the use of terminology used across key documents produced by the Ministry to enhance clarity and understanding.

CONCLUSION

Community and Public Health appreciates the opportunity to make a submission on this important document and looks forward to operationalising the updated curriculum - once finalised - when working in education settings.

Overall, we believe the draft Curriculum is very good, however, it could be improved with minor changes as suggested within this submission, including under the Key Points.

REFERENCES

- Canterbury District Health Board. (October 2005). *District Strategic Plan. A Healthier Canterbury: Directions 2010*. Christchurch: Canterbury District Health Board.
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- Ratzan, S. C. (2001). Health literacy: Communication for the public good. *Health Promotion International, 16*(2), 207–214.
- State Services Commission. (2005). Treaty of Waitangi Unit. *Survey*. Wellington: State Services Commission.
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Canterbury

District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora o Waitaha

28 November 2006

Ministry of Education
P O Box 1666
Wellington

Dear Sir/Madam

**The New Zealand Curriculum
Draft for consultation 2006 - Submission**

Please find enclosed a copy of our submission from Community & Public Health, a division of the Canterbury District Health Board, on the draft New Zealand Curriculum document.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on this important document. We hope that the points that we have raised will be useful.

Thank you for your time and consideration with our submission.

Yours faithfully



Evon Currie
General Manager

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