MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Briefing Note: Classroom2020 online learning platform

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education Hon Tracey Martin, Associate Minister of Education		
Date:	19 May 2020	**Priority:**	Medium
Security Level:	In Confidence	**METIS No:**	1228804
Drafter:	Alethea Young		
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Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	**Round Robin:**	No

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

- **Note** the approach the Ministry is taking to provide online learning courses to schools and kura through a Ministry instance of Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura) Learning Management System, Brightspace.

- **Note** that this support will be targeted towards NCEA students in the first phase of implementation.

- **Agree** to forward this briefing to Hon Kelvin Davis and Hon Jenny Salesa.

Agree / Disagree

- **Agree** that this Briefing will be proactively released.

Agree / Disagree

Summary

1. To minimise disruption to learning progress, and avoid perpetuating or increasing inequities in learning outcomes, we established a comprehensive programme of work to enable distance learning for all children and young people as part of the COVID-19 response [METIS 1225140 refers].

2. We are developing the next phase of this work to ensure we are ready to respond should an escalation of alert levels be needed locally, regionally or nationally and to make sure that we take opportunities to improve the education system e.g. keeping the digital divide closed through time. We will be providing you with further advice in coming weeks on

these streams of work. One immediate step we are taking to both be ready for any further disruptions but also improve our education system, is to provide a Learning Management System (LMS).

3. On 7 April 2020, COVID-19 Ministers agreed to provide s 9(2)(f)(iv) for access to an online package of ready-to-go teaching and learning courseware for 200,000 students. We are working with Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura) to provide schools and kura with the most need access to their online course material hosted on the Brightspace LMS as an interim support for the 2020 academic year.

4. The work began under Alert level 4 of the COVID-19 response framework, in which all children and young people were learning at home. Under Alert level 2 there is still a need for schools to be able to support learning at home for some students (e.g. those self-isolating), and we need to continue to strengthen the resilience of all schools to disruption to face-to-face education.

5. Providing access to the Brightspace LMS and Te Kura course material will provide a ready-to-go online learning platform for schools and kura with low levels of existing capability and digital infrastructure. This will strengthen resilience in the sector, and provide an opportunity for the teachers and kaiako in those schools to build capability to provide their own distance learning programmes as they use this example of high quality, well-designed online learning approach.

6. In the medium term we are planning work so that we can deliver the LMS functionality for the Te Rito platform. Currently, development of the Te Rito platform has focused on the Learning Support Register (sLSR) as well as the national learner repository.

7. We are planning work for the LMS deployment, while ensuring the standardised Learning Support Register (sLSR) is not adversely impacted. Work on the Te Rito Data Analysis Early Stage rollout is being paused.

8. Schools and kura who use the Brightspace option will be well-placed to integrate with, or transition to, the Te Rito platform in the future.

Ellen MacGregor-Reid
Deputy Secretary
Early Learning and Student Achievement

19/05/2020

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

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Hon Tracey Martin
Associate Minister of Education

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Background

1. To minimise disruption to learning progress, and avoid perpetuating or increasing inequities in learning outcomes, we have established a comprehensive programme of work to enable distance learning for all children and young people. [METIS 1225140 refers]

2. We are developing the next phase of this work to ensure we are ready to respond should an escalation of alert levels be needed locally, regionally or nationally and to make sure that we take opportunities to improve the education system e.g. keeping the digital divide closed through time. We will be providing you with further advice in coming weeks on these streams of work. One immediate step we are taking to both be ready for any further disruptions but also improve our education system, is to provide a Learning Management System (LMS).

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4. The work began under Alert level 4 of the COVID-19 response framework, in which all children and young people were learning at home. Under Alert level 2 there is still a need for schools to be able to support learning at home for some students (e.g. those self-isolating), and we need to continue to strengthen the resilience of all schools to disruption to face-to-face education.

Classroom2020 platform (on Brightspace)

5. There is significant need for support among some schools and kura who do not have an LMS to enable online teaching and learning. The lack of access to an LMS mean that some schools and kura did not have online learning material readily available for learners under lockdown.

6. To support learners in these schools Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura) has shared its online course materials with the Ministry. In order to make these online courses available to schools and kura the Ministry is working to provide a Ministry instance of the Brightspace platform with Te Kura course content. This platform has been branded Classroom2020. We had hoped to have this ready for schools and kura during Alert Level 3, but technical delays and the pace with which New Zealand has shifted to Alert Level 2 has meant that was not possible.

7. Though the majority of students will be learning at school under Alert Level 2 we are progressing implementation because we have seen firsthand that use of virtual learning environments such as an LMS is part of improving education for our children and young people. As well, schools and kura will still need to provide distance learning for those students unable to attend school, for example those self-isolating, unwell, or impacted by a potential exposure to COVID-19. This will also build resilience for those schools and kura to be able to shift back to fully distance learning if necessary at any point as part of the COVID-19 pandemic or in response to other emergencies.

8. Providing Classroom2020 to those schools and kura most in need is intended as an interim measure for the 2020 academic year. The current intention is to offer this platform until February 2021 (which allows for NZQA submission timeframes). The Ministry is considering a long term solution for the 2021 school year and beyond through the Te Rito work programme.

9. Te Kura has shared online courses for early childhood, primary and secondary students. This provides quality teaching and learning and assessment resources aligned to the New Zealand Curriculum, and NCEA. Resources include Te Reo Māori courses that can benefit learners in Māori medium settings and learners of te reo Māori.

10. We are currently finalising with Te Kura a Memorandum of Understanding around the use of their course content in the Ministry instance of Brightspace. The letter of intent for the Brightspace platform covers up to 200,000 students initially for two months with an opportunity to extend use to the end of the 2020 school year. We are working to finalise our contract with D2L for the Brightspace platform on that basis.

11. Providing access to the Brightspace LMS and Te Kura course material will provide a ready-to-go online learning platform for schools and kura with low levels of existing capability and digital infrastructure. This will strengthen resilience in the sector, and provide an opportunity for the teachers and kaiako in those schools to build capability to provide their own distance learning programmes as they use this example of high quality, well-designed online learning approach.

12. In the medium term we are planning work so that we can deliver the LMS functionality for Te Rito platform. Currently, development of Te Rito platform has focused on the standardised Learning Support Register (sLSR) as well as the national learner repository.

13. We are planning work for the LMS deployment, while ensuring the standardised Learning Support Register (sLSR) is not adversely impacted. Work on the Te Rito Data Analysis Early Stage rollout is being paused.

Implementation approach

14. We plan to implement Classroom2020 as an optional resource available to schools and kura in a phased approach, starting with NCEA levels 1-3 courses, then providing access to course content to lower year levels starting with Years 9 and 10. We have already migrated course content from years 11-13 into the Ministry platform and will continue to migrate additional year levels, starting with years 9 and 10.

15. We are working with three schools in some initial technical testing. We have also started work with regional offices to identify schools who would benefit from this platform to participate in a pilot, which will effectively be the start of early adoption. We will then move quickly from this early adoption phase to launching the platform more widely to secondary schools who request access.

16. In later phases we will explore providing access for lower year levels, starting with Years 9 and 10. This is dependent on the ever changing context and the need and interest by schools and kura for this resource.

17. We are finalising our approach to piloting and roll out so that we can provide access quickly to interested secondary schools. We propose a soft launch approach with an ongoing roll out in small batches rather than a "big bang" roll out approach to facilitate ongoing set up for schools. This will also support us in managing sector expectations of processing time if they request access as there will be limitations on how many schools the Ministry can process in any week.

Key Risks and Benefits

18. There is a risk that the provision of this resource under alert levels 2 and 1 may be viewed by the sector as potentially prescriptive or too directive in relation to what constitutes quality online teaching and learning. While this may be a concern of some,

there will be many schools and kura who welcome this resource to fill the absence of an LMS or as supplement to their existing online teaching approaches.

19. There is a risk that the sector will perceive the rollout of this online learning platform as an indication that we may return to alert levels 3 and 4. We can manage this risk through clear communications aligned to the key messages from Ministry of Health, and by focussing on the need to build system resilience for a range of potential emergency situations that could impact on access to face-to-face education.

Proactive Release

20. We recommend that this Briefing is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.