

Press Release

Inclusive Education Action Group

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Inclusive Education Group Critical of Auckland Grammar's Decision to Dump NCEA

The decision by Auckland Grammar School to replace NCEA at year 11 with the Cambridge system for most of its students is elitist and will fail to meet the needs of many students, according to the Inclusive Education Action Group (IEAG).

While Grammar principal John Morris said that students have “one choice” to do Cambridge, IEAG co-convenors Ian Armstrong and Dr Jude MacArthur say that “one choice” means “no choice”. “Children and young people have a right to education, and schools are places where all students should feel welcome and have their learning supported. Providing a non-New Zealand contextualized system based only on exams excludes a large number of students”, they said. In allowing “some exceptions” for “weaker” students to do NCEA subjects, the school created a culture that differentiated students into two distinct groups. “Who will want to be in the “weak” group?” they asked.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the New Zealand Disability Strategy established schools' responsibilities to provide an inclusive education system for all students. “Principals need to understand what this means for their schools. Moving to a Cambridge system will not support schools to become inclusive. On the contrary, we see a large number of students missing out. Is this what we want our schools to look like?”

IEAG acknowledged the work of New Zealand researchers such as Professor John Hattie that showed NCEA has resulted in more students staying at school and succeeding. Grammar principal John Morris described students as copying others' work and lacking motivation to excel, but throwing out NCEA is the wrong approach. “These are issues that can be addressed through the development of an inclusive school culture where teachers and students have respect for the learning process and for each other; have high expectations; work collaboratively; and do their best work.”

IEAG hopes that the Ministry of Education will ensure that all state secondary schools continue to offer NCEA to all students.

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