

School Zones - A Community Perspective.



The North East Secondary Education Committee (NESE) would like to shape the future of school zones to improve student access and attendance at school. NESE's suggestions are considered conclusions, reflecting community feedback and discussions with education leaders to date.

School zone benefits:-

- Zones ensure residents can attend their local school
- Students are distributed to all schools
- State resources are well utilised

Current school zone arrangements have several negative outcomes:-

- Families choose schools for their children, sometimes at great distances from their homes.
- Many primary students are unsure which secondary school they will attend even at the end of year 8, losing momentum and confidence in their Learning Journey.
- Schools advertise and promote themselves as being better.
- There is a strong perception of "good school vs bad school".
- Families believe there is prestige in getting "in" to a school when they are out of zone
- Real estate prices capitalise on families moving to get into a preferred school zone.
- Some schools struggle to get local students to attend them, especially those without a zone.
- Marketing does not always reflect the teaching, learning or opportunities students will receive by attending the school.

NESE's Objectives

Students need to be able to independently get themselves to their local school for education. The Ministry of Education needs to have a strategy in place so local schools are available for all communities.

Students need to be able to envisage their Learning Journey. Student achievement will be raised through the wellbeing students gain with being confident about their future Learning Journey.

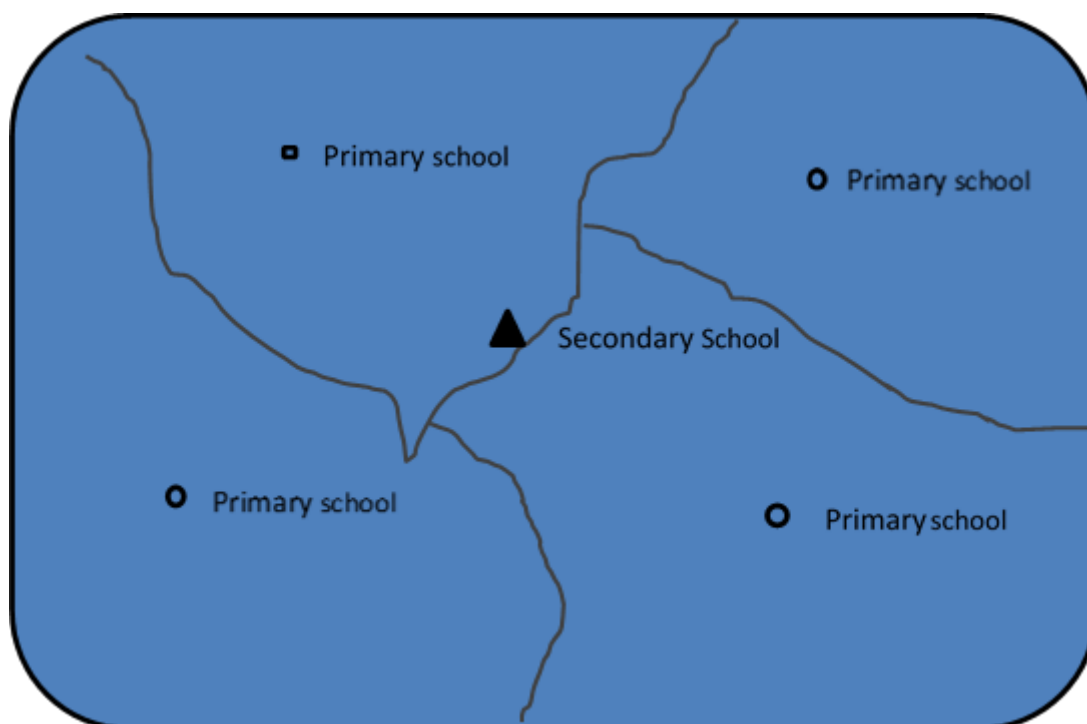
School Catchments - A Learning Journey Focus.

NESE would like to present options that could bring school zones back in line with the practical outcomes school zones aim to achieve. We don't wish to restrict parental choice, but rather encourage an education pathway that is clear and interactive, allowing students to easily access and participate in education. Our ideas focus on adopting the student Learning Journey as the foundation of education:-

Location

- We could stop using the phrase "enrolment zone". We need to create zones which focus on natural catchment areas. The phrase then becomes "catchment".
- Every school would have a defined catchment.
- Catchments are designed and optimised for safe access to schools, preferably using active transport, including walking, cycling and scooting. Major roads, rivers and train tracks are considered to be catchment boundaries.
- Primary school catchments would be enclosed and surrounded by the local secondary school's catchment. See diagram below.
- Every residential house must fall inside both a primary and secondary school catchment.
- Entry to the local secondary school is continued as a natural transition from attending the local primary school. This important provision supports many positive benefits to both children and administration

Learning Journey Catchment.



Relationships between schools

- Enrolment at the secondary school will be quickly verified through the National Student Index Number, without the need to verify residential addresses.
- There is increased potential for accurate planning. Student numbers at 'catchment' primary schools will forecast provision at the catchment secondary school.
- Relationships between primary and secondary schools will be more connected. This will ease the transition to secondary school, with the secondary schools becoming familiar places to all students before they attend.
- All schools within a catchment would network more regularly, benefiting from each other's knowledge, without needing to compete to attract students.
- Students can continue their Learning Journey together as primary school cohorts would never have their students split to attend different secondary schools.

Wellbeing

- Catchments would provide certainty. Families will be able to envisage their children's Learning Journey. Students approaching secondary school will be familiar with the school they will attend and have a greater sense of belonging.
- Students and their envisioned Learning Journey are protected as their enrolment in the catchment allows their Learning Journey to continue. This will benefit those who move house frequently, or experience change due to parent separation, moving house and other complex factors which separate students from their friends and familiar adults.
- Families that move house would have a choice to either continue at the school where their children started their Learning Journey, or move to the school in the catchment of their new home.
- Promotion of local schools will enable communities to develop more confidence in their local schools. Families will engage more and invest more of their time and resources in their school.

Administration

- Adjusting school capacity is predictable and timely. A change in catchment student numbers could be seen and documented initially at early primary level.
- School catchment zones are designed using both Ministry school data and Census data so each catchment zone contains sufficient students to support the school's planned capacity.
- Catchments could be adjusted to allow flexibility if needed after a Census, or to provide for new housing developments. This should be an infrequent event.

Additional Considerations

- All homes would fall inside both a co-ed and single sex secondary school catchment.
- Single sex schools in the same area should have the same catchment.
- Families will continue to have the choice of attending schools of religious nature, private schooling or single sex education.

Positive actions suggested

- Encourage schools to have a healthy level of diversity, reflecting their own geographical community.
- Promote the well-being advantages of the relationships students establish while attending their local school, combined with the benefits when students belong and live in that same community.
- Take actions to overcome the low public perception that schools on the East of Christchurch are considered to be less desirable.
- Supply the media with balanced, factual performance articles.
- Encourage media education for principals and those in school leadership roles.
- The Ministry and individual schools should monitor media articles for accuracy, contacting the editor promptly to correct any errors.

Out of zone enrolments

Is the current zone enrolment priority order the best order of priority? How does this give equal opportunity or raise student achievement? NESE believes active provision should be made for:-

- Students who have previously attended a primary school within the catchment.
- Students from residential areas with no school zone. E.g. semi-rural.
- Students moving from another school for specific social reasons. These students should have access to the next closest school catchment.

NESE's Vision

NESE believes adopting a focus on individual student Learning Journeys will create a stable foundation for raising student achievement. Catchments will optimise student involvement in their local community, forming the foundation for successful Learning Journeys. Education will be inclusive, engaging families within their own communities. Transitions between schools will be smooth. The culture and focus of network provision will prioritise student education as a seamless Learning Journey. Invested relationships between schools within a catchment will facilitate the purposeful sharing of resources.

The NESE Committee

NESE is a community group based in North East Christchurch. Committee members are available to discuss these ideas. Please contact the chair Amanda Williams at amanda.williams@xtra.co.nz or phone 383 4248.