

The future of Physical Education NZ

A REPORT FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION NZ

Why explore the future?

Physical Education NZ (PENZ) is interested in how it might best position itself to be fit for purpose and sustainable into the future. Its Board and senior management are conscious of the rapid speed of change occurring across society, and how this will impact the environment in which it works.

Therefore, it agreed to partner with Sport NZ to explore possible and plausible futures that may play out, to enable it to test its approach through understanding the issues and challenges shaping the future.

Process facilitated by:
 Dave Adams (Head of Strategic Foresight)
 and Gregor Foundation (Strategic Engagement Manager)
 Sport New Zealand
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Topics covered included:

- Testing the assumptions held by PENZ that are influencing how the strategic issues are being considered.
- Emerging disruptions and transformations ahead.
- Scenarios to illustrate alternative futures to consider a much wider range of contexts in which PENZ may be operating and to generate new insights into possible future developments.
- Consideration of novel ideas and risk reduction to enable a level of anticipation, and therefore preparation, for the inevitable surprises that PENZ will encounter.

These topics underpin a new approach to having conversations about the future and identifying narratives to align to a period of rapid change. To do this, it is important to imagine a range of alternative scenarios for the future. This can give us greater confidence that we are taking the right actions today – fit for a future we want, and adaptive for the changes and disruptions we will experience in the coming decade.

This document summarises the PENZ strategic foresight conversation from the development of an initial baseline perspective to the elaboration of four potential scenarios.

This involved two facilitated workshops involving the PENZ Board and senior management.

A five-to-10-year time horizon was used.



Key findings

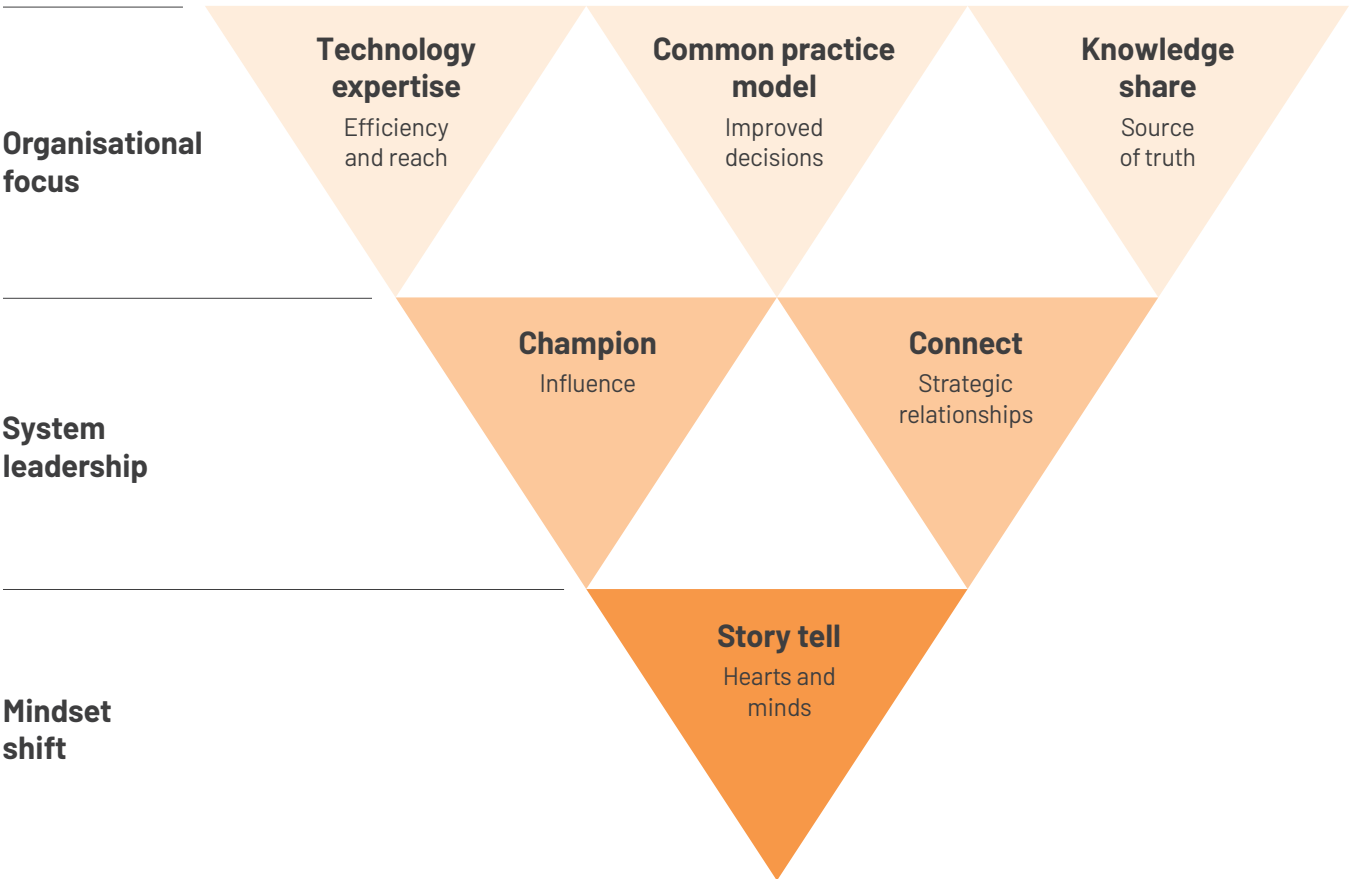
The need for PENZ and the physical education sector to continue to adapt to a changing world is widely acknowledged. Rather than being constrained by assuming a single future, PENZ (and the physical education sector) will benefit from exploring alternative scenarios to be ready for future uncertainty. This learning journey also helps to clarify today's issues and allows us to think more creatively.

This report adds to this learning journey and is intended as an input into ongoing strategic thinking. As a key advocate for physical education in New Zealand, PENZ has a significant role in responding to the current challenges and future opportunities and providing guidance to the physical education sector. That said, it should not think it has to act alone or have all the answers. This is as much about what PENZ wants to become, as the actions it might take.

This report focuses on the assumed future and four alternative futures to identify the capabilities PENZ will need to enhance its resilience to respond to future opportunities and challenges.

Collectively, these inputs highlighted six immediate opportunities for PENZ. They are complementary but can also be considered in isolation of each other, noting capacity considerations.

Six key opportunities for PENZ





Story tell (mindset shift)

Every organisation has a story. It is a narrative staff and stakeholders create. It is neither right or wrong, but is powerful in informing how we construct meaning, often more powerful in influencing behaviour than data or evidence. It is important PENZ can tell a story that is aligned to its vision and reason for being and that it is a story that others tell about the organisation.

Scenario responses identified PENZ directors are thinking about the current context differently. This suggests not everyone is starting from the same place, with perspectives coloured by individual assumptions and mindsets. To collectively move forward, it is important to have a common understanding of where you are now. This will impact the narrative. What is PENZ's narrative? Is it effective and aligned to the future it wants to create? Has it, and can it, adapt to meet changing objectives and societal shifts? Does everyone agree with it?

Telling the story in a compelling way to the right people is as important as the narrative itself. This is about having the confidence and ability to tell the story to all levels from Ministers, the Ministry of Education, Boards of Trustees and school leaders. Is the PENZ narrative being heard? Are the right people hearing it? How is it being delivered?

Champion (System leadership)

Connected to storytelling, physical education can be positioned to champion other issues of societal interest, lifting the profile and relevance of physical education.

Integrating into its existing work, PENZ could position itself as a champion of environmental sustainability, aligning itself with the building momentum across society and reinforcing its social license. This would include leading by example through its own actions and helping the education sector adapt to the climate.

PENZ has a strong *maturanga* Māori focus. There is a desire to accelerate this to ensure education genuinely embraces Te Ao Māori, including understanding what physical education might look like from a *tāngata whenua* perspective. It could build on this progress, articulating its commitment to Māori. This might include influencing governance models to ensure Māori are engaged in key decision making across the sector, establishing direct relationships with *iwi*, and supporting member schools to do the same, giving effect to a for Māori-by-Māori approach, and continuing to strengthen cultural competency.

Connect (system leadership)

PENZ has an influencing role through advocacy and building strategic relationships. Both are required to influence policy and decisions that position physical education as a fundamental component of education.

Building this influence requires PENZ being a connector and facilitator in the system, providing opportunities for local, regional, national, and even international-wide conversations about opportunities and issues that are applicable across the education setting. Importantly, it is about understanding its communities, key influencers, and building trusted relationships.

This is about influencing up and out and will require strategic alliances, such as with the tertiary sector. It is also working locally into the school community to position the physical education conversation to better reflect students' diverse ways and motivations for engaging.

Has PENZ identified its key strategic relationships? How is it managing these relationships?

Knowledge share (organisational focus)

PENZ has a key role in the timely gathering, tailoring and dissemination of knowledge, and sharing a deep understanding of what is happening around it and what might happen in the future.

Knowledge gathering, analysis and distribution is particularly important in a time of rapid change and increased complexity. Having PENZ contribute to the flow of knowledge will improve decision-making and alignment and improve resilience.

It will also position PENZ as a credible source of information in a time of easy access to unreliable sources of information – the source of truth in a post truth world.

Common practice model (organisational focus)

With the apparent shift from the current school-based curriculum that has been signalled by new Government. For physical education, a common practice model could bring more rigor to the teaching and learning of physical education and include planning that reflects students' wellbeing and learning needs, fostering inclusion and relationship building, and exploring te ao Māori through a focus on hauora.

This is about modelling good practice and enabling teachers to deliver the HPE curriculum and also connect physical education to the delivery of other parts of the curriculum.

Technology alignment (organisational focus)

PENZ can build its technological capability to improve its operations and identify new opportunities. It should actively explore emerging technologies, such as AI solutions, that could help streamline its administrative processes and reduce burdens. PENZ has the option to build this technological capability internally, or it could partner with technology experts and leverage external knowledge and resources.

As PENZ explores new technologies, it should ensure that any changes align with its core purpose and values. The complexities of technological change can have both anticipated and unanticipated impacts, so PENZ should thoroughly assess these before significantly altering its strategies and programmes.

PENZ will need courage to change and to influence change. It can reimagine and realise what it becomes and is known for. This report is a step along that journey of discovery.



Education sector overview

New Zealand's Education Context

Since the 'Tomorrow's Schools' reforms of 1989, New Zealand has had a uniquely devolved state schooling system, with each of the 2500 schools operating as 'self-managing' crown entities that are governed by their own Boards of Trustees. New Zealand's approach provides school leaders and their Boards with the autonomy to make many of the major decisions which influence the experience of ākongā.

Māori medium schools are another distinct feature of New Zealand's schooling system. There are different types of Māori medium schools, such as Kura Kaupapa Māori, Kura ā Iwi, Kura Motuhake, Kura Māori and Wharekura. These are schools where most of the learning is in te reo Māori and focuses on Ao Māori perspectives. About 10 percent of Māori students (about 20,000) attend Māori medium schools.

Since the 1990s, New Zealand's curriculum approach has also differed from many other countries in the OECD. The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) provides a framework for schools to design a local curriculum which meets both the learning objectives stated in the curriculum and the needs of their school community. It is structured around eight learning areas (English, Mathematics, Technology, Science, Social Sciences, Health and Physical Education, Learning Languages and The Arts). Schools are required to cover all eight of these learning areas until the end of Year 10 but can make decisions about the allocation of teaching time to suit the needs of their own school community. While the recent refresh of the NZC has started to provide an increased emphasis on the disciplinary thinking underpinning each learning area (and more guidance on the content to be covered than previous iterations of the NZC), the school-based curriculum approach has remained paramount. In short, New Zealand schools and teachers are provided with the autonomy to design programmes of learning for the students in their classes.

Teacher Subject Associations, such as PENZ, play a key role in New Zealand's school-based curriculum environment. Largely without subject specialists within their staff teams, central agencies such as the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority rely on the associations for subject specialist advice and input. Subject associations also play a key role supporting and providing professional development for teachers throughout New Zealand through resource creation, regional and national networks, and the provision of conferences and other professional learning opportunities for teachers.

As a result of its review of 'Tomorrow's Schools', the Labour-led Government (2017-2023) passed the Education and Training Act (2020) which broadened the range of objectives which were the responsibility of a school board. While previously focused solely on educational achievement, the Act required boards to also ensure that the school is a "physically and emotionally safe place for all students and staff", "inclusive" and that it "caters for students with differing needs." The Act also requires that each school "gives effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi by working to ensure that its plans, policies, and local curriculum reflect local tikanga Māori, mātauranga Māori; and achieving equitable outcomes for Māori students."

New Government coalition Agreements on Education

The National, Act, NZ First coalition Government have agreed the following key education initiatives:

- The requirement for an hour of maths and two hours of reading and writing on average each day in primary and intermediate schools.
- Rewriting the curriculum to outline the knowledge and skills that primary and intermediate schools must cover each year in reading, writing, maths, and science.
- Requiring standardised, robust assessment of student progress in reading, writing and maths at least twice a year from Year 3 to Year 8, with clear reporting to parents.
- Reintroducing partnership schools and introducing a policy to allow state schools to become partnership schools.
- Prioritising reporting and enforcement action to reduce truancy, including centrally collecting and publishing attendance data.
- Amending the Education and Training Act 2020 to enshrine educational attainment as the paramount objective for state schools.
- Refocusing the curriculum on academic achievement and not ideology, including the removal and replacement of the gender, sexuality, and relationship-based education guidelines.
- Develop new strategies to address school attendance strategies.

What we are currently seeing?

Increased centralisation of decision-making

The education policies being implemented by the new Government largely appear to involve decisions being taken away from teachers, school leaders and board members. This is evident through the cell phone ban, the more prescriptive or knowledge-based approach to the curriculum and the mandated curriculum time for Maths, Reading and Writing.

Contrasting this centralised approach is the return of the partnership school model which liberates schools from the perceived bureaucratic and centralised constraints placed on them by the Ministry of Education.

School property challenges

With the Government closely examining budgets across the entire public service, school property development decisions are coming under increased scrutiny. In the self-managing school environment, there have been several examples of inadequate property maintenance and poor building design creating problems for schools and the Ministry of Education. The increasing costs of construction is exacerbating the problem.

The Minister has launched a three-month inquiry into school property, with many school property projects paused while the review takes place.

The Ministry of Education has been working on some generic designs for school buildings, including gymnasiums, as a way of ensuring high quality and affordable design. This approach may have implications for green space, playing fields and the sense of belonging which locally-designed school buildings can foster within a school community.

Increased stand-downs and suspensions

New Zealand school principals 'stood-down' more students in 2023 than they have in each of the previous 20 years. Assaults were the most common reason, followed by vaping, smoking and alcohol consumption. The increased polarisation of society in the post-pandemic world appears to be one factor having an impact on student conduct. The recent release of the Education Review Office's report, 'Time to Focus; Behaviour in our Classrooms', indicated that disruptive student behaviour in New Zealand classrooms was among the worst in the OECD.

Healthy school lunches being reviewed

Associate Minister of Education, David Seymour, has said that the scheme introduced by the previous Government is wasteful and that the Government will reduce the \$350 million which is currently allocated to the programme by making it more targeted. This has led to an outcry from some school principals and advocacy groups. Significantly, the Associate Minister appears keen to turn this issue into a wider discussion about measuring the impact of all interventions in schools to ascertain the extent to which they assist student achievement.

Increase in online learning

There are more students enrolling in online high schools, with a growing number of school options available. The Correspondence School grew from 23,000 students in 2020 to 28,000 two years later, while Crimson Global Academy had 284 students in 2024, up from 12 in 2022. Cost of living, time flexibility and bullying have been sighted as among the reasons.

Questions to consider

- How will a more centralised and prescriptive style of curriculum impact 'locally-led' approaches?
- Will a more prescriptive curriculum environment require less focus on working with individual schools and teachers and greater focus on the development and provision of resources and programmes to be utilised across schools?
- Will increased focus on standardised testing and reporting on student achievement in reading, writing and maths reduce curriculum time for physical education and physical activity?
- Will the reprioritisation of professional development funding towards upskilling existing teachers in reading, writing, maths, and science impact opportunities in HPE?
- What impact will reform fatigue have on engagement into schools?
- What impact will change, and fatigue have on selling additional 'new' or 'extra' initiatives, such as 'physical activity for wellbeing' into schools?

PENZ membership survey – key findings

- The survey was conducted by PENZ in December 2023 to gather insights from its members.
- The respondents were from secondary schools (73%), primary (12%), intermediate (5%), and tertiary (5%) organisations; were predominantly from larger urban regions like Auckland, Waikato, Wellington, and Canterbury; and were predominantly New Zealand European (81%), with some Māori (17%) and mixed ethnicities (20%).



Key findings

- The overall Net Promoter Score (NPS) for PENZ is +7, which is low compared to other similar sectors.
- The NPS varies significantly by organisation type, with tertiary (+63) and intermediate (+50) being the highest, secondary middling (+15), and primary the lowest (-27).
- There is solid support for PENZ's vision (3.79/5) and mission (3.83/5), with slightly lower support from primary and "other" schools.
- Of the three strategic priorities, "Grow" is seen as the top priority, followed by "Engage" and "Connect".
- Respondents feel most "interested", "inspired", and "encouraged" when connecting with PENZ, but less "connected" and "supported".
- The sense of belonging, feeling valued, and feeling empowered as PENZ members is generally moderate, with intermediate and tertiary organizations rating the highest.
- The most valuable current PENZ services are professional development opportunities and quality resources, with a desire for more academically and practically focused PD, as well as increased collaboration and sharing.
- The majority prefer an annual fee to access PENZ services and support, with a quarter liking "pay as you go" and a fifth wanting it to be free.
- There is strong support for PENZ supporting non-members as well as members.
- The preferred delivery mechanism for PENZ services is online, followed by local and regional provision.
- While people are positive about connecting with PENZ in the future (+16 NPS), they are highly unlikely to contribute to PENZ (-40 NPS).
- The top priorities for PENZ improvement are increasing physical presence and running local/regional networks and events, providing more PD opportunities, and building a broader network without cliques.
- Māori respondents have a lower sense of belonging and feeling valued as PENZ members compared to non-Māori but feel equally empowered.

What PENZ thinks will happen in the future

The assumed or baseline future is one possible future. It is a good way of emptying the mind of the most pressing worries to help identify not only what you want to avoid, but some of the characteristics that you want to work towards.

A baseline future is what we generally think will happen if there is limited change. It is not radically different from today and is derived from what we see in the world around us. The purpose of the baseline future is not to predict what the future of physical education will look like, but to help identify the obvious issues, and stimulate conversations around how PENZ could respond.

The basis of PENZ's baseline future was identified via a survey completed ahead of the first workshop. The survey questions are designed to draw out a common understanding of perceived opportunities, threats, and aspirations for the future of physical education in New Zealand. This provided the basis for the baseline future – the future participants assume will occur. (Survey responses are provided in Appendix 1).

In PENZ's baseline future, it is assumed:

- Increased student participation rates in physical education and extracurricular activities.
- The development of locally led communities, with a community of learners contributing to each other.
- PENZ becoming the primary source for advice and guidance in PE, especially regarding curriculum refresh.
- An increase in the demand for PENZ's work, including more advisors and staff.
- Government policies supporting the development and professional learning and development (PLD) of the curriculum.
- Strides towards equitable access to quality physical education.
- Stronger collaborative partnerships to promote physical activity and well-being.
- A thriving online community with knowledge sharing and accessible membership.
- An engaged PE community with PENZ at the forefront of this, leading the way.
- PENZ staying ahead of changes to NCEA and maintaining its perceived value.
- PENZ remaining relevant within communities as a place for support.
- There being a deeper understanding of bicultural physical education and Mana orite.

PENZ recognised the following issues could disrupt the future they assume will occur

- A refresh of the curriculum possibly challenging the place of PE.
- An increased challenge to attract PE teachers.
- Schools questioning the value of PENZ membership.
- A decline in membership involvement.
- Students become increasingly diverse, affecting how physical education teachers engage, communicate, and create relevant offers.
- The ability to adapt to AI and on-line learning.
- Lack of political will or policy support for physical education.
- Individual schools taking positions that are counter to that of PENZ.
- Increased pressure on discretionary time for teachers as our lives get busier.
- A lack of a unified approach to physical education delivery resulting in a growing gap between the priorities of state and independent schools.
- Funding constraints impacting capacity.

There are probably no surprises to those within the physical education community in this baseline future scenario. It reflects what many people and organisations in the sector are contemplating now – how are they going to ensure they have adequate membership and capacity to deliver on aspirations, how do they address current inequities in the system, and do they have the appropriate delivery model and capabilities to respond to societal challenges.

Moving beyond baseline future

Strategy is typically based on the assumption that a single assumed future will play out – the baseline future. As the future is unknown, reliance on a single future compromises our resilience to change.

There is a need to move away from prediction and a focus on a single future, to instead consider alternative scenarios that help us explore questions and prepare for unknowns. A few questions emerged in the baseline future discussion including:

- What impact on-line learning will have on subjects such as PE that have a practical component?
- Given changes to the school curriculum, is it safe to assume physical education will retain its value?
- To what extent do plans assume the current focus is appropriate?

These questions are unlikely to surprise those engaged within PENZ and are likely to form the basis of current strategic discussions. The variety of perception or response to these questions emphasises that no single future can be assumed. An exploration of how respective scenarios may challenge these questions leads to more robust strategic dialogue. It is easy to get misled by extrapolating from obvious trends and developments.

To avoid this, a common approach is to develop scenarios that explore plausible future states. Developing these scenario narratives can be achieved through the combination of impactful, but uncertain disruptors to form stories of the future.

Sport NZ has identified 31 phenomenon as causing the most disruption to the future of sport and recreation in New Zealand – [Disruptors](#). Of these, PENZ identified the following as potentially most disruptive to physical education.



Most impactful disruptors to school sport

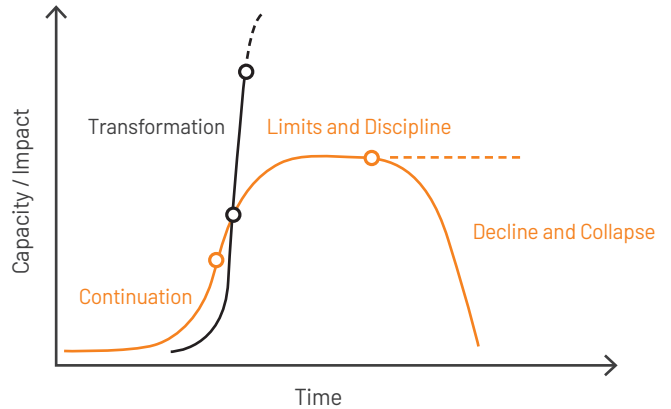
The following future disruptors were highlighted as potentially the most impactful for PENZ. Each are linked to reports.

<u>Workforce changes</u>	The play, active recreation, and sport sector will be subject to the same forces (e.g. demographic) shaping other workplaces. Challenging for the paid sector, these will prove particularly challenging for the key volunteer support groups.
<u>Gaming, augmented and virtual reality</u>	Online gaming and eSports are growing rapidly, especially but not exclusively among younger people. While competition and prize money are a driver for some, most find the social and community aspects the most important factors. Increasingly immersive games are anticipated, but how virtual worlds will develop is unknown.
<u>Individual wellbeing</u>	Health trends in New Zealand, often associated with lifestyle patterns, indicate chronic morbidities (e.g. diabetes) will be a significant concern over the coming decades. These trends were established before the emergence of 'long covid' and the unknown long-term consequences of the pandemic. Active recreation is likely to become more important as health systems look to continue evolving beyond disease response to wellbeing support.
<u>Social Resilience</u>	Changing patterns of social resilience that are associated with levels of trust, changing social values and world views. Reflects debates within New Zealand around the collective support of common norms and rules.
<u>Status of public funding</u>	Managing the government's finances will be challenged by a multitude of global and domestic challenges arising from the pandemic aftermath, geo-political tensions, and climate demands. Potential moves between orthodox and heterodox economic policies will determine future funding status.
<u>Inequality</u>	Socio-economic inequalities, while primarily associated with financial measures, also include the digital divide determining access to digital products & services so vital to full participation in contemporary New Zealand.
<u>Governance response</u>	The desire for re-alignment, reform and re/dis-establishment of respective government agencies will remain an ongoing trend. Reforms in health, local government, and education, for example all have the potential to influence the education outdoors sector.
<u>Climate change</u>	Current scientific forecasts indicate a changing climate will impact human health and facilities with the emergence of novel pests and diseases, together with extreme weather events. The consequences will also be felt in terms of societal change and consumer behaviour.
<u>The changing nature of work</u>	Even before the pandemic, the idea of a stable career and retirement was threatened by changing job patterns and increased longevity. Together with more transient employment contracts and the emergence of automation, the future of work is looking increasingly complex.
<u>Social licence</u>	Pressures on the Government to change priorities to address key issues (e.g. climate, ageing population, inequality) may result in spending on the sector becoming more discretionary if sport is no longer regarded as a universal good. Athlete activism and emergent social issues all contribute to the creation of an increasingly complex environment that the sector will need to navigate.

Alternative futures

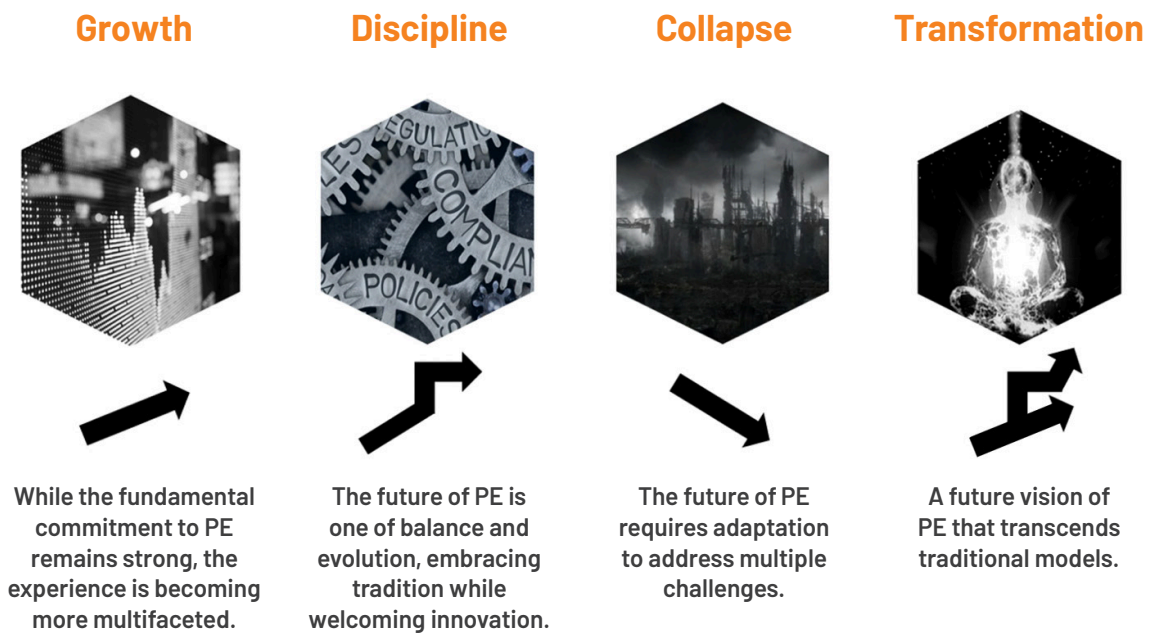
To identify possible and plausible alternative futures for PENZ, Jim Dator's four futures framework is used. This describes four broad categories of how the future may unfold:

- 1. Growth**
Continued development along current trajectories.
- 2. Collapse**
Sudden breakdown of systems and ways of being.
- 3. Discipline**
New forms of control and restraint imposed to prevent collapse.
- 4. Transformation**
Emergence of entirely novel systems and ways of being.



Dator argues these four futures encompass the range of possibilities people envision for the future.

The disruptors identified by PENZ as the most impactful and uncertain, were weaved through the four scenarios.



The full narratives for each scenario are provided in Appendix 2. In considering the narratives, the participants were asked to consider:

- How the PENZ strategy would fare if the scenario eventuated?
- What implications the scenario has for teachers and schools?
- What steps PENZ can take to develop greater resilience to the challenges?
- How PENZ can work to support the development of the more positive outcomes?
- What actions PENZ can take to ensure its plans are effective across multiple scenarios and not predicated on one?

Overall, the aim is not to judge whether the scenario will occur, but to consider what PENZ would do if it did

Scenario A: Growth

New Zealand’s evolving physical education (PE) landscape mirrors the country’s ongoing experience of broader societal, environmental, and economic changes. While the fundamental commitment to PE remains strong, the experience is becoming more multifaceted. The future of PE likely features a blended approach, leveraging technology, prioritising mental and holistic well-being, adapting to climate realities, and emphasising inclusivity within traditional sport.

Key Implications

- Politically seen as problem solvers – a huge weight on the sector. Need to lead sector, not just respond.
- Pressure on funding and sustainability of approach.
- Potential shift of emphasis from PE to physical activity, with increased focus on PE value proposition to STEM.
- Capacity of people would need to grow and change – both board and staff.

Biggest Opportunity/Risk

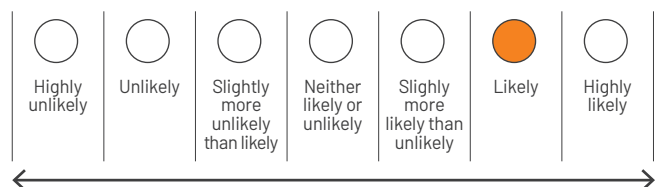
- Enhances wellbeing value proposition.
- Positive social skills from PE will contribute to social cohesion.
- Moving focus from STEM to STEMP.
- Front-footing climate and environmental challenges could open different partnerships.
- Accessible technology could improve experiences for young people that they would not otherwise access.
- Risk of PE losing its core purpose. Real and imagined hierarchies in schools exacerbated.
- Challenge of taking the profession with PENZ.
- Challenge of leading/convincing key stakeholders – MOE; NZQA; Boards of trustees
- Challenge of building understanding and value alignment across membership.
- Determining the extent to which technology is an enabler or dis-enabler of physical activity. For example, what impact will an increase in virtual engagement have on physical and mental health? What needs to be known to have confidence in the benefits, and be able to effectively manage the risks?
- How does digital impact on Mātauranga Māori?
- Facilities ill-equipped for warmer and wetter climate.
- How will the qualification system adjust?

Necessary Capabilities

- Proactive leadership, notably being prepared to take a stand and knowing who to stand with.
- Socializing ideas through storytelling – providing strong direction including an articulation and positioning of a compelling narrative – selling change and a vision for the future. At times this will be leading change and at others it will be about enabling change.
- Thought-leadership
- Staff capacity and understanding of the changing environment (and a willingness to learn and adapt).
- Having a strong value proposition (and story)
- Influencing the influencers and building sustainable relationships.
- Understanding emerging technologies and identifying opportunities and challenges. Build capability or strong connections with technology companies. Use technology to free up time.
- Build technological and social insights to understand the pros and cons of moving toward a more prominent digital environment.

Plausibility

While there are many variables, aspects of scenario are already in play. PENZ has agency in shaping the future.



Scenario B: Discipline

Physical education in New Zealand is evolving as society takes strong steps to respond to the challenges of the twenty-first century. Overall, the future of PE in New Zealand is one of balance and evolution. It embraces tradition while welcoming innovation, strives for equity and accessibility, and strongly emphasises the holistic well-being of young people, ensuring they stay active and engaged in a world of ever-changing opportunities.

Key Implications

- Requirement to evolve with societal trends.
- Increased financial pressures requiring innovative programmes to teach a wide range of skills and values through physical activity and movement.
- Enhanced collaboration within and across schools and into communities both expected and required.
- Immersive experiences and data analysis enhances student engagement and enables tracking of wellbeing.
- Improved status of PE as schools promote it because it aids health and well-being, although balancing the increased emphasis on STEM subjects with PE remains challenging.

Biggest Opportunity/Risk

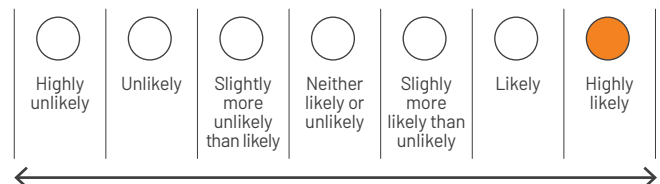
- Lead a mindset change to the new possibilities of engaging in PE, with improved access and equity a critical motivator.
- Use of technology helps to address financial pressures. AI has a potential critical support to teacher workload.
- Greater reach, leading to improved efficiencies and ability to share knowledge widely. Greater emphasis on positioning PENZ as critical thinkers.
- Appreciation that classroom can be beyond school grounds.
- Potential contribution to sustainability.
- Develop partnerships with gaming and other technology companies so virtual activities support PE.
- Use technology to track student wellbeing.
- Limited agility, awareness, and willingness of teachers to adapt to technological change.
- Requirement to learn new skills, on top of mounting pressure could lead to teacher burn-out.
- The immersive and digital world will require new skillsets that may not be widely available.
- The decrease in face-to-face challenges current teaching approach, with uncertain wellbeing impacts.
- Loss of local relevance and the value of the teacher knowing the pupils.
- Loss of PE commitment, with it becoming context for other subjects.
- Asks questions about what PE is, and more broadly, the role of school.

Necessary Capabilities

- Be clear about what PENZ stands for and its value proposition.
- Lead and demonstrate a mindset change that encourages and enables exploration of new approaches to meet changing demands and environmental conditions.
- Employ or access tech expertise to lead and guide the school community on transition opportunities with online activities, virtual and augmented reality, and artificial intelligence.
- Build partnerships and lead collaboration across subject areas, schools and into community.
- Assess new opportunities through a Te Ao Māori and environment sustainability lens.

Plausibility

The rapid growth of technology, political shifts and community trends make this scenario highly likely.



Scenario C: Collapse

The future of physical education in New Zealand requires adaptation and innovation to address multiple challenges. Schools are exploring new ways of teaching, creating more engaging environments, and integrating increased physical activity into daily routines. This transformation is a necessity, driven by the need to address the challenges of a changing world and to prioritise the health and well-being of the next generation. As New Zealand navigates this complex landscape, PE has the potential to be a powerful tool for fostering resilience, promoting well-being, and equipping young people to succeed in a world of uncertainty.

Key Implications

- Diminished relevance of PENZ due to loss of value proposition. STEM dominating.
- While physical activity remains, PENZ has lost its educational role.
- There is a non-specialist workforce.

Biggest Opportunity/Risk

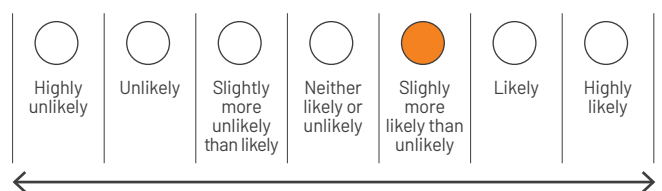
- Explore technology, notably AI to capture new audiences.
- Strengthen PE through repositioning/evolving delivery, within social wellbeing crisis.
- Promote high quality physical activity in different communities.
- Explore connections and synergies between virtual metaverse and traditional activity.
- Use of physical activity to attract young people back to school.
- Explore life-long moving leadership without the need for qualifications.
- Partnerships and digital platforms present new funding stream opportunities, and cost savings.
- Becoming source of truth in a post-truth world.
- Loss of specialist PE teachers in the generalist environment.
- Expectation that PENZ/PE is still required to solve every social and political problem.
- Technological and digital platforms are perhaps over-hyped and not the 'quick fix' some believe them to be.
- Schooling becomes atomized with the loss of a community for physical activity.
- Inadequate funding and resourcing.
- The cost of new technologies, ongoing upgrades, and skilled operators results in a growing gap between those that have the means and those that do not. The digital divide exacerbates inequity.

Necessary Capabilities

- Building of partnerships, relationships, and communities of practices.
- Listening to young people to identify blind spots and having agility to respond.
- Advocacy and compelling narrative for the holistic nature of schooling, play and movement.
- Influencing funding sources.
- Continue to be open-minded and agile, responding to changing demand and societal shifts. This includes experimenting and being innovative.
- Supporting the wellbeing of teachers.

Plausibility

While some of these signals of change appear feasible, they are negated in part by the slow-moving nature of the education system. Also, it is hard to envisage so many cascading crises without checks and balances kicking in.



Scenario D: Transformation

This transformed scenario paints a future vision of physical education that transcends traditional models. By embracing technological advancements, fostering a holistic view of well-being, and empowering educators, New Zealand has set the stage for a future where physical education empowers young people to become well-rounded, globally connected individuals, contributing meaningfully to their communities.

Key Implications

- The teaching and learning environment has changed, with redefined teaching roles.
- Students seamlessly combine virtual and physical elements.
- Strong alignment to PENZ vision.
- Demonstration of positive impact of PE on wellbeing, with legitimacy of PE no longer questioned.

Biggest Opportunity/Risk

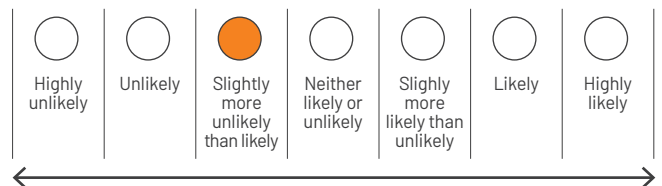
- PE value proposition being realised meaning ability to attract more teachers.
- Promote PE as a holistic experience connected to the curriculum, wellbeing, and career opportunities.
- AI as tool to support teachers including in personalised instruction, progress tracking, and resource sharing.
- Ability to connect internationally, repositioning PE as a global education experience.
- Explore opportunities to embrace virtual technologies without losing essence of PE.
- Will virtual technologies disconnect students from the environment? At what cost?
- The required mindset change within school communities will require energy. In a struggle between current and future mindsets whose voice will be the loudest. How can we ensure all voices are heard and listened to and a shared narrative developed?
- More expensive to sustain physical space and place.
- How do technologies developed overseas represent New Zealand and Te Ao Māori? Where does maturanga fit?
- What is the role of PENZ?

Necessary Capabilities

- Clear articulation of who PENZ is and value it adds. Retain critical consciousness of PE and what it is.
- Strong storytelling skills and ability to influence thinking.
- Technological skills or ability to access them.
- Ability to make sense of 'flood' of data/information.
- Strong relationships with local community and establish connections with international community. Become global conduit.
- Focus on market failure – those schools/communities not connected.
- Willingness to experiment and innovate.
- Agility to understand and respond to AI.
- Ability to 'kiwify' international technology product offerings.
- Monitor wellbeing and measure impact.

Plausibility

High anticipation of the strengthening role of AI and technology, but pessimism on the political and social will to move to this scenario.



Key capabilities

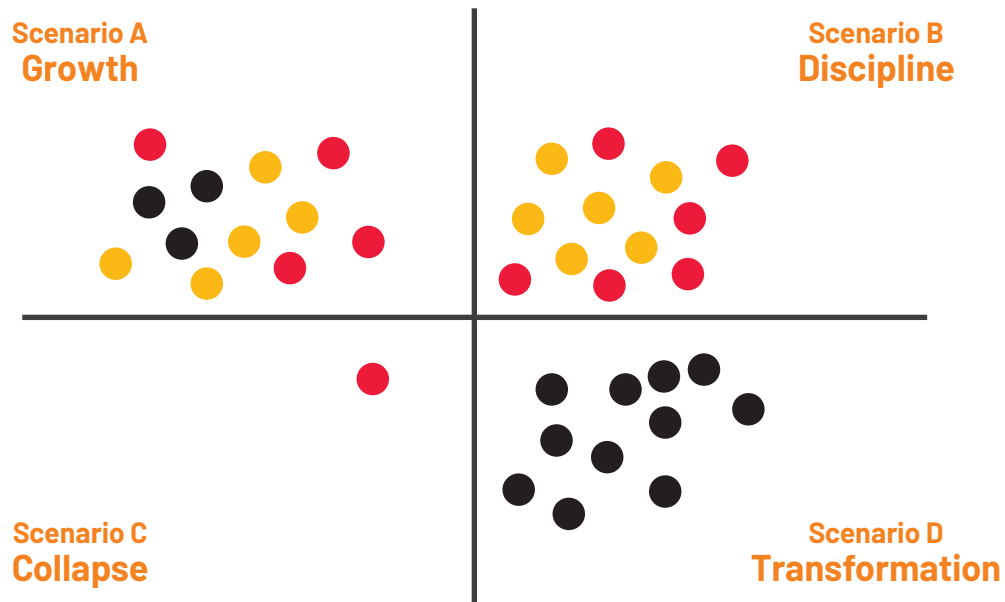
Each scenario will bring different opportunities and challenges, but there are a common set of capabilities that PENZ needs to help it respond better to most of the scenarios.

The follow capabilities were common across all or most scenarios. They help PENZ think about the capabilities it might need.

Storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is PENZ's current narrative, and how might this need to adapt as the future unfolds? • What is the story others would tell about it? Are the two stories aligned? • How do you best convey PE as a pipeline for movement and a life-journey?
Thought leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what areas can PENZ continue to learn, adapt and provide guidance?
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does PENZ have a clear position on the uses of digital technologies, such as AI? • What technological capabilities does PENZ require, and how best should it access these? • How can digital technologies improve PENZ's own efficiencies, connections, measurement and data management and analysis?
Champion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might PENZ better promote and enhance student wellbeing? • How does PENZ build on its engagements and partnerships with Māori? • What role, if any, should it play in helping other organizations within the education sector to do likewise? • How can being an environmental champion be weaved into PENZ's narrative? • What role does it have in helping others to reduce their adverse environmental impacts?
Common practice model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What resources and guidance are required to provide a consistent approach to quality PE?
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the transition from the present to the future, the nature and type of advocacy will need to change, so how can that be managed well? • How do you influence the fence-sitters and decision-makers? • How can PENZ access and disseminate timely intelligence as a means of influence?
Strategic relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the critical strategic relationships that need to be fostered? • How are these relationships best managed and developed, given others may have different visions of the future?
Relationship building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where should PENZ build further capability and capacity in terms of relationship management? • What actions/behaviours within PENZ need to change to continue to build and foster trust and catalyse change across the physical education sector?
Funding influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might PENZ influence funding distribution? • How can it build/strengthen funder relationships?
Adaptable/Agile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which of the scenarios potentially represents the greatest change and what data points can PENZ use to heighten its anticipation and agility? • How does this align with entrenched practice? What more can PENZ do to assist the physical education community prepare and respond to risk?
Source of truth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does PENZ measure its impact?

Scenario outlook

Participants identified the most preferred scenario (black), the scenario most reflected in the present (yellow), and what they believe to be the most likely future (red).



The scenario outlook exercise is qualitative and biased by the group perspective but is a useful mirror for reflection.

- There is a reasonable spread of views that the present is reflected across two different scenarios. This highlights that perceptions of the current context within the group are not clear-cut and reflect significant levels of ambiguity. This is healthy as it implies a spread of perspectives that can be explored with ongoing critique of assumptions.
- The variance in the preferred future perhaps reflects a differing value set amongst participants. The most preferred future was also identified as the least plausible scenario. This raises the question to what extent current strategy is based on this most hopeful state?
- There is also a split of views on where the future context lies. This recognises the uncertainty about the pace and scale of change. This emphasises the need to consider all scenarios when making strategic decisions and should prompt greater exploration of reference points / data that validate the emergence (or otherwise) of the scenarios.

Summary of Action Areas for PENZ

The scenarios highlighted several key action areas PENZ might consider when reflecting on its strategic planning. When prioritising / developing the plans, it is worth reflecting their potential to have the greatest impact across multiple futures, noting PENZ will not have the capacity to adopt all actions.

Mitigate Challenges

- **Agility** – operating shocks requiring quick responses have become the new norm for organisations. PENZ should reflect on how greater agility/flexibility can be built into its operating model to enable faster understanding and response to change, the mix of doing vs exploring/ learning, developing a culture of continuous learning, and empowering people. It needs to be comfortable adjusting strategy ongoing, not just at strategy completion points. It should adopt and promote futures thinking to improve anticipation and response.
- **Timely gathering, packaging and distribution of knowledge** – understand what is happening around it, including the motivations and influences of engaging in PE, and provide timely knowledge, insights and implications to the physical education community.
- **Continue to build networks** – broaden the PE conversation to better reflect the narrative PENZ wants to promote. This includes hearing from voices it might not normally hear from, connecting with entities it historically has not had a relationship with, and working in new ways. This is about understanding the evolving PE environment, key influencers, the support required, and how to access that support.
- **Challenge assumptions** – openly explore the assumptions, practices, systems, and mindsets that may be holding the physical education sector back and adopt approaches that help change them.
- **Advocate for policies across the system** – this is a meaningful way to influence the system, and through it, behaviour change.
- **Direction** – provide leadership and education on risk mitigation.

Capitalise on Opportunity

- **Storytelling** – Telling a consistent and compelling story to the right people.
- **Embrace technology** – understand emerging technologies and identify opportunities and challenges. PENZ can build capability or strong connections with technology companies and be open to exploring efficiencies and growing its community. It could actively explore emerging technology solutions to improve the administration burden. Model mindset shifts that accelerate the new opportunities driven by technological developments.
- **Champion environment** – position itself as a leading voice of environmental sustainability, aligning with the building momentum across society and reinforcing its social license. This would include leading by example through its own actions and helping the education sector adapt to the climate through the HPE curriculum.
- **Strategic relationships** – establish and improve strategic alliances with Ministers, the Ministry of Education, Boards of trustees, Sport NZ, environmental organisations, and iwi to assist with the ongoing positioning of PE.
- **Build and facilitate connections** – play the role of connector and facilitator in the system and provide opportunities for local, regional, national and international conversations. This would include facilitating relationships/cooperation between community and schools, and between different education subject matter groups. Be the bridge to the tertiary sector.
- **Champion Te Ao Māori** – there is significant momentum across New Zealand toward understanding and connecting with Te Tiriti o Waitangi Te o Māori. PENZ can show leadership in its approach to partnering with Māori. This might include influencing governance models to ensure Māori are engaged in key decision making across the school sport sector, establishing direct relationships with iwi, giving effect to a for Māori-by-Māori approach, and continuing to strengthen cultural competency.
- **Enhance profile/credibility** – lift profile through advocating for change and positioning itself as the source of truth on PE and engagement within it.
- **Common practice model** – modelling good practice and enabling teachers to deliver the HPE curriculum effectively and connecting physical education to the delivery of other parts of the curriculum.



Ongoing futures focus for PENZ board

This report provides a framework and some initial futures thinking that PENZ can build from. Most immediately, the report can inform PENZ's strengthen and adapt proposal for Sport NZ. Beyond that, it can help PENZ to develop better strategy through understanding the longer-term issues or challenges shaping its future.

Alternative futures

PENZ can use the alternative futures with a wider audience to build on the implications, opportunities and challenges identified through this process. This will also assist with promoting greater engagement within the outdoors community in strategic thinking processes.

Alternatively, PENZ could craft different scenarios to extend its thinking beyond the assumed future and generate new insights and a more resilient strategy.

Ongoing Assumptions

The process of evaluating the future strategic context is ongoing. Regularly surfacing and non-judgementally assessing underpinning assumptions is a critical element of this. This is an exercise the PENZ could usefully do at least annually.

The Sport NZ Board monitors sport and recreation assumptions on a six-monthly basis.

Metrics to Track

Tracking the changing PENZ's operating context is an ongoing task to assess whether the anticipated challenges and opportunities are more or less likely to eventuate. Given the nature of the scenarios explored, and the deep levels of uncertainties they represent, the PENZ team may consider a limited set of metrics that provide pointers to what the future may hold.

The Sport NZ Board tracks factors that may disrupt sport and recreation every three months.

Appendix 1: How PENZ is thinking about the future

What would you identify as the critical issue for your organisation in the next 5-10 years?

- The need for a deeper understanding of bicultural physical education and Mana orite.
- A refresh of the curriculum.
- A rapidly declining teacher workforce and a decrease in volunteers.
- The necessity for AI-ready, easy-to-use resources.
- Meeting the needs of the entire Physical Education Community across the country.
- Maintaining relevance of memberships, particularly in secondary schools, and establishing relevance for primary and intermediate schools.
- Advocacy and support for educators amidst curriculum and sector changes.
- Ensuring equitable access to quality physical education opportunities for all students.
- Innovating the physical education curriculum to engage students and promote lifelong physical activity.
- Staying ahead of changes to NCEA and maintaining the perceived value of PENZ
- Staying relevant within our communities as a place for support. As people become even more time poor, quick fixes are often sought. This is especially so within the secondary school space, as schools navigate curriculum changes.

If things go well for your organisation what would you expect to see in 5-10 years?

- Nationwide quality physical education.
- An increase in the number of appropriate people wanting to become PE teachers.
- Increased student participation rates in physical education and extracurricular activities.
- The development of locally led communities, with a community of learners contributing to each other.
- PENZ becoming the primary source for advice and guidance in PE, especially regarding curriculum refresh.
- An increase in the demand for PENZ's work, including more advisors and staff.
- Government policies supporting the development and professional learning and development (PLD) of the curriculum.
- Strides towards equitable access to quality physical education.

- Stronger collaborative partnerships to promote physical activity and well-being.
- A thriving online community with knowledge sharing and accessible membership.
- An engaged PE community with PENZ at the forefront of this, leading the way. Social media channels full of help, support, recognising quality practice, and people connecting with each other.

What are the factors holding you back from achieving success?

- Lack of resources and structure to follow through on goals.
- Capacity not matching need or desire.
- Lack of member involvement.
- Time constraints and the need for new ways of working.
- Lack of awareness at the Primary/Intermediate level.
- Schools' inability to prioritize PE PLD.
- Funding constraints, policy barriers, teacher training, and limited collaboration.
- Ongoing financial investment in online technology and staff
- A diverse organisation that works to try and serve so many different bodies

If things went wrong for your organisation in the next 5-10 years, what has occurred and what would you most worry about?

- Lack of political will or policy support for physical education.
- Decreased student participation rates in physical education classes.
- Sustainability and succession planning challenges.
- A disconnect with the new generation of teachers.
- Loss of funding and quality staff.
- Decreasing memberships and reduced hours for current staff.
- An ineffective board and inability to run events or unite teachers.
- Growing disconnect between schools, communities, and other stakeholders.
- Lack of support for teachers through the curriculum change and flow-on impact to students.
- Drop in PENZ relevance and reputation within the school setting, as a result of little support and connection offered.

Looking forward, what do you see as the priority actions your organisation should carry out now?

- Connecting, advocating, and networking to secure more funding.
- Growing resources for teachers and engaging in succession planning.
- Engaging members and establishing local, sustainable groups.
- Developing a shared strategic vision.
- Providing opportunities for teachers to connect and grow.
- Raising awareness of PENZ in the primary and intermediate school sectors.
- Advocating for policies and initiatives that prioritize physical education.
- Investing in professional development for physical education educators.
- Establishing a sustainable membership structure.
- Greater promotion of the organisation and who it represents, i.e. being much more than just a primary and secondary school body.
- Increased presence within schools, both Primary and Secondary.
- Greater recognition of PE Champions within the sector, individuals, schools and local sporting bodies, initiatives.



Appendix 2: Scenarios

Scenario 1 Growth

New Zealand's evolving physical education (PE) landscape mirrors the country's ongoing experience of broader societal, environmental, and economic changes. While the fundamental commitment to PE remains strong, the experience is becoming more multifaceted. The future of PE likely features a blended approach, leveraging technology, prioritising mental and holistic well-being, adapting to climate realities, and emphasising inclusivity within traditional sport.

Summary Points

Social Cohesion:

PE programmes address societal distrust by emphasising teamwork, leadership, civic responsibility and diversity and inclusion.

Mental Wellbeing:

The PE curriculum incorporates mindfulness and the positive impact of movement on mental health.

Resource Limitations:

The ageing population and income disparity strain resources, limiting the expansion of PE offerings.

Tech Integration:

PE creatively uses VR/gaming for motivation while continuing to prioritise traditional physical activity pursuits.

AI-powered Learning:

AI coaching tools and data analysis enhance learning and performance in, through and about movement.

Adapting to Climate Change:

PE programmes emphasise heat tolerance, water conservation, and safe exercise during extreme weather.

Bridging the Gap:

PE programmes strive to bridge income gaps by providing equal access to sport and physical activity and personal development opportunities.

Focus on Wellbeing:

PE emphasises diverse recreational activities, healthy habits, social interaction, and community building.

Curriculum Emphasis:

Increased emphasis on STEM subjects in the digital age, leads to declining PE participation and engagement.

The Shifting Landscape of Physical Education in New Zealand

The landscape of physical education in New Zealand is experiencing gradual yet significant changes. These changes are driven by societal priorities and emerging trends, resulting in a more nuanced approach. Persistently high rates of bullying, wellbeing disparities, and heightened mental distress has led to a renewed emphasis of physical education initiatives on fostering social cohesion, community engagement, and diversity and inclusion. They aim to instil values of teamwork, leadership, critical thinking, and civic responsibility among students, which is an ongoing priority as wider social discourse is undermined by a lack of trust fostered by social media silos.

The Influence of Societal Shifts on PE

A growing focus on overall social well-being has led to discussions around regulating social media platforms. In this context, physical education is also seen as a beneficial influence with a curriculum design that supports mental health, mindfulness techniques, and the positive effects of movement on mood and emotional regulation. This aligns with the holistic approach of the Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum, emphasising hauora.

Moreover, as New Zealand's population ages and income inequalities persist, the resources necessary to support the HPE curriculum are increasingly thin. This limits the ability of schools to expand offerings and introduce innovative activities and ongoing efforts towards inclusivity and variety.

Balancing Technology and Traditional Physical Activity

The rapid advancement of new technologies provides both opportunities and challenges for schools. One challenge is balancing the need to provide equal access to immersive technologies with the importance of traditional physical activity. In PE programmes, digital gaming and virtual experiences are creatively incorporated to motivate students while still emphasising the benefits of more conventional physical activity. AI-driven coaching tools, wearable devices, and data-driven training methods are all used to enhance students' skills in traditional sport and physical activity, leading to greatly improved learning experiences and performance outcomes.

As automation and robotics drive changes in the workforce, PE plays a supporting role by focusing on movement skills that promote adaptability, coordination, and the ability to learn new physical tasks. These skills, particularly adaption, are crucial for students to navigate an employment environment undergoing revolutionary change successfully.

Climate Change Shapes the PE Experience

Teaching resilience and environmental awareness has become increasingly important in the face of rising temperatures and extreme weather events. The incremental and relatively slow pace of climate action has meant extreme weather events increasingly disrupt physical education classes. As a result, indoor facilities have become more crucial, and lesson plans routinely incorporate safe movement strategies for adverse conditions.

Physical education programmes now emphasise heat tolerance, water conservation, and environmental stewardship strategies. Developing greater knowledge and skills in these areas enables students to become more environmentally aware and better prepared to face climate challenges.

The Evolving Role of Sport in Schools

Physical education programmes are increasingly prioritising efforts to bridge income and wealth gaps, providing equal access to sport activities and promoting personal development opportunities for all students.

PE programmes emphasise diverse recreational activities and prioritise participation over pure athletic performance to achieve this. There is also growing interest in innovative sport and physical education programmes that promote holistic well-being as an educational priority, emphasising healthy habits, social interactions, and community building for students of all ages.

The main goal is to address income disparities through inclusive physical education programmes, ensuring that all students have access to quality sport, physical activity, and movement opportunities for personal growth, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

The Ongoing Tension Over the Status of Physical Education

Focusing on economic growth has led to more sport and physical education programme funding, resulting in better student facilities and resources. However, the challenge of balancing physical education with increased focus on STEM subjects remains, notably as students move into higher levels of education. This is being exacerbated by an increasingly unpredictable employment environment. This pressure leads to an ongoing decline in participation rates for sport and physical activity over time.

Scenario 2

Discipline

Physical education in New Zealand is evolving as society takes strong steps to respond to the challenges of the twenty-first century. Overall, the future of PE in New Zealand is one of balance and evolution. It embraces tradition while welcoming innovation, strives for equity and accessibility, and strongly emphasises the holistic well-being of young people, ensuring they stay active and engaged in a world of ever-changing opportunities.

Summary Points

Holistic Well-being:

PE classes emphasise mindfulness, yoga, and other contexts for learning alongside traditional sport and physical activity.

Technology Integration:

Virtual simulations, AR fitness games, and esports are entering the curriculum, offering engaging ways for movement and to stay active.

Emerging Activities:

New technologies and global trends introduce niche sport and movement activities.

Collaboration and Inclusion:

Non-competitive activities, accessible public facilities, and community partnerships promote inclusivity.

Cost-Effectiveness:

Some new technologies offer cost-effective alternatives to traditional equipment, addressing budget constraints.

Staffing Challenges:

Funding limitations hinder adequate staff support and training for innovative programmes.

Combating declining well-being:

Schools emphasise PE because it promotes health and well-being.

Creative Engagement:

Educators use creative and engaging programmes to teach a wide range of skills and values through physical activity and movement.

Academic Pressure:

Balancing the increased emphasis on STEM subjects with PE remains challenging, impacting overall well-being.

Sustainability Focus:

PE programmes incorporate principles of resource conservation and local reliance into their activities.

Tech Integration Transforms the Playing Field

Technology costs continue to decrease, creating momentum for increasing use of technology in PE classes. Virtual simulations, augmented reality fitness games, and esports are being incorporated into the curriculum, providing exciting and engaging ways for students to stay active such as parkour, frisbee golf, and even drone racing. This is leading to the transformation of the traditional sport and physical activity landscape. This trend is partly driven by the cost-effectiveness of some emergent technologies compared to traditional equipment, addressing concerns about tight budgets. Unfortunately, the funds to ensure staff can adequately support some of these broader programmes are lacking, and staff training is minimal.

Blurring the Lines: Collaboration and Inclusion

Ensuring everyone feels included remains a priority. Alongside these advancements, there is a growing focus on non-competitive, participation-based activities. Public facilities with the widest possible use continue to receive investment, ensuring everyone has access to quality infrastructure. This also blurs the traditional lines between school and community as facility use is maximised. Students increasingly gain PE credit for participating in community engagement to enhance learning. This fosters a sense of community and provides diverse experiences for students. This collaboration across community programmes mitigates funding limitations and puts communities in a better position to cater to the needs of a diverse ageing population.

Paradoxically, the focus on tight budgets has brought greater focus on integrating programmes to maximise returns. Schools' critical role in promoting health and overall wellbeing has led to greater emphasis on PE, though funding remains tight. Schools face challenges due to limited resources but actively seek innovative ways to keep students engaged in physical activity and movement. Efforts are being made to instil a love for lifelong movement habits among students through creative and engaging physical education programmes.

The Evolving Status of Physical Education

Balancing PE with the continued focus on STEM subjects remains a challenge, but schools are getting creative. Some are exploring integrated learning models, weaving physical activity into these subjects. Others offer condensed PE programmes, delivering the benefits of physical activity in shorter, more efficient formats. However, in today's educational landscape, the focus on STEM and perceived job opportunities sometimes overshadows the importance of physical education. Students find themselves balancing rigorous academic schedules with limited time for physical activity, which continues to undermine the well-being agenda, particularly concerning mental health.

Evolving for Sustainability

With a growing emphasis on sustainability and long-term planning, physical education programmes are evolving to align with broader societal goals. Educators are incorporating principles of resource conservation and social stability into their approach to promoting movement among students. While some of the worst projections for future climate now look like they are being avoided, the ongoing momentum of climate events continues to disrupt outdoor activity and damage facilities and focus minds on the need for continued sustainability programmes. Physical education programmes have adapted to this new reality and incorporate the core principles of resource conservation and local reliance.

Scenario 3

Collapse

The future of physical education in New Zealand requires adaptation and innovation to address multiple challenges. Schools are exploring new ways of teaching, creating more engaging environments, and integrating increased physical activity into daily routines. This transformation is a necessity, driven by the need to address the challenges of a changing world and to prioritise the health and well-being of the next generation. As New Zealand navigates this complex landscape, PE has the potential to be a powerful tool for fostering resilience, promoting well-being, and equipping young people to succeed in a world of uncertainty.

Summary Points

Cascading Crises:

Climate change and economic instability have led to funding cuts, resulting in neglected playing fields, and community parks and green spaces, deterring outdoor activity.

Digital Allure:

The virtual world offers an escape from harsh realities, drawing students away from the social and physical benefits of physical activity and traditional team sport. More students are also choosing to take up the option of remote learning decreasing the need for the traditional teaching workforce.

Strained Resources:

Limited resources, heavy workloads, and the increase in remote learning force schools to cut back on PE teaching resources.

Erosion of Trust:

The abundance of AI-created information fosters an environment of distrust, making collaboration difficult for intra and inter school initiatives.

Reduced Enrolment:

PE enrolment rates in senior years have plummeted due to the focus on STEM subjects, the allure of virtual spaces, and increased remote learning.

Truancy Epidemic:

A rise in truancy due to societal anxieties, combined with increased remote learning, compounds the challenges of delivering effective PE programmes.

Health Concerns:

A potential downward spiral looms, with physical and mental health issues reaching unprecedented levels.

Holistic Approach:

The holistic intent of PE and its benefits, and the culture of Hauora are now better understood given their alignment to addressing pressing societal issues.

Adaptation and Innovation:

The future of PE necessitates adaptation and innovation, with schools exploring new teaching methods, creating engaging environments, and integrating increased movement into daily routines.

Facing the Tide: The Impact of Cascading Crises

New Zealand's once-vibrant physical education landscape grapples with the harsh realities of a world in turmoil. Climate change, a key driver of this turmoil, has brought cascading crises. Budgetary constraints, a consequence of economic instability, have forced schools and local councils to slash funding for playing field and green space maintenance. The "meticulously maintained" fields of the past have given way to patchy grass and neglected equipment, deterring many from outdoor physical activity.

This decline in outdoor activity options aligns with the growing allure of digital leisure. The virtual world offers an escape from the harsh realities of the physical world, drawing students indoors and isolating them from the social and physical benefits of physical activity and traditional team sports. School environments, once bastions of equity and accessibility, now face their own struggles. Limited resources and heavy workloads have forced many schools to cut back on PE and other teachers, leaving the remaining individuals overwhelmed.

Navigating a World of Distrust: Collaboration and the Erosion of Trust

The erosion of trust further complicates the situation. Collaboration and trust are essential for effective school sport and PE initiatives, but a tsunami of AI-created information has left individuals confused and frustrated in a post-truth environment. Supportive networks that once empowered physical activity initiatives, like regional sports directors, are themselves stretched thin. While still functioning, they face funding cuts and struggle to organise events and provide professional development opportunities.

The Intensifying Battle for Attention

Paradoxically, the focus on tight budgets has brought greater focus on integrating programmes to maximise returns. Schools' critical role in promoting health and overall wellbeing has led to greater emphasis on PE, though funding remains tight. Schools face challenges due to limited resources but actively seek innovative ways to keep students engaged in physical activity and movement. Efforts are being made to instil a love for lifelong movement habits among students through creative and engaging physical education programmes.

Adapting and Innovating: Towards a Holistic Approach to Well-being

Amidst the challenges, there are signs of hope. Educators and school administrators are aware of the essential role that physical education plays in maintaining overall health and well-being. They are putting in efforts to create supportive environments that encourage participation in sport and physical activities, despite the limited resources. The field of physical education continues to evolve to fulfil the intent of a holistic well-being approach that encompasses personal health, movement concepts, social interactions, and healthy communities. This allows educators to strive to cultivate a culture centred around hauora, promoting lifelong movement habits, and fostering positive mental health outcomes among students.

Scenario 4

Transformation

This transformed scenario paints a future vision of physical education that transcends traditional models. By embracing technological advancements, fostering a holistic view of well-being, and empowering educators, New Zealand has set the stage for a future where physical education empowers young people to become well-rounded, globally connected individuals, contributing meaningfully to their communities.

Summary Points

Technological Advancements:

Robotics, augmented reality, and holographic teleportation enhance learning experiences and access to specialised facilities.

Reduced Environmental Impact:

Technological advancements have minimised resource use and addressed environmental concerns.

The Blurring of Physical and Virtual Activities:

Students seamlessly combine virtual and physical elements.

Holistic PE Curriculum:

PE becomes a core subject beyond year 10, emphasising personal health, physical movement, social interactions, diversity and inclusion, and healthy communities.

Social Wellbeing:

Social safety nets such as universal basic income (UBI) empower students to explore diverse interests in PE without fear of failure.

Personalised Learning:

AI personalises instruction, and educators collaborate with health professionals and sport and recreation bodies to support individual development.

Globalised Sports:

Inter-school competitions become international, fostering global understanding and connection.

Local Empowerment:

Decentralised decision-making empowers local clubs and organisations to offer diverse and inclusive movement, physical activity, and sporting opportunities.

Empowered Educators:

AI tools support educators in personalised instruction, progress tracking, and resource sharing across the country.

Celebrating Bi-culturalism:

Networks facilitate knowledge exchange and celebrate diverse approaches to physical education within Aotearoa's bi-cultural context.

Revolutionising the Learning Environment

Fuelled by advancements in robotics and augmented reality, students across New Zealand can now access specialised facilities and coaching, regardless of location. Holographic teleportation minimises previous physical barriers, while immersive virtual environments personalise skill development and gamify fitness. This global revolution has significantly reduced resource impacts and consequently reduced some of the most significant environmental concerns.

It has really blurred the lines between physical and virtual activities with students, and the wider community, routinely switching between the two. Students now scale virtual mountains within their school gym or participate in collaborative, international sporting events from their local community centres, seamlessly blending digital experiences with real-world engagement.

Redefining the Educational Approach

Recognising the vital role of movement in overall well-being, physical education has become a core subject throughout secondary school, with the same intense emphasis that was previously reserved for STEM subjects. The curriculum now pays heed to a holistic approach to well-being through personal health, physical movement, social interactions, and healthy communities.

With the freedom now afforded by robust social safety nets like the new UBI, empowered students can explore their diverse interests and aspirations in PE. This freedom fosters a learning environment unburdened from the fear of failure and is now replaced by the courage to experiment, innovate, and contribute meaningfully to their own well-being and that of their communities. This has also removed much of the historic tension between STEM subjects and physical education. To aid this, AI-powered tools personalise instruction, while educators leverage collaborative networks with health professionals and sport and recreation bodies to foster a holistic approach to individual student development.

Expanding the Horizons of Sport

The traditional concept of “school sports teams” now transcends geographical limitations. Inter-school competitions become global, fostering international understanding and unprecedented connection. Empowered by decentralised decision-making and AI-driven insights, local clubs and organisations offer even more diverse and inclusive sporting opportunities, catering to a wider range of interests and abilities. This vibrant leisure landscape provides opportunities to celebrate local knowledge and empowers diverse voices, enriching the athletic landscape of Aotearoa.

Empowering Educators in a Connected Future

No longer burdened by limited resources, PE teachers leverage AI-powered tools for personalised instruction, progress tracking, and real-time feedback. The interconnectedness of their network supports professional development and augments resources in areas of the motu where physical resources are light.

Regional sports directors play a crucial role in supporting schools by facilitating knowledge exchange, providing resources, and celebrating diverse approaches to physical education within the bi-cultural context of Aotearoa.



Level 1, Harbour City Centre
29 Brandon Street
Wellington 6011, New Zealand
PO Box 2251 Wellington 6140
Phone: +64 4 472 8058
sportnz.org.nz

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government