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New Zealand
PRINCIPAL
NGĀ TUMUAKI O AOTEAROA

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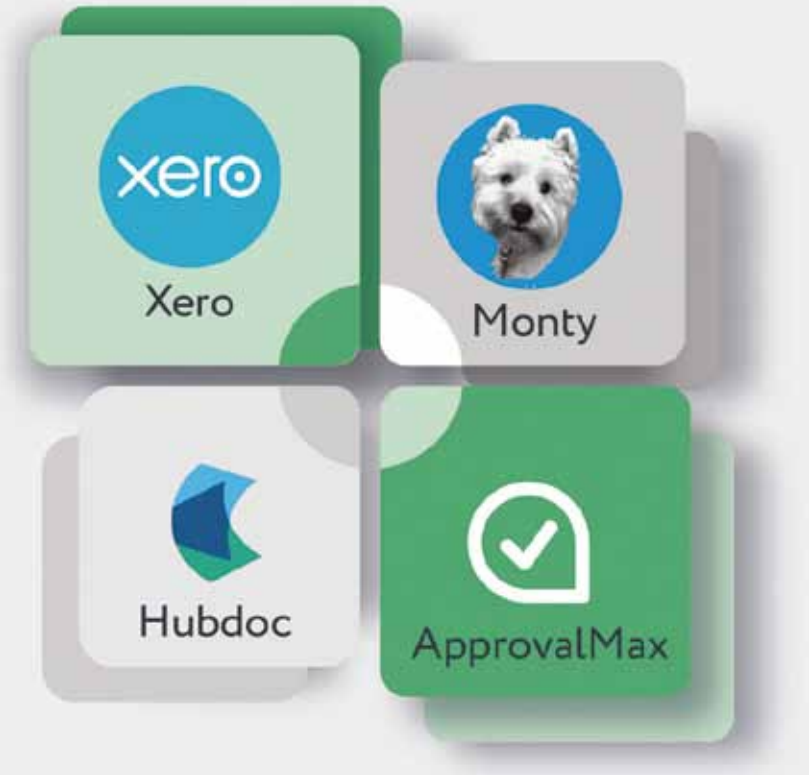

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CONTENTS

NOVEMBER 2020

20

PERRY SPIES A 'ROAD SIGN'

EDITORIAL

Liz Hawes EDITOR

WHAT AN ASTONISHING year! It started out much like any other year, with the summer holiday season; swimming, surfing, bush-walking and barbecues all transpired as usual.

As we lazed on the beach, we heard about a worrisome novel coronavirus affecting people in Wuhan, China – but no-one expected it would so quickly become a global pandemic. COVID-19, as it was labelled by the scientists, was spreading fast. Reports of rampant outbreaks across Europe, China, and North America blitzed our news channels and on 28 February, confirmation that the vile COVID-19 had breached our own shores. For the rest of the year, our lives would be dominated by efforts to contain and eliminate this vicious threat to our nation's health.

As we grapple with our new normal, knowing this brutal virus is never far away, we read reports from the United States of America, from Europe and almost every other country in the world and watch the case numbers surging and spiking in ways they haven't done before. With no immediate prospect of a reliable and effective vaccine, living with the coronavirus will continue to be a challenge, with mask wearing encouraged on public transport and hand sanitizing and contact tracing, all part of our everyday lives. We are now wired to protect ourselves and prevent further outbreak of this devastating infection.

What the coronavirus has not suppressed is the insatiable desire of our young people to learn and the enthusiasm of teachers to provide the opportunities to satisfy their cravings. That means matching the curriculum with the environment children inhabit and the values they embrace.

Schooling on Aotea Great Barrier Island (see pp.20–26) is a good example of 'environment meets the classroom.' The curricula of all three Island schools are deeply infused with features of the landscape and the Barrier Island way of life. Swimming sports in the waters of Tryphena Bay, kayaking as a lunch time recreation, visits from Fisheries Officers and a school bus route terminating at the wharf so children can continue their journey home by boat. Students study science and actively address issues of sea pollution with beach clean-ups, student agency involves the young people presenting findings of their own beach studies to scientists and university students, art work expresses their deeply held views on keeping their environment pristine, tree propagation supports reforestation, and in the north of the Island, a bilingual school culture demonstrates the high value placed on Te Ao Māori.

What the **CORONAVIRUS HAS NOT SUPPRESSED** is the insatiable desire of our **YOUNG PEOPLE TO LEARN** and the **ENTHUSIASM OF TEACHERS . . .**

There is no doubt that when school learning occurs in authentic contexts it has sharper meaning for children. Many would argue that strong effective leadership is the key to moulding the curriculum into the right shape for the specific context. But what are the factors that define strong and effective leadership?

Professor Martin Thrupp challenges his readers to reconsider leadership (p.33). He argues against populist approaches to leadership which pamper to fads and fashions and do not acknowledge or critique the political context into which these approaches are introduced. Less dependence on leadership and so-called gurus, he argues, may yield better results.

He draws on the work of Howard Youngs who suggests that 'leadership and collaborative practices are emergent and fluid so that the sources of influence cannot be solely attributed to an exceptional individual.' He introduces a whole new angle to empowering staff and students saying that the job of the principal is 'to remove barriers from staff and students so that they can exercise their human right to access their own power.' It's an approach to leadership from an entirely different perspective, driven by humility rather than assertion. It sees leadership as a process rather than leadership driven by political imperatives or belonging solely to a designated expert.

In this way, with teachers and students being active participants in curriculum development it is more likely that student and teacher agency are enhanced. It is more likely they will feel empowered to set their own learning agendas not just for the school setting but throughout their lives.

We conclude the year with a whole new vocabulary of epidemiological terms – contact tracing, virus clusters, social distancing, managed isolation, community transmission, virus resurgence to name a few. It is likely that referral to these terms will persist for a lot longer yet.

Assuredly, in these very uncertain times, student agency has never been more important. If living with the novel coronavirus has taught us anything, it is how much the future of our country depends on us all being empowered to make the right decisions, so that we can eliminate community transmission of the virus and confidently shape an economically sustainable future for our children to build on and enjoy. That means every one of us having the power to be active participants in the process.

PRESIDENT'S PEN

Perry Rush NATIONAL PRESIDENT, NEW ZEALAND PRINCIPALS' FEDERATION

I AM ALWAYS reluctant to point to the halcyon days of yesteryear as the high tide mark for quality but in the instance of initial teacher education, it is appropriate.

Our current teacher training providers are not servicing our profession well. The quality of provision must be urgently addressed.

I remember those halcyon days. There was a strong emphasis on the 'practice' of teaching so that trainee teachers experienced 'how to teach'. This meant learning from an expert who modelled teaching and taught trainee teachers the skills, techniques, and knowledge relevant to each curriculum.

These newly minted capabilities were then able to be practised in school-based settings.

This meant that trainee teachers experienced visual art through media such as pottery, print making or painting.

They experienced science by experimenting with chemicals, manipulating apparatus, and wading in streams to collect, explore and classify flora and fauna.

They played a plethora of sport such as cricket, softball and hockey and were taught how to throw, catch, kick and hit a ball.

They experienced the fire of competition and the sharp prick of embarrassment at sometimes being chosen last by peers who were team captains, vowing never to deploy this practice with their own pupils.

They added legions of fitness drills, drama games, maths puzzles, titles of outstanding children's fiction and current events quizzes to their teaching tool kit.

The danced, learned to play a guitar and sang as members of a choir.

They learned how to administer a 'running record' and became adept at doing so with multiple opportunities to practise over the 2 or 3 years of training.

The richness of initial teacher education ended when Teachers' Training Colleges were amalgamated with Universities in the early 2000s.

There is no more powerful metaphor for the destructive impact of this amalgamation than the huge drama studio at Wellington Teachers' College that was, in short order after amalgamation, converted to a lecture theatre.

Half day drama workshops every week in the drama studio were quickly commuted to several hour-long drama lectures over a year, deemed by University bosses to be adequate preparation for primary drama teaching.

Is it any surprise that the practical curriculum has suffered over the past 15 years?

And therein lies the problem.

Universities are ivory towers that emphasise academic learning. They focus on teaching theory. But teacher training is an apprenticeship. While there are opportunities to 'practise' teaching in school practicums, this is different to learning 'how to teach'. The alchemy missing is the knowledge of practices associated with different curriculum and a deep understanding of pedagogy.

This is a major problem, and we are seeing the impact on student achievement.

Is it surprising that we have declining literacy rates in New Zealand, or young people struggling with obesity without sufficient skill-based physical education programmes? Or so little integrated drama and dance other than the ubiquitous school production?

The dysfunction of initial teacher education is symptomatic of other major problems in education.

New Zealand education is rudderless.

Schooling and young people's achievement is suffering for lack of leadership, that values practice-based experience, that articulates an ethos of education, that is truly bespoke, of New Zealand and focussed on our way of doing things.

Leadership of the system and all its parts does not lie with the Ministry of Education – they are stewards of the system. It does not lie in the Education Review Office who have an evaluative function, nor does it lie with schooling. Each school is a self-managing, self-governing entity charged with localising curriculum.

Some might say it lies with the political leadership of the day but that is not something principals would wish on schooling. Over the past 15 years New Zealand education has experienced a raft of damaging education policies and we no longer wish to be subject to the pendulum swing of policy, left to right, right to left!

Education in New Zealand is suffering for lack of cohesive leadership that joins all parts of the ecosystem to a whole, that isn't a mess of competing ideologies and that makes sense.

Where is the leadership to review and design an effective system of initial teacher education that values the practice of teaching?

Where is the leadership that holds the tinkering at the Education Review Office (ERO) to account and, despite their current advocacy of a new partnership model, insists that change isn't just window-dressing?

Where is the leadership of the New Zealand Curriculum? Why is there such a vacuum in championing the Curriculum and the urgent provision of curriculum advisors to ensure teaching and learning is significantly strengthened right across New Zealand?

Where is the leadership that echoes the strong and visionary educational leadership of the past? The kind that we saw clearly in Clarence Beeby's call 'to a free education of a kind for which he [every student] is best suited and to the fullest extent of his powers'. Why is it that we must return to a period some 70 to 80 years ago to find a New Zealand educationist with vision as influential as his?

Education in Aotearoa is suffering from an absence of vision and brave, cohesive leadership. It is suffering from a lack of organisational power and appropriate influence. We have sunk our trust in localisation, forgetting that such an approach will only flourish within a vision that is designed around strong ideas that serve to organise the system.

In this we are our own worst enemies. We do not want to support a strengthening of system level educational decision-making for fear that it will be politically imbued or impose the wrong sort of vision on schooling.

But we can and should tackle this dilemma. The various parts of the system are not working in unison and that simply will not service the future.

Post-election and as the new term of government gets underway, major substantive change is required.

I call on the Minister of Education to urgently work across the education ecosystem to address the inconsistencies and build a connectedness that is sorely lacking – starting with significant change in initial teacher education.

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NZPF MAKES HISTORY

Liz Hawes EDITOR

The taonga presented to NZPF by Te Akatea in recognition of their partnership

COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS HAS a long reach. This year, NZPF's Trans-Tasman conference was scheduled to open in September – in Melbourne. Coronavirus sent those plans packing and for the first time in NZPF history, there is no annual conference this year.

The postponement of conference meant the AGM lost its venue. Traditionally held during the conference to maximize attendance, the AGM would now be held separately. Already, the NZPF National Secretary had received a motion to give effect to an historical constitutional change. The change, if agreed, would alter the membership of the national executive from 12 elected members to 11, plus one dedicated Māori seat, endorsed by Te Akatea Māori Principals' Association.

The vote was much too important to leave to chance, so an alternative voting mechanism was sought. Fortunately, the NZPF constitution already provided for voting on constitutional changes by electronic ballot, and the results of the ballot are binding.

It is not a voting option usually employed for constitutional changes, but in these times of COVID, atypical has become the new norm. Besides, it allowed all financial members to vote, which is not a bad thing given the gravity of the issue. Over nine hundred members cast their vote and the motion was supported by an overwhelming majority of 860, far more than the two-thirds majority required to make the change.

The AGM was held as a separate event in Christchurch and attracted a healthy quorum of around 50 principals, including the NZPF and Te Akatea's entire executive groups.

The NZPF journey to give real effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, is a long one, with some notable milestones. The first of these was the election of Pat Newman, principal of Hora Hora School, Whangarei, as the first Māori NZPF president. Pat remembers it well. It was announced at the NZPF 2005 Christchurch conference and was immediately followed by a rousing haka which rang out from the heights of the Town Hall.

'All of the Māori principals had gathered up there and were honouring me as the first Māori President of the New Zealand Principals' Federation. This was very emotional for me, to receive such an acknowledgement. At the same time, it reinforced the expectations placed upon me by my own people,' he said.

> 'These expectations were further amplified when I was inaugurated as President at my first Executive Meeting. It was a lovely setting at a Retreat House in Long Bay, Auckland. Another old friend, and ex National President of Te Akatea, Debi Marshall-Lobb, presented me with a Ngai Tahu Cloak of bright blue Pukeko feathers and placed a Taonga around my neck in front of all my whānau, including my elderly mother, and the National Executive. I had to return the cloak as Debi's mother had borrowed it for the occasion. I must say though, I felt the weight of responsibility on my shoulders.'

Perry Rush (middle) with Te Akatea executive members in celebration

Pat has continued to feel that responsibility for his people throughout his principalship. He is a living example of ethical leadership in action and is unafraid to be outspoken and passionate in defence of what is right for the tamariki of Aotearoa New Zealand. Whether that meant turning his back on the damaging, although mandated, national standards, or relentlessly calling out the Government for ignoring the escalation of and lack of support for traumatised kids in schools, Pat Newman is never complacent. He is committed to Kaupapa Māori and has been a member of Te Akatea Māori Principals' Association since 1996. As NZPF President, Pat's intention was always to bring NZPF and Te Akatea closer and he certainly sowed the seeds for that to happen.

The executive members from both Te Akatea and NZPF join Kaumatua Haterei Temo (middle back row) in celebration

By 2010, NZPF had two Māori executive members, Peter Witana, principal of KawaKawa School and Keri Milne Ihimaera, principal of Moerewa School both based in Northland. They were soon after joined by Whetu Cormick of Bathgate Park School, Dunedin. Whilst Keri introduced waiata to the executive, which members responded too effusively, Peter worked on meeting protocols and values based in Tikanga Māori. Before long NZPF had its own Kawa and, as a group, had spent a weekend immersed in the Tikanga of Te Tii Marae, Waitangi. The experience was transformational for the national executive who were growing in their understanding of a Māori world view.

At the same time, the education lens was firmly fixed on finding solutions for Māori underachievement in school. Discussions, led by Peter, Keri and now Whetu, shifted to questions like how schools might better incorporate a Māori world view in their practices. How could principals make their schools more welcoming of tamariki and their whānau? How could they incorporate Tikanga Māori into the fabric of their school culture so that tamariki and whānau felt their culture was valued, respected and treasured and school was a place where they belonged and felt safe?

Out of these discussions emerged a bespoke form of PLD. Targeting principals, as leaders of learning in their schools, the PLD would take willing principals on a journey of cultural discovery. Working in clusters with a trained facilitator, each principal would seek out their own cultural knowledge, values and practices and having reached a point of understanding the sources and nature of their own cultural identity would then, as a group, explore a Māori cultural world view. It was a process

of changing hearts and minds. And so, the Māori Achievement Collaborations (MACs) were formed.

NZPF launched the MACs in 2014 in partnership with Te Akatea and the Ministry. Hoana Pearson, formerly principal of Newton School, Auckland, was appointed coordinator and has grown the MACs to be one of the most influential PLD programmes in changing the culture of schools across Aotearoa. After two years, independent evaluation studies of tamariki from MAC schools showed marked improvement in the children's success rates in core subject areas. The MACs continue to expand with more collaborations forming every year.

Te Akatea executive members perform a rousing Haka

NZPF rightly feels great pride in these achievements and recognises there is more work to do to fulfil our obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Strengthening our partnership with Te Akatea is an important step in this journey.

With the change in constitution to include a permanent seat for Māori on the national executive, we move one step closer. Both Te Akatea and NZPF executives appreciate the significance of this outcome and at the AGM, celebrated the moment alongside Canterbury colleagues, including three former NZPF presidents, Peter Simpson, Phil Harding and Denise Torrey. Pat Newman, first NZPF Māori president, had also made the journey from Whangarei, to mark the occasion.

The Te Akatea president, Myles Ferris was invited to speak, at the conclusion of which, he presented NZPF president Perry Rush with a taonga in recognition of the constitutional change. The moment was accompanied by a stirring haka by the Te Akatea members, followed by a fulsome waiata. The strength of emotional passion in the room was palpable. Another step had been taken. Another step towards biculturalism. Another step towards strengthening the partnership between Te Akatea and NZPF, another step towards giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Work will continue. Beyond the principal organisations, survey results continue to emerge reporting unacceptable rates of racism against our Māori teachers, principals and tamariki. Few workplaces can claim to be racism-free. We recognise that wider change must begin with leadership and that including a dedicated Māori seat on our national executive is one more step along the journey.

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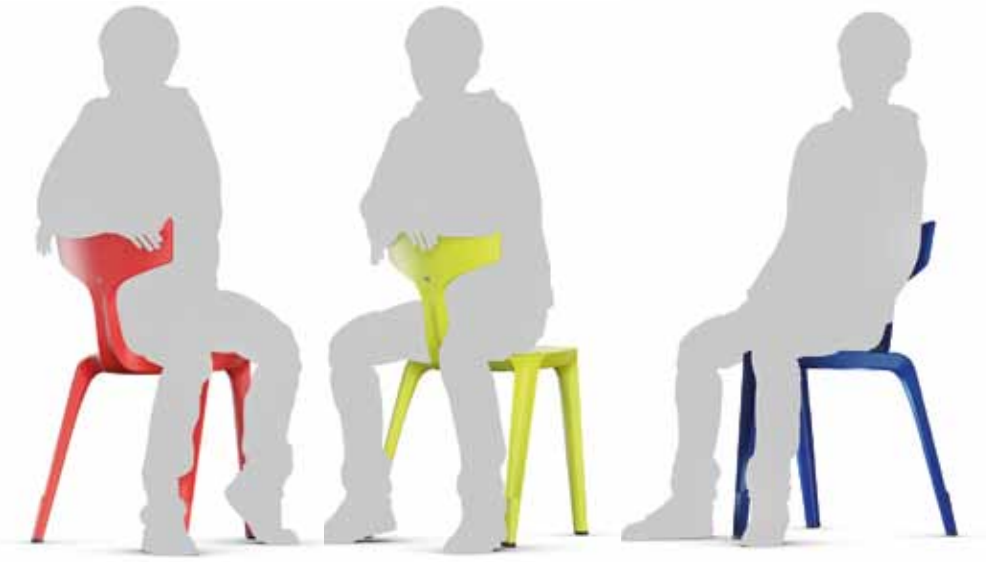

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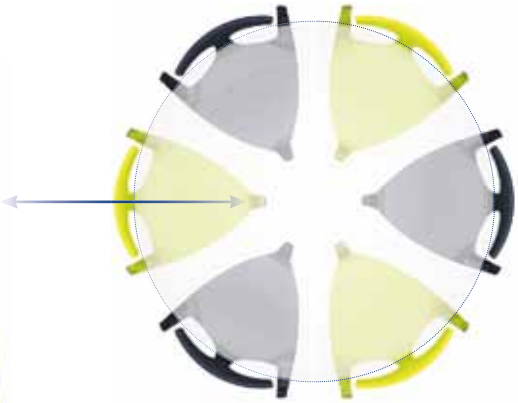

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GEOFF LOVEGROVE, AUTHOR OF 'FIRST P *THE NEW MILLENNIUM*' TALKS WITH LIZ H

Liz Hawes EDITOR

HIS COLLEAGUES OFTEN describe him as the wise one, the one who has years of experience and who uses knowledge critically. His mentoring skills are legendary, as are his communication and writing skills. Dozens of grateful principals still thank him for helping them to manage their way out of impossible crises. He is gentle, humble and humorous. He is retired school principal, Geoff Lovegrove.

Highly respected for his professionalism, Geoff was repeatedly re-elected to the NZPF national executive from 1989 to 2010. He was president for two years, treasurer for five and editor of this magazine for nine years, signing off his last magazine in June 2010.

It is rare to meet a former school principal who continues to be connected at so many levels of education in the way that Geoff is, nor one who carries as much knowledge and love of its history. Who better to write the sequel to Tom Brown's '*First Principals – A history of the New Zealand Principals' Federation*'?

As we settle into a comfortable little café in Geoff's retirement town of Feilding, I ask him why recording NZPF's history matters.

'We do not often record events as they are happening, and then, as time passes, we wonder what happened, and what led to the outcomes that resulted. NZPF is still a relatively young organisation and it is great that our forebears thought to keep good records. Even better, we had people like Tom Brown to access the records, interview key people, and write *First Principals*, covering those critical early years. Why the word "Federation"? How did we get involved internationally? Those details are important, and we should be delighted that someone had the foresight to document this in formation.'

George Santayana, the renowned philosopher, once said that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. It is a quote that has stuck with Geoff, who says, 'before written word accounts, our forebears depended on oral accounts of history which were passed on through the generations resulting in widely varying versions and interpretations of the same event'. It is vital, he said, that good, accurate evidence is collected, fact-checked, agreed and approved for safe keeping. In this way we can learn from the mistakes of the past.

That said, we can't resolve every issue immediately. The answer, Geoff says, is in persistence. He points to acclaimed educators such as Michael Fullan and Andy Hargreaves who have written extensively about 'what's worth fighting for?' in respect of school leadership. 'There will always be issues in education,' he says, 'and the role of NZPF is to hold fast to its agreed aims and ideals as it seeks to influence policy makers and educational powerbrokers.' Those aims and ideals are to be the most respected and influential advocate for New Zealand's school principals and to provide a voice and support for principals as they lead New Zealand schools.

In terms of history, Geoff explains that in the decade before the *Tomorrow's Schools* policy was implemented, principals had come to the realization that they needed better support and representation. They were aware that major changes were coming for the administration and governance of schools and wanted a structured professional organization through which principals would support and represent their peers. That was the impetus for establishing NZPF, which would complement the work of the unions.

'This work will never be completed,' says Geoff, 'as the challenges of school leadership will become more complex, and the need for strong advocacy even more critical.'

Over the years NZPF has become stronger and more influential. Geoff lists the main strengths of NZPF as having a history of strong leadership, having highly skilled national executive members and national office staff, being respected by political leaders and their officials, having resilience (Governments come and go but principals endure!), having commitment to a just cause backed by proven educational theory, and having ready access to members.

During his own time as president (1999 and 2000) there were three key issues to confront. These were appropriate PLD for principals, curriculum support and establishing a network of principal advisors.

'It was inconceivable that school leaders were expected to undertake their complex duties with absolutely no PLD training or support from the Ministry,' he said. 'The battle to have this need recognised (and addressed) continued throughout my two years in the hot seat. It was not until a year after my presidency that some major PLD advances were achieved for principals.'

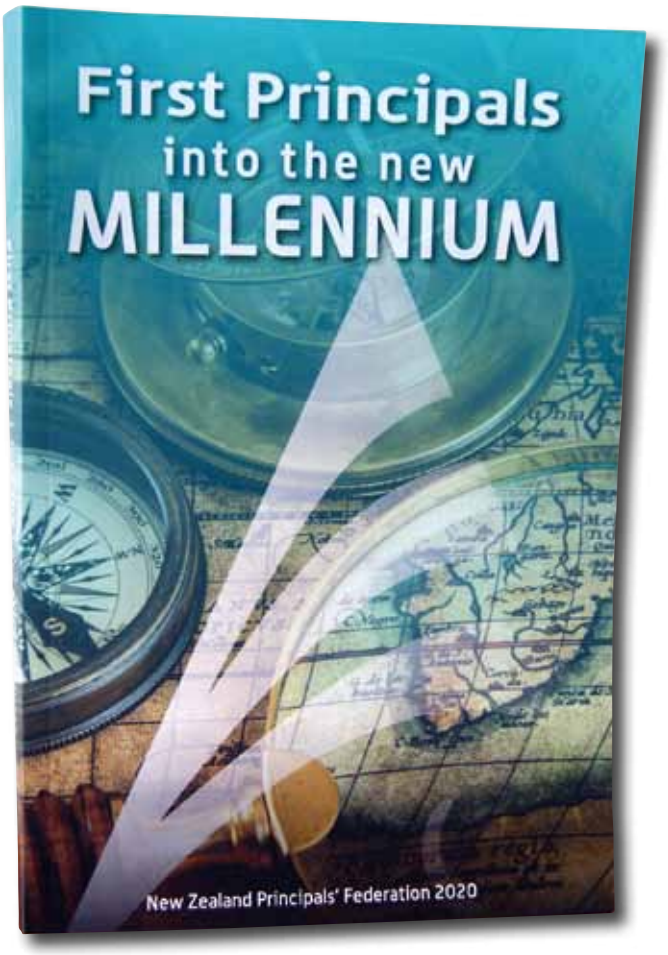
On the subject of curriculum support, Geoff reminisced fondly about the work of curriculum advisors who acted as mentors for principals and provided expert advice on all subjects including reading, mathematics, science, the arts, physical-education and social studies. 'We looked to extend and improve these services, but instead they were pared back and eventually disappeared,' he said sadly.

'We also focused on establishing a network of principal advisors,' he said. 'We sought a system-wide allocation of experienced school leaders who could assist with hauora issues that were emerging.'

It would be a long wait for the Principal Leadership Advisory (PLA) to be set up, and not until 2015 was David Hain, the first advisor, appointed in Northland. Today there are 36 PLAs employed by Evaluation Associates across the country but NZPF believes that number should be doubled. Geoff agrees, there is much more work to do yet.

One question Geoff would not be drawn on was whether the

RINCIPALS – *INTO* AWES



quality of education is higher now than in earlier days. People value different skills and attributes at different times, he said. Over his 47-year career in education Geoff witnessed many changes. 'Most were for the better,' he says confidently. 'Learning today is certainly more complex and there are so many variables for our young people to deal with. I believe most of them cope exceedingly well. There are many support systems in place, and we can always ask for more, but visit any classroom, chat with any group of young people today, and they are a joy to see at work. They are facing a raft of challenges that our own parents could never anticipate, and in most cases, they are succeeding. I envy and commend them (and their teachers) for the way they go about their work.'

Given the imminent general election, I asked Geoff about political intrusion in education and what might prevent it.

He began his answer with a question. 'Does the piper call the tune?' 'Education,' he said, 'is largely paid for by the state, and politicians have an expectation that it will deliver. So long as there are respectful, robust conversations on the issues, the nation should expect that the educators get on with the job of teaching and learning without political intrusion.'

'Political parties have their policies and their agendas, and when elected, they feel they have the mandate of the people to implement those policies. That is a given. It is when those policies have no foundation in educational thinking that conflict arises. We have seen a perfect example of this in the National Standards debacle that focused us all, throughout the first seventeen years of this century. Despite a raft of academic thinking and international experience, the government went ahead with a global reform philosophy that was flawed from the outset and has caused immeasurable harm,' he said.

So, what would prevent political intrusion?

'Hard to say,' says Geoff, 'but a concerted, reasoned, well-resourced and clearly thought through anti-national standards campaign, still failed to prevent it happening. The piper called the tune.'

We then turned our attention to NZPF conferences, why we have always held them and how they benefit principals.

'The earliest NZPF Conferences were held in Auckland and Hamilton,' says Geoff, 'reflecting the home-towns of the majority of the initial membership. The 1984 "Conference" (total cost $36.50 per principal) was really an annual meeting with the added attractions of afternoon tea and dinner, followed by a western-themed musical, and Sunday lunch. From those early AGMs grew a tradition of major annual conferences, always with a theme appropriate to the times, and guest speakers sharing the latest thinking on school leadership. Con Coffey (NZPF President 1987-1989) opened doors in Wellington and the 1988 conference was the first of the modern format, with keynote addresses and breakout groups. Tomorrow's Schools arrived, and the 1989 Conference in Auckland provided the turning point for NZPF, with corporate partners, overseas speakers, and a significant increase in registration numbers. Why is Conference important? It is not just for the speakers and their messages; it is not only for the AGM and finance reporting; not just to elect a new Executive (That has been handled electronically for some years now). It is all these elements, but it is also an annual opportunity for principals (and many deputy principals) to meet colleagues, discuss issues, catch up on stories, and just "chew the fat". This has always been a very valuable component of every conference.'

Whilst on the topic of conferences, I asked Geoff how international relationships through NZPF's membership of the International Confederation of Principals (ICP) benefited principals globally. I was surprised to learn how historically influential New Zealand principals had been in establishing the ICP.

'Our links with overseas colleagues trace back to the Australian conferences of the early nineties,' he said. 'We have also had close links with our UK and Irish principal associations for many years. We have learned so much from them, and there is still much we can learn, from their successes and their failures. We were early members of the fledgling ICP and have participated in international education affairs for many years.'

'It was a privilege,' he said, 'to attend several ICP conventions, especially in Edinburgh in 2003, when our own NZPF president, Nola Hambleton, was international President of ICP and chaired the World Convention. What have been our contributions? I can think of three significant ones,' he said.

'The first is financial stability. ICP struggled for many years until two events in New Zealand. We hosted an ICP Council

meeting in Auckland in 2005 (at short notice, after Taiwan pulled out). NZPF pulled together several able principals, who not only organized a superb Council Meeting, but also managed to achieve a significant financial profit for ICP. Two years later, Auckland hosted the first ICP Convention to be held in New Zealand, and once again, through some amazing lobbying, corporate negotiating and arm-twisting, achieved a substantial surplus, giving ICP its first sound financial footing.'

'The second,' he said, 'relates to New Zealand's educational reputation. New Zealand stands tall in international education circles, and over many decades has won a good deal of respect and admiration for the way we work in our schools. The "New Zealand Way" is quite unique, and we continue to host international visitors who want to see what we do.'

The third contribution relates to clear thinking and solution-based action.

'We were disappointed, and somewhat bemused by the process adopted by ICP in the early days when formulating discussion position papers,' said Geoff. 'There were some serious issues in world education, and ICP was an ideal forum to bring people and nations together to raise educational opportunities for all, but especially for the third world countries. ICP was quite a polite "old boys' network", and when Nola Hambleton and I attended a Council meeting in Jerusalem, we were appalled at the way the issues were dealt with. An important paper had been discussed a year before and scheduled for further discussion at this meeting. A couple of people spoke, and then a dignified gentleman moved a resolution, "that the matter be tabled, and discussed again at the next Council meeting!" We had done our homework, and fully expected some action on the very good proposals embedded in the paper. I believe it was that single event that prompted Nola to work so hard to improve the way the ICP operated, and indeed, during her two-year presidency of ICP, several major changes were made to the overall operation and efficiency of the international organization,' he said.

Having worked as executive officer for NZPF for a decade, I was amazed at how much I didn't know. With so much historical knowledge of the organization, Geoff was clearly the perfect candidate to pen this next phase of NZPF history. As expected, he has compiled a comprehensive, well written account of NZPF from 2000 – 2012. He has not just recorded the educational events and various policies that emerged across the twelve year timeframe, he has brought the human face and the credible narratives to those events so that we can feel the impact of the policy decisions on individuals and groups of principals. We hear the stories and the impact Government policies have had on school principals during this time.

Geoff has exercised his considerable writing talent to 'put the flesh on the bones' to breathe life into the educational events of a decade. It is a wise and compelling narration of principals' experiences, allowing us to both learn from the past and inform our educational future.

Partnership for community engagement

Manurewa South School, like many schools around New Zealand, have had ongoing challenges engaging with their school community.

A decile 1 school in South Auckland, the school roll includes students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The families are busy - often working more than one job and juggling commitments around multiple children in the family. The availability of internet and devices in the homes of the students is low, presenting an additional set of communication challenges. As such, the school recognised that their parent community was difficult to reach, let alone engage.

The Manurewa South leadership team spent considerable time and energy pursuing avenues to encourage engagement with the school and school events, with limited success. They needed to address the ongoing complexity of communicating with families and find a solution that would equip them with the right tools to ensure maximum engagement with their parent and caregiver community.

Working in partnership with KiwiSchools, the school developed a multi-faceted approach to ensure best access to information for all families.

"We knew that the majority of our families had access to a smartphone, even if they didn't have home internet or home computers", said Tone Kolose, the Principal at Manurewa South. *"If we wanted to reach our community, and engage with them, we needed to make sure that we made it easy for them to receive and access information through their mobile devices."*

The school website was redeveloped and redesigned to not only reflect the rich cultural diversity and strong sense of community at the school, but to also accommodate largely mobile device users. The information on the site was developed and structured in a way that would be easy to use and navigate for parents using their smartphones.

The KiwiSchools App, as part of the KiwiSchools suite of communication tools, became a primary communication tool for Manurewa South ensuring that notifications and newsletters could be delivered in real time. The app also provided easy access to contact details for staff and simple absence-reporting functionality.

Jackie Yates, the AP at the school notes that *"...there has definitely been an increase in absence reporting, and that saves us a lot of admin time in the day. I think it has a lot to do with how easy it is for parents to report an absence now through the new KiwiSchools platform either on the website or the app"*.

Tone and Jackie worked closely with KiwiSchools in the development of these tools to ensure a smooth transition in communication methods for the Manurewa South community. They are seeing improvements in engagement, as well as internal efficiencies due to consistent and wider-reaching communications.

The process of engaging families is ongoing but from Manurewa South's point of view the trend is looking promising.

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WHY DO WORDS COUNT?

James W. Chapman PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY, MASSEY UNIVERSITY

MANY PRINCIPALS, TEACHERS, Ministry of Education officials, and politicians have expressed concerns about the literacy performance levels of New Zealand children. Our rankings in international surveys have steadily dropped over the past 50 years. In 1970 the first international literacy survey of 9-year-old children was held. New Zealand was ranked 1st. In 1991, New Zealand ranked 6th. The first in a series of rolling surveys, the Progress in International Literacy Survey (PIRLS) was held in 2001; New Zealand 9-year olds ranked 13th; in 2006, 22nd; 2011, 23rd; 2016, 33rd. New Zealand ranked lowest of English language countries in the latest (2016) survey.

The juniors learn how to put sounds together

What went wrong? International surveys aren't the be-all and end-all measure of learning outcomes. But they provide an important, independent source of information. Despite various government attempts to improve the literacy performance of our children and to reduce the big gap between good and poor readers, things have got worse, not better.

The failure to improve the literacy learning outcomes of our children has been attributed to poverty, increased use of digital devices, poor parenting and home backgrounds, and poor school facilities. Other countries have these issues as well. Poverty and the use of digital devices, for example, exist in many countries, including the other English language countries that we now lag behind. Virtually no policy attention has focused on our literacy teaching methods as one of the fixable reasons for our declining performance.

New Zealand has followed a strongly constructivist approach to literacy education for the past 30 years. This approach is based on the belief that learning to read is like learning to speak; both abilities are said to develop 'naturally'. The claim is that 'children learn to read themselves; direct teaching plays only a minor role' (Smith & Elley, 1994, *Learning to read in New Zealand*, p.87). This view gets to the crux of the matter, which is about the role of word-level information in learning to read.

The advice to students in initial teacher education programmes, promoted and supported by Department/Ministry of Education publications since at least the early 1980s, has been on the 'multiple cues' theory of reading. When beginning readers come across an unfamiliar word in text, they are encouraged to use cues such as pictures, the meaning or syntax, or some of the letters in the word.

However, research clearly shows that good readers have strong word-level skills, whereas poor readers have weak word-level skills and compensate for this lack by over-relying on meaning cues. Further, when learners are encouraged to use non-word-level cues (e.g., picture, syntax, developing meaning—if they understand the developing meaning) they lose an opportunity to pay attention to the word and to map it to memory. Unfortunately, the multiple cues approach disadvantages the children who need the most help in learning to read.

This deeply entrenched approach to literacy instruction in New Zealand has been discredited by scientific studies of reading for nearly three decades. Extensive research shows that achievement in reading comprehension (reading for meaning) depends on two processes: the ability to recognise the words in text accurately and quickly, and the use of language skills such as vocabulary and syntax. Progress in learning to read words requires the ability to translate letters and letter patterns into phonological forms (i.e., letter-sound relationships). Making use of letter-sound relationships provides the basis for beginning readers to develop sight word knowledge—for building a mental dictionary of print words. This in turn allows beginning readers to use their cognitive resources to focus on sentence meaning and text integration.

To develop links between spelling patterns and sound patterns, children have to be able to segment words into phonemic

sequences; they have to understand that spoken words and syllables are made up of sequences of speech sounds. Developing phonemic awareness (the ability to hear and manipulate the sounds in spoken words) is essential for discovering spelling-to-sound relationships and for grasping the alphabetic principle. Understanding the alphabetic principle, or 'cracking' the alphabetic code, is necessary (but not enough by itself) for being able to read for meaning. Put simply, children cannot get meaning from text if they cannot identify the words in text that carry the meaning!

There is now a large body of research showing that explicit, systematic instruction in relating spellings to pronunciations positively influences reading achievement, especially during the early stages of learning to read. And conversely, a lack of these skills has a negative influence on reading acquisition. Explicit attention in early literacy instruction to alphabetic coding skills, alongside explicit attention to vocabulary, is helpful for all children and crucial for some.

Children at Kaiapoi North School work on sounds through the Science of Reading Approach

Teaching beginning readers word-level decoding skills and strategies systematically and explicitly is vital for providing children with the foundations for learning to read. Because of the entrenched approach to literacy instruction few teachers have had the opportunity to learn how to do this. It has become clear that effectively teaching reading skills to beginning readers requires that teachers have a thorough understanding of the basic structure of the English language, including an understanding of the sound-symbol correspondences of written English and how this affects reading development. Louisa Moats, in her highly acclaimed publication *Teaching Reading IS Rocket Science* (2020, https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/moats.pdf), showed that relevant teacher knowledge includes understanding language and some linguistics, as well as understanding the psychology of reading development and cognitive development.

Although phonics programmes have provided teachers with some of the important language knowledge involved in reading acquisition, many haven't had the opportunity to refresh their teaching skills in line with current research on best practice in literacy instruction. This is the case even when they know they need to change their instructional practices. Change is required if the literacy learning outcomes of *all* children in New Zealand are to improve.

My colleagues and I tested instructional changes in a Ministry of Education-funded longitudinal research project. We developed a teacher PLD programme that focussed on developing teachers' levels of knowledge and the practices required for more effective literacy teaching. This year-long programme consisted of five workshops spaced over the four terms and totalled six days of workshop attendance.

To provide a conceptual guide in the workshops, we adopted the Cognitive Foundations of Learning to Read framework (Tunmer & Hoover, 2018, *Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties*). This framework combines the two essential components required for independent reading for meaning (reading comprehension): language comprehension and word recognition. It's necessary that *both* word recognition and language comprehension are taught in an integrated manner in each literacy lesson. The weighting of the instructional focus on either word recognition or language comprehension differs, based on the learner's current needs. Beginning readers, for example, require focused instruction in word recognition, and all that it involves, with language comprehension taught in whole-class settings. Learners with greater word recognition knowledge have focused instruction on language comprehension, and less weighting on word recognition, because they have the foundation skills required for independently accessing written words.

And another new word is sounded out

One major aspect of the PLD programme was the provision of strategies for teaching the necessary knowledge and skills. This revolved around the use of explicit, structured, and systematic instruction. Explicit instruction does not leave acquisition of essential knowledge to chance in the hopes that children will 'get it'. Instead, explicit instruction requires breaking down the necessary learning into key components. These components include each letter name and sound, blending of phonemes together to decode unfamiliar words, segmenting sounds in spoken words to spell unknown words, as well as teaching the meanings of target words. To assist teachers with this process in working with children, we provided or recommended the use of decodable readers. In contrast to the current *Ready to Read* texts which are based on predictable text to facilitate meaning, decodable texts provide children with the opportunity to practice their word-level decoding skills and strategies. Importantly, teachers and children enjoyed the decodable texts.

To examine the effectiveness of the PLD workshops, the new entrant teachers who participated in these sessions formed the 'intervention' group. New entrant teachers in other schools opted to form the 'comparison' group. The new entrant children in both groups all started school for the first time following the Christmas holiday break, and they had similar scores across a range of reading-related measures.

By the middle of Year 2, the intervention children significantly outperformed the comparison children on assessments of reading and spelling. Especially significant was the finding that *low decile* intervention children on average markedly outperformed the low decile comparison group of children. On some measures, the low decile intervention children had mean scores that were close to or equal to those of children in higher decile schools.

Assessments of the intervention teachers showed important improvements in their knowledge of the language foundations associated with effective literacy teaching and learning. Video clips of classroom teaching also revealed changes in instructional practices that reflected the content and materials from the PLD workshops. The significant improvements in literacy learning outcomes of the intervention children are consistent with the changes teachers made as a result of the PLD workshops.

The young students have a think about this sound

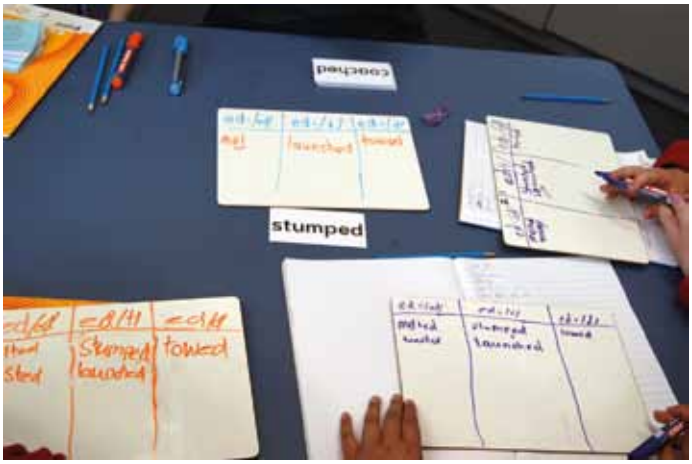
Our approach for teaching early literacy combined whole-class instruction with small-group instruction for reading and spelling. Whole-class teaching provided instruction in oral vocabulary and concepts about print using picture books and big books. Small group reading and spelling teaching combined phonics instruction with the reading of connected text and with learning to spell words. The small group teaching is based on the use of an instructional scope and sequence and targeted assessments to ensure children receive specific instruction to meet their strengths and needs. Both small-group and whole-class teaching involved explicit explanations but differed in the instructional strategies immediately following the explicit explanations.

A full technical report and a shorter easier-to-read report with specific teaching guides are available on the Education Counts website: https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/schooling/early-literacy-research-project

The findings from this project are consistent with other similar projects in a range of countries. The research is not a one-off or an outlier. It is part of the mainstream of scientific research on reading. Evidence of the importance of providing explicit and systematic instruction on the development of word-level decoding skills and strategies has emerged in the research literature for over three decades now. And nation-wide evidence of the value of the approach can be seen in the 2016 PIRLS results for England. Following the introduction of a stronger 'phonics' approach to teaching after a major report on the teaching of reading in the mid-2000s, children's scores on the 2016 PIRLS literacy assessments showed a significant improvement.

Many schools in New Zealand are now working to implement a structured approach to teaching literacy. These schools have invested in training or have participated in projects like *Teaching to Ensure Progress in Literacy* (https://gazette.education.govt.nz/articles/phonics-based-literacy-inquiry-lifts-progress), or the Better Start Literacy Approach (https://www.betterstartapproach.com/). The participating teachers in these projects are finding considerable improvements in student literacy outcomes and in student motivation to engage in literacy tasks.

The take-away message? Do the same thing; get the same results. The *status quo* especially disadvantages Māori and Pacific children, and children in low decile schools. That is simply unacceptable, especially when we know that it doesn't have to be that way. Teaching children to develop effective word-level decoding skills and strategies, explicitly and systematically, is far more effective than leaving the development of word knowledge to chance. *Words count.*



Older children learn more complex blends and sounds to decode words

FURTHER READING

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Professor James Chapman is an international researcher recognised for his work in the areas of cognitive-motivational factors associated with learning disabilities and the development and remediation of reading difficulties. He has published over 150 journal articles, book chapters and books on learning disabilities, special education, literacy learning difficulties, early literacy development, reading intervention, and self-system factors in academic achievement. In 1999 he was co-winner of the International Reading Association's Dina Feitelson Award for Excellence in Research. Professor Chapman was head of the College of Education at Massey University for 10 years.
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AOTEA – GREAT BARRIER ISLAND – SCHOOL LIFE WITH A DIFFERENCE

Liz Hawes EDITOR

YOU QUICKLY RUN out of superlatives when describing Aotea Great Barrier Island. It is a place of exquisite beauty to anyone who craves peace and tranquility and yearns to escape the harsh city sounds. Located in the outer Hauraki Gulf, it offers few perceptible intrusions bar the gentle lapping of the sea and the many and varied songs of its profligate bird population.

Threatened species such as the kaka, the banded rail, the brown teal duck and New Zealand dotterel make Aotea their home, alongside the more common oyster catcher, tui, pukeko, kereru, blue penguin, petrel and gannet. It helps that Aotea has few predators and with help from the Department of Conservation (DOC), who control two-thirds of the Island's bush covered conservation park, predators are kept at low levels. The aspiration is of course to eradicate all pests, and rat-trapping is a big part of that.

Here's an example from the balcony of our digs!

President Perry Rush takes a look at what's over the school fence. Yes, it really is Tryphena Bay

Aotea has not escaped kauri die back disease and DOC workers are regenerating the kauri stands. Maintaining and cutting the many walking tracks through the pristine native bush of the conservation park is another key task for DOC.

The splendid rocky outcrops and beaches of Tryphena, Okupu and Whangaparapara on the west coast, contrast with the sweeping golden sandy beaches of Medlands, Kaitoke and Whangapoua in the east. It is not unusual to be entertained by the antics of Orca or Minke whales and dolphins as you sip your coffee in a Tryphena café and if the whales and dolphins aren't performing, there's bound to be a few kayaks and fishing boats to catch your attention.

Aotea is largely uninhabited, except for the 800 or so residents who populate the southern end of the island, in the service communities of Tryphena and Claris (which boasts the Island's main airport) and at the northern end, Port Fitzroy and Okiwi. A few working sheep and beef farms dot the landscape along with the manuka and bush honey producers.

Aotea is accessible by (small) plane, ferry or barge. These are also the means by which food, freight and mail arrives on the island. There are three general stores, but if you are expecting supermarkets, you will be deeply disappointed. Stores are located in Tryphena, Claris and Fitzroy, the main island hubs. You can also find the medical centre, pharmacy, police, fire brigade, and garages at Claris. Cafes and restaurants are not plentiful, but some have wonderful names, such as *My Fat Puku*, *The Currach* (Irish Pub), *Swallow* (hamburger bar), *Stray Possum Restaurant & Bar* and *The Whale Boat* (in deference to the colonial whaling industry of the 1800s). If you expect to order excellent local seafood, however, you may be disappointed. Despite the well-stocked local scallop beds, the rock oysters, paua, crayfish, snapper, hapuka, terakihi, kingfish and other local seafood delights are not always available to restaurants and cafes. Rather, these delicacies are more likely to have filled the quotas of Auckland based commercial fisheries, and not be available to Aotea restaurants. If you are a seafood fan, you might need to befriend a local recreational fisherman and invite yourself for dinner.

There are a few things you quickly learn about Barrier life. Petrol is $3.40 a litre, milk is $5 a litre and electricity is not a given. Some families need a wet-back for hot water and coal ranges are still in use in some parts. Once the sun goes down, you are essentially in the dark. There are no road lights to guide you home at night, nor are there any traffic lights or road markings. There is a single sealed road from one end of the island to the

Perry Rush entertains the children of Mulberry Grove School

other, but don't be in a hurry. The road is especially narrow, hilly and very windy.

The lack of 'light pollution' means that Aotea qualifies as the world's only island ***Dark Sky Sanctuary*** and attracts astro-tourists from all over the world to participate in star-gazing tours. This means that Aotea is well placed to celebrate Matariki and does so with a month-long festival including astronomy talks and star gazing. This year the festival ended with a chance to see Mars at its brightest and closest since 2003, and what better place to see it with clarity than Aotea?

This is the place where the children of Aotea Great Barrier Island are born, nurtured and grow up. They are closely connected to nature and have a heightened awareness and knowledge of their beautiful environment. They are quite comfortable both in the sea and in the bush. Perry Rush, NZPF president and I visited the three schools on Aotea in October this year. The three schools are quite distinct in their focus with one in the northern Okiwi district, Kaitoke School in Claris and Mulberry Grove in Tryphena. That said, there are also issues they all have in common.

Our visit began with Mulberry Grove School (MGS), Tryphena.

Mulberry Grove School (MGS)

Principal of MGS, Ally Gibbs, is proud of her 30 students, saying how willing they are to share their fishing and pig hunting stories, how adaptable and resilient they are, and how adept at solving problems. 'They are free range kids,' she said delightedly, 'so they have learned how to look out for each other and be responsible for themselves and the environment.'

'The school's curriculum provides the flexibility to focus on the needs and the strengths of the students, using the local environment and community to support classroom programmes,' says Ally. 'The students here are also well connected, through the virtual learning network (VLN), to other kids living in isolated places including those in other countries,' she said. The VLN allows our students to learn foreign languages too and Spanish is a popular choice at MGS. 'Some students have had three years of Spanish before they start secondary school,' said Ally.

Staying in touch with the community is key to understanding

Ally Gibbs, Principal of Mulberry Grove School checks in with the kayakas through her walkie-talkie

the breadth of knowledge out there and Ally is quick to involve those with expertise who are willing to help broaden the curriculum. 'Take Ian Way,' says Ally. 'He is Grandfather to one of our students but is a retired pilot with an interest in model aeroplanes. He is teaching two of our boys, Zac and Cane the theory of flying, aerodynamics and how to read and understand plans and instructions,' says Ally. The two boys are building model aeroplanes under Ian's watchful eye and are completely

Year 7 & 8 kids at Mulberry Grove School get ready for a kayak trip to Pa Point

Zac has found his niche making model aeroplanes with the help of former pilot Ian Way, from Devon

engrossed in their learning. Zac already plans to train as a pilot as soon as he is old enough!

Connection to the environment is brought starkly into focus when we talk about the school swimming pool. 'We have a huge swimming pool,' says Ally with a grin, 'See the Bay out there?' And yes, all the children have swimming lessons in Tryphena Bay which is on the school boundary. 'We host swimming sports in the summer for all three schools on the Island,' says Ally, 'because there's plenty of room in our pool!'

If we needed any confirmation of the kids love of water sports, come lunch time, we watched the seniors set off with a teacher for an hour's kayaking round to nearby Pa Bay. 'They like to jump off the wharf, but today the ferry is in so they can jump in the water from Pa Bay instead,' said Ally, as she checked in with the teacher via the radio telephone communication system. 'This is part of our safety procedure,' she said, 'Just in case anything goes wrong and we have to get help urgently.'

Another important programme the school offers is Sea Science, supported by the Sea Education Charitable Trust. 'Our kids learn to sail, kayak and snorkel and we do long jump on the beach,' she

The VLN corner at Mulberry Grove School where the seniors learn Spanish

said. They also learn about marine debris and the 'great Pacific Garbage Patch' in the Pacific Ocean, made up mostly of plastic.

All three schools on Aotea combined in a beach clean-up in 2017, which became a scientific study to better understand the nature of the rubbish, where the rubbish came from, whether the location of the beach made a difference to the type of rubbish found and how to reduce it.

This project was a perfect example of schools collaborating around common goals and objectives. The aim of the study was to enhance their Island environment by systematically analysing the types and effects of rubbish on their beaches. They collected samples, categorised and counted the items of rubbish, recorded and analysed the data and communicated their findings through creative art, sculptures (including sculpting a hammerhead shark), and wall displays, using the marine debris. They wrote poems, songs and a play and made videos of their findings. They then shared their creations with their communities through a hui.

This was followed up with a presentation to a science conference of about one hundred marine scientists and a presentation to over 300 Auckland University students, about how marine debris affects Aotea Great Barrier Island. A community beach clean-up was organised by the children, who invited the community to volunteer and support their efforts and meetings were held with mussel farmers to discuss ways to stop lanyards (rope used for growing mussels) ending up on beaches.

'This project had everything,' said Ally. 'The children used key competencies in working together, they involved all the core subjects of reading, writing and maths and applied science; they collected data and analysed it, categorising and counting all the different types of rubbish; and they summarised their findings by synthesizing all the data and presenting it in pie graphs with a narrative. They then used their public communication skills to present to the different groups, answered their questions and converted their story into Art form. It was a stunningly good project,' she said.

Building and working on relationships with the community is a critical part of being a principal at MGS. 'I'm the 30th principal in 50 years,' she said. 'It's important that you are a good fit with the community and it's not for everybody as the stats show.'

The COVID health crisis was a mixed bag for Ally's children. 'Most families have access to the internet so many kids could keep learning from home, but access to devices was an issue with many limited to their parent's phone,' she said. 'The other

COVID related problem was socialisation, especially for only kids,' she said.

One enduring problem for all Aotea schools is attracting teachers, relievers and teacher aides. 'It's difficult, especially with rolls moving up and down,' said Ally. 'Teachers are less likely to accept a position with us when they may be out of a job the following year.'

The other common issue is getting access to learning support

It takes full attention to write speeches

people. 'We are aware that there is a cost to bringing over RTLB or an RTLit, Educational Psychologists, speech therapists, Oranga Tamariki or mental health service workers to the Island,' says Ally. 'At times we have had an inter-agency approach including all the different agencies and the Police too, but then funding was cut. Our learning support services are at best inconsistent,' she said. This is a constant problem for the school given about one third of the current students would benefit from some learning support assistance.

'The same applies to PLD,' she said, 'and it's these things that suck the life out of you.' She did add that being able to access the COVID Urgent Response Fund was hugely helpful and they had been able to relieve some pressure points through that.

Property issues are another common headache for all three schools. Fluctuating rolls place them in the too hard basket.

Whilst in many ways school is an idyllic experience for the children, there are barriers for them too. The biggest is that Aotea kids are zoned for Te Kura, Correspondence School for their Secondary School Education. In other words, there is no secondary school on the Island.

'Parents all want the best opportunities for their kids throughout their schooling lives. Parents of our kids want their secondary aged kids to have an expanded curriculum and broader socialisation to prepare them for their adult lives,' said Ally, 'and that means attending Boarding Schools in Auckland.'

The Ministry of Education does offer a small subsidy to parents of the kids who attend Boarding School but this subsidy is nowhere near enough for many families.

'In some cases, we lose the whole family, who shift to Auckland once their eldest goes to High School,' said Ally. 'In other cases, families struggle on and there are those who just use Te Kura, Correspondence School,' she said. A hub has been created to support these students, but its no substitute for the real school experience.

Challenges aside, one of the most influential factors in the school's success is the community spirit. 'We are so lucky to have such a committed community here,' she says. 'just take our school gardens, for example,' she says, as she leads us outside to inspect the new garden boxes that have just been constructed, ready for the soil to be dug in. 'All this work has been done by our parents', she said proudly.

Te Kura o Okiwi

The Fisheries Officers come to educate the children at Okiwi on the rules of fishing

It's a slow windy road from Tryphena to Okiwi. We immerse ourselves in the dense fresh bush – much of it regenerating – at the northern end of the island and take in the steep cliffs, deep ravines and spectacular jagged 'Pinnacles'.

Kura o Okiwi is the most isolated of the three schools, because of its distance from service centres. Port Fitzroy is the closest and offers a general store and a wharf. Families are scattered. Whilst some children arrive at school by bus, others are bused from the wharf where they have been dropped by boat.

Principal Colin Griffiths is away the day we visit the Okiwi kura but we were well taken care of by Kaimahi Brian Reid. The day began with a mihi whakatau, which is the normal way to welcome visitors at the school. The school population is about 90 per cent Māori, so English and Te Reo Māori are used interchangeably.

Some children from Kura o Okiwi travel to and from school by boat

'We have a big emphasis on taha Māori at our school,' says Brian, 'and most of the Kaimahi (teaching staff) are quite fluent in te reo,' he said.

'There are families on the Island who want their children to experience a richly Māori education,' says Brian, 'so they deliberately choose our school.'

'We run a tuakana teina system where the older kids look out for and nurture the younger ones,' he said. 'In the end this becomes part of our whānau way of being.'

We saw tuakana teina in action when we joined the children who presented prepared statements about who they are, their families, what they and their families like doing and what is special about their families. There was a mix of family types from sole parents to extended whānau families where grandparents had an influential role, particularly in passing on skills and knowledge. We also met descendants of the oldest family on the Island, Richie and Isabella Mabey. The Mabey family has farmed on Great Barrier Island for over a century.

The sculpture of the hammerhead shark made from marine debris is displayed at Kura o Okiwi

Some children prepared their stories in Te Reo, others in a mix of English and Te Reo, and some in English. If young ones were struggling to read their work, an older student would get up and help them out or hold up pictures for them.

Favourite pastimes were heavily weighted in favour of outdoor activities, and surprisingly not a single child mentioned they played computer games!

Motorbike riding was a hit amongst a few older boys, but far and away the most popular weekend fun was hunting, fishing and diving. This is in part because they said they love eating seafood. Ball games like netball, tennis, soccer, rugby, touch rugby and cricket were also standard fare. Family cats and dogs took the interest of a few and managing litters of new-borns was most exciting.

Another example of tuakana teina at Kura o Okiwi

We learned that several dads work for DOC and in this northern area, rat trapping is a big focus. Others are truck drivers, builders, and tradesmen, mostly in full time work on account of the residential building happening on the Island. Some are propagating native trees to sell, just as children at Te Kura o Okiwi propagate natives to plant. There are creative Mums who like to paint and some are adept at Māori art, others make jewellery.

Indoor favourites included playing chess, drawing, reading, writing, guitar playing and singing. A few like to bake.

Families in this part of the Island are not millionaires so when it comes to school trips, they have to be innovative in their fundraising choices. About twenty years ago, locals decided to gather to watch the Melbourne Cup race on television, and to entertain the young ones, someone suggested snail races. The snail races took on a life of their own and are now the major fundraiser for school trips. The kids are the owners and trainers. They paint their snail shell with a number and people bid on which snail will win. The winner is the first to breach the edge of a defined circle.

'We now have visiting Russian boaties who regularly come to bet on the snail race and a group of sailors from Tauranga come over every year especially for the event. What is so amusing, is that they are not coming for the Melbourne Cup so much as the snail race!' said Brian.

The day we visit, two Fisheries Officers Tom and Taylor, are also visiting the school. We sit in on their session with the children. Tom and Taylor are here to educate the children on the rules of fishing, the number of a single species allowed per day and how

big the fish have to be before you can take them home. They also explain the consequences of not following the rules.

They explained their role as being 'Fish Police' and began their presentation by asking the children questions. 'How long does a snapper have to be, to keep it?' The hands went up quickly, and the question answered correctly. This pattern was repeated for every question.

The children already knew all the rules and were keen to abide by them so that the fishing stocks would be sustained. Indeed, they had questions for the Fishing Police themselves. Like, did they know what commercial fisher-people were doing at night and could they track what they are doing? What was happening about the plastic on the mussel lines which pollutes the sea? These are children for whom the sea is their home and the fish their sustenance.

Kura o Okiwi is a school that actively lives its values of awhinatanga, manaakitanga and whanaungatanga and has very close connections with the two local marae and the local iwi Ngāti Wai. These values and the school's cultural connections heavily influence the daily curriculum and activities of the school, as do environmental studies. The young people attending this very distinct Kura, will be the bi-cultural kids of the future, capable of walking confidently in two worlds.

Kaitoke School, Claris

Kaitoke is the school closest to the airport at Claris. Kaitoke boasts the only natural hot springs on Aotea, a reminder of the Island's volcanic nature. They are accessible via the Hot Springs track through beautiful native bush or by Whangaparapara Road and a short bush walk.

The children of Kaitoke School welcome President Perry Rush to their school

We have no time to indulge in this natural phenomenon unfortunately and motor across the farmlands to Kaitoke school. We meet Leo de Beurs, the principal of nine years, but like Mulberry Grove School, Kaitoke has a history of many previous principals who did not stay long.

'You have to be a particular person to fit in here,' says Leo, but we love it.

The students of Kaitoke school essentially come from two main areas. These are Okupu and Whangaparapara. 'We have a mix of kids here,' says Leo, 'with some coming from privileged backgrounds and others living in baches.'

The school is situated on a very generous site and the school, the adjacent playcentre and two schoolhouses are powered by

Kaitoke kids enjoy a good joke

Principal Leo de Beurs, Kaitoke, has a laugh with Perry

48 solar panels, 24 large storage batteries and 2 large generators. 'This is all Ministry of Education land,' said Leo, 'It is a huge expanse because there was an intention to build an Area School here, but that has not eventuated,' he said.

Like all the Aotea schools, Kaitoke operates a whānau model, where older kids look after younger ones. It is an advantage that Leo thinks the mainland Intermediate schools don't have. 'By retaining our year 7 and 8 kids, they have the opportunity to learn to take responsibility for supporting and organising and caring for the little ones, which of course can't happen if you take them out and put them all into Intermediate schools,' he said.

The year 7 and 8 kids from across all the schools do have their own social club and regular meetups. 'They have movie nights and swimming, snorkeling and jumping off rocks and have a meal together. They organise tramps too and have quiz nights, just for themselves,' he said.

Friday pie day is a big job for pie monitor Terri

Nature is a prominent feature for Kaitoke school, as it is for all the schools, but as Leo says, it's not always positive. 'At certain times of the year the pigs circle our rubbish bins, take what they want and off they go,' he says. 'They also encroach on private properties when fruit is ripening and help themselves,' he says.

We get to chat to some of the senior students who are looking ahead to secondary school. There's a fairly even divide between those who are intending to go to Epsom Girls' Grammar School and those who will stay on the island and do high school work by correspondence, and much does depend on finances, not their individual potential to succeed.

One school leaver will leave behind his own enduring legacy. Peter will stay on the island for his high school years but has designed a race track which he has named 'Cartoki City.' It will take up a metre square area of the playground and the challenge now is translating the plan onto the plot. Junior children have helped Peter to dig it out ready for the next stage. His teacher aide and he have been working on this project for a long time now and it is exciting that it will soon be taking shape. This lasting legacy will also include Peter's name, etched into the concrete, he told us proudly.

Friday at Kaitoke School is pie day. Like so many food items, the pies are flown into the island in boxes and delivered to the school for heating. It's a treat the kids all anticipate with relish.

We finish our day with Friday assembly and as the children perform their dances and songs, we resolve to return to this little piece of paradise, called Aotea Great Barrier Island.

Pies make these girls smile!

Peter, Kaitoke School, shows Perry another model he has made from Lego

NZPF SURVEY REPORT

Liz Hawes EDITOR

EARLIER THIS YEAR, President, Perry Rush, undertook a *Road Show* to 17 regions across the country. At the conclusion of the tour, an online survey was conducted, based on the responses of the 800 or so principals he met on his travels.

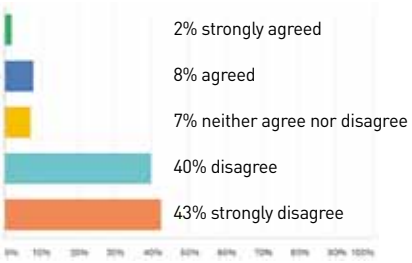
We now have the results of that survey, snippets of which Perry has already published in his *Principal Matters* electronic newsletter. This report expands further on the results to give you a full picture.

The survey was designed to capture information on wellbeing, learning and behaviour issues, which you encounter in your schools, the severity and frequency of these and how you are resourcing and coping with these issues; Kahui Ako and whether you support the model as it currently exists, support it with modifications or do not support it at all; and curriculum issues.

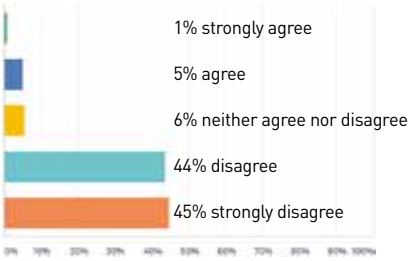
Our thanks to the 682 principals who responded to the survey. Your responses contribute to the position that NZPF takes in respect of the issues outlined. The reported percentages here are rounded to the nearest whole number so may not all add up to exactly 100 per cent.

Wellbeing & Learning and Behaviour Issues

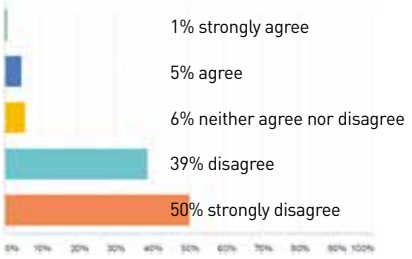
1. 'In my school, we have sufficient funds to employ the necessary Teacher Aides to support children's needs'



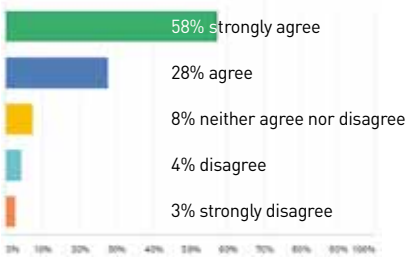
2. 'My school has sufficient funds to meet the level of learning support needs'



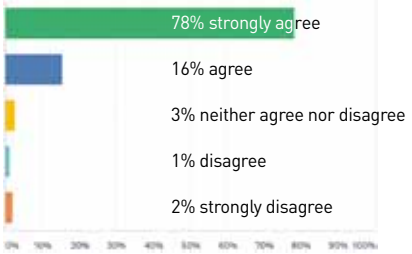
3. 'My school has sufficient funding to employ staff to meet the pastoral, well-being and mental health needs of students'



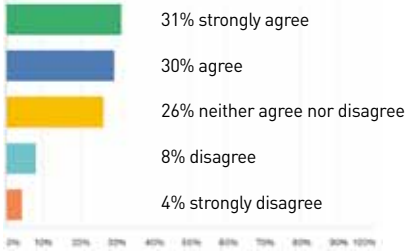
4. 'Funded counselling services is an urgent need for the students in my school'



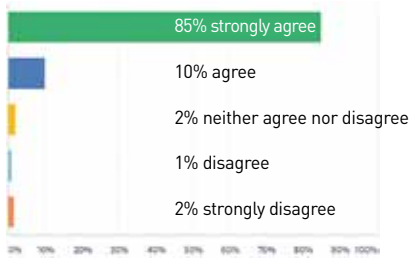
5. 'Every school should have a fully funded SENCo or LSC'



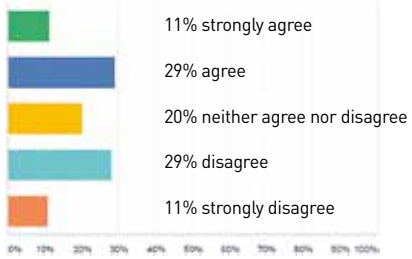
6. 'The donations scheme should be available to decile 8–10 schools'



7. 'The level of management staffing entitlements, including units and allowances, available to secondary schools should equally be available to primary schools'

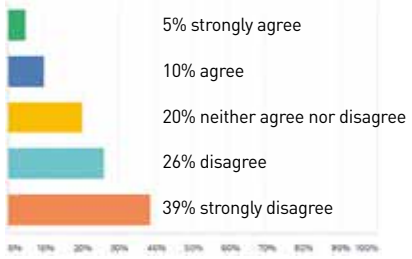


8. 'The RTLB is an effective service that delivers quality outcomes for students requiring learning and/or behaviour support'

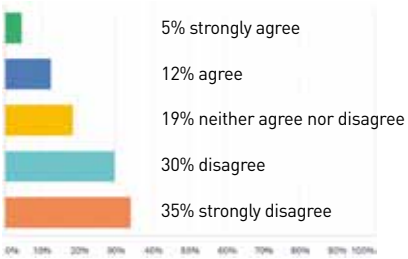


Kahui Ako

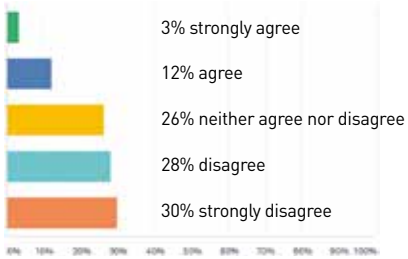
9. 'The most equitable way to deploy the LSC resource is to locate most of them in Kahui Ako'



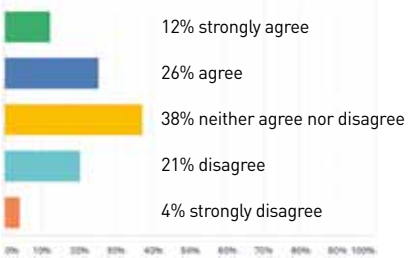
10. ‘Kahui Ako is the best model to activate networking for principals’



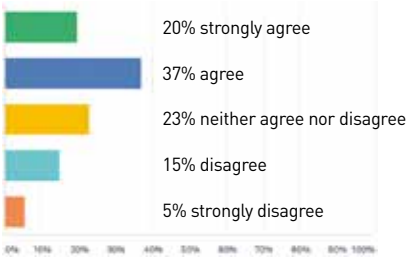
11. ‘The Kahui Ako model results in improved learning outcomes for students’



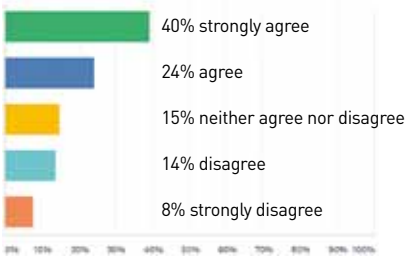
12. ‘Participation in Kahui Ako takes too much of my time’



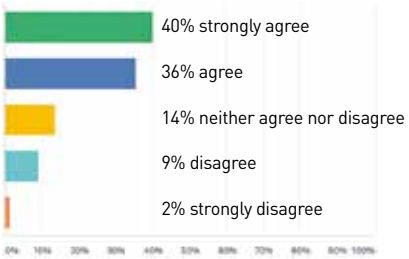
13. ‘I would support the Kahui Ako model of collaboration if all the money currently paid to leaders was redirected to funding activities agreed by participants’



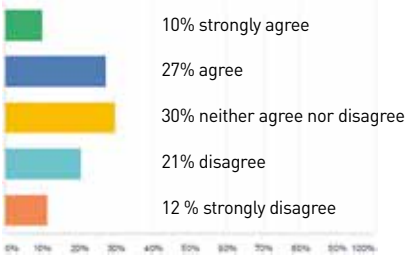
14. ‘I do not support the Kahui Ako model and the money would be better spent on specialist services and learning support’



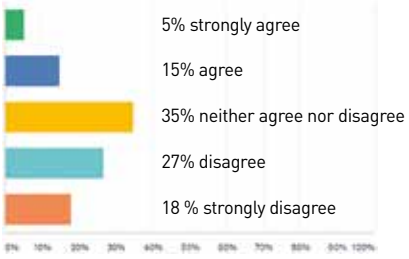
15. ‘The best collaboration occurs when principals choose who the collaborate with’



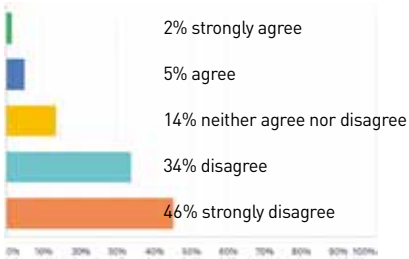
16. ‘Kahui Ako enable better transitions between different schooling levels such as primary to intermediate and on to secondary’



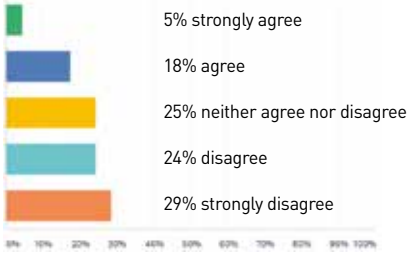
17. ‘Setting and collectively working towards agreed achievement challenges for the Kahui Ako lifts the achievement of all schools in the Kahui Ako’



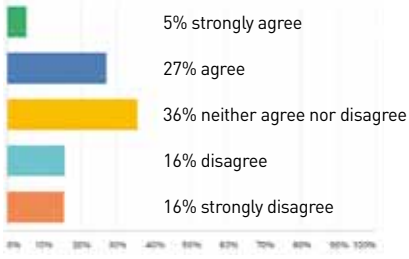
18. ‘All learning support services should be provided through the Kahui Ako’



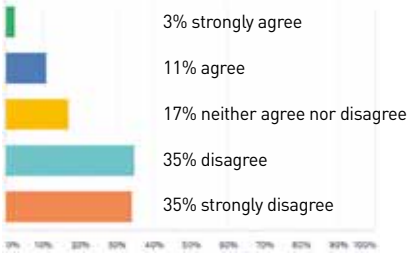
19. ‘Kahui Ako is the best model to develop a shared local curriculum in partnership with local iwi’



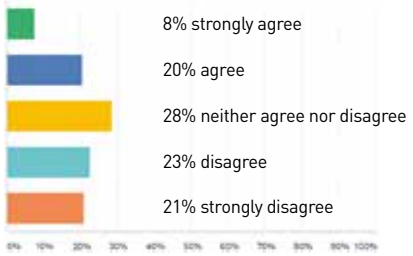
20. ‘I support Kahui Ako to enable participating schools to share each other’s physical facilities’



21. ‘I support Kahui Ako as the preferable model for obtaining agreed PLD’

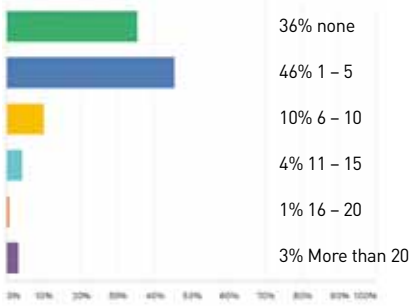


22. ‘Kahui Ako develop strong communities of practice for teachers, leaders, middle leaders and curriculum leaders’

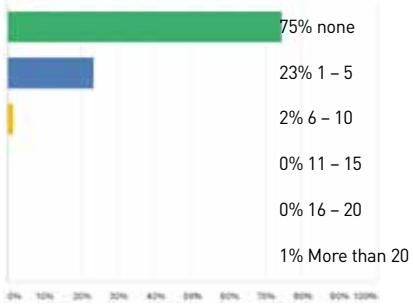


Class Evacuations, Stand downs, exclusions

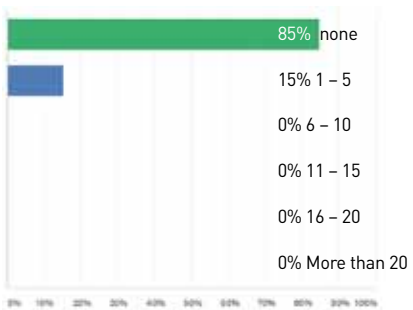
23. ‘In the past twelve months, how many students have you stood down from your school?’



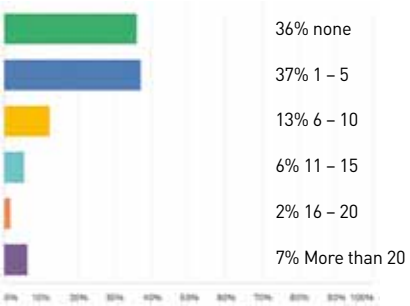
24. ‘In the past twelve months, how many students have you suspended from your school?’



25. ‘In the past twelve months, how many students has your Board excluded from your school?’



26. ‘In the past twelve months, how many class evacuations have there been in your school?’

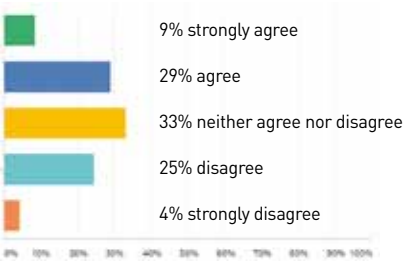


27. This question asked principals to think of an instance of extreme behaviour in their school and how it affected other students and staff. 608 responded with stories of trauma, threat, shock, emotional stress, anxiety, abuse, fear, upset, disruption, exhaustion and physical harm. Thank you for sharing your stories which provide hard evidence for NZPF to advocate more strongly and convincingly for urgent services in this area.

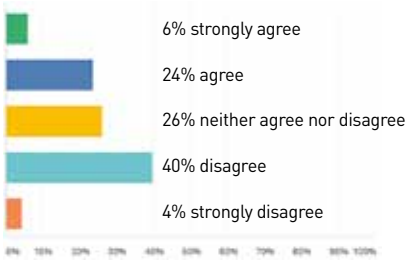
28. This question asked principals to outline one example of violent behaviour, including physical harm to self, other staff or students, property or equipment and to describe how you coped. 564 responded with examples including biting, hitting, punching, shoulder charging, kicking, pinching, spitting, scratching, swearing, stomping on others, fighting, assault, stabbing with scissors, taunting and threatening others with a kitchen knife, trashing offices and classrooms, tearing wall displays down, upending paint on classroom carpets, throwing rocks, bashing others with baseball bat, throwing furniture and pot plants, attacking staff cars, squirting cleaning liquid at others eyes.

Curriculum

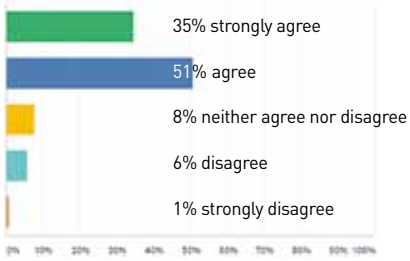
29. ‘In my school the curriculum area requiring priority support, advice and PLD is the Arts’



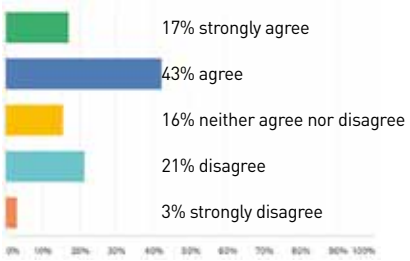
30. ‘In my school EOTC is the most underdeveloped and under resourced area of learning’



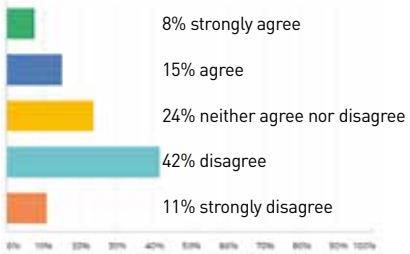
31. ‘The most supported subject areas in my school are reading, writing and mathematics’



32. ‘Our school needs direction, support and advice to implement the digital technologies curriculum’



33. ‘We do not teach Te Reo Māori in our school because we cannot get a Te Reo Māori teacher’



The survey was open from May 8 2020 to August 30 2020.

THE POWER OF MOVING FROM DE

COGNITION EDUCATION

In the beginning

TE TAI RAKI Kāhui Ako is located in Kamo, a small township, approximately five minutes' drive from the *Whangarei* CBD. The Kāhui Ako name means 'eyelash', but has also been said to mean 'to bubble up', referring to hot springs in the area.

We could also use the phrase 'to bubble up' to describe the quiet raising of key indicators of improvement and the successes we can report in terms of cultural capability in the area. *This is Te Tai Raki Kāhui Ako's story.*

Since 2018, the Kāhui Ako have had a goal to address inequitable experiences for Māori learners. As hard as it can be to acknowledge, often the cause of these inequitable experiences are people and systems. When we continue to approach the topic of Māori student learning from our individual biases and assumptions (whether we are Māori or non-Māori ourselves), rather than from activating the lived experiences of those learners and their whānau, we continue to reproduce the inequities, however unintentionally.

In an endeavour to dig deeper into what was going on for their learners, Excellere College, Hurupaki School, and Totara Grove School embarked on a journey of culturally responsive Professional Learning and Development (PLD). This PLD began by collecting, listening to and activating the voices of their key stakeholder groups. Cognition Education's Relationships First programme facilitated the gathering of these voices. What the schools discovered was surprising, even to them.

Confronted with evidence and supported with professional development, teachers can recognise that to make a difference they need to change their beliefs and practices rather than expect family circumstances to adjust. (Ministry of Education, KA HIKITIA A Demonstration Report Effectiveness of Te Kotahitanga Phase 5 2010-2012).

This is what Te Tai Raki Kāhui Ako did. The exciting thing about the Te Tai Raki Kāhui Ako story is how the schools' narratives changed over time – with the support of expert facilitation and a willingness to shift the culture in these schools for the better.

In 2018, initial focus group interviews surfaced two quite different perspectives of the learning experiences of students in these schools. On the one hand, students were reporting their mixture of feelings about what it was like to be a learner at their school. Some comments from students identified what Russell Bishop refers to as North-East teaching (2019); '*Good teachers are organised and always ready for us, they want us to go up to a higher level, and we know what to do';* others described a less positive perspective; *'Not all teachers are kind and caring – sometimes there are different rules for different students, that's not fair'.*

On the other hand, the teachers' discourse also clearly pointed to a need for changing beliefs and assumptions that were no-doubt impacting on classroom practice and teacher-student interactions. Some examples of the types of sentiments being expressed by staff included; '*It is the luck of the draw – sometimes you get better results because you have got better students*'; and, '*Maybe teachers feel like they are not supported from management*'.

Over the next year Te Tai Raki Kāhui Ako worked with Cognition Education to unpack these voices, coach and mentor their teachers, build relationships with whānau, and listen carefully to students to change their perceptions and their practice.

Changing Voices

The following is an excerpt from a comparative Voices report, prepared for one of these three schools just one year later, in 2019:

FICIT TO AGENTIC DISCOURSE

Cognition Education

- Students appreciated the wide range of opportunities available to them (subjects and experiences) and when teachers include challenge in the learning, they are more engaged.
- Students spoke about how the teachers were friendly, supportive of them and able to explain learning in detail – the result being students like school and feel safe.
- Students enjoy working in groups and being able to ask other students for help.
- Students shared how they know their teachers know them as learners and know how to motivate them through feedforward, success criteria, planning sheets and topic workshops.
- Students requested to have more one-on-one time or teacher time and more quiet spaces.

Similarly, the teachers had shifted their discourse to an agentic position, and this had a flow-on effect to their classroom relationships and their pedagogical practices. Leaders and teachers acknowledged; '*Deficit can come through but when you do that, you stop looking for the solution*'.

New institutions supported staff to constructively and reflectively discuss their practice, leading to measurable improvements in their use of interactive and relational teaching approaches; '*Impact coaching allows teachers to connect when they might be struggling*'.

A Principal described the deep impact of this Professional Learning on their staff; '*We are valuing student voice more and providing more opportunities in learning for students to contribute to and influence the direction and focus of the learning*'. Isn't that what we would love to see happening in every school in the country?

Compared to 2018, there were far more statements from student and parents' voices that emphasised positive beliefs and experiences and many fewer that expressed negative beliefs or experiences.

Category of Voice	% of comments codes as "Enablers"	% of comments coded as "Barriers"
Student Voice Yrs 4, 5 & 6	80	20
Parent/Whānau Voice	54	46
Teacher Voice	96	4
Leadership Voice	95	5
Average	81	19

Percentage of October 2019 comments coded as either 'Enablers' (+ve) or 'Barriers' (-ve) to student success – Hurupaki School

Achievement data also saw marked increases, for example Totara Grove saw raises across reading, writing and Maths.

Totara Grove School Comparison of 2016-2019 OTJ Achievement Data – Years 1 to 6

Totara Grove School Comparison of 2016-2019 OTJ Achievement Data – Years 1 to 6

Sustainable Impact

In 2020, the greatest impact of the learning journey for these three schools is that change is embedded in the culture and ongoing rhetoric of their place. One school is now entirely self-sustaining, continuously monitoring the impact of their institutions and practices on students Attendance, Retention,

Engagement, and Achievement (A.R.E.A.) data. The other two schools now have teachers and leaders who have the internal capability to lead the learning of others in their organisations and across the Kāhui Ako.

For Hurupaki School, 'Relationships First' turned out to be '*something quite different and much more transformational than what we expected*'. Principal, Rob Posthumus, described 'Relationships First' as a whole pedagogical and coaching model that is strongly focused on developing teachers' skills and knowledge of effective teaching practices for all learners. In addition to this, the PLD was responsible for '*growth in the leadership skills of our Middle Leaders*'.

For Lana, the Principal of Totara Grove, the biggest gains are that:

1. Teachers look for solutions and reasons why a learner might not be succeeding
2. Teacher expectations for learners have changed. You hear a lot more agentic talk happening now.

Continuing initiatives include training sessions and PLD for Teacher Aides and Support Staff to ensure consistent practices and a shared language amongst all staff; ongoing training and induction of new staff into their roles as Impact Coaches; cycles of observations and coaching conversations focused on lifting Māori and target student engagement, progress and achievement. All of this is underpinned by leaders who are monitoring and evaluating so that they can constantly tweak what they are doing to make sure it is working for those students who were previously marginalised, according to their own voices and narratives.

KIA HIWA RĀ

In support of summer reading on educational leadership

Martin Thrupp thrupp@waikato.ac.nz

TERM FOUR IS always so busy, but are you planning to do some more professional reading once the year winds down? If so what will you read? It's a daunting task to get to grips with the educational leadership literature. There is a lot of it and from many perspectives too. So here are a few thoughts from me about it.

The first thing to recognise, as I'm sure you do, is that much of the educational leadership literature is the literary equivalent of fast food rather than having much substance. There's surely a place for motivational books, leadership tips and so on, but they shouldn't be confused for serious analysis. *Lead, Follow or Get Out of the Way: How to Be a More Effective Leader in Today's Schools* is the silly title of one US bestseller in this genre.

In contrast there are writers who are worthy of much more serious attention. Recently I had the privilege of examining Helen Gunter's higher doctoral thesis (a step up from a regular PhD). Helen is a professor at the University of Manchester and her higher doctorate required demonstrating that she is a global authority in her area, which is the field of educational leadership and policy. That wasn't too hard to prove as over the last forty years Helen has carried out numerous research projects and written more than 100 journal articles and about 20 books.

At the centre of Helen's work in educational leadership has been inquiry into how certain ideas and people are favoured and others not, and how this discrepancy is heavily influenced by the politics of the day. Essentially she has spent a lifetime mapping the educational leadership field and considering the policy and practice implications of different positionings within it. In contrast, many people writing about educational leadership and associated areas don't question how their work links to political agendas and so end up mainly supporting, rather than questioning, the dominant politics of the time.

Helen's political lens on the educational leadership literature is quite similar to my own, which is probably why I was asked to examine her thesis. For instance, in 2003 I published a book with Rob Willmott, called *Education Management in Managerialist Times: Beyond the Textual Apologists*. It called out academics who were writing in ways that supported neo-liberal reforms in education either overtly or in more subtle ways. It didn't make Rob and I popular amongst many school improvement, school change, school leadership, school development planning, strategic HRM or school marketing 'experts', and we had one threat of legal action. Nevertheless the book has stood the test of time.

So what am I saying here? It's similar to the view I expressed on private actors in education in one of my columns earlier this year: that it is incumbent on principals to try to work out what such organisations are all about. In this case, when it comes to the educational leadership field, principals need a broad understanding to be able to recognise the political perspective that informs whatever they are reading, rather than just taking a text or argument at face value.

To my mind, this challenge has implications for the way the Leadership Centre being established by the Teaching Council should operate. Rather than being heavily influenced by government policy and telling principals what to think, it would be great if the Leadership Centre set out to inform understandings of a range of leadership arguments and perspectives in a way that would further develop principals' own knowledgeable and astute analyses.

One advantage of principals really understanding the educational leadership area, would be to leave them much less prone to fads and fashions, which I think is a big problem in New Zealand – as it is elsewhere. There's been neuroscience,

disruptive technologies, distributed leadership, innovative learning environments, the list goes on. And that's not to say that any of these things are without value. But wise principals will take them with a grain of salt rather than investing too heavily in the flavour of the month, and that requires some wider outlook.

Another advantage of greater insight would be less dependence on school leadership and reform gurus who have made their living 'on the circuit' doing conference keynotes for teachers and principals: people like Michael Fullan, Pasi Sahlberg and others. Their messages are polished and palatable but I think a more confident and knowledgeable sector would show interest in lesser-known figures who are also doing good thinking about educational leadership. I'm also concerned about the substantial amounts teacher and principal organisations pay for some conference keynote speakers, as that is money pulled out of schools and school systems. I think it's the lazy option to go back to the same 'big names' time and time again.

As an example of a local source of insight, consider Howard Youngs at AUT. Howard has an interest in the emerging Leadership-As-Practice (L-A-P) perspective in Leadership Studies. Drawing on the work of Joseph Raelin, he argues that leadership and collaborative practices are emergent and fluid so that the sources of influence cannot be solely attributed to an exceptional individual. This turns attention to understanding leadership as an emergent practice, as direction is forming and it shifts attention away from thinking the leader is responsible as the primary? catalyst for change.

Howard says there is so much else going on and focussing too much on the individual leader or leadership team over-simplifies direction-forming. He talks about the principal as 'head teacher' and suggests that as a principal you are not 'empowering staff', you can however help to remove the barriers from staff and students so that they can exercise their human right to access their own power. From this L-A-P perspective, principals should not so much assert their leadership to influence staff, rather, if sufficient social capital is in play, staff are happy to be influenced.

This kind of humble thinking is such a huge challenge to the CEO approach to being a principal, or what might perhaps be described as the 'Bantam Rooster' model of school leadership. Certainly, Howard's perspective has typically not been supported by government policy, which requires more assertive leadership centred on principals' formal responsibilities. But Howard argues that leadership needs re-placing down a peg or two, and needs to be understood more as a process in the present, rather than over-emphasising qualities of any individual who ends up being labelled 'leader'.

Howard is a New Zealand academic, but ahead of any trans-Tasman bubble, I can think of some Australian educational leadership academics who could also provide New Zealand principals with wonderful insights – Jane Wilkinson, Scott Eacott, Richard Niesche, Christina Gowlett, and Amanda Heffernan, to name a few.

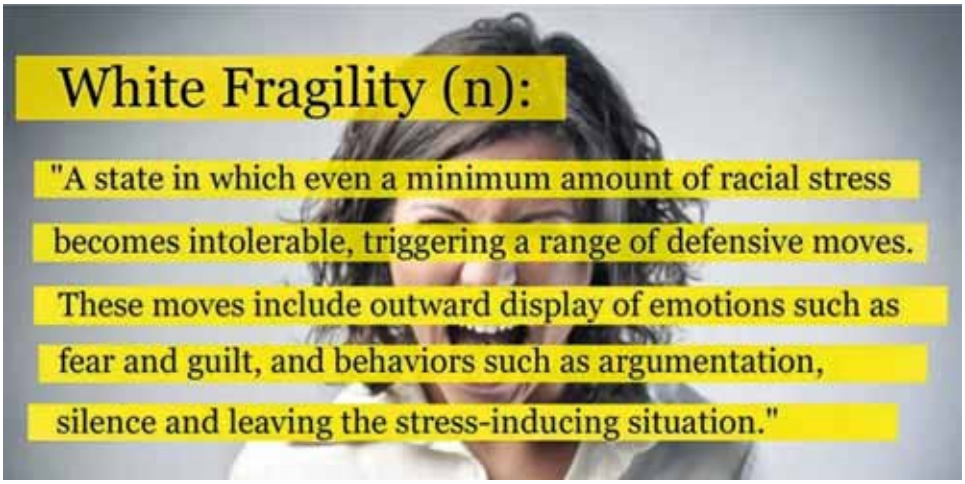
I hope you have enjoyed my *Kia Hiwa Rā* pieces over 2020 and that you can see how I have tried to mix it up, with four quite different columns this year. What a year it's been! I hope you have a restful Christmas break and I look forward to more thinking with you, and for you, in 2021.

DOES WHITE FRAGILITY EXIST IN AOTEAROA?

HELEN KINSEY-WIGHTMAN

A FEW YEARS ago I was at an excellent workshop on communication, led by a facilitator I respect. Our task was to give an impromptu speech – I spoke on racism.

I talked about my grandfather – whom I adored – who had been in the British Army in Malaya and my father who, at the age of 18, spent 2 years in Kenya quelling the 'MauMau rebellion.' If you have not heard of this particularly shameful episode of British history, I would direct you to Harvard historian Caroline Elkin's writing on what she calls Britain's Gulag. In 2013, her work led to compensation for 5,228 Kenyans tortured and abused and an apology in Parliament – the first admission that Britain had carried out torture anywhere in its former empire.



Hence, I grew up looking at photographs and listening to stories, told by men I loved, about their army adventures, involving their participation in colonial atrocities they had never been taught to question. I went to school in 1970's Britain, described by Indian born writer Kenan Malik as 'an age in which "Paki-bashing" was almost a national sport' hence 'Paki' was an insult I grew up hearing daily. 'Cheating Arab' was a phrase my grandmother used often, poorly constructed houses like ours were 'Jap-built' and Viz comic ran a cartoon called 'Thieving Gypsy Bastards.'

In my speech I acknowledged that racism was part of my childhood, role-modelled by my friends and family and deeply embedded in societal structures. I talked about the steps in my thinking I still have to take to over-ride the associations that come to my mind as a result of this early socialisation.

The course leader gave me some excellent feedback on my speech and techniques I could work on to improve its delivery. She also suggested I reconsider the content of my speech as it sounded as though I was admitting to being racist.

And yet, I was.

The conversation left me with a feeling of discomfort I have struggled to articulate – even writing these things down today is uncomfortable. Reading Robin DiAngelo's book '*White Fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism*' I now have a framework to talk about my discomfort.

But first some definitions: DiAngelo defines **prejudice** as prejudgements every human makes based on our socialisation; **discrimination** as individual actions taken by some on the basis of prejudice – such as ignoring, excluding, threats or violence. According to DiAngelo, **racism** '*occurs when a racial group's prejudice is backed by legal authority and institutional control.*'

As a (white) social justice and racism trainer and lecturer at the University of Washington, DiAngelo works with organisations actively trying to address racism within their HR systems. She found that a predictable range of defensive actions, feelings, and behaviours, such as anger, fear, and silence were commonly displayed when talking with workshop participants about their behaviour and she began to call them 'white fragility'.

In New Zealand, in recent years we have become somewhat comfortable talking about racism – providing we call it 'unconscious bias'. In the past I have expressed the opinion that young people are growing up with less overt racism in their world and that this results in them being less racist. DiAngelo disagrees. She says that in the past it was possible for individuals to express racist views and still be considered a good person. In these more enlightened times we consider racism to be inherently bad and immoral . . . but this means that we cannot talk about racism and examine our own socialisation in a colonised country for fear we may admit to a thought or a deed which we, or someone else, could label racist.

As a result, liberal, educated white people often claim not to see colour, or that their experiences 'on their OE' or 'working in a diverse environment' have led them to understand and celebrate racial differences. "One of my best friends is Māori," serves this function too.

Have New Zealanders been socialised in a society with racist structures? Yes. Have I ever seen white fragility in action here in New Zealand? The simple answer is yes. If you haven't, then invite Dr Ann Milne to speak in your staffroom or school community. I can guarantee there will be offence caused and probably some

strongly worded emails coming your way. Following the March 15th attack in Christchurch Dr Milne (awarded the NZ Order of Merit this year) reflected;

> 'I talk about racism, about Whiteness, White privilege and supremacy, colonisation and assimilation, about oppression, about naming these and how they are directly connected to our Māori children's experience of learning and achievement in our classrooms. I talk about urgency and ask how much more time do we need? How many more reports and research do we have to read to show us that racism permeates every corner of our education system? But now, I am asking myself, is that enough? What else can I do?'

DiAngelo's contention is that if we have been socialised in a colonised society we have to confront our racist assumptions. Her book concludes, '*our institutions were designed to reproduce racial inequality and they do so with efficiency. Our schools are particularly effective at this task . . . Interrupting racism takes courage and intentionality . . . we must never consider ourselves finished with our learning. Even if challenging all the racism and superiority we have internalised was quick and easy to do, our racism would be reinforced all over again by virtue of living in the culture.*'

DiAngelo describes this as a '*messy, lifelong process.*' I often confront my assumptions – my challenge is to consider how I can do this out-loud in my professional life. If Martin Thrupp has inspired you to search out a book for the Christmas break, buy 2 copies of White Fragility, read one yourself and give the other to someone you respect and commit to an honest conversation in the New Year.

Finally, in the words of James Baldwin, '*Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced.*'

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