N.Z. PRINCIPALS' FEDERATION

New Zealand
PRINCIPAL
NGĀ TUMUAKI O AOTEAROA

March 2022
Volume 37, Number 1

FRIMLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL
PM EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNER

+ Catholic Schools in New Zealand

Handle with Care by Aric Sigman

Ageing Well National Science Challenge

Investing In Psychological Capital

When professionals use well-being as a reason for not producing high quality work, and when leaders feel guilty asking people to do the jobs for which they are being paid, well-being as a concept is misunderstood and likely being abused.

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Micro-stressors include parent-teacher meetings; overseeing teacher-aides & learning assistants; enmeshed relationships with parents & whānau (within which teachers can become personal advisors, emergency responders, confidantes, counsellors, coaches, mentors, nannies & social workers); and new & inexperienced teachers needing support with the mental and emotional sides of teaching, not just narrow support around their teaching & learning.

In school settings some of the highest frequency micro-stressors occur at the adult to adult interface and it's those professionals who skilfully and confidently manage the adult sides of their roles who fortify their occupational well-being. Everyone benefits because they find more joy in their roles and because they possess higher levels of self-efficacy, hope, resilience & optimism (psychologists refer to these 4 elements as psychological capital), they are psychologically, psychosomatically and emotionally more well at work.

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SUBSCRIPTION
Distributed free to all schools in New Zealand. For individual subscribers, send $40 per year to:
New Zealand Principals' Federation
National Office, PO Box 25380,
Wellington 6146

New Zealand Principal is published by Cervin Media Ltd on behalf of the New Zealand Principals' Federation and is issued four times annually. For all enquiries regarding editorial contributions, please contact the editor.

ISSN 0112-403X (Print)
ISSN 1179-4372 (Online)

PHOTOS FOR THE MAGAZINE:
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TECHNICAL DETAILS:
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EDITORIAL

Liz Hawes EDITOR

MANY YEARS AGO, I worked with Paul. Paul was about half my age and extremely intelligent. He didn't brag but I knew he scored 90%+ for Mathematics in his university entrance examination. These were the early days of the internet and as the world-wide web crawled its way into our millennial lives, Paul was ready and welcomed it enthusiastically.

Our Wellington office followed the tradition of many others. Morning tea was 'Dominion Quiz' time. I expected Paul would comprehensively blitz the quiz every day but surprisingly, he rarely answered a single question. He could find answers to questions on the internet in a nano second, but the internet wasn't allowed at quiz time. Paul was stumped.

One day we had a repeat question from a few weeks before. We all kept silent so Paul could answer. 'I have no idea,' he eventually offered.

Can young people be **EXPECTED TO BUILD KNOWLEDGE** when you can **JUST ASK WHAEA GOOGLE** for the answer **ANYTIME, ANYWHERE?**

Paul's explanation for not recalling the answer was 'he didn't need to remember' because he could just look it up again on the internet. It seemed the memory compartment of Paul's extraordinary brain, was like a very expensive Christmas tree decoration. An ornamental crystal ball, in pristine condition, of the finest quality, and quite empty.

In 2022, we are deeply immersed in the information age with billions of bits of information being added to the internet every minute of the day. The question is, how can this information translate into retrievable knowledge? Can young people be expected to build knowledge when you can just ask Whaea Google for the answer anytime, anywhere?

There are multiple theories of learning. At the heart of each is knowledge – building knowledge, broadening knowledge, critiquing knowledge and creating new knowledge. Whether teacher directed or student centred, the process of learning is dependent first on remembering previous information so we have something to build on – something we can convert into knowledge. It is an active process by which we incorporate new information into existing cognitive frameworks and come to conclusions about it. As new information comes to hand, we reconsider, rearrange and reevaluate and eventually we construct new knowledge. Each stage is completely dependent on the knowledge we already have – the knowledge we have remembered.

So why is knowledge so important? For a start it is essential to help us to understand the world around us. It is also essential to making informed decisions. Our knowledge structures aid us to encode new experiences in our memories and guide us to respond rationally so we can extrapolate information to predict the future. Further knowledge can eventually be used to generalize to other things. It can be conceptualized and applied to quite novel information.

Over time, as we build up many knowledge bases in our brains, we assimilate and understand more and more knowledge and learn how some knowledge may inform other knowledge. Soon we have an entire eco-system of interconnected networks of knowledge to call on to interpret our world and give it vibrancy and colour. We get more and more efficient at storing incoming information when it fits prior knowledge and it becomes easier to consolidate and retrieve it.

Building our knowledge base then, is a critical feature of learning for young people. Encoding and recalling knowledge is part of that process. If our prior knowledge is available, we can build on it, change it, evaluate it and reconstruct it. We can apply critical thinking skills to help us decide what is worthy and relevant knowledge and what is not. We can comprehend and remember new information better when it is connected to existing knowledge.

This is a process which continues throughout our lives. When we actively assimilate new information and actively apply that knowledge to our already well-developed knowledge base, we eventually become wise. Our judgement is sharp and our thinking deep. We have much to draw on to reach our conclusions.

Whilst noting the importance of knowledge development, and the memory skills associated with that we also place a high value on the use of technology in classrooms. As a country we have a very high uptake of technology and in our schools we place considerable emphasis on our young people being technologically literate and capable.

These aspirations have merit at one level, but have we got the balance right? Are we making sure that technology is not doing our children's schoolwork for them, giving them all the answers while their memory banks are starved of the rich nutrients we call knowledge?

Technology can be a wonderful aid. It supports teaching and can help children with learning. What it must never do is replace either.

PRESIDENT'S PEN

Education Leadership in Aotearoa 2022: The pandemic, partnerships and possibilities

Cherie Taylor-Patel NATIONAL PRESIDENT, NEW ZEALAND PRINCIPALS' FEDERATION

NEW ZEALAND HAS one of the most devolved education systems in the world. Consequently, principals' roles are complex. Some aspects of management are the same across schools, but the kete of skills we develop and draw upon to lead our communities, varies according to our context. Just as no two schools are the same in New Zealand, no two principals will have had the same career pathway. We define our leadership roles in different ways, based on what we have learned, to suit the context in which we lead.

Apart from the 'First time Principals' professional development programme, introduced in 2002, New Zealand has had no systemic, centrally funded, on-going professional development for school leaders for thirty years. Initiatives have come and gone, dependent on the political environment of the day. This has created inequities in access to quality professional development, resulting in too many principals struggling and choosing to leave the profession early. This has also led to

> *"slow and uneven transfers of professional knowledge and skills, and wide variability in learner/ākonga performance across schools/kura, including within the same decile."* (Reform of Tomorrow's Schools, Pg. 10)

In 2020, the Minister of Education, Chris Hipkins, announced that principals needed more support. It was proposed that a new centre of leadership be established, through the Teaching Council of Aotearoa. In addition, a redesigned Education Ministry would have the additional function of building the status and capability of school leaders through the establishment of leadership advisory roles. Since then, the Teaching Council has developed the Rauhuia Leadership Strategy, the Ministry of Education has restructured, and provision has been made to engage leadership advisors.

The Pandemic

Alongside this work, the world has been gripped by a global pandemic. With the 'Team of 5,000,000', school principals are supporting our world-class covid response. They extended their leadership role from being 'leaders of learning' to being 'community and crisis leaders'. Whilst maintaining the integrity of learning content, they then supported teachers, staff, students, and whānau to adapt their school-based learning to home-based learning, using both online and hardpack resources. Consequently, principals and teachers have deepened their understanding of the students they teach, their families and the challenges they face.

In 2021, the OECD commissioned research into the impact of the global pandemic from different jurisdictions around the world. Led by Andreas Schleicher, Special Advisor on education policy to the OECD, data from France, Germany, Ireland, the United Kingdom and the United States was collected, collated and analysed. From this study, ten key themes to support learning emerged.

Principles for schooling during the pandemic:

1. Keep schools open as much and as safely as possible
2. Ensure equity and align resources with needs
3. Provide a remote learning infrastructure which is designed to reach all students
4. Support teachers in their professional lives
5. Enable teachers and parents to support learners

Principles for recovery towards effective and equitable education:

6. Provide targeted support to meet students' learning and social and emotional needs
7. Co-design a robust digital learning infrastructure with teachers and stakeholders
8. Empower teachers to exercise their professionalism and benefit from professional learning opportunities
9. Encourage a collaborative culture of innovation
10. Learn from national and international experiences

These themes resonate with us, because, we have seen the impact the pandemic has had – socially, emotionally, physically, financially, individually, within families, in workplaces and in our wider society. Over half of the students in New Zealand will be entering a third year of disrupted learning in 2022.

Partnerships and possibilities

A global conversation has begun, centred on 'Post-Covid Education recovery' for different jurisdictions. In New Zealand we have enacted a world-class Pandemic response and an excellent education response. We are now well placed to develop and lead a 'world-class Post-Covid education recovery', starting with, system support for school leaders.

Central to this would be the creation of a leadership professional development eco-system, founded on the principles of 'Te Tiriti o Waitangi'. The system would attract multiple partners and providers, to support the vision, core values and principles of the Rauhuia Leadership strategy, developed through the Teaching Council of Aotearoa. The next phase would be designing and implementing the 'culturally-centred' leadership strategy which would:

- Be a centrally funded, embedded system, not subject to the

political vagaries of different government ideologies

- Deliver quality professional development, in every region of New Zealand to address inequities of access
- Be co-constructed and governed by principals, for principals, with principals and key stakeholders, to create a flexible eco-system of leadership learning, that is enduring

If the 'Post-Covid Education Sector PLD Plan' is owned and driven by school principals and their key stakeholders, the eco-system that evolves would be world leading. It would support systemic principal PLD so that every principal, no matter where they are situated and no matter what their context, would have leadership growth opportunities available to them throughout their careers. Equitable access to leadership PLD would mean that all principals could lead successful schools and our tamariki could all succeed in a 'Post-pandemic world'.

The challenge and the opportunity is before us.

Whakamaua te pae tata kia tina
Take hold of your potential so it becomes your reality.

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THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL NETWORK IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

A Tale of Diversity, Quality and Challenge!

Brother Sir Patrick Lynch and Patrick Walsh

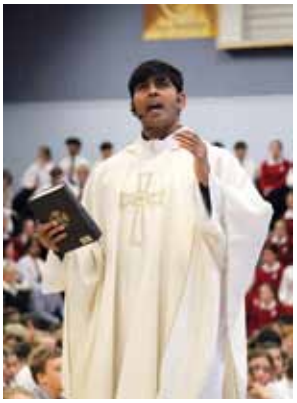
The Catholic School network in Aotearoa New Zealand has a long and proud history dating back to 1841 shortly after the Treaty of Waitangi was signed. As explained in *'A Fair and Just Solution' A History of Integration of Private Schools in New Zealand*, in 1877 the Government of the day was unable to agree on the level of religious influence that ought to be permitted in New Zealand education, so a secular (and free and compulsory) system of education was established under the Education Act 1877. The result was an independent Catholic School system then grew alongside its State School counterpart.

IN AOTEAROA NEW Zealand today there are 237 Catholic schools spread throughout the nation. They educate 68,000 students and are now part of the State Integrated School system which welcomed the first school in 1976. Internationally there are 217,000 Catholic schools and 1,360 Catholic universities with a total population of 60 million students.

New Zealand Catholic schools are part of an extensive global network of educational institutions. They all play a part in building up of the social and educational fabric of the societies which they serve – including New Zealand.

The Universal Catholic Church has traditionally held firm to the view that Catholic schools provide a conduit for children to have a personal encounter with Christ, support the Mission of the Church and to learn about their Faith tradition. (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 2007). These goals were easily achievable up until the 1960's, with most schools staffed with high numbers of Religious Nuns and Brothers and families of regular Church goers.

It is worth noting that the success of the Catholic network of schools (prior to Integration) was built on the back of Religious Orders. These men and women laboured for free, seeing teaching as a calling from God and a vocation. Their personal and financial sacrifices were the key ingredients to a flourishing Catholic school system independent of the State.



While the above remain the core reasons for the existence of Catholic schools, the increasing secularisation of New Zealand and the decreasing number of practising Catholics has dramatically altered the educational landscape of Catholic schools. The purpose now includes evangelisation (not proselytizing), social justice and understanding the Gospel message. The Catholic Church and Principals accept the reality that most of the students in Catholic schools are unchurched.

This change in focus is not without controversy. Fr Simon Story

in a 2020 Stuff Article (February 2020) lamented that parents who wanted their children to attend Catholic schools were not prepared to go to Mass on Sunday. He perceived this to be a vital part of belonging to the Church. In some respects this is not surprising when 48 per cent of Kiwi's reported in the 2018 census that they have 'no religion'.

The decline in Church attendance has been offset by an increase in immigrant populations including Indians, Filipinos and Pacific people who have provided a lifeline for many parishes. The stark reality for the Church is that the Catholic School itself has become the parish where they pray, worship and experience fellowship.

It does beg the question however, why Catholic schools are in such demand when clearly the Church itself is not? It is no secret that Catholic schools and in particular secondary schools punch well above their weight in academic results including NCEA. Metro Magazine which publishes an annual report card on the best schools in Auckland consistently names Catholic schools in its top ten. Of interest is that it covers all deciles including schools such as decile one McAuley High

School in Otahuhu and decile nine school Baradene College in Remuera. Despite being worlds apart in a socio-economic sense both schools have an unrelenting focus on students reaching their 'God given potential.'

Part of the attraction of Catholic schools for parents is their own lived experience. While many no longer practice their faith (lapsed Catholics) they recognise the benefits of a strong values

based education. This is not to say that state and private schools are not values based. It simply means that Catholic schools directly and proudly draw their values and world view from a religious perspective including being 'Christ centred'. This includes love of neighbour, a commitment to social justice, and a strong sense of the common good. They also speak with affection about feeling they are part of a school community or whānau.

The Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975 cemented the unique place of Catholic and other religious schools into the New Zealand educational landscape. It transformed previously private Catholic schools into 'State Integrated Schools'. This internationally unique piece of legislation protected the Catholic or 'Special Character' of the school with the Crown paying for teacher salaries and operational costs. It has proven to be an enduring contract and relationship.

My own experience of Catholic schools particularly De La Salle College in Mangere where I spent ten years as the Deputy Principal, is that it had a culture that was a good fit for Pacific and Māori communities. This included the importance of regular karakia and the goal of fulfilling God's purpose for you which is the antithesis of deficit thinking so necessary in our lower decile schools.

The College also had a strong aversion to racism on the foundational belief that we are all created in the image of God. My observation is that Catholic schools also have strong tikanga related to religious observances not too dissimilar to a marae setting. Traditional Catholic values also intersect well with manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, mana, wairua as well as Fa Samoa.

There is a strong level of comfort and affirmation from Māori and Pacific whanau within Catholic schools for their cultural lens on life. It seems to me that Catholic schools are well set up to deal naturally with life's curve balls. A death in a Catholic school community is responded to organically with karakia, liturgy or a funeral Mass. The Parish and local priest become central rallying points in the grieving process, easing the discomfort of whānau and tapping into the deep wellspring of their collective faith.

It is also experience that when a student or their whānau face an unexpected hardship such as a cancer diagnosis or job loss the Catholic school community quickly rally behind them in both a practical and spiritual sense. It is a very humbling experience to witness.

School statistics also note that Catholic schools have fewer stand downs and suspensions of students. Like State schools they have a strong focus on restorative practice. The difference here however, is that within the Catholic tradition there is a

religious element that we are all sinners who seek God's and others' forgiveness. On this basis reconciliation is the preferred option rather than exclusion.

It has often been said that Catholic schools which educate only 9 per cent of the school population punch well above their weight with luminaries from all fields of endeavour. Michael Joseph Savage, Jim Bolger and Bill English are some notable political leaders. James K Baxter and Whina Cooper are among many activists.

Some have asked what the future holds for the Catholic school network in the face of declining numbers of practising Catholic families? The appeal of Catholic schools extends well beyond practising Catholics to those with a general or indeed no connection to the Church. The teachings and life of Jesus has a universal appeal which resonates with many Kiwis. Add to this a proven track record of academic success irrespective of decile; cultural inclusiveness; strong pastoral care and community engagement and the future is assured.

The challenge for Catholic schools with decreasing numbers of practising Catholic teachers and families is to remain authentically Catholic. The risk and danger is that they become high performing State Schools with a Catholic veneer. Stained glass windows, religious statues and an impressive Chapel won't in itself 'cut the mustard!' In this case they would lose their legal and moral mandate to continue to exist. There are no signs of that yet, but it requires constant effort and vigilance.

New Zealand is blessed as a small country with a rich tapestry of schools giving parents plenty of choice. In addition to State and Integrated schools we have single sex, co-educational, Private, Kaupapa Māori and boarding schools. Catholic Schools sit alongside but are different to their State and private school cousins. It is their 'Catholic' nature which is the point of difference. A difference which is a great taonga that parents seek out and all educators celebrate.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS
Brother Sir Patrick Lynch –KNZM, QSO., De La Salle Brothers
Patrick Walsh – Principal, John Paul College

NZPF EXECUTIVE MEMBER WINS NATIONAL AWARDS

Liz Hawes EDITOR

Leanne Otene (Te Rarawa) has been a school principal for 26 years and currently heads up Manaia View School in Whangārei. She's experienced her fair share of challenges over the years and is acutely aware of the complexities of principalship in Aotearoa New Zealand.

PRINCIPALS ARE EXPECTED to lead learning in their schools, be the school's visionary, strategist, administrator, businessperson, property manager, human resources manager, serve the community and meet the needs – whether simple or complex – of every child in an inclusive environment, while addressing inequities and other societal pressures, all on minimal budgets. It's a tall order for the best of principals, especially when there is little if any advice or support on offer.

Otene has experienced it all, and long ago realized that it was the beginning principals who were not going to make it without help. She trained as a mentor and applied her skills to supporting these young leaders to stay in the profession. Her mentorship successes soon became known and she was invited to share her skills internationally through addressing the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSITI) project at the Adelaide University of South Australia and twice addressed the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Trans-Tasman conferences.

This year, some 500 principals were nominated for national awards for leadership. Otene walked off with two of them. The first was in recognition of her mentorship over many years. The second was the Principals' award for leadership.

It was her approach to teaching in the time of COVID that captivated the judges. Otene didn't just look at how she might transfer her school's teaching programme to a home learning version, she looked at what was already happening overseas in countries that had been grappling with COVID long before us. She examined the different approaches and picked those aspects which might work best in her own school community. Unsurprisingly she was quickly singled out to join a nationwide group to monitor Government's advice to principals on home-learning.

Otene attributes her successes to the outstanding way in which her dedicated school staff have supported her in her quest to do more for other principals and to be the best they can collectively be for their own tamariki at Manaia View. No one achieves awards like this alone, she says, humbly. We succeed when we work together and these honours are due to the dedication of my staff as much as any efforts of mine.

CREATING CULTURE AT FRIMLEY PRIMARY

Liz Hawes EDITOR

Camera in one hand, laptop in the other, I stride to the front gate of Frimley School. Two youngsters on scooters are headed for the same gate. 'Morena whaea!' they smile in unison. They stand back. 'Kia ora e ngā tāmariki,' I reply, immediately warming to my new friends. We introduce ourselves, chat a bit and I ask directions for the school office. My new buddies offer to walk me there and we continue our chatter on the way.

MANAAKITANGA IS NOT just an aspiration at Frimley Primary. It's a living, breathing value. As a stranger visiting the school, you instantly know it. You are immediately respected, valued and looked after. You are not just welcome here; you quickly feel like this has always been your place.

I meet the school Tumuaki, Tim White. Connecting is easy. We don't have to play out the trivial niceties because I'm already one of the whānau. The tamariki at the front gate have seen to that.

Tim tells me Frimley is a decile four, contributing primary school of around 570-600 students. He talks about the school pou – Te Wao Tapu Nui – standing tall at the entrance to the school. 'The pou is a physical and spiritual link with mana whenua,' he explains, 'and was carved especially for us by our artist in residence, master carver, Nathan Foote.'

The school pou Te Wao tapu nui stands proudly at the front entrance to the school

Nathan took the rakau, gifted to the school from Matariki Forestry and transformed it into the pou which tells the story of Ranginui and Papatuanuku and includes symbolism from maunga to moana.

'The pou symbolises everything we are trying to achieve here at Frimley School,' says Tim, 'which makes it a very precious taonga for us all.'

He is also proud of the way the Whānau Māori Rōpū supports and guides the senior leadership of the school and how every staff member is taking weekly classes in te reo me ngā tīkanga and learning Kahungunu specific waiata. The links between Ngāti Kahungunu, and the school are very strong, he explains.

It is a buzzing thriving school, right now basking in the honour of winning the prestigious top prize in the Prime Minister's Education Excellence Awards for 2021. Frimley School also won the Excellence in Teaching and Learning Award. Each prize comes with a financial reward for the school and PLD opportunities. The Prime Minister's award brings an additional $30,000.

Tim is proud that the school has been recognised in this way

Frimley Primary wins the Prime Minister's Supreme Award and the Teaching Excellence Award for 2021

The conch shell, sometimes used at Powhiri celebrations and also played by some Indian and Samoan students

The ageing trees provide a generous canopy to shelter the children from the summer heat

but doesn't make a big deal of the accolades. He is much more interested in telling the story of how the school community – his board, senior leaders, teachers, support staff and tamariki – embarked on a transformational cultural journey, beginning in 2016. He is quick to acknowledge the many organisations, facilitators and cultural experts who supported and advised them along the way.

The school recognised that its community had significantly changed as the roll grew and the school's curriculum and what it valued as success hadn't evolved. It felt that some learners were not experiencing a relevant curriculum and a strong sense of belonging to the school. The families actively involved in the school were not now representative of the new school community.

Tim wanted to find a way through these inequities. He wanted to celebrate the growing multi-cultural mix of his students. Although the academic achievement overall was judged by ERO as satisfactory, it had reached a plateau and he wanted to address the gaps between Māori achievement and that of other students. He wanted every child to feel valued and cared for and he wanted every child to experience success in life and in learning.

The school's roll demographic for 2020 shows 36.8% Māori, more than half of whom whakapapa to Ngāti Kahungunu, 32.6% NZ Pākehā, 7.8% Pasifika, 12.7% Indian, 7% Asian and 3% other. By 2021 the total school roll was growing, as was the Māori roll and there were 74 students receiving ESOL funding.

The Board set out to consult with the school community,

Frimley School is a proudly multi-cultural Hastings school

Its great to be out of the classroom and under the generous shade of the big playground trees

developing strategies to ensure Māori voice was heard. The resulting strategic plan created a pathway to begin the process of transformation.

Frimley Primary would change and become a place where all tamariki felt at home; where every child had their place and valued their language, culture and identity. A core strategy was to emphasise the value of strengthening the school's te reo Māori me ngā tīkanga so that tamariki would be strong and secure in who they are. Alongside this goal was strengthening the school's wellbeing strategies. Tim wanted them to feel healthy, happy and be contributing members of the school whānau. He argued that only when these goals were achieved would we see achievement rising and inequities reduced.

It was an ambitious undertaking. Tim knew he would need help. This would have to be a team effort, and he and the Board would need the support and advice of the local kaumatua, kuia, hapu and iwi, the commitment of staff and the parent community.

Changes would occur at many levels and all through team effort. The first step was comprehensive consultation to set the strategic plan. Once goals were set the way ahead was clear. Learning would be fun and meaningful; all tamariki would experience success; and strong partnerships would be built with whānau.

Frimley School Values

The school's strategic plan would focus on the needs of the whole child rather than just their academic lives. Alongside this process came an exploration of the Ngāti Kahungunu Matauranga strategy (Te Tōpuni Tauwhainga) which led to a new place-based curriculum.

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini – Success is not the work of an individual but the work of many.

The second step was a change to the school values to guide behaviours and attitudes. The values give solid foundation to guide and strengthen the aspirations of the whole school community. All of this was consistent with what would become the new school values of Rangatiratanga, Whanaungatanga, Kaitiakitanga and Manaakitanga.

To gain better understanding, wellbeing surveys were constructed to capture whānau and student voice. The findings confirmed that not all tamariki and whānau had a strong sense of identity. Students were struggling to form relationships, were not always treating each other respectfully or including those who were feeling left out. A level of bullying continued and the children did not see how the (old) school

The tipuna adorn the classroom walls, just as they do in the wharenui

values were guiding them. Some whānau did not feel they had a place within the school.

Planned changes soon became actions, all of which I was privileged to witness on a tour of the school with Deputy Principal, Ngahina Transom.

'In line with our values and our new strategic plan, we had to alter the organisational structures of the school,' said Ngahina. 'We have four learning communities now and each learning community has six classes.' The learning communities are dual level and are made up of paired classrooms.

We visit one space of year five and six tamariki. 'The children stay for two years with the same teachers,' she explained.

This concept of younger working with older children comes from a Te Ao Māori practice, resembling a buddy system, called tuakana teina. The older or more expert tuakana help and guide the younger or less expert teina. Sometimes these roles may reverse as different kinds of knowledge are shared.

'It is not just the teachers who are teaching,' explains Ngahina. 'Teaching and learning is more like an expression of whanaungatanga. We operate like a big family,' she said. 'Power sharing and Ako are central to our classroom teaching. It is a culturally responsive practice where teachers learn from the children and vice versa. Whānau knowledge is added to the mix giving children agency as they learn from each other.'

Another feature of the classrooms is seeing photographs of the children's tipuna up on the walls, as you might see in a wharenui.

'These are the children's nannies, the koro (grandfather) and the great uncles and aunties,' explains Ngahina. 'They are highly respected and if a child was being rude or cheeky in class, you just have to gaze at their tipuna and say, "I wonder what your Nan or Koro would have to say about that behaviour?"' 'That is usually enough for the child to pull themselves back into line,' she said.

This change could only work with the cooperation of the teachers. 'We are so fortunate to have all our teachers on board with this cultural change,' says Ngahina. 'We are a mainstream English medium school, yet every one of our teachers is taking responsibility for learning te reo me ngā tīkanga. Our teachers are modelling the values we want our tamariki to adopt. They are the learners too and have Te Reo goals for their personal and professional lives,' she explains.

The Master carver explains pounamu carving to the year six school leaders

The teachers are not only enculturating themselves through Te Reo learning, every Teacher Only Day for PLD includes a sleep-over on the marae and the local kaumatua has declared that the marae is also the school's marae, the teachers' marae.

With a holistic approach to teaching and learning and the adoption of a place-based curriculum, teachers have also embarked on a journey of discovery, learning about the local places that have significance for Ngati Kahungunu iwi.

'Ngati Kahungunu hapu and whānau helped construct our curriculum and that includes telling our stories', explains Ngahina. 'Our teachers and children learn about the Takitimu waka's journey to this place, how it found its way to Āotearoa, by observing the patterns of bird behaviours, whales and sea life and using navigation skills.'

'Our teachers get a lavish budget to go out to the whenua and hear the stories of how it got its name, how we can learn to be kaitiaki of it, how it has nourished the people across the ages and will continue to do so, if we look after it and protect it.'

'All of our classrooms have been given significant Māori ingoa (names), which come from the local tauparapara reflecting mana whenua. Each day begins with karakia – a quiet time to reflect and be ready for the day. We also support every child to learn their pepeha,' she said, 'because knowing who you are and where you come from is valued for every learner."

Identity is well celebrated in every classroom with displays of the children's pepeha prominent in every room. Some, separately, explain how they acquired their names.

Most follow the pattern of naming the waka their ancestors arrived in, the river and mountain with which they identify, the names of their parents and their own name.

All Teacher Only Days are held on the local marae

Some of the children, however, are recent migrants. Everyone is important and the arrival of whānau in Āotearoa is noted. The celebration of names is a special part of whanaungatanga and teachers encourage children to share the background to their names with their class mates.

As we move about the school, we come across a group of year six students, the school's house leaders, gathered around a pounamu carver. He is explaining to them that he will be supporting them to carve a personal pounamu, a taonga in recognition of their mana and they will receive this when they leave the school.

We meet up again with Tim as we complete our school tour. He talks about some other initiatives introduced since the cultural changes were embedded.

'With our holistic focus, we now employ

Boys learn their baking skills from the Nans

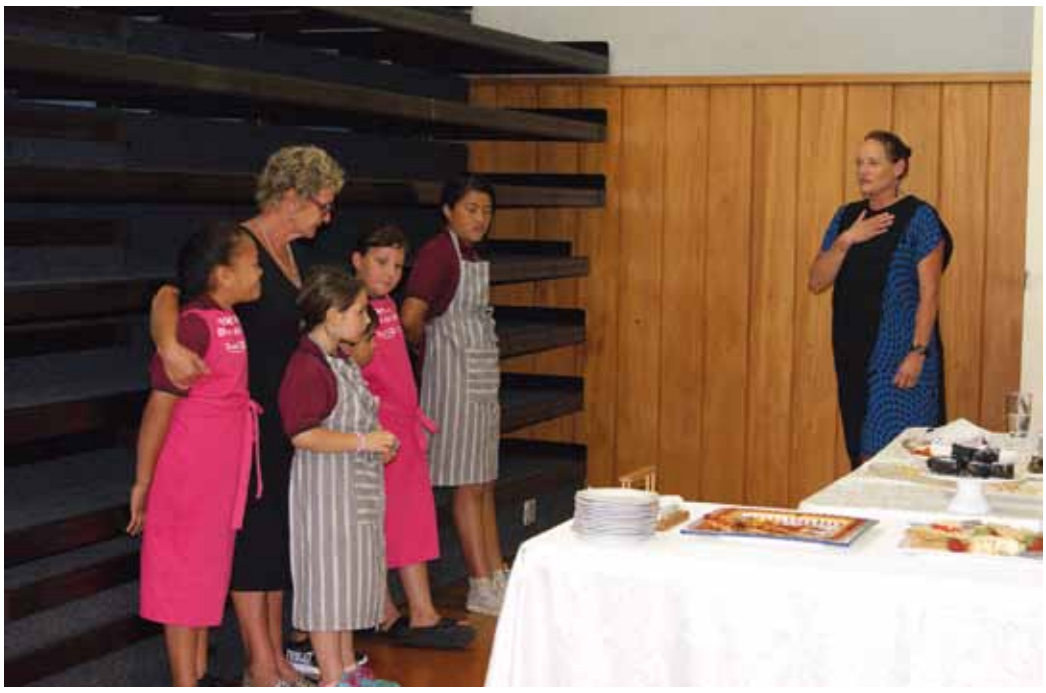
a full-time practice nurse for the health and wellbeing of our tamariki so they can be strong and healthy," he explains.

'We also have a Te Ao Māori healer at the school," he says, 'who uses a combination of Māori pūrākau therapy and connection for those tamariki who have experienced grief or trauma in their lives or are finding managing their behaviour difficult. This is one of the Manaaki tamariki programmes we offer," he explains.

'Nannies or kuia work with our children too. The mahi poi group learn to make poi, learn the tīkanga behind the poi dance and learn to give to others. Similarly, there is the mahi tukutuku – a nanny teaches the children cross stitch, which is the foundation skill for making tukutuku panels. There is also kai time. This teaches the children how to cook and bake in the kitchen and then share their cooking with others,' he said. These activities are expressions of the values of manaakitanga and rangatirotanga.

My morning ends with the staff gathering in the hall, as Ngahina introduces Nan and her group of bakers, thanks them for providing our morning tea and blesses the food for us all to enjoy. I won't head back to the front gate after morning tea. I'm not ready to leave my new home, my place. I shall return upstairs to learn more about the conch shell, gifted to the school and used in pōwhiri ceremonies, but also central to ceremonies in Indian and Samoan cultures. Just so much to learn, to share, to protect and to care about.

That's life at Frimley Primary.



Deputy Principal Ngahina Transom blesses the morning tea prepared by Nan and the children

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HANDLE WITH CARE

Aric Sigman REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION; HUMAN GIVENS JOURNAL V.15 – 3: 2008

Aric Sigman explains why craft-based skills are as important as academic skills and need to be taught in all schools.

CRAFT-BASED CURRICULUM SUBJECTS have never had the cachet that more academic subjects enjoy. Yet the practical curriculum has consistently been found to confer more than the skills learned.

Research from unrelated diverse disciplines clearly indicates that practical and craft-based education develops a more general capacity to function and work in other areas — in other words, competencies are transferable. A curriculum primarily based on craft activities cultivates precisely the cognitive and physical experiences necessary for full intellectual development. For example, making jewellery involves practical hand-craft and aesthetic skills, but it also involves knowledge of metallurgy, mathematical skills, and calculations involving temperature and volume – all linked to cultural skills.[1]

Yet, increasingly, children and young adults are spending more and more time experiencing a virtual world as opposed to a three-dimensional real world during key years of their cognitive development. This has been the result of dramatic increases in time spent in front of screen technology (ICT).[2],[3],[4] Researchers have found a link between use of computer games (more than a third of 10-year-olds in England play computer games for more than three hours a day) and lower attainment in reading and literacy.[5] In another study of 10,000 children, using a standard test of perceptions of volume and weight (which are considered a fairly robust indicator of cognitive development), researchers have concluded, 'The performance of students has recently been getting steadily worse. An 11-year-old today is performing at the level an 8 or 9-year-old was performing at 30 years ago . . . in terms of cognitive and conceptual development . . . The most likely reasons are the lack of experiential play in primary schools, and the growth of a video-game, TV culture. Both take away the kind of hands-on play that allows kids to experience how the world works in practice and to make informed judgments about abstract concepts.'[6],[7] Television is eclipsing 'by a factor of five or ten, the time parents spend actively engaging with children'.[8]

The consequences of a software-instead-of-screwdriver-society are already being observed in the work place. Senior engineers and car mechanics have noted a recent and noticeable decline in the ability of junior engineers (at a major US national scientific laboratory) and apprentice or work placement mechanics to conceptualise straightforward mechanical problems. It was observed that, while the young people concerned had more than enough intelligence to do the work, they seemed to have missed certain areas of cognitive development because 'they hadn't held a spanner or tinkered with a simple engine'.[9]

Recent advances in neuroscience and other fields are offering new insights into how and why a practical curriculum has wider benefits than were previously expected. New research is finding that using tools, as in craft activities, involves the use and strengthening of 'widely distributed, yet highly interactive, [brain cell] networks'. Such tool use also stimulates 'social, cognitive, perceptual and motor processes'. By using tools in this way, mirror neurons — specialised brain cells involved in observational learning and/or copying by example are activated. This is part of a greater civilising process, which serves 'as a critical mechanism for the cultural transmission of skills'.[10]

The same phenomenon has just been found in a study of primates. Using tools activated mirror neurons involved in learning through observation. But tool use also seemed to "integrate" the learning activity in a physiological way 'as if the tool were the hand of the monkey and its tips were the monkey's fingers'. The brain's trick is to treat tools as just another body part. When a primate learns to use a tool, its brain must code brain cells not only to move the hand but also to make the tool manipulate

an object, a much more cognitively complex task.[11] Tool use in crafts appears to "exercise" the brain in a variety of ways that go far beyond the capacities used for the specific task at hand. 'The capacity to use tools is a fundamental evolutionary achievement,' conclude the researchers.

Even in a computer-driven world, these three dimensional practical skills are an integral part of the most cutting-edge international space-age technologies. The International Space Station, a joint collaboration among America, Russia, Europe, Japan, Canada and Brazil, is the most expensive object ever assembled by mankind. The £70 billion structure – a giant network of pressurised cabins, solar panels and radiators – is now in its 10th year of construction and about 70 per cent complete. The design, development and construction of the Space Station have been dependent on a profound understanding of the three-dimensional real world, along with skills of classic hand use of tools.[12] Recently, the crew of the Space Shuttle Endeavour carried out a record five spacewalks on their arduous 12-day visit to the 200ft-long space station. The entire project relies on highly educated astronaut "mechanics" hanging precariously 250 miles above the Earth, working on the exterior components of the International Space Station as it hurtles through space at 17,000mph.

Albert Einstein stated, 'Learning is experiencing. Everything else is just information', suggesting that we must "experience" learning by making use of our sensory systems. Most human beings find learning easiest when they begin a learning experience with a hands-on, minds-on activity. At nearly all stages of life, we learn a great deal about our environment (objects, other people, etc) via our universal human preference to touch, to learn more about an object. While touching an object, higher-order mammals will also turn it, twist it, view it from a number of other positions, etc, as a means of drawing out the most meaningful clues, cues, and relevant information needed for arriving at conclusions concerning the object. Teenagers and young adults learn in the same way.

Hands on

Another way to consider the benefits of craft activities is by looking at the primal and central role of hands in learning and creation. Frank R Wilson, a neurologist at the University of California School of Medicine, considers the hand a 'musculoskeletal organism', emphasising the centrality to intelligence of our human hand and how crucial the manipulation of the hands are to cognitive learning. The human hand should not be regarded as a mere "appendix", but rather, a fundamental part of the way we create.[13],[14] It is a highly evolved mechanism responsible for the high level of adaptation and survival in humans and is particularly sensitive to perceiving and transmitting exceedingly sophisticated information to the brain.[15] The inter-relationship between the hand and brain constitutes an integrated system, which seems genetically programmed. For instance, the learning brain receives high levels of vital information through the sensations and movements of the hands.[16] Research on 10-week-old foetuses indicates that nerve connections from the hands to the brain develop before the connections that allow the brain to control the hands. And the fetus's hand movements appear to influence the way that the brain physically develops in the womb.[17]

Elements of hand use such as movement velocity, direction and mode of coordination in craft activities are reflected in "robust" brain activity.[18] This hand-to-brain relationship is so strong that the American Academy of Neurology has just reported that hand stimulation can be used therapeutically to improve brain function in adults.[19] It is now thought that only by manipulating real objects in real space is an evolutionary imperative satisfied.

And this is why "hands-on" exploration seems critical for the development of understanding and inventiveness.

Sustained attention

The ability to stay focused and on-task is of huge importance in daily life. We know that sustained attention, critical to the ability to concentrate, and self-regulation are effectively cultivated and reinforced through a craft-based curriculum, especially one in which nature plays a part (see later). Indeed, the process of "start-to-finish" learning also cultivates deferred gratification vital to impulse control. Although intelligence is generally thought to play a key role in children's early academic achievement, aspects of children's self-regulation abilities — including the ability to alternately shift and focus attention and to inhibit impulsive responding are uniquely related to early academic success and account for greater variation in early academic progress than do measures of intelligence. Despite the current focus on teaching specific content and factual information even in pre-school and early primary education, these findings indicate that, without a simultaneous focus on promoting self-regulation skills, many children are likely to struggle to keep pace with the academic demands.[20] This distinction between sustained and divided attention is the subject of increasing concern because of the

dramatic increase in younger people multi-tasking with different electronic media: social networking online, flicking their eyes from laptop to TV screen and back again, or flipping between channels to keep up with two simultaneous shows at once.[21],[22] Brain imaging now reveals that multitasking activates a different brain region (the striatum) from the one used when learning one thing at a time (medial temporal lobe) and this is a significant hindrance to learning.[23]

The neuroscientists who carried out this research are describing the benefits of modern multitasking as 'a myth . . . The toll in terms of slowdown is extremely large — amazingly so . . . You will never, ever be able to overcome the inherent limitations in the brain for processing information during multitasking.'[24] In the new world of greater two-dimensional learning, there are growing links between time spent in front of computers and television screens — a medium which erodes the ability to pay sustained attention — and learning problems, reading ability and lower academic and occupational achievement.[6],[25] A study of 15-year-old students in 31 countries concluded that those using computers at school several times a week performed 'sizeably and statistically significantly worse' in both maths and reading than those who used them less often.[18]

One main area of interest is the effect of nature on the ability to pay sustained attention. Some scientists now report that modern activities and situations involving prolonged or intense use of our attention cause an attentional "fatigue" to set in. Interestingly, a study in the American Journal of Public Health reports that, in modern societies, 'It becomes increasingly difficult to pay attention and inhibit impulses; that is, the behaviour and performance of individuals without ADHD [attention deficit hyperactivity disorder] temporarily take on many of the characteristic patterns of ADHD.'[26] Exposing children with ADHD to outdoor greenery significantly reduces their symptoms. Scientists evaluated the effects of 49 after-school or weekend activities conducted in green outdoor settings versus those conducted in both built outdoor and indoor settings. The results were highly impressive. And the effect was consistent across age, gender, socio-economic status, and type of community, geographic region and diagnosis. In fact, the greener the setting, the greater the relief from symptoms. The researchers also pointed to substantial research conducted among people without ADHD, showing that inattention and impulsivity are reduced after exposure to green natural views and settings. So, a growing number of researchers now believe that, for most of us, being exposed to greenery has general, widespread benefits for our ability to pay attention.[27]

Storytelling

It isn't just craft-based skills that are erroneously downgraded in schools. Storytelling has never been thought of as a "heavyweight" academic activity, yet cognitive and neuroscientists are revisiting this "folksy" tradition and reinforcing what school inspectors have noted: the benefits of storytelling go well beyond the story. Storytelling involves considerable cognitive demands: imagery, thinking ahead with plot and narrative, vocalisation, performance, listening and interpreting. For example, when the brain imagines, it increases activity, literally forming new dendrites and synaptic connections. Imagery therefore speeds communication within the cells and between the cells in the brain. Imagery-building skills from oral word "paintings" involve a process of conscious thought that transfers to reading imagery skills. If you visualise what you hear, you facilitate the ability to visualise what you read. Storytelling, probably the oldest form of narrative in the world, is not the same as reading aloud, because in storytelling, the interaction between teller and listener is immediate, personal, active, and direct.[28]

Cognitive multi-gym

The neuroscientist Michael Gazzaniga locates the storytelling "machinery" in the brain's left hemisphere: the function of 'the Interpreter', as he calls it, is to identify patterns of connection between different brain modules and correlate them with events in the external world.[29] The activity, internal and external, is wound into a single narrative thread of subjective experience. This is why storytelling provides excellent cognitive exercise — in neurological terms it is a cognitive multi-gym. One example of how storytelling may have unexpected effects on neurocognitive functioning is seen in a Canadian study. Helping children to develop their storytelling abilities was linked to their success in maths years later. This is a good example of how the brain often benefits from one form of stimulation, later enhancing skills you would normally assume come from a completely different form of stimulation.[30] Most children today are exposed mainly to imposed imagery: television, DVDs, computer-based images, and even picture books. The brain's function is reduced to taking in something that is already in front of the eye, rather than creating an image of something that is not apparent.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Roger G Schank, former head of the Artificial Intelligence Laboratory at Yale University, was examining the issue of how we think, and how our thinking processes influence our behaviour. He was attempting to develop artificial intelligence programs for computers through this work. What he found was that the human brain is programmed to

think in terms of stories. A human brain may receive thousands of pieces of information daily. Most of it we can't retrieve, even minutes later, while other information can stay with us for years, and we can easily recall it. Why? Because the information that we tend to remember is presented in the context of a story about the information, person, or event. Schank states, 'Stories give life to past experiences; stories make events in memory memorable to others and to ourselves.' In other words, memories are really stories, which can be recalled at a later time. Pupils who are exposed to information in the context of a story can better recall it later.[31]

For these and so many more reasons, it is vital that a greater practical curriculum is incorporated into both mainstream and special education. As now seems clear, the future may be digital but experience of tangible three-dimensional qualities remains absolutely vital.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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This article first appeared in 'Human Givens Journal' Volume 15 – No. 3: 2008

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THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF ASSESSI IN A SMALL SCHOOL SETTING

Nick Jensen KIWITAHI SCHOOL, NEW ZEALAND

Kiwitahi is a rural primary school in Waikato, New Zealand. The school is in the dairy farming heartland of the North Island, with the majority of pupils coming from farming families. There are 41 children currently on roll, with numbers forecast to grow later this year. The school is state funded, providing a quality 21st-century education through a friendly, family-orientated environment.

NICK JENSEN JOINED the school as Principal in October 2019 after spending time teaching in England. At that point, the school operated two full-time classrooms – a senior classroom for Years 3 to 6 and a junior classroom for new entrants and Years 1 and 2. One of his first actions on joining was to introduce a new system of assessment in the school, so that he and the teaching team could get a better overall picture of their students' abilities, attainment and any barriers to learning.

Key outcomes:

1. Even in small schools, with a high teacher-student ratio, students can mask issues that may be preventing them from reaching their potential
2. Data can help identify whole-school or cohort-level issues and give principals and Boards the evidence they need to make fundamental changes
3. Identifying any issues early in a student's life gives schools a better chance of turning things around before they become more serious

While **STANDARDISED TESTING** in primary schools is **OPTIONAL IN NEW ZEALAND,** there are some **RECOMMENDED TESTS** that schools can use if they choose.

'If you can't get your school to be a place where the kids feel safe and happy, you're doomed to failure – so you have to address the children's attitudes to school, first and foremost.' Nick Jensen, Principal

Assessing ability and wellbeing

While standardised testing in primary schools is optional in New Zealand, there are some recommended tests that schools can use if they choose. Nick tells us more: 'I've never found these tests particularly useful, they're all paper-based and involve a lot of teacher time in marking. We really don't get much depth of information from them.'

'So I knew that we were looking for something new that would allow us to capture accurate baseline information on each child, that would be data-driven and have as little teacher bias as possible. Teacher judgement is, of course, really important – but it's very easy to become blinkered or to think that you can see something when actually what you're seeing could be quite different – particularly when it comes to student wellbeing. I'd experienced GL Education's assessments being used at my previous school and they worked really well – so I was keen to utilise them when I arrived here.'

Implementing a new assessment regime

The school began to use GL Education's **Cognitive Abilities Test** (CAT4), the **Pupil Attitudes to Self and School** (PASS) survey, and the **New Group Reading Test** (NGRT).

Nick explains: 'We started by using CAT4 – for the teachers, this was completely new. They were genuinely interested in what the data could show us and to see how the children would compare to other students around the world.'

'The results that we got were really interesting – but I wouldn't say that there were many surprises with the data, which was really good to see as it told us that our teacher judgements were robust.'

'We then did our first PASS survey later that term (Term 4 2019), to allow us to look in detail at our students' feelings about school, self-regard, attitudes to teachers, confidence in learning etc. This would give us really good insights into their attitudes and mindsets.'

'After that initial survey, we carried out further PASS surveys

	2019 Term 4	2020 Term 1	2020 Term 2	2020 Term 3	2020 Term 4	2021 Term 1	2021 Term 2	2021 Term 3	2021 Term 4
CAT4	*								*
PASS	*		*		*	*	*	*	*
NGRT	*								*

Kiwitahi's testing timeline

NG STUDENT WELLBEING

in Terms 2 and 4 of 2020. Being a rural school, we are really affected by a lot of roll change – with new pupils often joining the school mid-year, reflecting the start date of new farming contracts in the surrounding area. In 2020, more than 50 per cent of the school roll changed on 1st June, so that was a big change. We were keen therefore, to look into each student's PASS results to reveal any hidden barriers to their learning.'

The impact of the data

As the Term 4 results were reviewed, Nick saw some patterns emerging that would lead to a radical reworking of the organisation of the school.

'We got to our final board meeting of the year and at that stage we only had two classrooms open. We didn't have our third one operating as we'd lost children off roll, and therefore didn't have the state funding for a further teacher for that classroom.'

'I presented the PASS results to the Board of Trustees in our meeting and what we found was that there was a large number of children, predominantly boys in Year 3, who were showing a lot of red flags on their PASS profile results. We looked at it in detail, talked to the children, and realised that the youngest students in our senior classroom were being negatively affected by the age difference across the class. Being so much younger in comparison with the Year 5 and 6 children, while still sharing the same routines and the same classroom, was having an impact. Obviously all the work they were doing was differentiated to their level, but we could see that, in their view, they didn't care about the age difference, they cared that they could see they were achieving lower than the other children around them and that this was having a big effect on their confidence.'

'So this prompted me to say to the board – we haven't got enough kids to fully open the third classroom, but we can't just sit by and watch these children become disenfranchised with school because they are feeling like it's not a good place to be. The data is telling us that these students are really not happy in school – so we need to do something about it to prevent this affecting their academic performance in the future.'

The Board of Trustees listened to the data and gave Nick the go ahead to open up the third classroom and to use it for Years 2 and 3 for core curriculum work. This meant they would need to take on an additional part-time teacher, adding more than 25 per cent to the teaching headcount. They took the decision to fund this teacher from their own school operations grant and out of parental fundraising, with a total cost of around $30,000 a year. This was put in place for the start of the new school year in February 2021.

The effect is already visible

The impact of this decision is already being made clear. Nick explains: 'We're halfway through Term 2 now, and the difference is absolutely noticeable. You walk through the school gate and I get parents commenting that the children look so happy. In the classrooms, the children are completely focused on their learning

	December 2020 average PASS score	March 2021 average PASS score
Student 1	6.05	32.55
Student 2	17.95	36.84
Student 3	53.5	72.11

and there's a real buzz in the air'.

'The PASS surveys are coming back with much improved results – so I can already see that 100 per cent it's making a difference.'

Nick shared some of the PASS scores for the 2020 Year 3 boys who were being most affected *(see the table below – the higher the score the more positive the children's attitudes)*. The data shows a significant uptick in scores that has been achieved rapidly in just a 4-month period. This has given Nick both reassurance that they're on the right track, but also provides benchmarked data that he can show to the Board of Trustees as validation of their decision.

Parents across the school are also extremely happy with the changes that can be seen. The hope is that the number of children on roll will grow to allow the third classroom to become state-funded, but in the meantime the Parent-School Committee is contributing to the cost of the additional member of staff through various fundraising initiatives.

The survey also **SUPPORTS THE SCHOOL WITH INDIVIDUAL INSIGHTS,** guided by the PASS **INTERVENTION STRATEGIES THAT ARE PROVIDED** for each of the PASS factors.

Supporting individual children

The survey also supports the school with individual insights, guided by the PASS intervention strategies that are provided for each of the PASS factors.

Nick explains: 'We wanted to know what the children were concerned about – and never assumed that we knew everything about each child, even though as a small school there is obviously a high teacher-student ratio.'

'We used the PASS interventions to support professional development work for the teachers and to establish a wellbeing programme. By looking at the data we could pinpoint particular questions in relation to what the data was showing us, that we could then discuss with individual children to tease out more information. This facilitated some quite difficult conversations, but allowed us to shine a light on issues, discuss things with parents, and put in place external support where needed.'

The school is also using the PASS results to inform a project around resilience that is helping the children to deal with any feelings of failure. The PASS measure for perceived learning capability is particularly useful here, as it offers the chance to explore a student's feelings of self-efficacy and can reveal warning signs of demoralisation and disaffection.

Nick explains: 'The perceived learning capability of some of the children were lower than we'd like, so we took the opportunity to look at the vocabulary around this and created a graphic that would be a visual aid for the students. We give them tools such as "When I'm feeling stuck what can I do?" and are working towards us as teachers having coaching conversations with the children, daily'.

'The survey results come out often in our staff meetings, so the teachers are referring to them regularly – the data is very much front and centre of what we're doing.'

Next steps

The school is currently delivering PASS surveys each term, to allow the insights to continue. They are also planning to administer their second CAT4 and NGRT tests in October and will triangulate the data between PASS and CAT4 to gain even more information.

Nick explains: 'I think there's still potential for us to use the CAT4 data in more detail – so one of my next areas of development for the school is improving how we use that data and how it combines with PASS. I've recently completed Matthew Savage's *Data Triangulation course*, which has given me great support for looking at the use of student-level data to boost wellbeing and personalise learning.'

'We'll carry on doing PASS each term for the time being, as it really lets us get a snapshot of the changes that are happening – and as they only take around 20 minutes to complete and the results are quick, they're not hugely time consuming.'

With the dramatic improvement in student wellbeing seen from the introduction of the third classroom, the school is confident that we are moving in the right direction, led by the data.

Nick concludes: 'If you can't get your school to be a place where the kids feel safe and happy, you're doomed to failure – so you have to address the children's attitudes to school, first and foremost. If you can get a positive culture in your school, then kids will come and soak up that culture.'

'The feedback we get from people visiting the school say the most positive things about Kiwitahi. It's really fulfilling to know that we've got to a place where the school has a good name, and a lot of that is down to us reacting to information that we've got from the PASS surveys. Otherwise, we would be blinkered, driving blind and trying to fix problems that we *thought* we needed to fix rather than *knowing* we are dealing with the right areas.'

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR LOUISE P AGEING WELL NATIONAL SCIENCE

Kia ora ki ngā tumuaki o Aotearoa

Associate Professor Louise Parr-Brownlie DEPARTMENT OF ANATOMY, UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

You've had two years demonstrating unwavering, strong, kind leadership to support staff, students and whānau through the challenges that Covid-19 has brought. No one could have predicted – let alone planned – the journey you've had to navigate. Yet, here you are – January 2022 – with the next school year beginning.

FIRST, I WANT to acknowledge the work you have done so that students could continue to learn. You are the *pou* in our communities. Our unsung heroes. You've supported teachers to motivate students to continue their learning journeys. For some, your heart has broken observing insurmountable barriers and exacerbated inequitable outcomes for some tauira. Life isn't fair and that adds to the frustration and exhaustion experienced over the last two years.

Through all of this it is easy to lose sight of, or continually put lower down on your to-do list, your own health and wellbeing. However, in order to support others, your wairua and tinana need to be nourished. You need time to pause, reflect, and dream. It's time to take an hour and think about *you*, not about what your school or community needs! Where do you want to be in 5, 10, or 25 years? My aim is to prompt you to consider how to age and retire well.

Demographics indicate that the population of principals in New Zealand is an ageing and increasingly diverse group[1]. In 2019, the average age of the 2466 principals in New Zealand was in the fifties, and the number of principals over 65 years of age had tripled in the previous 10 years. Of course, this aligns with New Zealand having an ageing population. We expect the number of people over 65 years of age to double in the next 20 years, at which time, there will be 1.3 million people over 65 years of age[2].

The reality is that almost half of you are eligible to receive superannuation within 10 years. So it is timely to pause and consider what you want your next phase of life to look like. There are no preconceptions on what that might be. Remaining in your current role is one of a myriad of options.

Modifiable determinants of the ageing trajectory

The next 10 years

There are few certainties in life, but ageing is one of them. It is a natural biological process, and one we at the Ageing Well National Science Challenge encourage people to embrace.

There is not a uniform experience of ageing and the ageing trajectory can differ greatly between individuals. Some determinants of ageing are not modifiable or we have had little mana motuhake over them, such as genetics, or events in utero or early in life. Other determinants continue to influence the ageing trajectory in the years to come[2]. Many of these are the basics – the things my Nana taught me – to eat a healthy diet of unprocessed food, exercise regularly, keep your brain active by learning new things, stay connected with whānau and friends, and seek regular medical and dental check ups.

In many Western societies, ageing is perceived negatively. For Māori and many other Indigenous cultures, ageing brings mana, status, experience and many positive benefits. Sure, there can be challenges, but there are still so many opportunities. Collette Maze, a French pianist, recently released a new album at 107 years of age. Only a year ago, Captain Tom raised £33 million for the United Kingdom's National Health System as part of his 100th birthday celebrations. Actor Betty White continued working doing what she loved until she was almost 100. Never say never – the possibilities are endless. What is clear is that we need to change the narrative of ageing to break down the stereotypes and biases. However, that kōrero is for another day.

Ageing is happening to all of us. With that in mind, and regardless of your chronological age, what do you want your future to look like? In 25 years, will your next phase of life include being retired?

ARR-BROWNLIE, CHALLENGE

Retirement may include sharing your knowledge during paid or unpaid work

Retirement

Most of us have observed whānau and friends when they retire. Some people flourish, others do not. The reasons for these different experiences are complex. A key thing is to figure out what will work best for you so you can retire, and continue to age, well. Take some time to dream big. Don't be constrained by what others have done. There are few rules* – be creative.

In this era, retirement can look completely different from one person to the next. But generally speaking, retirement often coincides with eligibility to receive the New Zealand superannuation and/or can access retirement savings. It can also be a time when some people leave paid employment and pursue hobbies and volunteering opportunities.

Retirement can also happen gradually. Phased retirement over several years may be a good option if you haven't had time to think about what you'd like to do when you are no longer a principal. Can you work part-time and continue to mentor others? Principals have abundant transferable skills. If you retire from being a principal, you may continue in paid or unpaid work applying your skills to do things you love. There are endless possibilities; work full-time for a limited number of weeks each year e.g. working as a guide for a tourism ecology organisation during the busy summer season; being the chair of a trust board with monthly meetings that involve a day of work before and afterwards to prepare papers and action decisions; starting a business; fostering the important role and benefits intergenerational relationships have for kaumātua and tauira; or becoming involved in the local art society. Know what gives you purpose in life and embed those things into your next stage of life, too. *You get to define what retirement means for you!*

In New Zealand in 2016, 61% of people over 65 years of age are retired, whereas 14% work fulltime and 18% work part-time, respectively[3]. Research shows that New Zealanders over 65 years

Kaumātua competing in physical and cognitive events at the Kaumātua Olympics in Hamilton in September 2019

of age who are working have the best health if they have low levels of job stress and work-family conflict, and have high levels of job involvement. Teachers often have good-to-excellent health at over 65 years of age[3].

One thing you need to be realistic and pragmatic about is what you'll do during retirement. As a general guide, people flourish during retirement when they continue to do things they love and that bring them purpose. Everyone has different needs and expectations. Consider what makes you happy, placing greater emphasis on what has brought you joy more recently. However, reflect on what made you happy earlier in life, too. What have you stopped doing, but always loved, and might be able to engage with when you retire? What have you always wanted to do, but haven't had time for? Be cautious about planning your retirement around things you have not previously done. If you are considering new activities or hobbies, invest time in them before you retire to test drive if they really suit you and you like their social networks. An additional benefit is you can offset any financial investment in the hobby (e.g. a fancy sewing machine or a new bike) that may be needed when you still receive a salary.

One of the things Ageing Well National Science Challenge funded research has shown is that remaining socially connected is vitally important for your health[4,5]. Consider your optimal level and way of engaging with people. Do you want to be around other people regularly or occasionally? Do you want to have robust discussion on political issues or prefer catching up on the latest news from friends? Social connections are often expanded or maintained around where you reside and ongoing hobbies.

One of the things **AGEING WELL NATIONAL SCIENCE CHALLENGE** funded research has shown is that **REMAINING SOCIALLY CONNECTED IS VITALLY IMPORTANT** for your health[4,5].

There are also plenty of opportunities to continue learning. Learning is important to keep our mind active, and is generally thought to help reduce the risk of dementia[6,7]. U3A (University of the Third Age) and Rotary Clubs invite experts to talk about things as diverse as writing a memoir, misadventures, sustainability, health, dementia, the cosmos, gardening and landscaping. With all of your experience, you may be a guest speaker sharing insights from leading and managing a school. Embracing opportunities to keep learning is also a great way to stay connected with like-minded people and keep your brain engaged.

Planning and change

As with many things in life, you need to plan for your retirement. The best time to plan your retirement was yesterday, but the second best time to plan is *today*. Did you discuss transitions with your parents or grandparents as they aged? Give yourself time

to consider all your options to make informed decisions. Also, you don't need to make all the decisions in one day. Draw upon your skills and strengths to create lists, draw or collect images of what you like and don't like, and do some market research by asking friends and family what they think are essential to a happy retirement. Use your reflections and research to make evidence-based decisions.

Life is full of change and you should expect life transitions during retirement. In some cases, they can be managed proactively, reducing stress and costs. Actively planning for transitions helps to maintain independence, an essential part of ageing well. An example of this is asking yourself how will your decisions change when your partner or significant whānau and friends pass away or you are no longer able to drive. Considering how you might navigate around these challenges will make the transition a little easier.

Another common transition is where and how you live. Will your current home enable you to remain independent when you are less mobile? Do you have stairs into or between levels in the house? Consider if your home is close to whānau and friends, hobbies and key services such as the bus routes, supermarket, doctor, hair salon, and hospital. Leaving the house you've spent years accumulating memories and possibly raising a family in is hard. However, it is harder to change homes under urgency when you've had a fall and can no long navigate stairs. One approach is to consider if your current home will be fit for purpose in 5-10 years time. If you aren't sure, consider what would future proof your independence. Retirement villages meet some people's needs and budgets. However, if they aren't for you, consider alternatives such as creating your own "village" by having whānau and friends living in close proximity or by sharing a home.

Executing a retirement plan should be an exciting time in your life. You have worked hard for this, so I encourage you to do it on your terms. Learn from what has worked for others, but don't be restricted by their experiences. Dream of the ideal retirement situation for *you*. Ultimately, having the right retirement plan will contribute to your ongoing positive ageing.

Kia tino pai tō tau!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Kaiwhakahaere matua, Kia Eke Kairangi ki te Taikaumatuatanga
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BIOGRAPHY

Associate Professor Louise Parr-Brownlie (Ngāti Maniapoto me Te Arawa) joined the Department of Anatomy at the University of Otago in 2010. Louise completed her undergraduate degree in physical education and doctoral training in neurophysiology at the University of Otago. She held Postdoctoral and Research Fellow positions (2003-2007) at the National Institutes of Health in the United States. Her biomedical expertise is understanding how brain cell activity controls movement and in characterising changes associated with Parkinson's disease, and she applies that knowledge to discover new ways to treat Parkinson's disease and other neurological disorders. Louise has extended

her research programme to explore how Māori have traditionally maintained brain health.
As the Director of Ageing Well National Science Challenge, Louise draws on Western science and mātauranga Māori to ensure the best methods are used to answer mission-led research questions, which then deliver equitable outcomes so kaumātua can age positively. Louise has been an invited speaker at prestigious conferences in the United States, is a member of the New Zealand Institute of Directors, and holds senior Māori leadership positions within science and academia.

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OTHER INFORMATION

* When receiving the New Zealand Super and Veteran's Pension, you are required to reside in New Zealand for at least 26 weeks each year. A full list of obligations can be found here – https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/seniors/superannuation/obligations.html

OPINION PIECE

And so it begins

Martin Thrupp thrupp@waikato.ac.nz

OVER THE CHRISTMAS break a short interview with Christopher Luxon on the TV news caught my attention. As National's new leader he was talking about policy priorities in the future and focussing particularly on education, where he said 'we've let standards slip'.

It followed a year where the standard of schooling and teachers in Aotearoa had come into the news quite a bit. In February 2021, NZPF accused the Ministry of Education of a lack of thought-leadership in the face of declining international test results and criticised provision of initial teacher education and professional development for established teachers.

The Ministry then commissioned a report on the mathematics curriculum from the Royal Society Te Apārangi who put together a panel of experts led by Distinguished Professor Gaven Martin. Their report released in October 2021 called for changes throughout the education system, not just within the maths curriculum itself.

In November, National Education spokesperson Paul Goldsmith released a 'Back on Track' plan that involved a variety of carrots and sticks to help students catch up on their missed curriculum. National were proposing extra cash for schools to develop interventions and various sanctions against schools where student attendance was poor.

But it was the interview with Luxon that interested me most, because I've been expecting something of the sort. It's been clear to me for a while now that the Labour Government is vulnerable in this area of standards because of the removal of National Standards, the long period of reviewing education and Education Minister Chris Hipkins being super busy as Covid Response Minister.

It's all left a perceived void that is a gift to the Opposition. I say 'perceived' because it's not as if the Ministry of Education hasn't been beavering away on the recommendations of the Tomorrow's Schools Taskforce, the Curriculum Progress and Achievement review, the NCEA review and the Curriculum Refresh, all of which are intended to bring more consistency and rigour into the system.

But none of this work provides the soundbites and sense of immediacy – the silver bullets – that National can be expected to trade on to bring itself into power. National will also get public and professional buy-in from concern about the pandemic's undoubted huge impact on school attendance and achievement. Any further bad news that can be garnered from the international large scale assessments like PISA and TIMMS will be useful to National as well.

So, this is how it can be predicted to play out from here on. National will announce some kind of education policy heavily centred on standards, testing and accountability which it will promote as a cornerstone of its manifesto going into the next election. It will likely be a simplistic 'policy by soundbite' idea but it will be taken up enthusiastically by many. Labour may be forced to come up with its own soundbite to show it is still up to the job.

At the moment, those in schools and kura are generally not being criticised for the slip in standards. Luxon said in the interview that 'a big part of [the problem] was that the education system hadn't supported teachers as well as it could have.' Unfortunately, all that goodwill can change very quickly. Teachers, principals and schools are easily turned into scapegoats.

I've seen it happen here and overseas and have been writing

against it for decades. I call it the 'politics of blame'. If you want to see just how grubby and self-serving the politics of blame can get in New Zealand, then you should read my book on *The Search for Better Educational Standards: A Cautionary Tale* about the National Standards policy. It is all there in gory detail and former Ministers of Education Anne Tolley and Hekia Parata do not come off at all well. Nor does the Key/English government of which they were a part.

A central issue in the politics of blaming teachers and schools is how much you believe they are responsible for inequalities in the education system or how much you attribute to the 'family background' of students, especially their socio-economic living conditions and related culture of expectations and aspirations. All of which is certainly complex and I struggle to cover it in university courses let alone my short column here.

A central issue in the politics of **BLAMING TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS** is how much you believe they are **RESPONSIBLE FOR INEQUALITIES** in the education system or how much you attribute to the 'family background' of students, especially their **SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIVING CONDITIONS** and related **CULTURE OF EXPECTATIONS** and aspirations.

What does Luxon say in his interview? That he believes education is the 'biggest enabler' of social mobility. Well, from my research-informed point of view, it is and it isn't.

At an individual level, we probably all know people whose lives and life-chances have been transformed by education. I am one of them. My parents did not attend university and I was the only one of my siblings to have a university education. Luckily my parents and siblings have all been able to do well in different ways given the times we have lived in. But it's getting harder to prosper without university qualifications, and indeed even if you do have them.

At a group or structural level, what makes the difference is not so much education per se, but how well off your family is. The children of the rich have numerous advantages over the children of the poor. Indeed that's become hugely more the case in our country in recent years. So we need to face up to the educational impact of the huge inequalities within New Zealand society. Christopher Luxon, who owns seven houses, unfortunately exemplifies one side of the wealth/poverty dynamic all too well.

Of course there's another angle to all this, that we know implicitly but must be celebrated and celebrated again, which is that schooling is not all about academic achievement.

Thinking about Māori and education in Aotearoa has particularly highlighted to me the limitation of focussing too much on academic achievement. This is because of how the reflection of Māori world views is endorsed by Māori as a major purpose of the education system. Academic achievement and enhanced life-chances may follow, but the restoration of Te Reo me ngā Tikanga Māori is a key goal in itself.

At the same time it is not just Māori that view education through a lens of cultural maintenance or restoration, other ethnic groups who are not the indigenous people of Aotearoa also have an aspiration for their culture to be reflected in schools. And then communities look to schools for numerous other purposes including ethics, citizenship, civic duty and respect for law and order, sport and leisure, the care, wellbeing,healthy sexuality and mental health of young people, special educational needs, care for local communities and environments, a safe place in a crisis or emergency, the list goes on.

It all points to schools making a difference through very much more than the academic performance of their students, something that has been highlighted by COVID of course. Let me bring these wider purposes of education down to examples of a particular issue and a particular individual.

The particular issue I want to focus on is teaching children not to be unnecessarily cruel to animals and other wild things. Because of New Zealand's unusual emphasis on pest control and eradication, many New Zealand children, whether they live in country or city, are brought up to have very little respect for 'pest' animals which are seen as fair game however they are killed. Those in rural areas also become accustomed to well-established but inhumane farming practices to which our society chooses to turn a blind eye.

These attitudes enter schools in all sorts of ways, here are a few examples of which I have heard. The boys 'playing with', i.e. tormenting, an eel found in a muddy puddle. Children using sticks to push a nest full of bird eggs out of a tree. The school fieldtrip where an outdoor educator jokes to a class about drowning stray cats in a cage. None of these things should go unchallenged.

Schools and teachers have an important role in socialising children to be humane in their treatment of all wildlife, even if that's not always given weight elsewhere. Unfortunately, animal cruelty in childhood can sometimes also be a possible red flag that children are witnessing or experiencing domestic violence or that they may have a greater chance of being involved in violent crime as an adult.

Let me turn lastly, to a wonderful good news story in the press as I write this column. The quick thinking and bravery of a young Manawatū man has been credited with saving the lives of three teenagers caught in a burning car south of Foxton, after a collision with another vehicle.

Taina Keelan, 23, a corrections officer at Manawatū Prison, drew on his immense physical strength and First Aid training to force open a damaged door of the burning car and extract the young people safely. He has now become nicknamed 'The Hulk' and widely commended for his bravery in a crisis

Taina's whānau must be very proud of him but I hope his former teachers and principals will also take a moment to raise a glass and feel some satisfaction. If it takes a village to raise a child then we should celebrate everyone who, with the support of their schooling, has ended up making a helpful difference to the lives of others.

We all need to remember that education is about far more than academic achievement. To me every decent human being that comes through our education system is another success to be celebrated.

'MUM, I'M FEELING SOCIALLY AWKWARD . . .'

HELEN KINSEY-WIGHTMAN

AS REGULAR READERS of this column might remember, I have whānau in the UK. Their experience of Covid-19 has been significantly different to my own and not in a good way. Writing this on Waitangi Day, yesterday the UK reported 60,578 new Covid cases and 259 deaths.

Last week I chatted to my family about the effects that the pandemic has had on them personally. My Mum, who is 78, reported that she and her friends are quite reluctant to head out for anything except essentials and that they all experience a greater sense of isolation despite being well connected to friends and family previously and that the Winter has exacerbated this. My sister talked about her 14 year old son who has always been confident and popular in his friendship group. He has recently begun describing himself as 'socially awkward.'

I can certainly identify with this change in my own children. Towards the end of the Summer holidays as I returned to work, I enrolled my 11 year old – who has been living in Auckland this year – in 3 days of holiday care. The weekend before I reminded him of the activities he would be taking part in and what he would need to get ready. Without any warning he had a meltdown. When he had calmed down, we talked about what had been going on for him. He admitted that he was really nervous about walking into a room of kids he didn't yet know, he reminded me that he hadn't really been to school much in the last 2 terms and he had forgotten how to meet new people. We talked about some strategies to use and I remembered to praise him everyday for flexing his bravery muscles.

This may be something we talk about with our students in class or mentoring time, to let them know that we understand it might have been difficult returning from lockdowns and online learning, to kanohi ki te kanohi class situations and that we are proud of them for being resilient and adaptable and then ask what they might be struggling with so that we can support this.

We have been back at school for a week now and mask wearing has added a whole new dimension to the experience. From a physical perspective, we all know the challenge of effectively communicating verbally through a mask – we may have thought through the issues for hearing impaired students and staff, but we may not have given equal thought to the social and emotional impacts.

A Frontiers in Psychology journal article[1] describes a German study of the effect of mask wearing on the ability of adults to read emotions. The study reported, *'Lower accuracy and lower confidence in one's own assessment of the displayed emotions indicate that emotional reading was strongly irritated by the presence of a mask. We further detected specific confusion patterns, mostly pronounced in the case of misinterpreting disgusted faces as being angry plus assessing many other emotions (e.g., happy, sad, and angry) as neutral.'* We can therefore assume that for young people and teens whose brain development means they are less able to read emotions from facial expressions under normal circumstances – the challenge of functioning whilst wearing a mask will necessarily be greater.

The study recommends reminding ourselves that '*Facial expressions are not our one and only source of information;*' as teachers we should therefore seek to use body posture and body language to communicate emotion. In addition, when speaking to young people we may need to name our emotions, 'I know it's harder when we are wearing our masks to see how we are feeling. I'm feeling sad about what you just told me but I'm not angry with you. How are you feeling?'

If we conclude that many of our previously positive, resilient and socially confident young people may – since Covid – be experiencing a lack of resilience and perhaps feeling 'socially awkward' how can we support teachers to support them?

We can encourage teachers to have some explicit classroom conversations about the effects of Covid on wellbeing. We can also encourage them to tell stories about how students could be feeling, 'I read an article that said some young people feel more socially awkward since lockdowns and home learning – do you think that is true?' We may then need to use drama and role play to practice walking into a room of new people and striking up a conversation.

In addition, the increased role of Zoom, Google Classroom and social media in young people's lives may make it harder to use more traditional forms of communication that are necessary to function in an adult world. My Year 12 class often asked for help in writing emails – particularly when expressing something difficult like asking for an extension or explaining the struggles they are having with learning in a particular subject. My 20 year old son freely admits that he often procrastinates and has to psych himself up for several days before picking up the phone to ring

someone who is not expecting his call. How can we build these experiences into learning and remind parents to do the same?

Perhaps we can also use the fact that mask wearing hides our facial expressions to have more wellbeing conversations, 'I can't see how you are feeling under your mask – how are you doing?' We could also encourage more body language – give me a thumbs up if you agree. I have found the thumbs up, thumbs down (and an in the middle wiggle) works with students right the way up to Y13 to get a quick gauge on how a class is feeling. As in, 'How are you all feeling about your workload at present?' If it is obvious there are lots of thumbs down or in the middles, a few minutes of sharing strategies can be really supportive.

As we navigate this new landscape together, it is good to talk about the things we can do to support each other so that whilst physical closeness might be more challenging, emotional connection is not lost.

Waiho i te toipoto, kaua i te toiroa – Let us keep close together – not far apart.

REFERENCES

1 Wearing Facemasks Strongly confuses counterparts in reading emotions Claus Christian-Carbon https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.566886/full

Removing Communication Barriers in Higher Education with **ListenTALK**

Physically distancing is the number one thing you can do to keep faculty and students safe but face masks and distance can create communication barriers. ListenTALK communication solutions can help.

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Reduced Capacity
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Confused students lead to safety risks

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
TE TĀHUHU O TE MĀTAURANGA

A refresh of the National Curriculum is underway

The national curriculum will be refreshed over the next five years, so it is clearer, more relevant and easier to use.

The Ministry of Education is working with educators and communities, on the new framing of *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* and *The New Zealand Curriculum* to ensure they're clear what our tamariki need to learn to be successful now and in the future.

An example of what a refreshed curriculum could look like is the draft curriculum content for Aotearoa New Zealand's histories and Te Takanga o Te Wā which were released for feedback in 2021.

The most important shift proposed for *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* is to address equity, trust and coherence, and reflect a more authentic indigenous curriculum that is holistic and ākonga focused, grounded in te ao Māori.

The New Zealand Curriculum framework and learning areas will be refreshed beginning with Social Sciences to support the implementation of Aotearoa New Zealand's histories in 2022. The large number of achievement objectives currently in the curriculum will be reviewed, so they provide greater clarity about progress to ensure all learners are reaching the milestones they need to.

Have your say

The refresh of *The New Zealand Curriculum* offers a once in a generation opportunity for a curriculum that is shaped around the learner – their voice, needs, and aspirations.

Ākonga want to learn from a curriculum that is meaningful to them and their whānau.

From March – May 2022 we will be seeking feedback on the draft Social Sciences learning area, and we want to hear from you.

So get involved, have your say, and make your voice heard as we refresh *The New Zealand Curriculum* together.

▸ FURTHER INFORMATION

on the refresh of the national curriculum, including timelines is available at

education.govt.nz/our-work/changes-in-education/curriculum-and-assessment-changes/new-zealand-curriculum/

▸ REGISTER

to give your feedback on Social Sciences at

www.haveyoursay.co.nz/social-sciences-and-vision