



New Zealand

# PRINCIPAL

NGĀ TUMUAKI O AOTEAROA

June 2024  
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# EDITORIAL

Liz Hawes EDITOR



**WE'VE BEEN HEARING** about the poor school attendance rates of young people in Aotearoa New Zealand for years. Attendance rates began a gradual decline in about 2015. Reports on declining attendance vary in perspective. Some refer to non-attendance as truancy, which directs responsibility at the school. Truancy is a wilful act of deliberately skipping class to have fun somewhere else, like the skate park, the river, the local shopping mall, or video parlour. The inference is that the schools of these kids are not engaging them. School is boring and so the finger very firmly points to principals and teachers to lift their game.

Other reports relate declining attendance to an increase in transiency and poverty. These reports often include Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches Programme. Relating attendance to transience, hunger and poverty shifts the emphasis away from the school to the social domain. It points to financial deprivation, social class, and cultural disadvantage, and that Aotearoa New Zealand holds the lowest position in the OECD for equity. Responsibility for these problems is firmly the domain of government and includes addressing issues of social housing, income, tax structures and poverty.

Ka Ora, Ka Ako sits comfortably alongside attendance and is also closely related to school learning outcomes. The logic is quite simple. If you have no food, you are hungry and can't think about anything else. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, air, food, water, shelter, clothing, and sleep are the most basic physiological needs and must be satisfied before any higher needs, such as learning, can be satisfied.

The relationship between Ka Ora, Ka Ako and attendance is also simple. Hungry children want to go to schools that provide food. I once visited a school located in the middle of a social housing block. The principal was quite clear about attendance. Provided his children were still in the same motel the next day, they would be at school the next day. His school did not just serve packaged lunches and breakfast at school, but also accessed the services of KidsCan who provided shoes, clothing, and rain jackets for those children in need of such basics. That is why the government's proposal to cut funding to the Ka Ora, Ka Ako programme is so immoral. So many more children will not have their basic physiological need for food satisfied and therefore will not be able to learn.

A group of primary-aged children were so concerned about their peers missing out on basic food, they took their argument to keep the school lunches programme to parliament recently. These youngsters know that if you don't eat, you don't learn. Kia kaha to those brave young New Zealanders and congratulations to them for acting on their social conscience. Actions make a difference.

So, just how bad are the attendance figures for our schools? Data sourced from the Ministry of Education's 'Education Counts' website shows 53.6 per cent of all children attended school regularly in term four last year. That is an increase of 3.5 per cent compared with term four in 2022. Regular attendance is defined as attending school nine out of ten half days or 90 per cent of the time. The 90 per cent attendance rate for term four 2019, (pre-Covid), is 66.1 per cent.

There are both unjustified and justified half-day absences and both measures have improved since last year. Unjustified absences for 2022 were 7.3 per cent and fell to 6.6 per cent in 2023. Justified absences fell from 7.5 per cent in 2022 to 6.8 per cent in 2023.

Unjustified absences include taking holidays during term time, truancy, offering trivial explanations for the absence, or unknown reasons. In 2022 truancy accounted for 3.4 per cent of unjustified absences but 2023 figures show truancy numbers have halved to 1.7 per cent.

Justified absences are those that fall within school policy and include short-term illness or medical reasons.

Adding together the percentages of justified and unjustified absences leaves 86.6 per cent total present half-days in term four of 2023, which represents a 3.3 per cent drop since 2019 (pre-Covid).

Attendance is worse for secondary than primary schools. Whilst primary schools average 57.2 per cent, for secondary the attendance rate is 44.3 per cent.

Looking at attendance overall, the figures are clear. Attendance is improving. Justified absences out-number unjustified absences. If we accept the justified absences, we are left with an unjustified attendance rate of 6.6 per cent of which 1.7 per cent can be attributed to truancy.

This hardly justifies the Associate Minister's punitive threat to fine families of the 1.7 per cent of truant kids.

School principals and teachers want all students at school every day because they know that high attendance is strongly correlated with higher achievement. They can't teach children who are not at school. But let's get this issue into perspective and get real. The group representing the 6.6 per cent of unjustified absence, which includes the truants, is the group the government needs to target – not with fines but with support. This is the group with the most serious social issues including housing, low income, and poverty. Not such an easy fix, but a necessary one.

# PRESIDENT'S PEN

## Developing Effective Education Policy: Collaboration between Principals and Government

Leanne Otene NATIONAL PRESIDENT, NEW ZEALAND PRINCIPALS' FEDERATION



**EDUCATION IS DYNAMIC.** To craft and implement effective education policies, collaboration between school principals and government is essential. The partnership hinges on mutual respect, agreed goals, and recognition of the responsibilities each party carries. When principals and government work closely together, they create an environment conducive to the growth and success of students, educators, and the whole education system.

Over the past six months, NZPF, the voice for principals across Aotearoa New Zealand, has requested multiple times to collaborate and consult with the government on their proposed education policies. Although NZPF met with the Minister soon after the election, ongoing consultation and collaboration has not occurred, with the Minister preferring to use her own Ministerial Advisory Group to advise her on policy.

We broadly want the same outcomes as the Minister. We want all our students at school every day. We want all our students to succeed in every subject across the curriculum and to be regularly assessed to establish next learning steps. We don't want cell phones distracting students from their learning, and we want to be accountable to the public through a national monitoring system of comprehensive school sampling. We will continue to report to parents at least twice a year.

What we also want to do is help the government with the policy formation phase so that they can benefit from our direct classroom experience, and knowledge of curriculum and assessment. That way, policy would be relevant, teachers and leaders would be engaged in appropriate PLD, and implementing policy would become a natural next step because the Minister would already be in step with the sector. In the absence of ongoing consultation, NZPF responds to policy questions through the media, which is not our preferred way of working.

So, what are our responsibilities and what are the responsibilities of Government?

### The Role of Principals

Principals are the key players of any educational system. They are entrusted with multifaceted responsibilities ranging from curriculum leadership to administrative management. In the area of policy, principals serve as key conduits, consulting with their local school communities and teachers about policy objectives set. Their frontline experience provides invaluable insights into

the efficacy and feasibility of any proposed policies.

Principals play a pivotal role in policy implementation, acting as catalysts for change within their schools. They translate abstract policy directives into actionable strategies tailored to the unique needs and challenges of their akonga and staff. Moreover, principals serve as advocates, articulating the concerns and aspirations of their school communities to policymakers, thereby ensuring that policies resonate with reality on the ground.

Principals also foster a culture of continuous improvement within their schools, aligning policies with emerging best practices and evolving educational trends. By leveraging their expertise and leadership, principals not only drive the successful implementation of policies but also cultivate a culture of collaboration and innovation among their staff.

**COLLABORATIVE** efforts  
between **PRINCIPALS**  
and **GOVERNMENT** are  
**ESSENTIAL** for crafting and  
implementing **EFFECTIVE**  
**EDUCATION POLICIES.**

### The Responsibilities of Government

Government bears the responsibility of formulating education policies that are equitable, evidence-based, and responsive to the diverse needs of students and communities. That is why governments must engage in meaningful dialogue and collaboration with peak body groups, who possess invaluable frontline insights about educational practice.

Our schools are self-governing – this means school Boards and principals implement policy. Government creates a policy framework that provides principals and Boards with the autonomy and resources necessary to execute their duties effectively. This includes allocating sufficient funding, providing professional development opportunities, and establishing support structures to bolster the capacity of school Boards and principals to implement policy successfully.

Fostering a culture of inclusivity and transparency with the sector means the government can ensure that policies reflect the collective wisdom and expertise of those directly impacted by their implementation.

Additionally, governments play a critical role in monitoring and evaluating the impact of policies on student outcomes and system performance. Data analysis and feedback mechanisms ensure government fiscal responsibility and allow them to refine policies and address any unintended consequences in an ongoing way. That is why the purpose of collecting data and how it will be used must be clear and transparent from the beginning.

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## Fostering Collaboration

Effective collaboration between principals and government hinges on clear communication, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to the overarching goal of advancing educational excellence. NZPF must actively engage with the government through forums, advisory committees, and professional networks to contribute their insights and perspectives.

Similarly, governments must proactively seek feedback from NZPF through consultation sessions to inform policy decisions. By fostering a culture of collaboration and partnership, both parties can leverage their respective strengths to drive positive change and foster a culture of continuous improvement within the education system.

It is also imperative that the government provides ongoing professional development to principals to enhance their capacity in policy analysis, advocacy, and leadership. By equipping principals with the necessary knowledge and skills, governments can empower them to effectively engage in the policy process and drive meaningful change within their schools and communities.

In conclusion, collaborative efforts between principals and government are essential for crafting and implementing effective education policies. By leveraging their respective expertise and resources, both parties can work synergistically to nurture a culture of excellence, equity and innovation within the education system. As stewards of the future, principals and government must together embrace collaboration as a cornerstone of educational leadership and governance.

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# MOOT 2024 REPORT

Liz Hawes EDITOR

**THERE WAS A** heightened buzz of anticipation as a hundred principals, who lead the Principals' Associations of their regions, gathered at Wellington's Intercontinental Hotel in March. They had come to explore challenges and opportunities arising from the speakers' presentations and from earlier meetings with their own local principals. They would debate these challenges and opportunities later in the day, but, first, they would hear from the speakers.

## NZPF President, Leanne Otene

The theme of the president's speech was 'principals supporting principals'. In welcoming speakers and guests, Otene acknowledged the work of the regional presidents as a good example of her theme.

'Whilst continuing to lead your own schools, you provide an organisation through which your local principals can develop and learn, be supported professionally, socialise, and network. Thank you for the work you do on behalf of principals and thank you for the work you do for NZPF,' she said.

She also acknowledged the success of Te Arahou – The Māori Achievement Collaboratives (MACs) which this year celebrate ten years of culturally transforming school leaders to espouse a Māori world view in their schools.

'Despite the unquestionable quality of this kaupapa, it is strengthened because it is based on principals supporting principals,' she said.

The next section of her speech was focused on newly announced Government policies for education. She chose not to focus long on the proposed reintroduction of charter schools, except to say it was a good example of why a cross-party approach to policy making is more important than ever. She emphasised the shameful waste of precious resources as one government introduced charter schools, the next removed them from legislation and now, with a further change in government, they are back on the agenda again.

'Until we have a strategic plan that lasts longer than an election term, we will continue to face wasteful changes and never be given the chance to embed policies that are worthwhile,' she said.

The 'cell phones away during class time' policy was also quickly dismissed, as she noted that many schools already banned cell phones during class time and provided exemptions were allowed for exceptional circumstances, the policy was not contentious.

She gave greater attention to the policy for one hour a day of reading, writing and math for Years 1–8. Her focus was less on the hour a day, which she again noted was hardly contentious, than that the Minister preferred a single assessment tool for all schools. She reported that in a pre-moot survey of the regional leaders, 80 per cent were not in agreement with a single assessment tool. This

issue would be discussed more fully by the regional leaders in their later debates.

Workforce was her next topic and although she said she was not using the 'crisis' word yet, the profession is losing experienced principals.

'There are about 860 new principals and over 40 per cent of them work in small schools,' she said. 'Nearly half of those new principals, who are one or two years into the job, intend to leave the role within the next five years.'

She suggested the regional leaders might consider why this is the case, during their debates.

Otene raised two more recent policy proposals: to get tougher on attendance, and to reduce funding for Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches Programme. She acknowledged all principals want full attendance but condemned fining caregivers as the way to get young people re-engaged in schooling. She also pointed out the inconsistencies between the policy proposals. Reducing funding for the school lunches programme was unlikely to encourage attendance or lift student achievement.

Last, but most definitely not least, on the President's agenda, was leadership itself. It is well known that next to teaching, school leadership has the greatest impact on student learning.

'To have high quality principals means high quality principal support and professional development,' she said.

Otene noted that our education system has no Leadership Centre to coordinate and deliver leadership supports, PLD and advice, as almost every other jurisdiction in the OECD enjoyed. PLD is sporadic at best, and of mixed quality. There is no clear pathway from aspiring to experienced principalship, and no eligibility criteria for applying for a principal's position. She was however full of praise for some existing principal support.

'We do have an excellent cohort of 22 seconded school principals in the Ministry who are working as leadership advisors and provide a valuable service to any principals who seek their support and advice. Feedback from principals they work with is that this service is immensely helpful and principals form respectful, trusting relationships with the advisors very quickly – because the advisors are principals too. This service is "principals supporting principals" and we appreciate the support of the Ministry of Education Principal Leadership Team for their continued development of this service,' she said.

She also acknowledged the leadership advisors for working with NZPF to develop an induction programme for principals starting in a new school and noted that the pilot for this showed principals appreciate the programme.

'We have been discussing ways that, with the Chief Leadership Advisor, we could plan an accreditation service for all PLD and provide a transparent PLD framework for principals to access. What we lack is a Centre within which to coordinate all leadership



Much thinking went into the table discussions

support and advisory services. This is an area we are discussing with both the Minister and the Ministry,' she explained.

'The Leadership Centre is achievable if we build on the services already in existence,' she said. 'NZPF has pledged its support for establishing such a Centre and is committed to working alongside the Ministry of Education to make this a reality.'

Otene closed out her address saying, 'As leaders of learning in Aotearoa New Zealand, we bear the responsibility of shaping a positive future for our students. The solutions we seek are within our grasp. We need to confront the challenges head-on but let us also seize the opportunity to pave a better way forward.'

**Hon. Erica Stanford,  
Minister of Education**

The Minister opened her address saying she apologised she was unable to attend the moot in person but submitted a pre-recorded video which was played to the moot attendees.

In her opening remarks she said student attendance and achievement had declined in recent years and this must stop.

'We will set clear targets to measure attendance and achievement,' she said, and added 'If you can't measure it, you can't improve it, and we intend to do both.'

To lift achievement in reading, writing and mathematics, her government has introduced the 'one hour a day' policy. 'Many already do this but we want to see regular, purposeful instruction in reading, writing and math for one hour a day [for each subject].'

The Minister reported that she has established a Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) to refresh the mathematics, statistics and English curricula and advise on the draft common practice model. They will also advise on phase-by-phase guidance to provide clarity and year by year teaching expectations.

'This is all about teaching the core subjects brilliantly,' she said.

She moved on to the 'cell phones away policy' during the school day, which is intended to remove distractions.

'This is not just good for learning but also for healthy social interactions and mental wellbeing,' she said.

NZPF had sent her questions in advance which she then proceeded to answer.

**Q:** Has a decision been made on how reading, writing and mathematics will be assessed?

**A:** We are not quite there yet. First, we must get the curriculum right. Consistent and timely information on progress is vital. We want supported assessment tools that give valid and reliable information for next learning steps for teachers and for parents. I want to drive investment where it is needed and can only do this with good data. Standardising the approach for reading, writing and mathematics across schools means every child progresses and is monitored across the curriculum at least twice a year.

This is not standardised tests. It is a standardised consistent approach across the country that will strengthen consistency and the quality of assessment practice. There is no decision yet. I want implementation to be strong. I want to use the tools that teachers know well, such as e-asTTle and PATs.

We also intend to strengthen teacher training and professional learning and development, she said, along with building access to front line capability supports and resources.

When introduced, we will ensure that implementation is strong, so that assessment can be used effectively to check on the things that matter the most. Helping teachers to actively monitor, respond to and build on learning in a timely way.

**Q:** How will assessment be supported with PLD?

**A:** In my view it is crucial that we build the assessment capability of the education workforce. I want to maximise the positive impact that the use of assessment tools and reporting can have in our schools. We'll also invest in assessment so teachers can continue to grow their use of assessment information. For example, adjusting teaching strategies and identifying additional support needs early and celebrating children's progress and strengths.



Guest Speaker, Bali Haque (right), listens intently to MAC Coordinator, Hoana Pearson

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**Q:** Will the cost of assessment tools be cost-neutral to schools?

**A:** I do not anticipate that any costs associated with assessment tools will be passed on to schools. I'm taking advice on the approach and the timing of consistent twice-yearly testing of Years 3–8 students and the accompanying support schools will need to build their assessment capability.

**Q:** Can the Minister confirm that she supports a well-balanced curriculum?

**A:** The focus on reading, writing and mathematics acknowledges how vital it is for children to be making progress in the core areas and how the skills in them help students access the wider curriculum. I want to also share the importance of cross-curricular teaching and learning experiences in schools. While visiting schools across the country I've been so excited to see fractions used when teaching musical composition, literacy through science reports, geometry through sculptures. It's incredible.

**Q:** Will the Aotearoa New Zealand Histories Curriculum continue in its present form?

**A:** The Coalition Agreement commits the government to reviewing the ANZ Histories curriculum. But I want to be clear here. I support the compulsory teaching of the ANZ Histories in our schools. I also believe, as I have said, that any ANZ History curriculum must have an important duty to talk about the Treaty of Waitangi and our Māori history. This will not change. But it's about balance and I want to be able to share all our stories. The NZC needs to serve as a comprehensive guide for teachers and parents, outlining what learning should be taking place in our

classrooms each year. It should be evidence-based knowledge, rich, and internationally comparable. I also want to make sure, in the Social Sciences curriculum, that there is room for all the curriculum areas as well as history.

**Q:** Can the Minister give us an assurance that the Ka Ora, Ka Ako – Food in Schools programme – will continue?

**A:** The answer is that we have not yet made any decisions on future changes to the healthy school lunches programme. But this government supports the programme. We want to make sure we are reaching as many hungry children as we can and getting the best value for money out of it. The future of the programme is currently under consideration as part of Budget 2024 processes.

**Q:** Can the Minister confirm that the Curriculum Advisory Centre will be maintained and developed and that advisors will be available to work with schools?

**A:** The answer is yes. We have our Curriculum Centre in the Ministry, and we also have over 60 curriculum leaders in the regions and across the country. We intend to build on those numbers.

**Q:** What plans does the Minister have to build a sustainable workforce?

**A:** I want to let you know that this is one of my key five priorities that I will focus on in this term [of Government].

We know that the single most important thing is the quality of the teacher in front of the child and the quality of leadership in the school. If we are going to get 80 per cent of our kids to curriculum [levels], we need to invest in our teachers and our leaders. We are already planning on how we can attract and develop great

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teachers and leaders. I am keen that we identify early on in your careers – potential leaders – and invest in them so that we have a pipeline of amazing leaders ready to be principals. We are also looking at what we can do to support in-service principals.

With teacher development we want to make sure that ITE is high quality – that ITE providers are providing teachers with the skills and tools that they need like structured literacy and science of learning information. We're also keen to make sure that in-service teachers are getting high quality, targeted PLD.

We want high quality, rich curriculum knowledge. [We want to] set out year by year what needs to be taught and support our teaching workforce.

## The Minister's five priority areas to focus on in this term of Government

### 1. Develop the Education Workforce of our Future

Teachers are the backbone of our education system and if we want to see a positive shift in student outcomes we must invest in our teaching workforce.

### 2. Consistent Assessment Tools

We are interested in making sure we have, and are investing in, consistent assessment tools so we can support teachers but also know, from a central point of view, where we direct resourcing so we can catch learners before they start to fail.

### 3. To establish a knowledge rich curriculum grounded in the science of learning

The curriculum should challenge and empower our learners, support teachers, and ensure every child can fulfil their potential.

### 4. To implement a more consistent mode of monitoring student progression and achievement

To lift student achievement, it is crucial that we implement a regular and more consistent assessment of student progress. This will enable our teachers to provide more support for the learning needs of our students.

### 5. To effectively target learning support interventions

The provision of learning support has been a key issue raised by me, by you, by parents, by teachers and by the education sector. There is no quick fix to this highly complex systematic problem. My focus will be to strengthen early intervention, strengthen our curriculum and to increase the use of evidence-based teaching practice. To do all this I expect to make use of high performing data and evidence to inform decision making.

Throughout my key priority areas, it is crucial that we make better use of the data and analysis that we have available to understand what works, invest in the most effective services and to support our students. Education is a vital tool of social mobility for our young people, and it is the key to breaking cycles of intergenerational poverty. No matter what school you go to, who your teacher is, where you come from, where your family comes from, every young person deserves the right to experience success.

The minister concluded saying we face some big challenges but that with our support she is confident we will meet them.

## Bali Haque

Best known to school principals as Chair of the Independent Taskforce that reviewed the Tomorrow's Schools' administration document in 2018, Bali Haque was guest speaker at Moot 2024. He is also a regular commentator on education, most recently noting that the present 'silver bullet' reform approach will not fix the problems of education.

He introduced his audience to the concept of 'subsidiarity', explaining its meaning as:

'Nothing should be done by a large and more complex organisation which can be done as well by a smaller and simpler organisation.'

He used an example from the Secretary for Education, Iona Holsted who would say any system must be tight on objectives, loose on how you get there and tight on accountability. The question is, what should be centrally controlled, and what should be left loose?

He gave the example of school property. Should school buildings be bespoke and architecturally designed or bog-standard blocks and every school gets the same? These are complex issues, contested, political and not binary choices. Balance is required and identifying who is in control can also be complex.

## Principals and Subsidiarity

Leadership support for principals is poor and decisions are made by principals and their non-professional Boards. Should this be the case or should this be more tightly organised? he asked his audience. He noted that in one of the most devolved education systems in the world there is no prescribed PLD.

He moved his focus to PGCs asking if they were a useful way to show that we make principals accountable. 'We are loose on how we do it,' he said.

Principal appointments were next on his list, and he again asked, do we have the subsidiarity balance right? We currently leave the whole decision to non-professional Boards of Trustees. Sometimes very poor decisions are made. Alternatively, he said, would we want that duty centralised? And if we moved to directed principal training, would it be any better? These matters are not binary decisions, he said, they are wicked [complex] problems.

Similarly, he said, it is bizarre that we talk about improving achievement, yet we leave it to the chance encounters of 2,200 Boards and principals. Teachers are key to school improvement, he said, but how well are we training them, when we are now talking about the science of learning? PLD is loose and what is in the system is laissez faire and privatised.

If we contrast our system with Singapore, we see ITE is delivered by one national institute. Entry is competitive. They choose one of three pathways – teaching, principal, or a specialist pathway. Teacher induction is managed centrally by the Ministry and appraisal is undertaken nationally. Teachers receive 100 hours of PLD, which is led by one national institute. Clearly this is an example of a very tight system.

We have a diverse population unlike Singapore and, as a country, Singapore is very centrally controlled. Looking to Singapore does not make it right for us. Would one ITE work in NZ, given we currently have 25? How much flexibility should there be and how should we monitor performance? A poorly performing teacher is an emergency in school, but how do we deal with that? There are more questions than answers.

The last Government said the school curriculum had been left too much to chance and began the Curriculum Refresh process which was intended to fix that problem. The current Minister is thinking similarly, but applying the lens of subsidiarity, should the Government be telling the profession what to teach and how to teach?

Research suggests that in developing countries, mandating testing can be helpful. But in developed countries like NZ, mandating content with a testing regime will limit the curriculum.

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A curriculum refresh may help, but what is really needed is much more high quality PLD.

### Evaluation and assessment

The Minister talks about assessment a lot saying you can't do anything without data. Testing and evaluation are needed, but if you apply subsidiarity, will testing every student in the country get what you want? Currently, our data comes from NCEA, PISA and national monitoring. But the current system does not produce enough data. Perhaps increasing the sample size for national monitoring would be a better answer?

### Conclusion

Subsidiarity is important because we must question where the call is made between local and national. The demands of localism are important but what are we missing?

'In NZ we run a massive experiment of 2,200 individual schools and Boards,' he said.

'If we don't sort this right, we will continue to get the same result over and over again.'

'A long-term plan would be a very good start,' he said.

**Q:** In an Area school with all ages and full immersion the balance for me comes with getting a reliever. All decisions are influenced by unions. There is the student-centred view and then the union teacher-centred view.

**A:** Unions have responsibilities. The difficulty is constantly getting political waves going through and unions usually oppose, when sometimes there is an opportunity for discussion.

**Q:** We have principals who are going into schools, and they are not ready for school leadership. We are setting them up to fail. In Tai Tokerau, one third of principals are year one or two. Some schools have had five principals in five years. The average time as a principal in our region is two and a half years. What will be kept at a local level and what is done nationally is the crux of our problems.

**A:** Principals can be their own worst enemies. They are used to local control and that is where most support doesn't work that well. We resist loss of control to the Centre. The Ministry doesn't have the levers to do what they want to help. Principals are on their own and collaboration is not facilitated.

We sometimes act independently, not considering others. When international student numbers declined, some principals recruited 'out of zone' students to make up the numbers. This is not thinking system wide.

**Q:** Principals start with a tight system around them [Beginning Principals Programme] and then nothing. Do beginning principals need a tighter system for longer before loosening?

**A:** One recommendation from the Independent Task Force on *Tomorrow's Schools* was to establish a Leadership Centre,

which would be a conduit for research and support across [your leadership] career. The idea of the leadership advisors was that there would be a constant exchange of information from the Leadership Centre to the principal regional bodies. This all fell apart with the dispute between who would host it – the Ministry or Teaching Council.

**Q:** We have been calling for cross-party decision making for education for years. What do we need to do to achieve this?

**A:** I addressed SPANZ last year and they were having the same debate. Principals' national bodies hold enormous power together with your local associations. This will happen if school leaders demand it. You need a nine-year plan that crosses all education

levels. The current Minister, Hon Erica Stanford and former Minister Hon Jan Tinetti have said positive things about this. Make it a priority.

The Independent Task Force reviewing *Tomorrow's Schools* consulted with all political parties and got close to some consensus.

### Bruce Jepsen – Te Akatea President

Jepsen opened his address calling for changes and opportunities that will benefit all.

'As [education] system organisations we can work together to support a common vision,' he said.

He was clear that his vision would be driven by Toitū Te Tiriti – Honouring the Treaty and referred to Kingi Tūheitia's hui-ā-motu earlier in the year, a call for us all to unify and protect the mana of Te Tiriti.

Jepsen then put a series of questions to his audience to prompt some critical thinking.

'The Minister has called for balance. Ninety per cent of tamariki Māori learn in mainstream schools.

What has happened to them since Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed?'

'How can we have an equitable world class education system, when mainstream education has never been equitable for Māori?'

'In the 1800s Māori had all the authority. As tautiwi arrived, the British moved to take control of our people. Our chiefs worked on governance that would retain independence for Māori. This was all prior to signing te Tiriti,' he said.

Through a series of diagrams Jepsen demonstrated that through te Tiriti, Māori gave the Crown Kawanatanga or the right to govern, but at the same time guaranteed Māori tino rangatiratanga or complete control over their lands, dwelling places, and all other possessions. He demonstrated where kawanatanga and tino rangatiratanga intersected, noting that the lived reality for Māori today is a complete imbalance with the kawanatanga sphere hugely dominating the tino rangatiratanga sphere.

Returning to the challenges and opportunities he asked, 'What has happened for equity in terms of mainstream education for Māori?'

He asked the principals, 'How are you changing the power



Bruce Jepsen, Te Akatea President addresses the Moot

and authority across these two spheres? The future of tamariki is decided by your leadership.'

The education system is set up for pākehā success, not Māori success, he said and until we have equity for Māori we will not have a world-class system of education. We must aim for a balance of kawanatanga and tino rangatiratanga to be the reality, he said.

### Saane Faafo Oldehaver, NZPPA President

President of NZPPA, Saane Faafo Oldehaver, is currently seconded to the Ministry as a leadership advisor for Pacific Island principals. Her address challenged principals to provide an education to Pacific Island students that was commensurate with their cultural aspirations, beliefs, and practices.

'All levels of data show that both Māori and Pacific Island students are failing in our education system. There is an opportunity for us to reflect today and NZPPA gives you a plan to help you take a culturally appropriate approach to teaching Pacific Island students,' she said.

'Our motto is that the pathway to leadership is through service,' she said. 'As our children navigate their way through school, they are an extension of their family, which is all important in Pacific Island culture.'

Pacific Island people are unique and learn differently. That is why we have the Tapasa, the Ministry's Pasifika Education Plan and NZPPA has developed Tautai o le Moana for principals to learn about our culture and adopt a Pacific Island world view when teaching Pacific Island children, she said. It is a PLD programme developed and delivered by Pacific Island principals.

'This could be the opportunity you and your teachers need for your Pacific Island students to succeed,' she said.

The Pacific Island population is a growing population in Aotearoa New Zealand, and NZPPA is supporting that growth.

'We are aligned with all principals, we are not just an add-on,' she said. 'All principals are integral to the success of our Pacific Island children, so I encourage you to embark on our Tautai o le Moana PLD to achieve better outcomes for Pacific Island students,' she said.

### Challenges and Opportunities

The regional principal leaders heard the speakers and now it was their time to identify current challenges and examine opportunities arising from them. This made for a helpful debate with responses ranging from the relatively conservative to the courageous and bold.

Only the most frequently reported challenges and opportunities are reported here.

#### 1. A cross party forum to establish policy for education for the medium (three cycles of Government or nine years) and long term (up to 30 years)

There was no dissension on this issue and principals agreed that they must unite and speak as one powerful voice. Principals were determined to focus collectively on this issue so that we are not facing derailment of education policy

every electoral cycle. Currently, there is lack of consistency and certainty and an ongoing lack of cohesive direction for education. There is no consultation with our sector on planned changes or decisions.

The opportunity is now to promote a cross party coalition which would include a sector voice. There is no time to waste, particularly as the current Minister of Education (National Party) and the former Minister (Labour Party) are both open to entertaining a discussion on a cross party agreement for education policy making. Principals agreed they must be brave, take the lead and bring the politicians with them. That is the opportunity they agreed to take up.

#### 2. Staffing Schools with Quality Teachers

Schools are struggling to appoint high quality teachers in their schools. There are fewer quality graduates and insufficient supports for teachers coming from overseas. It is getting harder to recruit staff in already hard-to-staff areas. Stories in the media tend to be negative about schools and teaching, highlighting what a hard and unrewarding job it is. Principals themselves recognised that they too were as much to blame for the negative image of teaching as a career. Further there are disparities between Secondary and Primary principals and teacher pay scales.

Principals looked inventively at the challenges and suggested they could take the opportunity to help elevate the status of the profession by presenting teaching as a positive career where you can make a difference

to young peoples' futures. They suggested using their own association communications channels and those of NZPF to propagate positive stories about teaching and endorsing great school leaders. The media could also be engaged in more positive stories. They also suggested strengthening regional collaborations and looking beyond their own school's staffing needs and sharing staffing across schools. Given the extra costs of living, travelling, and housing in expensive cities like Auckland, it was also suggested that an alternative salary band for Auckland teaching professionals be considered. It was also suggested that trainee teachers' fees could be waived, and graduate teachers bonded to teach in NZ schools for a set number of years. Pay parity with secondary schools would also help. Is it time to consider isolation pay to attract good teachers and principals into rural schools?

#### 3. Learning Support

Learning support was identified as being a perennial challenge ever since the inclusion policy was introduced. Whilst principals endorse inclusivity, the supports and resources have never followed the policy. The lack of specialists, experts, Learning Support Coordinators (LSCs), trauma specialists, Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCOs), insufficient allocated teacher aide hours and the inequities across learning support services were all identified as challenges for teachers and principals. Further, it was noted that severe cases of neurodiversity were not consistently funded to attend school. The system was described as 'hit and miss'. Finding the right



Saane Faafo Oldehaver, NZPPA President

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specialist to diagnose a student so the school could apply for learning support was also an unhelpfully lengthy process. Some noted that resolving conflicts between keeping all staff and students safe and accepting a student with unpredictable violent tendencies was a further challenge. There is an increase in the diverse learning needs of our students and an increase in non-English speaking students. Some schools report that children are arriving at school, not ready for formal learning.

Opportunities included advocating for an LSC pro-rata for every school and redirecting Kahui Ako resources to fund it. Some also felt that a centrally funded roll based teacher aide allocation as part of the staffing entitlement would be preferable to the current system. Developing trauma-informed training programmes for educators and support staff was suggested. Addressing the inequity of learning support funding for schools across all regions is critical. Wraparound services for students with extreme behaviour issues was considered overdue and schools need special resources for five-year-olds who are not ready for learning. Collaborating with neighbouring schools to train a member of staff, share FTTEs and transfer some funds to create an LSC to share was suggested.

#### 4. Leadership, Leadership Centre and PLD

Challenges for leadership include the lack of a clear supported pathway to leadership, from aspiring principals to experienced principals. It was noted that PLD for principals is not provided as of right and was a mix of a few centrally delivered options and privately provided offerings, with no guarantee of quality. Principals reported that the paperwork for applying for any PLD was excessive for principals especially small and rural schools. Equity of delivery of PLD was a serious problem with rural and small schools especially impacted.

Principals' employment arrangements were also noted as a challenge. Principals feel vulnerable because they are appointed and employed by non-professional Boards and there is wide variation of Board quality and training across regions. Programmes for beginning principals are contracted and there is no guarantee they will continue beyond the term of the contract. There is no Centre of Leadership and no ongoing research to inform leadership.

Opportunities include centralising or regionalising school governance to save principals' time to focus on teaching and learning and to overcome the possibility of a dysfunctional Board. Providing writing support for schools applying for PLD was also suggested.

Establishing a Leadership Centre was broadly supported by the regional principals. The Centre could build on the Principal Leadership Advisory Service which is delivered by seconded principals who have currency in school leadership. The Centre would take responsibility for leadership research and the collection of data on leadership issues. It would also undertake an accreditation process for PLD. PLD would

include high quality online options especially for isolated, small, and rural schools. PLD provision would be guaranteed, e.g. for maths and literacy. The Centre would also provide seminars on leadership, both in person and online. It was felt that a Leadership Centre would have the support of the Minister and NZPF should strongly advocate for its establishment.

#### 5. Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Embedded in the Education Act is the obligation of schools to give effect to te Tiriti o Waitangi. There was no disagreement on this requirement. The challenge for principals was bringing all stakeholders on board with this requirement including school Boards and parent communities. Supporting the teaching of te reo Māori in schools was another challenge with many schools struggling to access fluent teachers. Further, some reported that establishing relationships with local

iwi was also a challenge, and the demands on local iwi and hapū were unrealistic. It was noted that it was a challenge maintaining momentum with the ANZ Histories Curriculum with new government curriculum policies emerging.

Opportunities included the Ministry rolling out regional workshops on te Tiriti o Waitangi and employing iwi liaison staff in the Ministry to support schools. It was also suggested that schools in one area could collaborate to engage with iwi as a collective. Schools could be actively encouraged to prioritise their ANZ Histories Curriculum, so as not to lose momentum. Schools could also engage with the culturally transforming kaupapa, the Māori Achievement Collaboratives (MACs). It was suggested by some that the MAC should be expanded and made compulsory for all schools.



Damon Ritai, Kaumatua for the Moot, leads the waiata

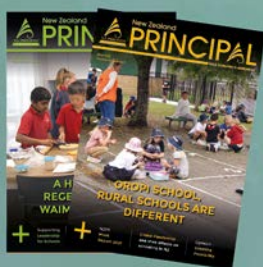
#### 6. ITE

There was general agreement that ITEs were not producing high quality graduates, except the Graduate School in Christchurch. There was no rigor in the processes for entry to ITE. The challenge is that there are 25 ITE providers, with most teacher trainees attending university programmes. Students are not getting sufficient practical experience to teach a broad curriculum, or sufficient tutoring in how to teach. It was noted that some courses are one year which is insufficient to learn the craft of teaching. Principals reported that beginning teachers are not ready to teach and require intensive support in schools. This support is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain with staff retention issues.

Opportunities include reducing the number of ITE providers and matching quality provision to the Graduate School in Christchurch. Increasing the hours of contact time in schools and providing attractive resourcing for associate teachers in schools. It would help to have a more rigorous recruitment policy so that high quality teacher trainees are chosen.

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### 7. Curriculum Assessment

Principals expressed concerns about assessment and the Minister's strong message that she prefers a single assessment tool to get consistent data for reading, writing and mathematics. The challenge is to assess so that no student is disadvantaged by the assessment process. Our students have diverse capabilities and needs. There is a danger that what is being measured becomes the default curriculum to the detriment of other subject areas.

Opportunities included removing racist assessment practices in schools that disadvantage tamariki Māori, advocating for multiple assessment tools and strengthening the National Assessment of Education Progress project by expanding the sampling numbers. Principals support a national performance measure.

As always, the regional principal leaders brought enthusiasm and careful consideration in their debates. They took careful notice of the messages the speakers presented and gave NZPF some excellent feedback, not just on the challenges that the sector faces, but also on possible opportunities that NZPF can pursue.

MC Julian Wilcox summed up the day by sharing a media crisis experience. The things that would save the situation included collaboration, quality journalism, staffing, and overcoming misinformation and disinformation. Challenges in the education sector can also be resolved with collaboration, quality teaching and leading, sustainable staffing, and clear communication and engagement. In addition, unlike journalists, educators have the collective strength to speak out, he said.

The day concluded with a karakia from our Kaumatua, Damon Ritai.



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Martin Hookham  
 Principal of Korokoro School



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Forest View High School in Tokoroa spans a large green campus, catering to more than 425 students. Built to the Ministry of Education's design standards of the day, it comprises separate classroom blocks, a gymnasium, an auditorium and an administration wing, as well as extensive sports fields and courts.

Despite the best management, the time and cost of running a site with registered mechanical keys was too high, and compromised property safety too.

## Property and personal safety paramount

Keeping the school safe and secure, and making it easier to access the gym, were driving factors in the search for a more efficient system. 'I saw an ad in New Zealand Principal magazine about a digital locking system where the school can be in full control of access,' says Jocelyn. 'It seemed to solve many of the issues we were facing.'

'We looked into different electronic systems, but most options required the locks to be hard-wired for power. We had too many doors to get power to, so it just wasn't practical. I contacted ASSA ABLOY and found that our locksmith Craig is one of their licensed installers, so he organised a meeting with ASSA ABLOY for a demo of the system, which looked ideal.'

## Retrofitting a battery-powered system

'Running the old traditional key system was manual and time-consuming,' recalls school principal Jocelyn Hale. 'There was one key for each block and others for different storage rooms according to access restrictions.'

But with so many doors spread over the campus, replacing all the manual keys with a wired-in digital system was not practical.

Choosing the eCLIQ electronic keying system by ASSA ABLOY, which features battery-powered electronic keys, meant the upfront costs of installation was substantially less than hard-wired locks. The new system, comprising 70+ User Keys and 220+ Cylinders was installed in under three days by local locksmiths, eCLIQ was retrofitted to 50 years' worth of various lock types, bringing the school's access system into the 21st century.

## Complete access control

Combining the traditional elements of lock and key with powerful electronic access and monitoring technology gives the school total control over who can enter any specific building or room, and at any given time.

'The system vastly improves the security of the school,' says Craig Snowball of installers Peak2Sea Locksmiths. 'The person responsible for issuing keys programmes which keys open which doors, so there is complete control over access. You can set time parameters on individual doors, like allowing them to open only during school hours. And you can set daily access for contractors to ensure they have access on a particular day or days.'

For Forest View High School, the safety and security benefits of the eCLIQ system are obvious. 'We want staff to feel safe even when the school is quiet. They know spaces have restricted access and they can easily open and lock spaces behind them for peace of mind.'

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# CONCERNS, COMPLAINTS AND PROTECTED DISCLOSURES

## What are they, and how might we fairly manage them in schools?

Fiona McMillan and Rebecca Laney PASL



**WHERE CONCERNS ARE** raised a school Board has a duty to take them seriously. Actively promoting a safe school environment is a statutory obligation, reinforced under the Code of Conduct for Board members:

I actively promote a safe school environment. I speak up when I see unethical behaviour. I treat all concerns raised seriously. I encourage an open culture where all staff, communities and students feel safe speaking up.

But ‘taking all concerns seriously’ does not mean that all concerns are so serious that the Board must implement formal and serious processes. The Board’s response must be balanced, fair, reasonable, and proportionate in the circumstances. Some triage may be required, and an assessment of the appropriate policy or process to follow. Consideration should be given, for example, to whether an email titled ‘Formal Complaint’ might more properly be described as an expression of opinion about the principal’s leadership.

Where health and safety matters are raised, such as work-related stress, bullying, or burn-out, the Board has a duty to consider the concerns and if necessary take action to address them.

That duty applies whether the matters are raised openly or anonymously, but the Board’s response to an anonymous concern or complaint should be quite different to its response to a concern or complaint from someone prepared to put their name to it.

For example, an anonymous letter from a staff member to the Board saying that *the principal is too demanding and has unreasonable expectations about workload* might lead to an informal chat between the Presiding Member and principal and a discussion about how things are going from a management perspective. In most circumstances, a principal would be concerned to hear that a staff member felt they were being overworked, and would welcome the opportunity to reflect, review, and consider how the situation might be addressed constructively.

It is highly unlikely that an anonymous letter about the principal could justify the Board imposing a performance improvement plan on the principal, or treating the letter as a complaint in a formal disciplinary context.

### Anonymous complaints

Nevertheless we are finding that Boards sometimes rely on anonymous ‘complaints’ about the principal to implement ‘performance improvement processes’ or formal investigation processes, while refusing to provide details to the principal because they have promised the complainant anonymity. This is neither fair nor reasonable, and exposes the principal to significant and unnecessary risk.

Employers and employees have obligations under the Employment Relations Act to act in good faith. That includes being open, honest, communicative, and responsive, in maintaining a productive employment relationship. Where an allegation is made against any employee, including a school principal, that employee has a fundamental right to all of the information about the matter. They also need an opportunity to directly respond and comment on that information and the allegations before any decisions are made by the employer.

An employee’s ability to respond in any meaningful way to allegations is likely to be affected by knowing the identity of a complainant or a witness. There may have been a prior incident or disagreement with the complainant, or (as is not uncommon) there may be performance issues the employee was genuinely attempting to address, or the complainant may simply have ulterior motives. Withholding the identity of a complainant or witness conflicts with an employee’s fundamental right to information needed to defend themselves.

There may be genuine reasons why a staff member or parent might prefer to keep their identity secret when raising a concern. It could be that they fear retaliation for themselves or their child, or they may wish to prevent further conflict or disharmony in the workplace. It is rare that an employer can maintain the anonymity of a complainant or witness and at the same time discharge its obligation to the employee being accused. The Court and Authority set a very high threshold for school Boards to be good employers. Board Members should therefore be very mindful of giving assurances that they will maintain a person’s identity as anonymous if they are the receiver of a concern or complaint.

### What if the information is disclosed under the Protected Disclosures Act 2000?

The Protected Disclosures (Protection of Whistleblowers) Act 2022 replaced the Protected Disclosures Act 2000 on 1 July 2022. The purpose of the 2022 Act is to facilitate the disclosure and investigation of serious wrongdoing in the workplace and to provide protection for employees and others who report concerns.

A ‘protected disclosure’ under the Act is the disclosure of information in good faith by a discloser who believes on reasonable grounds that there is or has been, serious wrongdoing in or by the discloser’s organisation. A common term for the people involved in this type of disclosure is a ‘whistleblower’.

A discloser includes a person who is, or was formally, an employee; a homeworker; a secondee to the organisation; a contractor, or a volunteer. You will see this does not include a

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parent, caregiver or whānau in the context of a school. The Act will not apply to these people unless they meet another category of 'discloser' such as an employee or volunteer.

Serious wrongdoing includes any act, omission, or course of conduct in (or by) any organisation that is:

- an offence;
- a serious risk to, public health, public safety, the health or safety of any individual, or the environment; or
- a serious risk to the maintenance of law; or
- oppressive, unlawfully discriminatory, or grossly negligent, or that is gross mismanagement (in a public sector organisation).

In our view, instances of sexual harassment, bullying, child welfare, or protection could fall under the category of serious risk to the health and safety of an individual.

Disclosers receive certain protections under this Act regarding confidentiality and immunity from civil, criminal and disciplinary meetings. Even when a disclosure is made in accordance with this Act, there is a specific requirement to disclose the complainant's name if the principles of natural justice require it. As above, the principles of natural justice in an employment context will require the disclosure of all relevant information to an employee to ensure they can respond to any allegations against them. A disclosure made under this Act will not justify an employer withholding relevant information including relevant person's identities.

### Exit interviews

Like anonymous complaints, exit surveys should be handled cautiously.

Teachers and other staff members resign for a variety of reasons, including promotion or for the big OE. Other staff

members leave because they are dissatisfied with the school for some reason, and it is not uncommon for a departing staff member to express concerns about the school in an exit interview. The feedback is important. If those staff members had been satisfied, or if (in the instance of the fixed-term teacher) they had been successful in obtaining a permanent position, then they would not have left. But if a departing staff member raises new matters not previously raised with the principal, then a Board would need to be very cautious about taking any formal action against the principal.

Anonymous surveys can also raise themes or elements of discontent. Further enquiries are likely appropriate to ascertain the basis of the information and whether there is a specific allegation being made before any formal next steps could be considered. It can be very damaging to the relationship between the principal and the Board, and undermining of the principal's leadership, if the Board allow people to raise concerns 'anonymously' and take steps to manage those concerns when the concerns are anonymous only to the principal.

### Conclusions

Schools will need to deal with anonymous concerns or complaints on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with their policies and procedures. It is very rare that an employer can maintain the anonymity of a complainant and still follow a fair and reasonable process.

Without considering the next steps, schools should not make assurances of anonymity. They should carefully explain that to effectively investigate any matters, the identity of the complainant will likely need to be disclosed.



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# SIX STARTING STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABILITY IN SMALL SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP

David McKenzie PRINCIPAL, EDENDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL



IN NEW ZEALAND, the term ‘principal’ is now an umbrella term for a multiplicity of separate roles spanning governance, leadership, management and teaching.

In New Zealand, the term principal is not consistent across our history. If you took a principal from the 1970s or early 1980s and put them into the role today, they would be flabbergasted at what is expected.

In New Zealand, the term principal is not consistent with the term used elsewhere on our planet. If you took a principal from another country and placed them in New Zealand, it would take some adjustment to learn to manage our significant deviation from principalship.

In New Zealand, we live today in an environment created by an initiative launched out of the wide-ranging review of education in the late 1980s called Administering for Excellence, colloquially known as the Picot Report. Out of that came the government response called Tomorrow’s Schools through which the whole landscape of education was reformed. The Ministry of Education was established, removing the Department of Education. Every school became a separate Crown entity with its own set of elected parent trustees. Budgeting, employment, property, policies and procedures were all devolved down to the point where day-by-day decisions occurred. Competition was introduced between schools for children that directly impacted each school’s staffing and funding.

Today’s New Zealand education system, Tomorrow’s Schools, after 35 years in action, continues to be one of the most highly devolved education systems on the planet. This devolution works well for schools with over 175 students. In such schools, there are enough resources to survive and to begin to look towards thriving. However, in smaller schools, which many New Zealand schools are, the situation is experienced differently. For principals of New Zealand’s smaller schools, often the place where principalship starts, the Tomorrow’s Schools system is a hefty weight and fraught with challenges, stress and pressure.

When applying for their first position in New Zealand’s small schools, aspiring principals are not fully aware of what they are getting into. They think becoming a principal in a small school is a promotion that builds naturally on their training and successful classroom experience, but that is not the case; much of what dominates the time of a New Zealand principal has nothing to do with the skills acquired on the trajectory taken to get there. They think they are going into a system that supports and enables them to be successful, but unfortunately, that is not the case. The education system lurches wildly, it is addicted to the sugar hit of change and riddled with quick-fix initiatives. Aspiring principals thought they would be leaders of learning, but principalship in

small New Zealand schools requires the need to become a quasi-school-based bureaucrat navigating a complex and confusing web of constricting compliance.

When applying for a position as a New Zealand small school principal, what started as a good idea to make a difference on a broader front in a small school, quickly turns into confusion and disillusionment. As a result, good, able, and talented people are being buried by the frenetic pace of small school principalship. They give it a try for two, three, or maybe four years and then quietly step out so as not to make a fuss.

Hence, the question of sustainability of and in the role requires weighty thought. Thankfully, the system realises there is a severe problem that needs attention for our small school principals. This will take time as we are three-plus decades deep into Tomorrow’s Schools and only learning now one of the unintended consequences was to set up small school principals for failure. So it is now up to us, the small school principals at the grassroots, to reshape it positively so we can gain a small semblance of stability and control in turbid, troubled waters.

Here are six starting strategies to consider for sustainability in small school principalship.

**1. Employ the polite and respectful ‘No thanks’:** Expectations are not getting any less. What government, ministries, school Boards, councils, staff and parents expect of a principal is rising and becoming untenable. We cannot know it all, be it all, say it all, or do it all. There are places that we can push back simply by not saying ‘Yes’ or ‘Maybe’ but by saying a polite and respectful ‘Thank you for thinking of me with this idea, but due to the many other things expected of me, I cannot take this on.’

The word ‘No’ is an important word that we must include in our vocabulary, especially if we have a predisposition to be people-pleasers or magpies who are attracted to new and shiny things.

**2. Train those around you:** Without training, people will interact with you on their grounds and terms – that is dangerous as everyone has a different idea about who you are and what your role should be. Training is required of others in two main areas:

- Problems: Staff and parents need to be trained to deal with problems. Too often, it is problem-dumping rather than problem-solving. Too often, they make their problems into our problems, taking them out of their backpack and putting them into ours. Training is required.
  - What have you done to solve this problem so far?
  - What can you do next?

continued on p.20



- Where else can you get support from?
- How can you contribute to bringing about a resolution to this issue?

When people take responsibility and initiative for the problems in their domain, we become more free to do the many things in our role.

- **Interruptibility:** Principals have work, legitimate work, and essential work that has to be done. Very few people understand this. They think their work is ours and will happily add to the pile without a care in the world about how big that pile is. This needs to be respectfully managed on both sides – theirs and ours.
    - **Book a time:** An open door does not mean an open slather on the principal. If it is going to take time and is important, then book a time to give it the proper attention.
    - **Close the door:** There are times when our work takes priority, and we need to close the door to get it done. This should occur a portion of every day, as we should not have to take work home to finish it because someone else decided that their work was more important for us to do.
  - **Communication tools:** Modern tools enable us to be contacted 24/7. This is wrong and unsustainable. It needs to stop.
    - **Emails:** Digital communication can give the feeling of instantaneity. However, instantly responding sets up a digital bounce that can roll and roll. Use the schedule response function to send and receive email communication between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday to Friday. We should not be responding to emails from staff or parents at 9 p.m. at night! This is an unsustainable practice that needs to stop.
    - **Cell phones:** We call them cell phones, but effectively they are mini-computers with a lot of great tools, but their ability to erode into our 'off time' is detrimental. We need to turn them off and put them away. If we don't, we won't get any 'off time' ourselves as they turn us back on to work at all hours of the day and night. Cell phone work addiction is an unsustainable practice that needs to stop.
- 3. Practise the power of patience:** The problems are big, and we want to solve them yesterday. Yet, such problems were years in the making and will take years to solve. Step the solutions out slowly, steadily, year on year, without trying to solve everything in the now-moment. This gives you space to think, plan, resource and take people with you. People love vision. Get yours and run it through the long term. Being personally patient ensures that you manage your energy levels and that of those around you. 'We'll do that next year. We have enough on our plate this year.'
- 4. Diligently, daily delegate:** Whatever can be delegated, delegate it. We cannot do everything, and nor should we, it weakens the school and makes it about us when it is not. To do the job sustainably, there needs to be a clearly defined structure of delegation supported by the school Board, remunerated and resourced with time – if all that is possible. This can be across multiple functions, including caretakers, office managers, teachers and middle management. Wherever another person can ably and capably do the job, and that job can legitimately sit in their sphere of work, get them to do it, however small, it grows them, and it helps to free you up.
- 5. Keep constantly connected:** Schools can be all-encompassing and take over every moment of our lives: evenings, weekends, and holidays. There is always another meeting, event, or workstream. When things are good, we can think we don't need others, and when things are bad, we can withdraw as a stress reaction. Resist both temptations. They cause isolation, which is never good for growth and mental health. Connect, connect, connect.

- **Connect with others of like mind:** Principals need to connect with other principals as only other principals truly know the role's magnitude. Teachers don't. Deputy Principals don't. Even Presiding Members don't. They only have their portion of the picture. It is only other principals who know the role. Connect and stay connected. Build relationships in the good times so that in the tough times, there are shoulders of others to lean on, advice to be garnered, and support to be received. The Tomorrow's School system created lonely, isolated islands. We need to turn those islands into thriving archipelagos.
- **Connect beyond school:** It is important to have connections outside of school. These should be completely different from anything related to school. In these places, you can be you without the expectation of being 'in role' and 'on duty'. We are more than our role as principals and so need to be embedded into places that help us live that out.

**6. Secure a sabbatical:** The base word of sabbatical is sabbat, which means rest, literally stopping doing work. Unplugging and having a sabbat is essential for sustainability. Rest enables the body and mind to reset and energy levels to recharge.

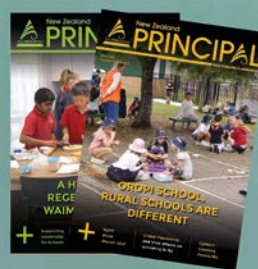
A sustained sabbat is essential and should be taken without any sense of guilt. Few fully understand that, for most of the year, the holidays are for children and staff, not the principal. A principal's work ploughs on with regulatory compliance, staff appointments, planning and preparation, and property projects, requiring significant holiday time investment while the children and most other staff are away.

A sabbatical is earned, and I look forward to the day it is provided every five years without needing to apply to a limited, highly contested pool. Until then, apply, apply and apply.

It will take time to bring a systemic sustainable model for small school principalship, so we must start making the changes we can for ourselves. Each small and determined step counts. Initially, it is for our own survival, but with enough micro-movements, the door opens to thriving.

Let me encourage you to start making changes today so you can still be in your role tomorrow, next week, next term, and year after year. It is time that we begin to look after ourselves so that we can look after others.

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# NEW RESOURCES TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS WITH CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR

Mamaeroa Munn

AS ALL SCHOOL principals will know, positive classroom behaviour is essential for learning and achievement. When students are focused and engaged, teachers are able to better use their time teaching, and spend less time reacting to and managing disruptive behaviours. As a result, students progress and enjoy their learning more, and less strain is put on educators.

Supporting positive classroom behaviour is a shared responsibility and joint actions are needed across school teams and leaders, the wider community, and through system supports like national guidance and programmes, initial teacher education, and access to experts.

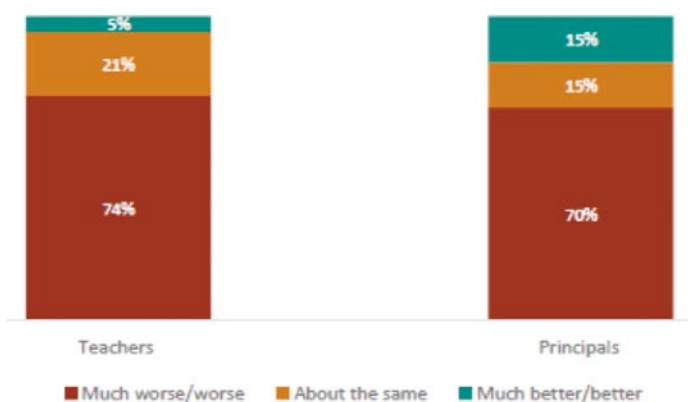
Responding to requests from teachers and principals about where they want more support, ERO has released new research and good practice resources on classroom behaviour. These new publications look at what is happening in Aotearoa New Zealand schools, what needs to shift to make improvements to the supports that schools receive, and strategies teachers and leaders can use to respond to challenging behaviour in their schools.

## What ERO found out about behaviour in our classrooms

### Leaders and teachers say behaviour has become worse

Over half of the teachers we talked to say that all types of disruptive behaviour have become worse in the last two years. A quarter of principals told us they are seeing students physically harm others, and damage or take property at least every day.

Teachers' and principals' perception of behaviour change overall in the last two years



### Behaviour is impacting students' learning and attendance

Three-quarters of teachers report disruptive behaviour is impact-

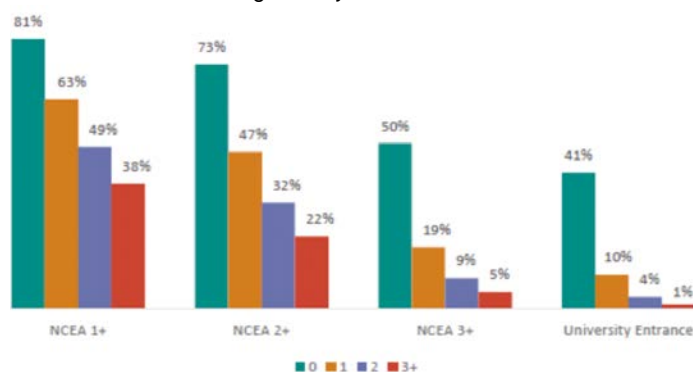
ing students' progress and we know students in better behaved classes have higher achievement. It is also preventing schools improving attendance – two-thirds of teachers say it is having a large impact on students' enjoyment of school, which is key to attendance.

### Disrupted behaviour is associated with negative life outcomes

Student behaviour is sometimes managed through being stood-down or suspended. These students have worse life outcomes – experiencing stand-downs is linked to other longer-term outcomes such as unemployment, offending, and poor health.

The younger a student's first stand-down, suspension, or exclusion, the more likely they are to receive a benefit, have lower income, have a greater number of admissions to emergency departments, offend, or receive a custodial sentence.

Achievement at age 20 by number of stand-downs



### Disruptive behaviour in classrooms is also affecting teachers

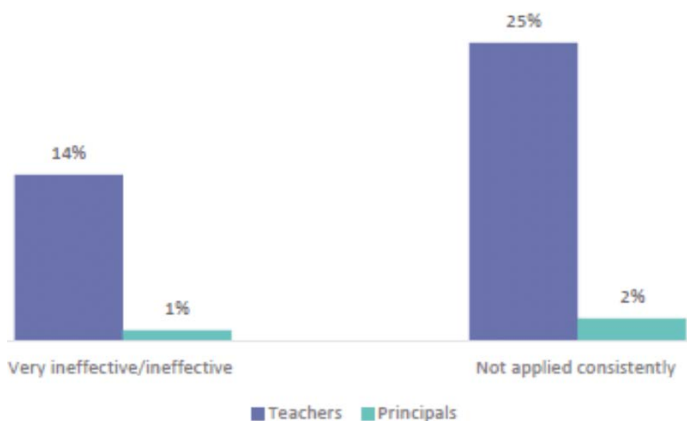
We found that 47 per cent of teachers are spending 40 to 50 minutes a day or more responding to challenging behaviour – limiting their time to teach. Half of teachers also say classroom behaviour has a large impact on their intention to stay in the profession.

### There is a disconnect between how supported principals think their staff are by policies and procedures, and how supported staff feel

This finding may be of particular interest to NZPF members – teaching staff and principals have different views of the effectiveness and consistency of their documented school behaviour approach. For example, one in four teachers think school behaviour policies are not applied consistently, a view shared by only one in 50 principals.

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Principals and teachers reporting that their behaviour policies and procedures are ineffective and not applied consistently



### Schools aren't always set up or supported to manage disruptive behaviours

Many teachers and principals struggle to access the expert support they need. For example, three-quarters of principals find timely advice from experts to be an important support, yet half of principals find it difficult to access. In addition to this, over half of principals told us they find it difficult to access the time they need to tackle behaviour issues.

My biggest concern and frustration is around access to resourcing . . . We can see the needs of these children. But the time and effort it takes to be able to access any sort of outside support and funding is really frustrating . . . because it needs to happen in a timely manner. When I talk to other principals, most of the time it's us having to recheck staffing to find money from other areas of the school where it might have gone, because number one, is supporting our teachers to be able to teach.  
– Principal

### What schools can do – good practice for managing challenging behaviour

ERO's evaluation report, *Time to Focus: Behaviour in our Classrooms*, shows that there are significant behaviour challenges facing schools, and that deliberate actions and shared responsibility are needed at a national level to change this. However, the evidence also shows that there are some school and classroom-level actions that can make a real difference to student behaviour.

To support schools, ERO has produced a good practice report and three good practice guides, offering practical guidance on six key practices that can make the most difference. There are links to these at the end of this article.

The six evidence-based areas of practice are:

Practice area 1	Know and understand students and what influences their behaviour (proactive)
Practice area 2	Use a consistent approach across the school to prevent and manage challenging behaviour (proactive)
Practice area 3	Use strategies in the classroom to support expected behaviour (proactive)
Practice area 4	Teach learning behaviours alongside managing challenging behaviour (proactive and reactive)
Practice area 5	Respond effectively to behaviour (reactive)
Practice area 6	Use targeted approaches to meet the individual needs of students (reactive)

### The six areas of practice include a combination of 'proactive' and 'reactive' strategies

- **Proactive strategies are about encouraging positive behaviour.** They involve working to create a positive and ordered learning environment, responding positively to students who show good behaviour, and encouraging more positive behaviour over time.
- **Reactive strategies are about discouraging negative behaviour.** They involve responding to students who are behaving poorly to discourage challenging behaviour and providing targeted support for improved behaviour over time.

ERO visited schools across the country to see how teachers and leaders are making these six key practices happen in real life. Their strategies and ideas are set out in a 'good practice' report and in practical guides for school leaders and for teachers – links to these are below.

I'm very clear with the parents and whānau that we have reflective steps . . . We don't go punitive straight away. We have a levelled approach to it, and I think we've got quite a bit of buy-in from them since we brought that in about three years ago.  
– Principal

### Read these resources on ERO's new research-focused website

You can find these new resources on ERO's evidence and insights website [evidence.ero.govt.nz](https://evidence.ero.govt.nz) – a one stop resource hub for all of ERO's insights and good practice resources.

#### Practical resources

Guide for Leaders: Behaviour in our Classrooms: <https://evidence.ero.govt.nz/documents/guide-for-leaders-behaviour-in-our-classrooms>

Guide for Teachers: Behaviour in our Classrooms: <https://evidence.ero.govt.nz/documents/guide-for-teachers-behaviour-in-our-classrooms>

Insights for School Boards: Behaviour in our Classrooms: <https://evidence.ero.govt.nz/documents/insights-for-school-boards-behaviour-in-our-classrooms>

#### Reports

Good practice report – Behaviour in our classrooms: <https://evidence.ero.govt.nz/documents/good-practice-behaviour-in-our-classrooms>

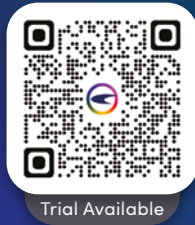
Time to focus: Behaviour in our classrooms: <https://evidence.ero.govt.nz/documents/time-to-focus-behaviour-in-our-classrooms>

Time to focus: Behaviour in our classrooms – Summary: <https://evidence.ero.govt.nz/documents/time-to-focus-behaviour-in-our-classrooms-summary>

### Next steps

We know that schools can't shift the dial on this alone, they need structural and expert support and parents play a key role too. ERO is recommending a national approach to how we manage behaviour in our schools so that students can get the best out of their education. We need to increase support for teachers, alongside setting clear expectations from all of us about what good behaviour looks like so we can prevent and respond to this challenge effectively – setting everyone up for success.

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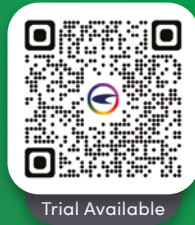
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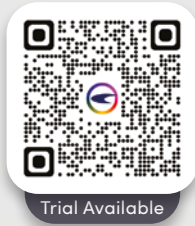
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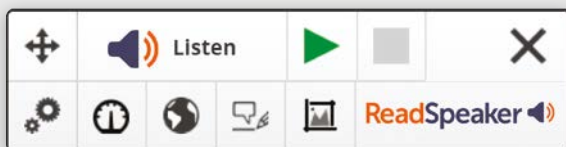
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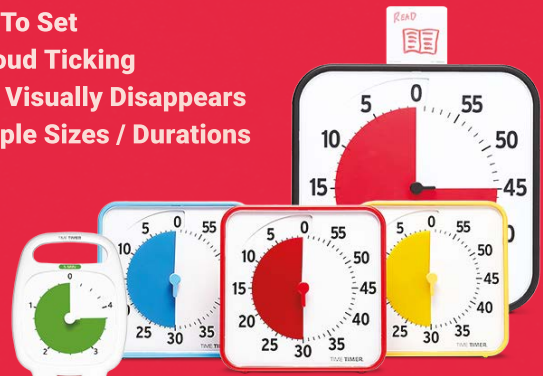
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# ASHHURST SCHOOL ON THE FLIP

Liz Hawes EDITOR

**PRINCIPAL, HEATH CHITTENDEN**, is setting up a Tech demonstration on the Ashhurst School courts when I visit. He is surrounded by an enthusiastic bunch of Year 7–8 students, each clutching a light-weight wooden racing car. From his kneeling position, he glances up from his gadgetry, flashes a welcoming smile and explains that he's taking the Tech class today because he's a teacher down.

In a very short while, with a little helpful advice from his participating students, the racetrack is set – two long fuse-wire thin metal tracks run from the starting blocks, about ten meters down the court to a kneeling student holding a big soft pillow. She holds the 'buffer' the rocketing cars will blast into.

Cars race two at a time. They each have a small gas cylinder plugged into them (potential energy) and the underside of the cars are threaded onto the thin metal tracks. At the flick of a switch (to release the energy), the cars explode down the track reaching the pillow in barely a second. The winner of each race is recorded by the highly excited watching class of children.

The children's excitement is palpable but so is their learning about kinetic energy, the conversion of potential energy into motion. They have already learned the theory for homework, through their teacher's three minute video recording. At school, they put the knowledge into action by doing the experiment. They see for themselves how kinetic energy is created and what the effects are. The learning is even more exciting because it's also fun.

In between his unexpected class duties, Heath escorts me to his office where we talk about learning, and he tells me what inspired him to choose Ashhurst School's pedagogical approach.

'It all began a decade ago when I attended an International Conference on Teaching, Learning and Education (ICTLE) in Singapore,' he said. 'At the time Singapore led the [OECD] World in PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) and other international measures of student achievement,' he said. It was there that he met Aaron Sams, who together with

Jonathan Bergmann, wrote the book *Flip your classroom: Reach every student in every class every day*. The flipped classroom is synonymous with mastery learning.

Sams's thinking was based on Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy (Cognitive Domain), a triangular shaped construct, with remembering and understanding, the lower order learning skills, at the base of the triangle, followed by application, analysis and the higher order learning skills of evaluation and creativity at the apex of the triangle. The size of the area for each learning skill was commensurate with the attention afforded it.

Flipped learning would turn the triangle into a diamond shape. In this way, the lower order skills would be in the bottom apex of the diamond, application and analytical skills would be expanded as the middle section and evaluation and creativity, the highest level skills, would be at the top.

This thinking changes the proportion of time teachers would devote to each skill, with the largest proportion devoted to application and analysis. Learning then becomes an active experience.

'This idea rang alarm bells with me,' said Heath.

He explained that the way we teach hadn't really changed in a century. All we have really done is make the learning groups smaller, he said.

We always spend the most time on theory, knowledge, recall of facts and basic concepts after which we give children tasks to explain, discuss, describe, and identify, to demonstrate their understanding of the facts and concepts. Much less time is spent on applying and analysing, which are far harder to achieve and require more intense teacher time.

The idea behind flipped learning is that direct instruction is not the best use of class time. Students therefore encounter information before class, freeing class time for activities that involve higher order thinking.

Heath spent the next year talking to staff and thinking about



The cars rocket down the track in the kinetic energy experiment

continued on p.26



School class time is all about application and analysis



The flip curriculum pedagogy allows the teacher to spend their classroom time on the application of learning

how they might use new technologies to cover off the lower learning skills of knowledge and comprehension more effectively and efficiently so that maximum classroom time could be spent on application and analysing. He wanted all his students to become mastery learners.

Next, he went to the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) conference in Denver, along with 12,000 other teachers and leaders. There, he encountered some of the smartest, cutting-edge experts in the world. At a 'flip learning' workshop, he met John Bergmann and Aaron Sams, the inventors of mastery learning. At this stage, flipped learning was being used in secondary schools and at tertiary level, but not in primary schools.

It was considered too hard for primary schools to direct the concept learning, knowledge gathering and comprehension to homework. It was too much to expect the children to direct their own learning at home so that they were ready for the higher order applied and analytical learning at school.

Heath found the answer was 'in flip' which happens inside the classroom. Instead of the students doing all the research and reading to acquire the knowledge and understanding at home, teachers create a three minute video each day which the children watch from home after school. This covers off what they need to know and understand to do the applied work and analysis at school the next day.

'We call this front-loading,' said Heath, 'because we want the majority of the teaching time spent on applying and analysing not on memory and understanding, which can be achieved through the video,' he said. 'This way, teachers are able to teach one on one because the video has enabled it,' he added.

Flipped learning also means that teachers work more closely with their students and get to know them better. This allows teachers to provide better support and promotes increased collaboration between students.

Heath is no fan of self-directed learning which has become

popular in many schools and expected to lead to student agency or control of their own learning, by allowing students to opt in rather than having their learning directed by the teacher. 'The pendulum has swung too far in encouraging children to follow their passions,' he said. 'For some children their passion doesn't extend beyond watching the Xbox.'

'We open doors for our kids, but we say which doors,' he explained.

'Right now, we are developing structured literacy. The teachers are preparing the videos. You can teach any concept in this way,' said Heath. 'That is the beauty of it.'

Heath says there are added bonuses to children watching the teaching video at home. 'We find that sending a video home every night strengthens the home-school relationships and engagement with families,' he said, 'because the families are connecting to the learning as well.'

As a result of Heath's adoption of flipped learning, the school is now a partner with the Derek Bok Centre for Teaching and Learning at Harvard University.

'We feature in their research work,' Heath explained, 'because we are pioneers in applying flipped learning at the primary school level.'

The Manawatū town of Ashhurst has a population of 3,500 people. To discover such a close connection between Ashhurst School and one of the most internationally acclaimed universities in the world, was not what I expected to uncover on a visit to the little town's school.

'Yes, we are proud to be internationally recognised by Harvard University,' said Heath, 'and we are indebted to the international community of researchers who introduced us to flipped learning in the first place,' he said.

If flipped learning can enable increased higher-level learning, more teacher one on one time with students and be as much fun as I observed, it's certainly worth a second look.



Everyone is engaged with a flip curriculum approach

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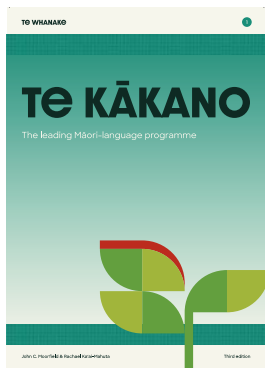
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# INSPIRING THE FUTURE BROADENS HORIZONS

Peter Thornbury TERTIARY EDUCATION COMMISSION

THE NATIONAL EDUCATION and Learning Priorities (NELP) place a range of expectations on schools to collaborate with business and communities around work and to raise the expectations of learners.

Now a government-backed programme is expanding through the country, offering a package that can help schools meet some NELP and curriculum priorities, as well as enrich the experience of learning about work and career options, by doing it in a fun and engaging way.

Inspiring the Future (ITF) is a research-based programme supported by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) as part of its role in providing careers information and funding transition education. It brings learners face to face with volunteer role models from their communities, and provides students with the chance to hear about their jobs and ask them questions about what inspired them and how they got there. Events are free to organise and run. Schools receive a printed resource pack on how to run a session, which includes pre and post-activities for the classroom.

While the idea behind the programme was developed overseas, it has been refined in New Zealand using local research.

In 2019, students in primary and intermediate schools took part in a survey called Drawing the Future. They were asked to draw pictures of what they want to be when they grow up. In just a few weeks more than 7,700 drawings were sent in.

The results showed more than half of these students aspire to one of just nine most popular jobs, such as police, doctor, vet or teacher. Less than one per cent of young people knew about their preferred role from someone visiting their school from the world of work.

They also showed stereotyped patterns in career preferences. Boys were four times more likely than girls to aspire to be an engineer. Girls were fourteen times more likely than boys to aspire to be a beauty therapist, make-up artist, hairdresser or barber. Children at lower decile schools were less likely than children in higher decile schools to aspire to careers in science, technology, engineering and maths.

So the big message was that many young people are not seeing the rich variety of potential career opportunities available to them, limiting their study options and potentially creating skills gaps for the economy over time.

Inspiring the Future was designed to counter that by broadening horizons and challenging stereotypes that can limit the potential of learners, while bridging the gap between schools and the world of work.

A key tool is the role models. They bring their variety of jobs, backgrounds and stories direct to learners, who get to hear about

different jobs and why people love doing them, as well as the role models' pathways and the challenges they faced along the way. The aim is that learners will find something relatable in the stories they hear that will encourage them to find out more. And that could lead to a new direction and rewarding career.

TEC has recruited hundreds of role models across New Zealand. A website has their profiles and locations. This allows schools to request the ones they want, to focus the session on what will be most engaging for learners. Of course, being volunteers, some first choices won't be available for the time requested.

When the session starts, the role models' jobs are not revealed and learners have to try and work them out through a question and answer session. After 'the big reveal', often involving demonstrations of uniforms or specific tools of their trade – there's the chance for small group sessions with the role models so more detailed discussion can take place.

Sessions can be in-person or online. The events are mostly designed for primary to intermediate age children (7–13 years) and four to eight role models, but secondary schools are also making use of Inspiring the Future. An in-person event runs for two to four hours. An online event runs for about one hour with fewer role models.

For role models, Inspiring the Future is a great way to give back to their community and be seen as a positive role model for young people.

For schools, it can expand their student's sense of what's possible and deliver to the curriculum at the same time.

For Alice Dunstan, Year 7/8 teacher and Deputy Principal of St Joseph's School, Queenstown, she sees the value in expanding horizons beyond traditional roles.

'The great thing about the programme for students was that it just exposes them to things that they may not have been aware of or even thought of, or that isn't in their immediate environment. For the kids it was a chance to realise, you can actually make a career from something you're passionate about, something that you're really excited about and somehow you can turn it into something that makes money for you.'

'They might just assume they'll do the same career as their parents. But for a lot of them, exposing them to different career options that aren't actually what you'd call traditional or things that they even realise you can make a living from, I think was really powerful for them.'

'One of the other benefits was that the role models didn't all have straightforward careers. They hadn't decided, "I'm going to do 'this' when I leave school", and then left school and done

continued on p.30

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it. They had lots of different experiences on their journey and didn't have a straight path to success. They tried some careers that didn't work out; then they tried something different. And I think it's a really important message.'

As a small school, they chose to do the sessions in person, bringing in role models to the classroom.

For Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura), in person isn't really an option and not the primary way they teach. For them, Inspiring the Future is working with a national group of students who are older – Years 11–13. Their focus is more on transition from school and building awareness of and connections with the world of work.

Trudy Harrison says the model is flexible enough to work well as online sessions for an older learner group. They were part of the pilot in 2020 and got involved 'to expose our young people to a variety of future pathways.'

As Kaiārahi-a-Motu mō te Whai Taumaruru (National Lead for Leaving to Learn), part of her role is focussed on making connections outside school and supporting the creation of lifelong learners.

Being online means they have focused on doing frequent and short sessions, with a focus on engagement.

'Research shows that akōnga are most likely to follow the pathway seen in their immediate family. This encourages them to be curious and to explore. We encourage them to contact role models outside the sessions to ask more questions. The depth and breadth they get from that is far more valuable to them than just doing it to gain credits.'

Te Kura's sessions are short – only about an hour – because that keeps learners engaged. Trudy says they like the fast pace.

'I believe the best value is when it's done more regularly. If you're only doing it as part of a careers module, it's not frequent enough.'

'We are guided by the student voice. We ask what they learnt after the session and build the chance to reflect. That helps us gather information that the programme is relevant. Its success can be measured by the high numbers coming back. That tells us that they are enjoying it and that their eyes are being opened to pathways. One of the NELP goals is connecting to the real world of work. Where else would they get that chance? We wouldn't run it if we didn't think it was worth it.'

'I will always advocate for it. I believe that the programme is flexible enough to be able to create the ideal conditions that suit each bespoke school, whether they choose face to face, online, or blended. I am an advocate for what we've been able to do in an online space because the other one too is that I've seen a face to face school, but the role models be online.'

To get more information on Inspiring the Future, go to the website [inspiringthefuture.org.nz](http://inspiringthefuture.org.nz) It contains information on the programme, how to sign up as well as videos showing how sessions can be run.

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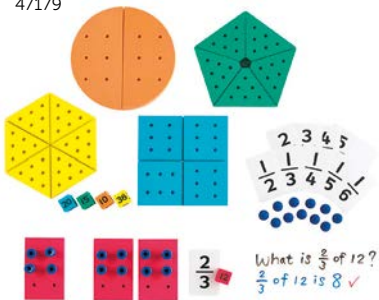
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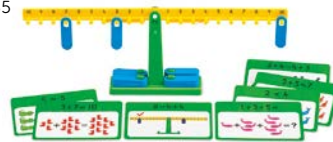
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# GUEST OPINION

## Wishing for a brighter future

Geoff Lovegrove FORMER PRINCIPAL



**EVERYWHERE IS DOOM** and gloom! That's the general impression given from every evening's viewing of the TV News.

It is really difficult to ignore the terrible things happening in the Middle East and Ukraine, the carnage wreaked by storms and earthquakes, the holiday road toll, the almost daily reports of murder, assaults and child abuse in New Zealand, and the decades-long deterioration in our country's infrastructure (road-ing, Cook Strait ferries, water supplies . . .), as well as reports of poor school attendance, behaviour and falling achievement standards.

Most who have chosen teaching as a career are 'Glass Half Full' people. They see the doughnut, not the hole, and they start each day believing they *will* make a positive difference for those in their care.

Although well retired from 42 years of principalship, I have maintained a keen interest in local and national education issues as they have emerged, while also closely observing my own grandchildren as they have grown and thrived, through their primary and secondary years, and now entering tertiary learning opportunities. I remain hopeful that there are indicators of brighter outcomes ahead. I also enjoy chats with today's generation of principals, often on the sideline of a cricket match, and I wonder now if I could do their job.

I do believe that some of the critical factors that influenced our own pathways need to be reconsidered and restored. Some examples:

**INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION:** I see very few positives in the move to take 'teacher training' wholly into the university environment. It needs to be a graduate profession, but it also needs redirection to emphasise 'learning about learning' and 'how to teach', including an extended practicum programme, to ensure a more complete understanding of what teaching and learning is all about.

I also believe there is a strong case for the teaching degree to be **fees-free**, with a bond period equivalent to the time spent studying. It worked well prior to the late 1980s and it would help keep our bright, young talent in New Zealand.

**ADVISORY SUPPORT SERVICES:** Most of today's teachers have never had the benefit of professional curriculum advisers, as they disappeared with the arrival of Tomorrow's Schools 35 years ago. Advisers in reading, mathematics, science, physical education, art and music, came to our schools and provided meaningful, relevant guidance to our teachers. Their advice was immensely beneficial. I always enjoyed, and greatly appreciated, the many discussions with my various Rural Advisers, never felt threatened by their visits, and gained greatly from their valuable advice. They were sanity preservers!

Costly to restore? Certainly, but what has been the cost of doing away with them? According to all the reports we read, we now have over-stretched teachers, poorer achievement results, curriculum deficits, disappointing international comparisons, frustrated and disillusioned teachers, and overworked, stressed principals.

My own grandchildren give me enormous hope. They are not vaping. Their time on devices is minimal. They are very involved in sports and a host of other activities. Much of their success and engagement can be attributed to good parenting (and grandparenting!). But credit must also go to their teachers who are committed, interested, and prepared to put extra time into helping their students succeed.

Much has been written about New Zealand schools 'humming along on good will'. We've reached a point now where the level of unmet basic needs and learning support way exceeds the 'good will' our teachers can give. The funding of school lunches meant teachers were relieved of the burden of sourcing breakfast and lunch foods and preparing these meals so that the growing number of our children living in poverty could learn rather than just focus on their empty tummies.

Funding for learning support remains woeful and the current threats to the school lunches programme makes no sense when we want to lift student achievement. Where is the courage to make critical changes?

New Zealand has a well-deserved reputation internationally as a fair-minded nation. However, there is much that is not fair in this country. Too many children are not getting a fair go. I am not seeing our current government doing anything tangible to reverse that.

Doom and Gloom? Well, Yeah and Nah. Some major decisions will have to be made. It is already later than it should be. How much longer can we keep making short-term calls, and putting off the necessary long-term solutions?

Where is the courage to do something really significant to make things better? Our generation failed to make the big calls, and the current generation (government and business) show few signs of doing anything differently. Will it take another generation to produce a bold and innovative politician like Michael Joseph Savage or Peter Fraser?

I congratulate all teachers and principals for the amazing work you do. Parents and grandparents really do appreciate your efforts to make life meaningful and worthwhile for today's students. My message is to continue to drink from the glass half-full and eat the full doughnut. Kia kaha!





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# KA ORA, KA AKO – FOOD WITH DIGNITY

Helen Kinsey-Wightman TUMUAKI | PRINCIPAL, RUAKAKA SCHOOL



I GREW UP in the UK in a home where there was lots of love but not much money. As a consequence, our family qualified for free school meals. In the UK, this was (and still is) a means-tested benefit available to children from low income homes. At primary school, most children ate hot lunches which were hearty, affordable and served from a school kitchen – this meant that I lined up with everyone else to get my lunch and it wasn't obvious to anyone that I was 'poor'.

At the age of 11, I headed off to high school. Whilst my entitlement to free food didn't change, the way it was administered did. Every morning, I lined up outside the Deputy Principal's Office to get a 'Free Dinners' yellow token. At lunchtime, I handed over my yellow token and everyone else paid cash. Some teenagers who qualified for a free meal did not claim one because of the shame they felt as a result of this system. Nobody meant it to be shameful – but it was. The system wasn't designed to be humiliating – but it was.

There are so many small, daily, intangible humiliations that accompany the very real tangible hardships of poverty for children and young people. If we are to create equity, our systems should focus on removing barriers and minimising shame.

Don't get me wrong. I appreciate the fact that I grew up in a country where my parents lack of formal education and low income did not prevent me from attending university and achieving success. Was it harder for me than for my friends who came from privilege? Yes. Were any of us in control of our poverty or privilege? Obviously not.

In my kura, it costs \$340,000 a year to run a programme that feeds all 350 children every day. We employ three staff members who live within our community and really care about the provision of healthy kai to our tamariki. They plan menus with feedback from tamariki and manage to make the funding stretch to fruit and a snack at morning tea and ensure that any leftovers go into the bags of children who need it. Our kaiako care so much about the programme that five years ago, they gave up their staffroom so that it could become a kitchen.

As of 2023, the Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches Programme serves free lunch to 229,811 tamariki in 1001 schools across Aotearoa. A recent Spinoff article provides an excellent summary of the programme<sup>1</sup>. According to the MoE website the aim of this programme is to address equity:

Ka Ora, Ka Ako aims to reduce food insecurity by providing access to a nutritious lunch every day. The name Ka Ora,

Ka Ako is about being healthy and well in order to be in a good place to learn. Research indicates that reducing food insecurity for children and young people:

- improves wellbeing
- supports child development and learning
- improves learners' levels of concentration, behaviour and school achievement
- reduces financial hardship amongst families and whānau
- addresses barriers to children's participation in education and promotes attendance at school
- boosts learners' overall health.

The food should be  
**PREPARED LOCALLY**  
by people who **LOVE**  
the **CHILDREN**,  
**UNDERSTAND** the  
**IMPORTANCE** of  
**HEALTHY FOOD . . .**

Ka Ora, Ka Ako is under fire and we await the budget announcement on 30 May to learn of the programme's fate. As I write this article, the MoE has announced over 500 job cuts and the Public Service Association has suggested that the proposed cuts could affect half of the team delivering lunches and period product projects.

At the recent NZPF moot Erica Stanford stated, 'We have not yet made any decisions on future changes to the healthy school lunches programme. But

this government supports the programme. We want to make sure we are reaching as many hungry children as we can and getting the best value for money out of it. The future of the programme is currently under consideration as part of Budget 2024 processes.'

Is a comprehensive school lunch programme that removes the stigma of poverty and provides food for all simply unaffordable for Aotearoa? The following countries are helping to stamp out child poverty by making universal free school meal provision work: Sweden, Finland, India, Brazil, Estonia, Rwanda and eight states within the US.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps it is unsurprising that Finland provides daily meals to all 900,000 of its children aged between 9–16 years – given the frequent references Christopher Luxon makes to the high quality of Finnish education, I hope he and his government have noted this!

What might be surprising is that the largest school meal scheme in the world is run by India. It gives free lunches to 125 million children aged between six and fourteen. What sets India's mid-day meal scheme apart is that it is governed by the Food Security Act so that Indian law enforces children being fed at school.

As we await Budget 2024, 'Professor Boyd Swinburn, the

continued on p.36



Health Coalition Aotearoa's co-chair, said the decision to put one of its most fervent critics [David Seymour] in charge of the policy raises doubts about its future. . . . Swinburn co-authored a study with other researchers at the University of Auckland last year which said the programme had brought more nutritious food into schools, reduced hunger, increased physical fitness and mental well being, lessened financial stress on struggling families, and created new jobs.<sup>3</sup>

David Seymour has repeatedly slammed our current programme, calling it wasteful. The Health Coalition Aotearoa has accused Seymour of using outdated evidence. They highlight two new reports, one that specifically looked at ākonga Māori<sup>4</sup> and another released in March<sup>5</sup> with new analysis on attendance impact for the most underserved students. The attendance analysis showed a statistically significant improvement in school attendance for the most disadvantaged students attending schools that receive the free lunch programme.

The Kaupapa Māori evaluation by the Ministry of Education presented evidence in July 2023 of benefits from the programme including improved attendance, positive shifts in behaviour and intellectual engagement in class.<sup>6</sup>

Many of David Seymour's comments around the review of Food in Schools may indicate that he has a preference for a model which targets provision towards individual children in poverty. Seymour told Checkpoint 'we're going to keep some form of the programme, but it has to be better targeted, it has to deliver more efficiently.' He said he wanted to see tangible results in 'things that relate to education . . . like getting kids to show up, getting kids to concentrate, ultimately getting kids to achieve.'<sup>6</sup>

Research from Brookings University in the US<sup>7</sup> focussed on the advantages of school wide free school meal programmes versus programmes targetted to individual students in poverty. The three findings were: First, schoolwide free meals increase the number of school breakfasts and lunches served to those who need them through reducing stigma. Second, schoolwide free meals improve math performance in districts where relatively few students qualified for food under the income-based programme. Third, schoolwide free-meal programs significantly reduce suspensions among white male elementary students.

All of these findings should be of interest to Mr. Seymour.

My fear is that Mr Seymour's solution will be a means-tested programme which will deliver food to those most in need as well as a generous helping of shame with every meal. This system will likely result in the closure of whole school programmes where I believe the real benefits exist. In my previous Tai Tokerau area school, our admin staff and TAs spent considerable time making cheese and ham sandwiches which they froze and then heated in

a sandwich press for hungry students, the Head Prefects recognised that hunger was an issue and organised a community fruit donation project and the kaiako Māori set up hot soup in his classroom. All of these efforts did not provide daily food security for students in the kura and many who really needed food did not step forward to ask.

We are the only kura in our district funded for Ka Ora, Ka Ako. Following a visit by the editor of our local newspaper, her editorial<sup>8</sup> concluded:

'I agree with Mr. Seymour that there should be a review and changes should be made where the food supplied is not being eaten. The review should also look at where the scheme is working well such as at Ruakākā School. With these best practices it should be extended to all New Zealand Public Schools with healthy morning snacks as well as lunches. The food should be prepared locally by people who love the children, understand the importance of healthy food and find joy and fulfilment in their work. The meals should be kept simple and sourced from local producers as much as possible. Providing healthy, free morning snacks and lunches is the most effective way I can think of to support young families, encourage good attendance at school and to lift educational achievement.'

I could not have said it better myself!

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