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SEPTEMBER 2024

EDITORIAL

Liz Hawes EDITOR

EIGHTEEN MONTHS FROM NOW, the city of Tamaki Makaurau will be inundated with school principals from across the globe as we host the International Confederation of Principals (ICP) World Convention. They will come from every continent, not just to enjoy our beautiful country, but to observe our unique approach to teaching and learning.

Whilst school principals across the globe are desperate to move away from standardised teaching and testing, which breeds 'teaching to the test' and is the death of creativity, Aotearoa New Zealand's public education shines as a beacon of light and hope for the world's community of school leaders.

Principals are lining up in droves to visit our land and our schools. They want to see how we infuse indigenous Māori culture and language into our national curriculum. They are excited about our outdoor education programmes and look forward to observing how our schools use our magnificent rivers, mountains, bushland and coastlines to educate our young people outside of the classroom. They want to observe for themselves how Aotearoa New Zealand produces students with the highest levels of creativity in the OECD. They want to witness the close relationships our schools have with their communities and how, in partnership with whānau, each school develops a localised curriculum, reflecting the context, history and values of the people, past and present.

Most importantly, they want to see personalised learning in action. Our teachers face a broad diversity of students, so use multiple approaches to teaching and learning. Assessment is for the sole purpose of finding out what a student knows, understands and can do, so that the teacher can shape their next learning steps. They use a mix of formative and summative assessments. The key is ensuring that each child is making learning progress.

Learning in Aotearoa New Zealand takes place in flexible classrooms, where children see themselves, their culture and environment reflected. A modern mix of furniture enables children to receive direct teaching or guided reading with their teacher and may work either singularly or collaboratively to complete tasks. They have spaces for relaxing and enjoying a good book or engaging in shared reading from the comfort of bean bags. Some may work individually or collaboratively to solve problems, with or without modern technology. Our modern-day classrooms have come a long way from the days of straight rows of single desks and uncomfortable chairs. Our global principal colleagues are keen to investigate the style of our classrooms and engage with our children as they work and learn.

They are also keen to see the innovative approaches that our schools are free to adopt. These may include whole school programmes shaped around a theme. They may be eco-schools, where the curriculum is based around environmental principles. They may witness play-based learning, or 'Garden-to-Table' programmes where the children learn the skills of gardening, planting, harvesting and ultimately cooking a meal for the class.

These are just a handful of the many innovations that schools adopt, because they have the autonomy to do so. Autonomy and innovation, alongside giving whānau the opportunity to involve themselves as partners in their own children's learning, are the gifts of the *Tomorrow's Schools* policy. No principal would choose to relinquish these features.

Recently, a cacophony of deafening alarm bells has been ringing out from all quarters decrying our dipping literacy and numeracy scores on OECD league tables. Whilst principals and teachers are always looking to improve their practice, it is critical that we don't treat small dints in achievement as crises or indulge in over-reaction.

We saw that happen in 2008 when the answer to lifting the achievement of our struggling students was to mandate National Standards. That experiment limited the richness of our curriculum and created high stress for teachers and students as they focused narrowly on the teaching of reading, writing and maths in what became a high stakes environment.

This Government is not proposing another dose of national standards but has expressed concerns about how our schools might lift results for literacy and numeracy. Their election promise was to 'Do the Basics Brilliantly'. No principals would disagree with that aspiration.

What they might caution, however, is how we do that. The Minister's intention – to improve the quality of our public education system – is laudable. Her first step was to establish a Ministerial Advisory Group to suggest how to improve the basics. Their report points to a single structured approach to reading and mathematics based on the 'Science of Learning'.

Many schools already choose structured literacy, with its early focus on phonics and 'decoding' skills. The theory is that this gives children basic skills to read and pronounce words, which they may not acquire any other way. But it won't be the only way, which is why mandating the approach, or worse, creating a common testing regime, would be a mistake. Schools that adopted structured literacy several years ago say they have made adaptations over time and other approaches are also used to accommodate children whose learning thrives through different methods. Teachers can be trusted to make their own professional judgements and assess learning in the most appropriate way. An extra tool in the kete will be welcomed, just not a mandated one with a high stakes assessment regime.

We want educators from across the world to continue seeing Aotearoa New Zealand as a leading light, and in 2026, to share the joy our tamariki experience from our unique approach to education. Our international principals will watch our tamariki question and seek solutions to their own problems by igniting the creativity within – and they will do this not just inside the classroom but outside of it too. That is why school leaders from every corner of the world are so excited about coming to vist our learners, our tamariki, and watch how we teach them – our way.

PRESIDENT'S PEN

Sailing Through Educational Change

He waka eke noa – 'a waka we are all in together'

Leanne Otene NATIONAL PRESIDENT, NEW ZEALAND PRINCIPALS' FEDERATION

IN THE EVER-EVOLVING WORLD of education, change isn't just inevitable; it's like the weather – always shifting. As school principals, we often find ourselves steering our waka through waves of reforms and updates. With the task of ensuring smooth transitions, keeping everyone's spirits up, and making sure the quality of education stays top-notch, we need to use effective change management techniques. Here, we explore some essential strategies for school principals facing a heap of changes in education.

Smooth sailing with effective communication

Communication is like the paddle in our journey through change. We need to communicate clearly, openly, and often with everyone involved – teachers, students, parents, Iwi, hapu and the broader community. When the rules change, we should quickly explain why, what's coming, and when it's happening. By creating open channels for feedback and discussion, we foster an atmosphere of trust and teamwork, where we can address concerns and share ideas freely.

Setting sail with a change-ready crew

Getting our crew ready for change is key. As Principals, we already encourage a culture of innovation, flexibility, inclusivity – culturally responsive practises and constant improvement. Now, let's take it a step further by fostering a growth mindset among our staff and akonga. This way, adapting to new changes becomes part of the school's DNA. Celebrating small wins along the way reminds everyone that change can lead to good things and keeps motivation high during tricky transitions.

Everyone on board: Involving stakeholders

Getting everyone involved in the change process isn't just a good idea; it's a game-changer. As school leaders, we're already pretty big on consulting with various groups – Iwi, hapu, community, teachers, parents, and akonga. We need to keep this up by making sure there's collaboration when we're rolling out new changes. This team effort makes sure everyone's voice is heard, concerns are sorted out, and solutions are created together. When our whole school community feels like they own the changes, they're more likely to get behind them.

Investing in crew training: Professional Development

Equipping our teachers and support staff with the skills they need to handle new changes is crucial. We know we need to invest in tailored professional development opportunities for each change. This might mean community meetings, staff meetings, focus groups that reflect the diversity of school communities such as hui or talanoa, or giving access to online resources. By giving ongoing support and guidance, we help our teachers and community feel confident in putting new strategies into action. When we invest in the professional growth of our staff, we're laying down the foundation for successful change.

CELEBRATING achievements not only **BOOSTS MORALE** but also **SHOWS** everyone that **CHANGE IS DOABLE** and leads to **GOOD OUTCOMES**.

Charting our course with data-informed decisions

Data is one of our guiding stars during times of change. As Principals, we know the benefits of collecting and analyzing the right data to make decisions as we navigate through change. We've got both formative and summative assessments to rely on, but we also need to consider the unique context of our school community and the cultural backgrounds of our students. This might include teacher feedback, surveys from parents and authentic involvement of iwi and hapu on their aspirations for their tamariki. By using all forms of data (both formal and informal), we can pinpoint our strengths and weaknesses, keep an eye on progress, and make changes as needed. Making decisions based on this information makes everyone confident that we're sharing the same vision.

Smooth sailing with effective communication

Change rarely sticks to the plan. We need to be ready to adjust our course when unexpected challenges pop up. Building flexibility into our change management strategy means we can respond quickly to any problems that come our way. We should encourage trying out new ideas and tweaking them based on feedback. By embracing flexibility, we can handle complex changes with resilience and adaptability.

Hoisting the flag for achievements and milestones

In the whirlwind of change, it's vital to stop and celebrate our wins along the way. As Principals, we should shout out the hard work and dedication of our teachers and staff, as well as the progress we've made towards our goals with any changes. This might mean giving public shoutouts, handing out awards, or organizing special events. Celebrating achievements not only boosts morale

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but also shows everyone that change is doable and leads to good outcomes. It builds momentum and excitement for the journey ahead. As I always say – 'their glow is your blow!'

Continuously checking the compass: Evaluation and reflection

Managing change is an ongoing journey that needs constant checks and adjustments. We should regularly assess how well our changes are working, gather feedback from everyone involved, and keep an eye on how we're progressing towards our goals. By reflecting on what's working and what's not, we can tweak our strategies and make informed decisions about what comes next. By fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptation, we make sure our schools stay responsive to best practices.

Change is just part of the deal in education, especially with the constant updates in policies. School principals play a critical role in guiding their schools | kura effectively through changes. By using the right change management techniques, including clear communication, nurturing a culture that's ready for change, involving everyone, providing professional development, using all forms of information to make decisions, being flexible, celebrating achievements, and keeping a close eye on progress, we can navigate the twists and turns of change with confidence and ensure that our schools keep thriving in the ever evolving world of education. You've got this!

THE BUSINESS OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

Liz Hawes EDITOR

THEY CAME, THEY WENT, and they're back! After a brief life under the Key Government, Charter Schools were revoked by the Ardern Administration only to be resurrected by the present Government.

Charter Schools are state funded, private businesses. They were a bottom line for David Seymour, the ACT Party leader, in both the 2008 coalition negotiations and again in his deal with the current Coalition Government.

Seventeen Charter Schools opened in 2014. The Charter School concept was promoted on the premise of lifting the academic achievement of 'priority' students in a climate of sliding international rankings. They would be the answer to the growing cohort of young people failing in mainstream public schools.

Charter Schools were intended to provide a climate for innovation to thrive, without the encumbrances of Ministry bureaucracy, compulsory curriculum constraints, or requirements to employ registered teachers. They would receive their funding in bulk and use it as they saw fit. They would employ their own teachers and would not be bound by the Official Information Act. Constraints included the requirement to have a sponsor and to sign a contract specifying targets – both financial and academic – to be met.

So how did they perform? A few were successful, some went under, and the rest survived, mostly with low enrolments. They were criticised for the lack of accountability and monitoring standards applied to them, but the Ministry responsible for the monitoring, attested that they had been given an impossible job. Inconsistent standards had been introduced with successive selection rounds resulting in layers of different regimes making contracts unmanageable.

Although the rationale for establishing Charter Schools was to address the needs of priority students and lift their achievement, there was no way of comparing the performance of Charter Schools against mainstream schools on this measure, because no separate data was recorded by Charter Schools for priority students. In general, Charter School reporting of academic results was described as 'unreliable'. They were also widely criticised by the sector for the per student cost to establish them. Other than satisfying the ACT party's core value for more choice, most principals viewed Charter Schools as a superfluous and expensive indulgence.

When the Government changed in 2017, they were one of the first casualties, and the current leader of the Opposition promises the same will happen next time the Government changes. As legislation to allow Charter Schools was unwound in 2017, the existing Charter Schools were all converted to special character or integrated public schools. The good ones have survived successfully in the state system and continue to perform well.

This time round, Minister Seymour promises there will be tighter accountability, closer monitoring, and schools will be funded to encourage growth rather than remain small as most were last time. He is also making provision for State Schools to convert to Charter Schools. On comparing the performance of Charter Schools against public schools he says it takes about three years to see trends and we would also analyse what the students do in later life. 'We are not good at collecting longitudinal data right now,' he said, 'It might take a decade to see real results.'

The 'Charter Schools Opinion Piece' (p.9) submitted by the Chair of the Charter Schools Establishment Board, Justine Mahon, sets out the rationale for this round of Charter Schools saying:

'Charter Schools in New Zealand are for educational leaders who want the freedom to focus on education, who thrive on the challenge of meeting, even exceeding, expectations for academic outcomes and who can motivate and reward their staff for taking innovative and effective approaches to get the job done.'

Minister Seymour concurs, emphasising the importance of having more choice of schools available, less bureaucratic red-tape, and enabling principals to have more control in decision making and promoting innovation. His implication is that there is insufficient choice now and that schools do not have autonomy over decision making or promoting innovation. Does the evidence support his position? Let's look at schooling in Aotearoa New Zealand right now.

Aotearoa New Zealand is one of the most devolved education systems in the world. The level of autonomy afforded each school is far greater than most jurisdictions in the world. For better or worse, the Tomorrow's Schools policy of 1989, made each school self-managing under a Board of Trustees, elected by and from the school community of parents. Regional Education Boards were abolished and replaced with a much leaner Ministry of Education. This was to divest the system of bureaucratic 'red tape' and allow school boards to make their own decisions on all operational matters.

Thirty-five years later, cracks have emerged. The high level of school autonomy has led to a breakdown in the connectedness of schools and the Tomorrows Schools 'competitive' model has been found wanting in maintaining healthy school collaboration mechanisms. Schools relish the closer relationships with their community members, however, and value the way community context is reflected in their local curriculum and school values. Charter Schools, with their individual business focus, are

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unlikely to resolve the connectivity issues that have emerged from Tomorrow's Schools.

Public schools also value the freedom to pursue innovative approaches to pedagogy and learning and there are numerous examples. Some include 'democratic' approaches, where all children participate in decision making from the classroom level to decisions about the whole school (*NZ Principal*, 2015, v.30,(1)) Teaching as Inquiry, for sustained teacher improvement and improved student learning (*NZ Principal*, 2010, v.25, (3)) Māori succeeding as Māori (*NZ Principal*, 2014, v.29, (3)), 'Play-based learning' and 'Garden- to-Table' (*NZ Principal*, 2021, v.36,(2)),Sports Academies (*NZ Principal*, 2022, v.37, (2)). These are a very few examples reported in this publication over the past years but there are hundreds more.

Innovation is the aspiration of all principals in Aotearoa New Zealand public schools. More than that, it is the reality for most. Principals are leading their staff to be innovative, and learner centred. It is what schools in New Zealand are most recognised for elsewhere in the world. New Zealand schools lead the way in individualised learning.

On school choice, New Zealand has always celebrated its fee paying private or independent schools that make a valuable contribution to the overall education system. They offer a particular sector of the population the opportunity of smaller classes, and a wide variety of extra-curricular options such as horse riding, music, arts and sporting options not available to all in mainstream schools. Within the public school system there are also many different school choices, including two excellent options showing outstanding results for Māori, who are too often found amongst the underachieving group of New Zealand students. These are the Kura Kaupapa Māori and Kura a-Iwi schools. We also have special character schools and integrated schools, all with their distinctive focus and values. Relative to most, New Zealand has a wide variety when it comes to school choice.

The level of **AUTONOMY** afforded **EACH SCHOOL** is **FAR GREATER** than **MOST JURISDICTIONS** in the world.

The question is, given the ambiguous results last time, and the lack of evidence that priority students made any gains under the former Charter School model, do we need a re-introduction of Charter Schools when the best of the last have survived perfectly well as public schools? In these fiscally constrained times, is it sensible to be spending $153 million on another Charter School trial?

Whilst most principals are telling us there are far more important things on which to spend the education budget, there are some exceptions. Private Montessori schools, for example, may see benefits in converting to the Charter School model. Some are operating as separate classes or units in state schools, which do not necessarily align with the Montessori philosophy and curriculum. This can create difficulties for the Montessori units. Further, depending on the provisions in the MoU between the Montessori Unit and the host school, the Montessori Unit may have no more than a term's notice to vacate, should the host school require space for roll growth.

Other schools may also see advantage in the bulk funded option and some groups may see Charter Schools as an opportunity to promote their special brand of religious or moral beliefs. It is no secret, for example, that the Destiny Church has shown support for the Charter School model. Others have noted the rise in parents who have been radicalised on issues such as gender and sexuality and fear that Charter Schools could become a divisive mechanism for society. The publication of the Report of the Royal Commision on Abuse in Care was followed by survivors calling for a halt to plans for military style boot camps which would have Charter School status.

By and large, however, principals report that they do not support the Charter School model and do not think it is a good use of money. Bruce Jepsen, Te Akatea Māori Principals' President says, 'Charter Schools are not a by Māori, for Māori option, which is the best approach to lifting Māori achievement.' He referred to the Kura Kaupapa and Kura a-Iwi success stories adding that while these options are working well, the majority of tamariki Māori remain in the public school system. 'Charter Schools are not a panacea for achieving Māori aspirations,' he said.

Regional presidents of principals' groups reported that they would prefer education funding was spent on addressing equity; expanding the school lunches programme; employing a Learning Support Coordinator (LSC) in every school; employing more specialists, such as more Educational Psychologists, so that tamariki can be diagnosed more quickly; increasing the number of teacher aides available to schools, especially for high needs students; establishing an Alternative Education option for those under-thirteen, in the primary and intermediate sector; increasing staffing – given the widespread shortage of relievers; funding smaller class sizes; providing more teacher support and offering more PLD. They would also like additional funds allocated for property upgrades; and to see teacher and principal wellbeing addressed, since those priorities have the greatest impact on student achievement.

Other comments have included concerns about the Minister's right to direct public 'failing' schools to become Charter Schools. The school board does not have to be consulted nor does the school community. Some see this as a 'strong-arm' tactic which does not consider those families who do not wish their children to attend a Charter School, or teachers who do not choose to work in a 'for profit' Charter School model. Parents value the relationship and their role in developing the shape of their school's values and culture and do not want to lose it. Teachers in turn value the relationships they have with the parent community which enables meaningful engagement and better outcomes for children's learning.

In summary, there is little school or public support for re-establishing Charter Schools and a good deal of opposition. When public schools have been starved of learning support services for decades, through lack of funding, it is difficult for principals to accept seeing millions of dollars invested in another Charter Schools round – especially when the Government's Opposition Party leader says, when his party is back in Government, they will be gone – again.

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CHARTER SCHOOLS OPINION PIECE

Justine Mahon CHAIR OF THE CHARTER SCHOOLS ESTABLISHMENT BOARD

IT IS MY FIRM belief as an educator with over 40 years of experience, as a teacher, senior lecturer and Principal, that Charter Schools have a place in New Zealand because they offer choice to families regardless of income. Choice is fundamental to a thriving education sector and a healthy democracy.

We have a high calibre of school leaders in New Zealand, and I know that many are wanting to be released from burdensome red tape and the grip of the unions and to be given the challenge of greater accountability for student achievement and attendance. Charter Schools, which still sit within the public sector but operate independently, will provide them with this opportunity.

Indeed, many Principals have spoken to me about how the autonomy which a chartered system offers would allow them to run more effective schools.

Less red tape means more time for educational matters, more time to concentrate on higher accountability for student results and outcomes, more time and more flexibility to ensure the right staff are in place and properly resourced to focus on teaching.

Too much energy sapped by bureaucracy stifles creativity. If more autonomy were granted to Principals, that would free up time for implementation of more visionary approaches which would engage our children and youth and prepare them to excel in the world of tomorrow.

Such game-changing approaches would respond more fully to student interests, aptitudes and needs, with core curriculum areas embedded. For example, specialisation in the arts, STEM, sport, dyslexia, autism, age cohorts, language immersion, and countless others, are all possibilities. Charter Schools will focus on what is best for the student and will be given more control over how they achieve that.

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I know many Principals and teachers are crying out for this opportunity because they have grave concerns, as do I, about the education statistics in New Zealand.

Standards in New Zealand schools have dropped markedly and, while it is fantastic there is a focus on the new curriculum, we also need more readily accessible choice in the system and the ability to quickly respond to the needs of those students whose needs are not being met. In 2022 New Zealand's 15-year-olds' average scores in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment dropped 15 points in mathematics. Science and reading scores fell four to five points.

As an educator, I feel keenly this sense of urgency in the sector. We must energise and empower educators to bring new models to attack the problem from all angles, as soon as possible.

Charter Schools will have autonomy and flexibility, but they must also reach the agreed performance outcomes and the very survival of a Charter School will be contingent upon its meeting such rigorous contractual obligations. Schools will have to report regularly on how their funding is being used and how it correlates to student outcomes. This does not mean money will simply exit the traditional state system. Education funding follows the child, and if the child chooses to attend the charter school, the funding goes with them.

Charter schools will require a certain number of registered teachers, and similar to state schools, can employ teachers without a practising certificate but with a Limited Authority to Teach (LAT). In essence, staff must have the skills and experience to respond to children and young people and bring out the best in them.

The evidence for the Charter School model, which has existed for over 30 years, is clear.

I have seen first-hand, how transformational Charter Schools have been in the Southern States of America. After Hurricane Katrina, which wreaked such havoc in New Orleans, children were out of school, in some cases, for three years. It would have taken the federal or state government years to rebuild the educational facilities. They needed a shortcut to success and that was the Charter School model. Community and parent needs were taken into account regarding how these schools were set up and operated; teachers were accountable for the learning outcomes and were rewarded for progress. In Atlanta, I have witnessed how whole neighbourhoods were transformed and lives were changed through the introduction of Charter Schools. College entrance numbers rose significantly and there was a decline in crime rates.

A 2023 study by the Centre for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University, found students in Charter Schools gain an average of 16 days of learning in reading and six days in maths in a school year, compared to their matched peers in traditional public schools. By the time they get to the end of their education, these Charter School students are a year ahead.

In the UK, Charter Schools, called academies, have raised standards significantly. Like Charter Schools, academies are publicly funded schools. However, unlike other state-funded schools, they're independent from local authorities and there is more freedom in how the school is run. In May last year, the UK Government said in a blog, that it believed that academies are the best way for children to get an excellent education, which is why 80 per cent of secondary schools in England are now academies.

Charter Schools in New Zealand are for educational leaders who want the freedom to focus on education, who thrive on the challenge of meeting, even exceeding, expectations for academic outcomes and who can motivate and reward their staff for taking innovative and effective approaches to get the job done.

There have been overwhelming expressions of interest from educators wanting to open a wide variety of different Charter Schools.

In July, the first stage of applications will be sought from schools and prospective sponsors. This will be followed by a second stage, which will be considered in time to enable Charter Schools to open from the start of 2025.

An Authorisation Board will be established to review all applications for Charter School status. These applications will be examined rigorously against criteria, with student achievement and well-being at the centre of all decision making. Members of the Board will have a wide range of educational, research, financial, legal, administrative and management experience.

The Authorisation Board will take over the work of the Establishment Board whose members are:

- Justine Mahon (Chair)
- Glen Denham
- John Fiso ONZM
- Dr Nina Hood
- Neil Paviour-Smith
- Rōpata Taylor
- Doran Wyatt
- Professor Elizabeth Rata

Justine Mahon is a leading New Zealand educator, with considerable experience as a teacher and Principal in the tertiary, secondary, and primary education sectors, both in New Zealand and overseas. She was formerly a Senior Lecturer at the Auckland College of Education and, on her return to the secondary sector, became Deputy Principal then, most recently, Principal of St Cuthbert's College 2018–2024, where she played a leading role in the Knowledge Rich School research project. Justine, along with three other Auckland Principals, also established a robust, alternative, In-School Initial Teacher Education model, in conjunction with the University of Waikato and was previously on the Executive of the New Zealand Association of Language Teachers (NZALT) and on the Board of Trustees of Bayfield School.

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Principal NAME WITHHELD

OVER THE PAST TWO decades as a school principal, I have seen many of our principal colleagues and friends just 'disappear'. During the early stages of my career, I was so busy learning the role it hardly occurred to me that the circumstances of their departures may have been what you could describe as 'difficult'. Some would leave principalship and pursue other jobs in the MoE, or NZEI or take up tertiary education roles. Others would change careers entirely or just retire. A few went back to being DPs. Others just vanished. I now have a personal list of around 20 colleagues who no longer hold a principal's position, most of whom are no longer working in education. The national list will be orders of magnitude higher than this but the figures are hard to pin down. This article aims to highlight the costs you may have to bear one day to save your job when your board goes rogue and wants you gone.

The first thing you have to be aware of is that falling foul of a rogue board ***can*** happen to you, whatever your age and stage. The adage that you are only as good as your last board meeting is true and I thought, as I grew more experienced, that such a thing could never happen to me. But it did. A combination of making difficult, professional decisions for my school, awkward timing of board elections and unexpectedly working with several very strong-minded personalities meant that I suddenly found myself in a maelstrom and a battle for survival that I barely won. If you get that feeling in your gut that things are starting to go pear-shaped, you must listen to that feeling, call for initial legal advice immediately and get a file opened if necessary. In our roles, we tend to try and work things through and hope for the best outcomes. My advice is to do all that too but also prepare for the worst-case scenario. Don't leave that early step of seeking initial legal advice too late or you might find yourself so far down a track that nothing can then be done from a legal perspective to support you. The initial call to the legal helpline is free for PASL members https://nzpf.ac.nz/legal-resources-and-support/ – this is an essential add-on to your NZPF membership. It might just save your career.

The second thing to be aware of would be the 'red flags' or trigger points that set in motion a series of events that, when moving at pace, are very hard to stop. This is especially the case after a board election cycle when you are likely to have inexperienced board members who lack training or are business-orientated types who do not understand governance and management boundaries in schools. Our former 'disappeared' colleagues have experienced many different trigger points. These may have been significant events that included making difficult staffing decisions, taking disciplinary action against a staff member, dealing with vexatious complaints from former staff or parents, or managing a damaging social media campaign. On the other hand, they were also as trivial as insisting on a school sun hat policy, disagreeing about the colour of new classroom carpets or dealing with bullying allegations made by one board member's child against another. Whatever the cause might be, the outcome for many of us is common. The principal is singled out, scapegoated, put under pressure and forced to leave their school. This might be achieved through mutual agreement (however reluctantly), or by threats, but an exit of some sort is often the line of least resistance for you to take. I once sat supporting a colleague in a local cafe and heard their union support person state bluntly that the best option was for the colleague to leave their school and start again elsewhere, even though they had done nothing wrong. It was the perfect example of taking the line of least resistance. A confidential payment is highly unlikely to sufficiently compensate you for your loss of position or career. There might not be much to show in the bank after decades of service to Education.

So when the heat comes on, you have to make a decision: stay and fight or just leave. You need to think about this carefully. If you stay and fight for your job, career, reputation and livelihood there will be a cost and it will not necessarily just be financial. However, if you do decide to leave, after a few weeks or months you may regret throwing the towel in too soon. Before making such a decision you must weigh your specific circumstances and predicament. You have to gauge the level of support for your decision from your spouse/partner and close family. Ask yourself if your staff trustee, senior leadership team, teachers and school community are behind you or not. Look carefully at your own physical and mental health and think about the toll a fight will take. **Most of all, before you make your decision, seek legal advice.** Whilst family, friends, colleagues and union advisors will all have a view on what you should do, your lawyer acts only for you. The strongest card to play is the NZPF/PASL scheme or your own lawyer. In my case, Fi McMillan and her team at Anderson Lloyd who act for the PASL scheme, could not have advised me more clearly or advocated for me more strongly.

The third thing you need to know is ***how*** to survive if you decide to stay and fight. When your board has 'formed a view' that you are to be replaced or worked out of your position, they may or may not be following advice from NZSTA. They may even disagree with NZSTA advice and get their own lawyers. In my case, the board went 'lawyer shopping' through three different sets in the end. There are likely to be secret board meetings that you will be excluded from. There will be whispers in the

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ECLIQ MAKES SCHOOL SECURITY ACCESS SIMPLER AND SAFER

With a traditional mechanical key system costing time and money and disrupting staff access, a North Island high school has embraced modern technology using eCLIQ by ASSA ABLOY.


Smart eCLIQ cylinder replacing an old mechanical cylinder.


eCLIQ Desk Programming Device (PD) is used to connect eCLIQ keys and cylinders to the software, via secure communication.

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 redistricted access and they can easily open and lock spaces behind them for peace of mind.'

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community and the car park – despite the 'confidentiality' of the process – and your staff may begin to see the strain, the mental and the physical toll a prolonged process will take on you. All the time you have to remain positive at work and be seen to be 'working with' the board at all times and conducting business as usual in your school.

The board may decide to do a staff culture survey or try to undertake an external appraisal or performance management process with an appraiser of their choice. They might start to block initiatives you have underway in your school or make unreasonable demands of you. They may even declare to you that it is time for some 'blue sky thinking' . . . In my case, I twice received letters from the Presiding Member demanding I submit a retrospective leave request to the board for an overseas holiday I took during the term break. Pressure can be applied to you directly or indirectly and in many, creative ways.

The strain of all this is likely to build quickly and time dilates somewhat. Events of a single day can seem like a week ago and it can become increasingly hard to keep on top of your job while fielding extra board 'requests', attending strained board meetings and responding to the complex legal issues that will inevitably arise. You can only do this by keeping a daily record of all calls, emails and conversations relevant to your circumstances. Make a Google doc on your personal computer and type in events daily. Do not wait until the weekend – you will forget. BCC/Copy emails to yourself; it is very hard to reconstruct a sequence of events even after a short time as so many other things will happen in a day that blur your recollection. Documents created for the purpose of seeking legal advice for you personally are privileged, and not subject to any OIA or Privacy Act request you may receive. Do as much work, proofreading and preparation as you can for your lawyer. It will help keep the legal costs down because those costs will rise surprisingly quickly. Anderson Lloyd will keep you advised of that side of the equation but you will find that $30,000 of legal advice can disappear very quickly.

In addition to all that, inform the MoE through your Education Advisor that things are not going well in your school. Your school is now at risk because you are at risk. While the board may just see you as a disposable and replaceable 'CEO', you are not only an employee of the board and deserving of all the rights of any other employee, but you are both the principal and the educational leader who cannot be replaced easily and without disruption to your school. This is the very time you need to put yourself first.

A fourth thing is to look after your health and well-being. Find time to debrief with your spouse/partner or a trusted colleague regularly. You cannot take on your board on your own although they may also try and smother you with the confidential nature of being part of a complaints or disciplinary process. Be aware that this conflict may go on for months. Your sleep will suffer even more than usual; you may eat poorly and drink more alcohol; you may not have time for exercise. All these factors compound over time. Take medical advice – an empathetic doctor can work miracles and support you during periods of immense strain. Despite all this, you can still win but you also must decide what a 'win' actually looks like for you. Is it maintaining your job or your health? Can you deal with the reputational damage of having an Advisor, LSM or Commissioner working in your school? What if all this stress just sucks the love of the job out of you and in the end, even when you win, do you want to stay? Board members can just resign and walk away with impunity having spent tens of thousands of school dollars trying to get rid of you. You still have to steady the ship, smooth things over in the community and with your staff. You may also have to contend with working alongside costly, external statutory appointees who might be excellent but can also be largely ineffective and are barely accountable to anyone but themselves. At the same time, you still have to do your daily job as a principal, as if that was not hard enough in itself.

Having read all this, my final piece of advice is that you can still do this: you can beat your board when it goes rogue. Most of us earn our jobs by being caring, professional, hardworking individuals. We possess inner strengths that remain untested but we also value fairness and often stand up for others. As school principals, we are not perfect and we make mistakes and no one expects to be defended against the indefensible. However, if your board is determined to force you out without due cause from the role you won, from the school you love, hang on to the fact that you actually can win. Do your homework now. Hope for the best but prepare for the worst. If you are a beginning principal or much more experienced you are still vulnerable; just look at the Principals' Facebook page or around your own local association and see how many of your colleagues are in real trouble. Watch some of Brené Brown's TED Talks about getting 'out of the cheap seats' and into the Arena and read Tsung Tsu's The Art of War about fighting smart as well as hard. Talk to your colleagues, your union's PSO or one of the 'disappeared' you might also know. Most importantly, talk to your lawyer if you get that 'feeling' . . . You might just need them all on your side if you are going to survive your board gone rogue.

- The Man in the Arena – Teddy Roosevelt (A Powerful Speech from History)
- Brene Brown, The Man In The Arena Speech (edited)
- Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

The author of this article remains a serving principal and may be contacted confidentially via NZPF/PASL.

NOT SO SMART VERY SMART

Another fantastic school transformation with SmartGrass

At St Joseph's School in Papanui, North West Christchurch, the once lifeless quad at the heart of a busy classroom zone has been completely transformed.

The dull, hard asphalt, with its faded defined play areas and sports courts, have given way to a vibrant and engaging environment thanks to a custom SmartGrass quad.

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- **A More Vibrant, Lively Space:** The new surface has brought energy and excitement to the area, making it a more inviting place for students to socialise and play.
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- **Enhanced Safety:** The cushioned non-slip surface provided by SmartGrass reduces the risk of injuries.
- **Greater Enjoyment:** Students genuinely love the new area, making playtime and physical education more enjoyable.
- **Long-lasting Durability:** SmartGrass ensures a smart, low-maintenance area that will look great and serve the school for many years to come.

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Greg Brown,
Deputy Principal

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TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH EMPOWERED LEARNING

Rachel Bolstad CHIEF RESEARCHER, NEW ZEALAND COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

AMONGST RECENT EDUCATIONAL POLICY discussions, little has been said about climate change and its impacts for young people.

Since 2019, I have led NZCER's research exploring educational policy and practice for a climate-changing Aotearoa New Zealand. Our research adds to a wider national and global literature that paints a mixed picture. On one hand, education is recognised as having enormous potential in empowering learners and enabling society to make the necessary transitions to a climate-changed, low-emissions future. On the other hand, many countries lack systematic climate education policies.

Still, there is much that schools can do to support and empower learners and communities in relation to climate transitions. This article discusses the impacts of climate transitions for education, and shares examples of schools and communities stepping up to empower learners and communities through action-focussed climate learning.

Key concepts in climate transitions

I often use the term 'climate transitions' rather than 'climate change'. 'Change' can sometimes feel like something that happens *to* us. Climate change can feel especially overwhelming and beyond our control. This can lead to avoidance, denial, or disempowerment. A 'transition' is a process of changing from one state to another. Thinking about climate change in terms of transitions can help us to find a sense of agency, and see the roles that we can play within our own spheres of influence. Three key concepts are central to climate transitions (Table 1).

Table 1 Three key ideas in climate transitions

Emissions reduction (or 'Mitigation')	Taking action to put less carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere in order to slow down and reduce global warming and climate change.
Adaptation	Dealing with the impacts of climate change. This involves anticipating, planning, and preparing for the changes that will occur in our lifetimes and for future generations—given that some temperature rise can no longer be prevented or reversed.
Just transitions	Ensuring that the economic, social, and cultural transitions necessary to achieving both emissions reduction and adaptation are equitable and socially just.

Climate transitions aren't always 'on top' in our everyday education conversations. However, these transitions have multiple touchpoints to education.

Education can contribute to emissions reduction

Scholars identify education as one of six key interventions that could lead to worldwide transformation to carbon-neutral societies by 2050 (Otto et al., 2020). Effective climate education could support learners of all ages, including adults, to understand why the transition to low-emissions is important. Further, education can provide learning opportunities grounded in localised, solutions-focussed transitional contexts. Some schools are exploring this by looking at their school's own carbon emissions and other sustainability practices, and investigating changes they can make.

In 2023 Auckland Council piloted a project called *Mana Ora: Students Decarbonising Schools.* This involved eighteen student- and teacher-led projects in early childhood, primary, and secondary schools, focussing on areas such as transport, waste, food, energy, and planting. While the direct decarbonisation impacts of these projects were modest, an evaluation found that many students developed new understandings about climate change and/or decarbonisation (Bolstad, 2024). Students felt 'empowered' to see ways they could take action on climate change and sustainability issues through making a change in their own school. The projects had multiple benefits for student learning, wellbeing, and community engagement. Lead teachers said that Mana Ora had contributed to their confidence and knowledge to teach about and inspire climate action learning.

> The Mana Ora project, it gave me a better understanding of what carbon was, and like, how you can deal with it. And there was heaps of different types of carbon –there is carbon from cows, transport carbon, we had to choose which one we wanted to decrease. (Year 6 student)

See examples of Mana Ora student projects here: https://livelightly.nz/mana-ora-students-decarbonising-schools/

Exploring emissions reduction opportunities at the school level can be a good entry point to knowledge-building and action. While schools and communities can certainly make changes, these are most effective when they lead to scalable, wider system shifts. Last year the Ministry of Education produced the first emissions inventory for the whole sector based on centrally available data, estimating a total of over 1.1 million tonnes of

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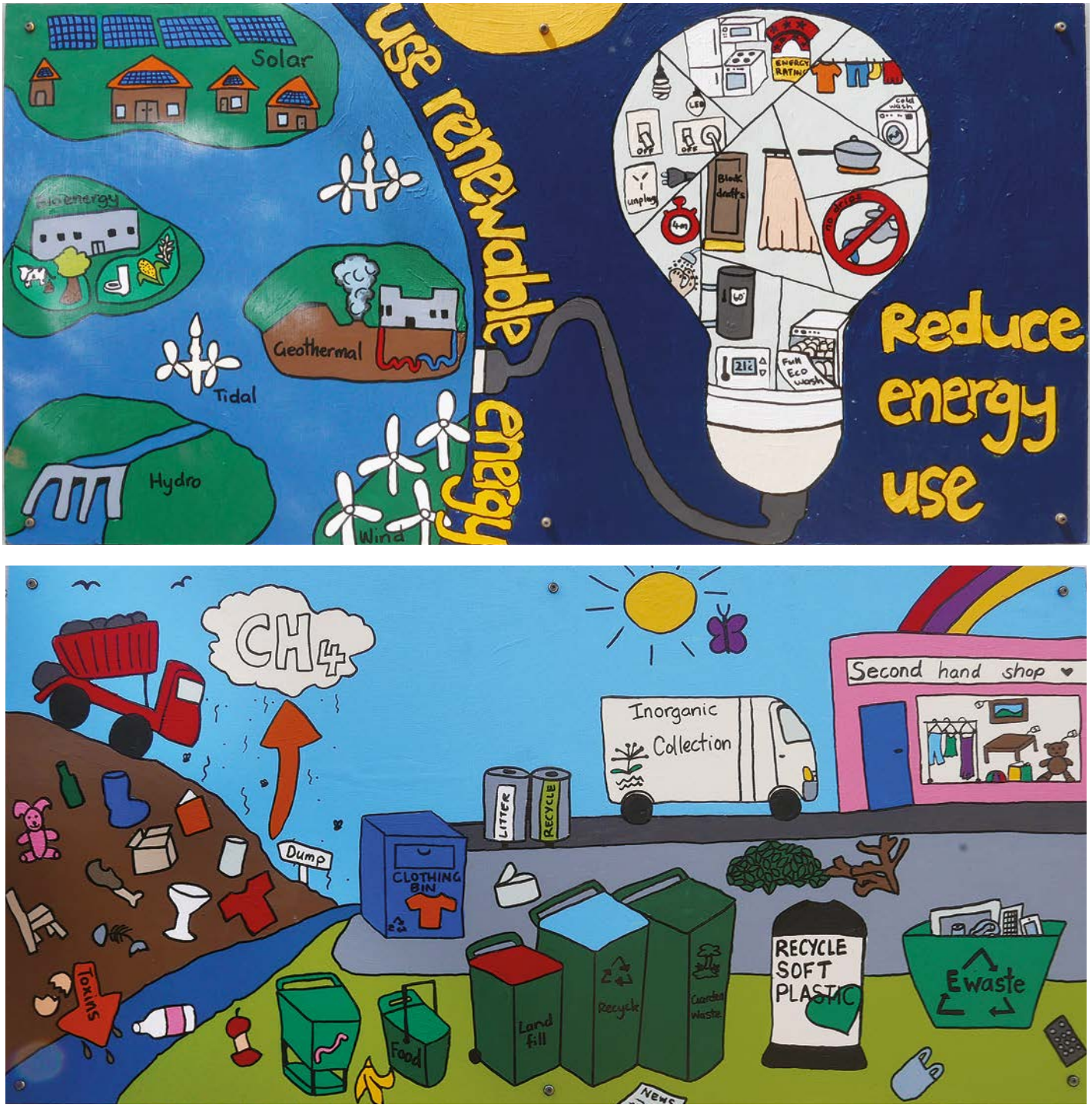


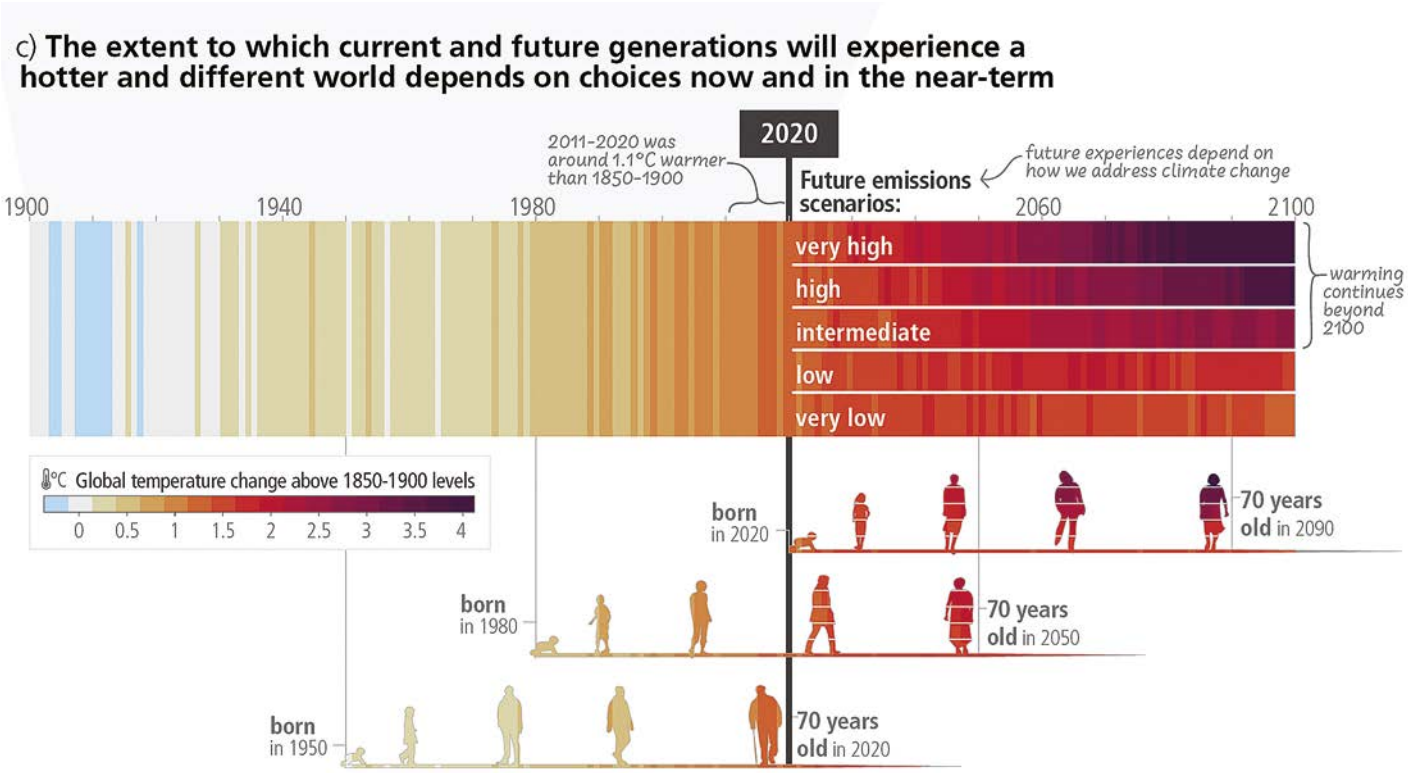
Energy and Waster murals, students from Onehunga Primary School, Auckland Council's Mana Ora: Students Decarbonising Schools project

carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO_2e) in the year ending June 2023. The Ministry's inventory identifies that the highest-emitting activities for the sector on an annual basis are purchased goods and services, transport, and construction. Other emissions sources include heating, electricity, water, and waste. School transport is one of several areas with potential for emissions reduction, with Ministry analysis suggesting that national reductions of 77,620 tCO_2e could be achieved if half the ākonga living in urban centres got to school via active transport. Learners and communities can examine these sorts of data, and practices in their own contexts, to explore what changes they could make. Learners and communities may also feel empowered to contribute to local, regional, and national decisions that shape or constrain their travel options.

State Schools can request a copy of their carbon footprint report, produced by Ministry of Education as part of their complete emissions inventory for the sector.
emissions.reduction@education.govt.nz.

Schools and communities are experiencing climate-related impacts

Schools play a key role in supporting community recovery and resilience in disasters, including extreme weather events. Over 500 North Island schools and kura were affected in the storm and cyclone events of early 2023.[1] While most schools were able to reopen within days or weeks, some were still unusable more than a year later.[2] Ministry of Education assessments indicate



Impacts of warming for people of different ages (source: IPCC AR6)

that 1,102 schools and kura – around 44 per cent of all schools and kura –are at some risk of coastal, surface, and river flooding, ranging from relatively low impact (for example, flooding of carpark or fields) to more serious (for example, more than 50 per cent of buildings affected).[3] Extreme weather can also impact school communities through damage to homes and infrastructure (roads, bridges).

School leaders and teachers often play the role of 'quiet heroes' in supporting communities through the immediate and long-term processes of recovery (Mutch, 2015, NZEI, 2024). For school communities that may have more complex support and recovery needs, this raises equity concerns, particularly if wider system support is inadequate in anticipating and meeting those needs.

International research warns of multiple ways in which exposure to climate stressors across the human life course presents a threat to children's development and educational outcomes (Prentice, Vergunst, Minor, & Berry, 2024). Although New Zealand research in this space is in its infancy, a Growing Up in New Zealand (GUiNZ) survey found higher levels of reported anxiety and depression amongst young people who had experienced the effects of the early 2023 weather events, compared with those who had not experienced these events.[4] Teachers and school leaders in affected areas have observed children's and families' anxieties rising when it rains heavily.

Young people want to be heard

An IPCC infographic (Figure 1) underscores the difference in global warming impacts likely to be experienced during the lifetimes of someone born in 1950 or 1980, compared with someone born in 2020, under different emissions scenarios. Many young people are aware of the disproportionate impacts they are likely to experience and have been vocal in urging their governments to take faster action on climate change.

Next Generation Conversation (NGC) is a coalition of young people aged 10–16 in Ōtautahi Christchurch who meet regularly after school, with support from facilitator Sian Carvell, to explore and take action on climate change. NGC formed in 2021 after learners had opportunities to engage in climate change education and action at their schools.

> We have quite a lot of debates and then we can get to hear everyone's opinion on the matter and what everybody thinks about it and we get to see a lot of different points of view (Member of NGC, Year 8)

Ryder (2023) has described NGC as an example of children's citizenship in action. As a team, NGC explores climate issues from multiple perspectives. They discuss policy issues and seek opportunities to engage with decision makers on local, national, and international climate-related matters. Examples include Christchurch City Council's coastal adaptation framework, New Zealand's National Adaptation Plan (Ministry for the Environment, 2022), and giving input to the Ministry of Transport.

> You are not just learning the facts, you're learning what you can do to help. You're not just learning about the big problem, you're learning about smaller problems you can fix (Member of NGC, Year 8).

Some schools are innovating in climate education

Research suggests that climate and sustainability learning may be somewhat 'left to chance' at a national level. Many New Zealand primary schools and early childhood centres already engage in whole-school environmental practices such as waste reduction, gardening, and taking care of local environments. However, climate change is less often a focus (Bolstad, 2020a). In secondary schools, climate change is addressed most commonly in science and social science subjects, but can be woven into any learning area. Whole-school sustainability or climate education approaches tend to be less common, though student leadership

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is often supported in these areas (Bolstad, 2020b). Innovative practice is often driven by individual teachers, students, or school leaders. Facilitators, advisors, and networks of expertise are often important in helping teachers and learners connect with people, programmes, and opportunities that further their learning.

One innovative example is the Climate Action Campus (CAC), a satellite school of Ao Tawhiti Discovery Unlimited, in Ōtautahi Christchurch. The CAC sits in the Ōtākaro Avon River Corridor, within the Red Zone on the decommissioned Avonside Girls' High School site. The Campus was the brainchild of former mayor Vicki Buck, who was motivated to respond to young people's concerns about climate change and demands for action.

The vision for CAC is to be a 'hub' where people and groups can connect, learn, share ideas, and collaborate on emerging opportunities to learn and take action on climate change. An ethos of innovation threads through the campus and its activities.

It's a place people see as a bit of an innovation hub to try things in terms of climate resilience (Learning advisor)

Dozens of schools, early learning centres, and other groups use the campus for diverse activities. Learning often involves connecting with the environment through nature play, growing or harvesting food, or working with the chickens or bees. Some learners work on group or independent projects, such as producing food for the community, environmental restoration, mural painting, learning about solar power, and bike repair workshops.

Members of NGC give input to Ministry of Transport

Learn more about the Climate Action Campus: https://climateaction.school.nz/

A system-wide approach is needed

The examples I've shared in this article contribute to our research exploring what it might look like if climate education was 'flourishing' in Aotearoa New Zealand (Bolstad & Durie, 2024).

Our research adds to other studies that demonstrate the short-term impacts of opportunities for learners to engage in climate action projects as a means to build climate knowledge, understanding, and agency to make change. We are also seeing that schools can benefit from tackling climate action together, and being able to share, compare, and learn from one another's successes and challenges. Kwauk and Winthrop (2021) argue that schools have the networks to effectively scale learning for community-driven climate action. Schools are also well-placed to ensure learning and action are 'locally-relevant and tied to local environmental justice issues [and] to local community challenges with climate change'.

While some studies are beginning to examine the longitudinal impact of climate education (Cordero et al., 2020), more research is needed to track the wider-scale impacts of climate change education, including its significant potential to act as a catalyst for community engagement (Odell et al., 2021). Emerging research suggests a 'sweet spot' for implementation of specific climate actions is at the scale of 10,000–1,000,000 people (Bhowmik et al., 2020). Schools across a town or city, working on climate response together, could potentially help to catalyse community engagement at this scale.

It's important to celebrate what schools and communities are able to do in responding to the need for positive, solutions-focussed climate learning. However, the literature indicates that for climate education to flourish across the system, policy supports need to include interdisciplinary curriculum guidance, teaching resources, teacher professional development, and clarity of long-term vision about the role of education in a climate-changing world. A recent OECD paper identifies several potential leverage points for education policy to accelerate transformative change (Nusche, Fuster Rabella, & Lauterbauch, 2024). These include:

- foregrounding more holistic, cross-curricular, and place-based approaches
- shifting the emphasis from 'individual' to 'collective' action; and
- making school systems climate-change resilient.

The UK is one of the first jurisdictions to have developed a sustainability and climate change strategy for education. Since December 2023, 45 countries have endorsed a climate and education common agenda declaration committing to actions to adapt, mitigate, and invest in tackling climate change through education.[5] New Zealand is not one of them. However, there are still opportunities to foreground the necessity of climate education in the refresh of our national curriculum, and to ensure holistic good practice is supported in educational policy reforms.

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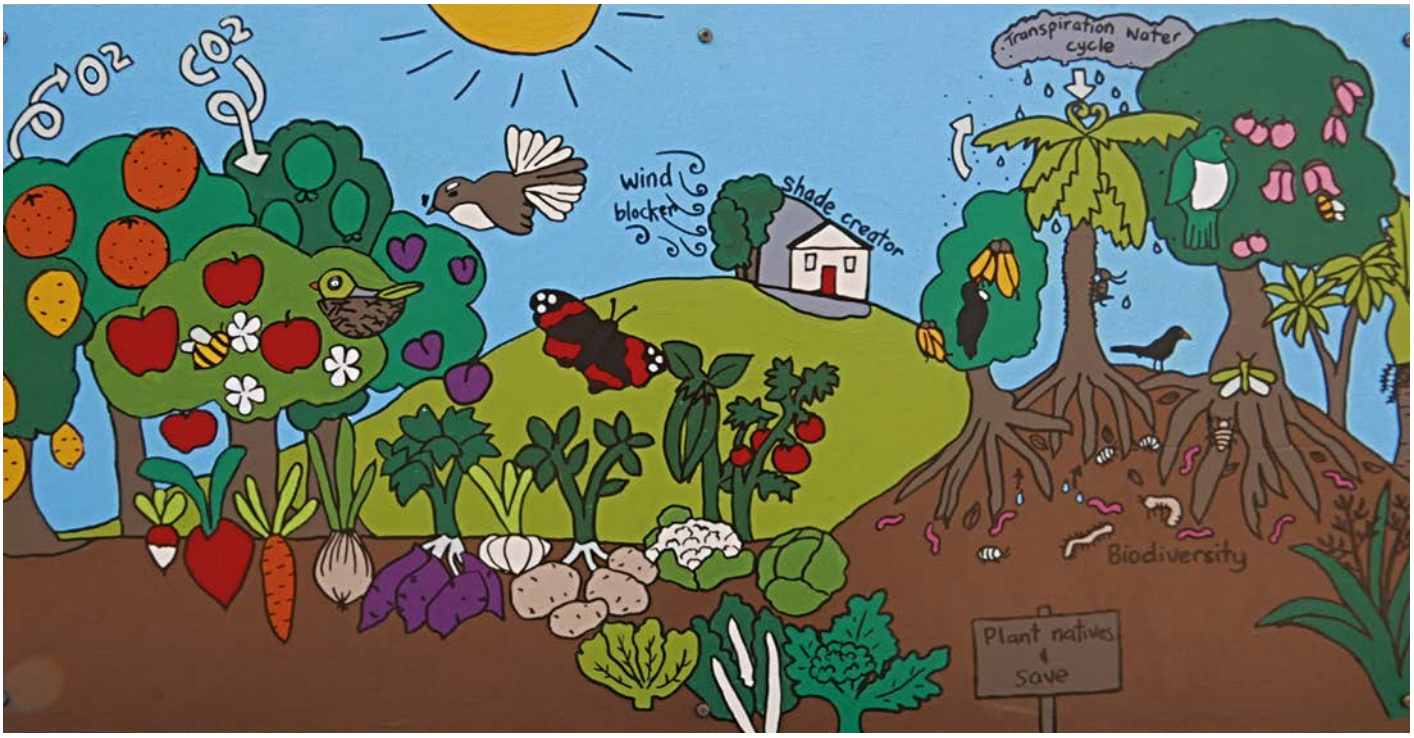

Food mura, by students from Onehunga Primary School, Auckland Council's Mana Ora: Students Decarbonising Schools project

Children prepare to garden at the Climate Action Campus, Otautahi

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Waikato Diocesan School for Girls

Another World Class Hockey Facility in the Heart of Waikato

Waikato Diocesan School for Girls has embarked on a transformative journey to upgrade their hockey facilities, inspired by a visit to Hamilton Boys High School, the school was prompted to revitalize their own turf. After much admiration for the site capabilities demonstrated at Hamilton Boys the school decided to transition from an older TigerTurf surface marked for Netball and Tennis to a state-of-the-art hockey surface.

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FAIRFIELD INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL LEADS COMMITMENT TO YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH IN HAMILTON

Kate Monahan

FAIRFIELD INTERMEDIATE, A 950-PUPIL Year 7 and 8 school in Hamilton, is the first intermediate in New Zealand to have more than 10 per cent of their staff trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid Aotearoa.

In June, nine staff completed a two-day Youth Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Aotearoa workshop at the school, run by two experienced instructors.

So what is this programme, how does it work and what does it achieve?

Kate Monahan, the communications director for the programme says, this internationally recognised, evidence-based and evidence-informed programme equips adults with the skills, knowledge and confidence to recognise, understand and respond to a young person aged 11 to 18 experiencing a mental health challenge or crisis.

According to Sarah Christensen, the programme manager for Mental Health First Aid Aotearoa, 'The research shows that around one in three young people in any given year will experience a mental health challenge, however, anecdotal evidence indicates that the real number is higher, and we are seeing mental health challenges presenting earlier in young people's lives.'

Youth MHFA Aotearoa launched last year in the South Island, then launched in the North Island this May. To date, 32 people have been trained as Youth MHFA instructors and 314 as Youth Mental Health First Aiders in New Zealand.

Fairfield Intermediate principal Angelas Walters says that the school was excited to train staff in Youth MHFA.

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Nine Fairfield Intermediate School teachers receive their Youth Mental Health First Aid Aotearoa certificates

Tarsh Leaf, HOD, Maori and classroom teacher at Fairfield Intermediate School

'We know that early adolescence can be the most critical years in a young person's life, as they are maturing physically and developing emotionally,' says Walters. 'Our goal is to see all our students reach their full potential, and good mental health is vital to their current and future success.'

Youth MHFA Aotearoa equips staff with the skills and confidence to have a conversation with a student around their mental health and provides a five-step action plan to support them.

Walters says the youth mental health programme ties in with the school's values of whanaungatanga, manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga.

'We care deeply about our students and their whānau, and Youth Mental Health First Aid training gives our staff another tool in the kete to support the wellbeing of our school community,' says Walters.

Sarah Christensen was one of the instructors teaching the Fairfield Intermediate staff in the Youth MHFA Aotearoa programme.

'It's about making a difference in a young person's world. If we can make a difference to someone's mental health in their foundation years, it can help mitigate or prevent things worsening later,' says Christensen, who is an experienced mental health educator and a registered nurse with a background in paediatric and child and adolescent mental health.

Fiona Stapleton, assistant principal at Fairfield Intermediate, said she would 'One hundred per cent, absolutely' recommend Youth Mental Health First Aid to other schools and teachers.

'Having the knowledge and a framework about what to do is really helpful, because you sort of know how to do stuff, but having a really solid, evidence-based framework gives us more confidence to have conversations and be courageous in supporting our young people.'

She said, with nine staff trained, it meant they had a team of people who could support each other with mental health in the school, rather than a few people 'doing it in isolation'.

She identified anxiety, non-suicidal self harm and suicidal thinking, eating disorders and problematic substance use as some of the key mental health challenges that teachers are seeing among youth in New Zealand.

‘There is a huge rise in anxiety.’

Tarsh Leaf, who is the HOD Māori for the school, says she works mostly with Māori students, and in her role is focused on providing ‘awhi and support’ to them when in distress.

She said the Youth MHFA course had been invaluable and ‘eye-opening’ and in addition, has given her some useful tools and a framework (the ALGEE five-step action plan) to use if a student is experiencing a mental health challenge or crisis.

‘The course has equipped me with the strategies to be able to help our students, to awhi them along . . . It has helped me identify when to approach them, how to assess what is going on.’

The programme is something she hopes can be rolled out throughout New Zealand, as these are skills everyone can use, just like physical first aid.

‘I can use it with my students, my family, my kids and my grandchildren,’ she said.

Angela Walters, Principal Fairfield Intermediate School

Mental Health First Aid Aotearoa is licensed by Te Pou in New Zealand. To find out more about Youth Mental Health First Aid, visit mentalhealthfirstaid.nz, or you can speak directly with Kate Monahan, Senior Communications Advisor at Te Pou, kate.monahan@tepou.co.nz or call her on 027 206 0757.

MANAGING REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

Fi McMillan and Kelly Thompson PASL LAWYERS

PARENTS, WHĀNAU, AND STAFF members will sometimes ask the school for information held about a person or an event. Requests for information are often made by a person in dispute with the school, and schools can also face requests for information from the media.

The Privacy Act 2020 (covering personal information) and Official Information Act 1982 ('OIA requests' for information held by the school) set out specific rules and requirements for how such information requests are to be managed. It is important that the school complies with these legal requirements.

The Human Rights Review Tribunal (the Tribunal) has recently highlighted the consequences a school board could face if it is found not to have complied with the Privacy Act in responding to a request for information.[1]

Facts

In this case, the parents, who were in dispute with the school, made three information requests to the Board under the Privacy Act.

The parents were dissatisfied with the Board's responses to these requests, and filed a claim in the Human Rights Review Tribunal. They said the Board had interfered with their privacy by refusing to provide the personal information they had requested, and sought significant financial compensation.

Human Rights Review Tribunal

In determining the parent's claim, the Tribunal first had to assess whether the Board had responded to the requests for personal information in accordance with the Privacy Act. In this instance the Board had failed to meet its legal obligations.

In brief, the Tribunal found that the Board had failed to comply with the statutory timeframes for responding to the first and second requests, and therefore did not comply with the Privacy Act.

The Board's subsequent refusal to provide information under the parent's third request, on the basis that the parents would not meet with the Board, also breached the Privacy Act. The Tribunal noted that the Privacy Act sets out the specific grounds on which an information request can be refused, and not attending a meeting was not a valid reason.

The Tribunal finding that the Board had not complied with the Privacy Act in respect of all three requests, is not, however, the end of the inquiry. A failure to comply with the Privacy Act only gives rise to a remedy if it results in an 'interference with privacy'.

The finding that the Board had not complied with the statutory timeframe in respect of the first two requests, meant the Board was deemed to have refused to make the personal information available. In relation to the third request, the Board had explicitly refused to make the information available. The Tribunal considered that there was no proper basis for the Board to refuse to provide the personal information and therefore, there had been an interference with the parent's privacy and they were entitled to a remedy.

Remedies

The parents were awarded a total of $25K in damages for 'humiliation, loss of dignity and injury to feelings' as a result of the Board's failures to comply with its obligations under the Privacy Act.

Key takeaways

Considering and responding to requests for information can be difficult and time consuming, but they do need to be taken seriously. In some instances you may need to take advice before responding. This will support you, especially if you are having to search through extensive records about issues which caused stress at the time, and will minimise risk of further issues arising. You will need to check, for example, that you are not breaching anyone else's privacy when releasing information.

While this case focused on non-compliance with the Privacy Act, it is important that requests under the Official Information Act are taken just as seriously. A request for access to information does not have to specifically mention the relevant legislation for the rules to apply. The Office of the Ombudsman has advice about managing requests which appear 'frivolous, vexatious, and trivial,' but the threshold for refusing OIA requests is quite high. Being annoying or inconvenient is not, on its own, a good reason to refuse a request.

Your school's privacy officer has specific duties under the Privacy Act, and must be familiar with the Act's requirements. This includes working to ensure the school complies with the Act, so it is important that all staff understand their obligations.

Any information which has been collected and/ or recorded might be accessible under a request for information. There are some grounds on which information can be withheld, such as if it is legally privileged, but you are unlikely to be able to withhold a file note or email simply on the basis that its contents are unhelpful to you. It is wise to be cautious about what is put in writing in the first place, and to check that records are factual and appropriate.

If the information exists, and a request is made, you may have no option but to disclose.

NOTE

1 *Cunliffe & Cunliffe v Helensville Primary School Board of Trustees* [2024] NZHRRT 4.

OPC–NZPF EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

Liz Hawes EDITOR

WHEN THE ONTARIO PRINCIPALS' Council (OPC) invited NZPF to launch a principal exchange programme with them, executive members Stephanie Thompson and Jen Rodgers immediately volunteered to give life to the concept. Principals from Aotearoa New Zealand would travel to Canada, to be hosted for a week by a Canadian school principal and in turn their Canadian host would travel here, to be similarly accommodated by their New Zealand principal host.

The exchange is all about professional learning at a leadership, curriculum, teaching, and systems level. It also encompasses cultural and social interaction to better understand the customs, habits and differences of the host country's people.

Making Memories: Matt and his wife Lindsay join the tamariki of Tinopai kura

Applications were quickly received from more than a dozen Kiwi principals who were matched with their Canadian counterparts. This year, the first exchanges got underway. Here, we report on a Canadian principal's visit to New Zealand and the experiences of a Kiwi principal travelling to Canada.

Maree Rossiter, principal of Tinopai School in the Far North, hosted Canadian principal Matt Dodds, in March this year. Maree's kura is a sole charge, Decile 1 school of around 20 students – unlike Matt's own much larger school in Canada.

'We staged a powhiri to welcome Matt and his family – wife Lindsay and daughters Kaitlyn and Jessica – on the Monday after they arrived, with kura, whānau, community and Iwi all present,' explained Maree.

'The following day Matt and Lindsay (also a trained teacher) and their girls spent the morning in our kura, working alongside us,' said Maree.

Maree further reported that tamariki loved hearing about Canada from Matt, as they shared Kiwi treats and colloquialisms with their Canadian guests.

'There were lots of giggles as we shared the very different lifestyles between Toronto, Canada and Tinopai, New Zealand,' said Maree.

With the family returning to Australia – their temporary bolt hole during Matt's six-month sabbatical – Matt immersed himself in Northland's schooling scene. Visits were arranged to other kura in the area including Te Kopuru School, Otamatea High School, Ruawai College, Matakohe School, Maungaturoto Primary School, and Kaiwaka Primary.

Each school was given advanced intel on Matt's special interests so they could share knowledge, examples and learning programmes that particularly interested him. They were all welcoming of their colleague from Canada and keen to show their new friend the diverse range of Kiwi students and the different approaches teachers adopt for individualised learning. Individualised teaching is a standout feature of New Zealand's schooling and one that always fascinates visitors.

All schools were welcoming and made sure that Matt got plenty of time to visit a variety of differently styled Kiwi classrooms, where he could observe learners of different age-groups. He also had the opportunity to meet with groups of principals, to talk with them and enjoy the Northland camaraderie.

'At the end of the week, we farewelled our new Canadian colleague as warmly as we had welcomed him – this time with a poroporoaki,' said Maree. 'Our school presented him with a tokotoko to demonstrate that we held him in esteem and had greatly valued his visit.'

During the week Matt spent in Tinopai, Maree took the opportunity to talk with him about the commonalities and differences between the education systems of each of their countries.

One of Matt's first observations was how hard it is to be a sole principal in Aotearoa New Zealand, because you are also a full time teacher. The principal's duties don't go away because you are teaching all day, and instead they go home with you. 'I think that is true for all sole principals,' said Maree.

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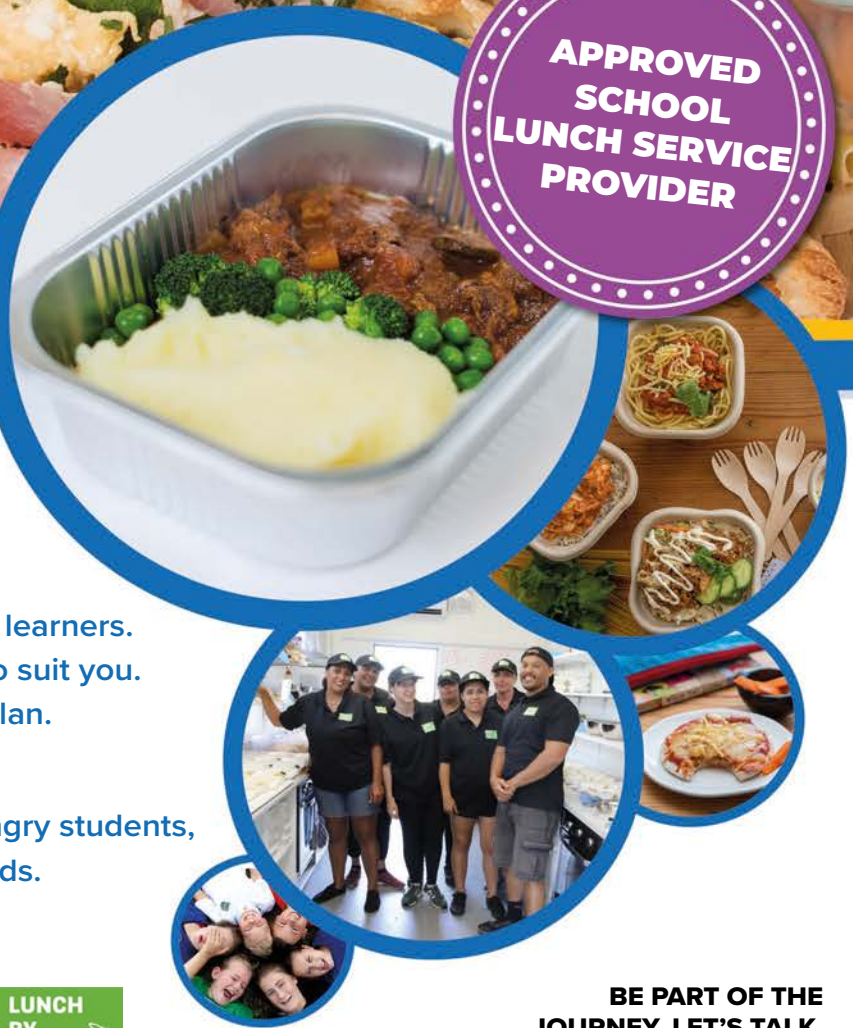

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One stand-out difference was the level of autonomy New Zealand schools have relative to their Canadian counterparts. Canadian schools also have considerably larger rolls than schools in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the principal groups or clusters are also much larger than in New Zealand regions.

'In Canada, schools teach the curriculum, as in New Zealand, but content does not vary much across schools. Teaching practices are nowhere near as diverse as we find in New Zealand schools,' said Maree. This is a further reflection of the level of autonomy public schools have in Aotearoa New Zealand.

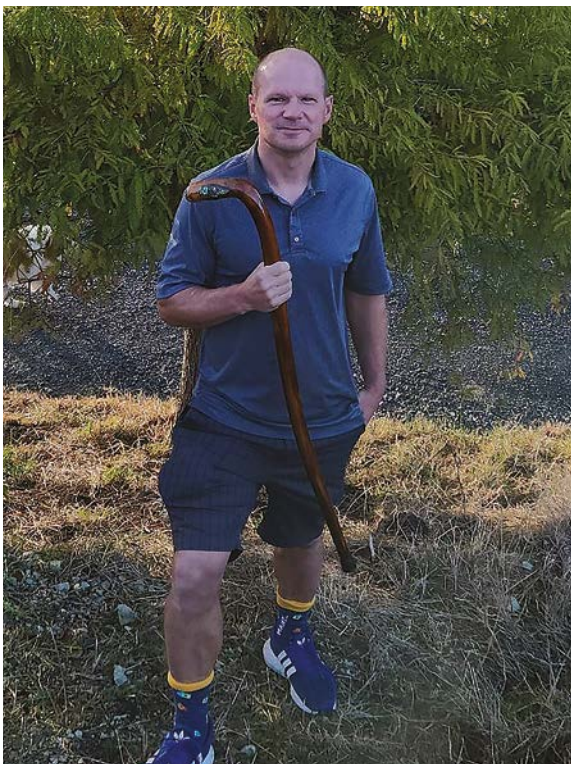
Schools are funded differently in Canada too, leaving little decision making to the principal. For example, in Canada, principals ask permission to purchase a text for their school and it must be approved, before procuring it.

In Canada, students are assessed by a test, at the end of certain grades. 'I understand from our Canadian visitors that it is not unusual for teachers to 'teach to the test' so that children get through,' said Maree.

Reflecting on the direction shift for education in New Zealand and thinking about the 'Canadian story' gives Maree a sense of unease.

'As a country we are heading down the path of relinquishing our autonomy,' she said. 'Mandatory literacy and mathematics, common assessments, being told how we are to teach, are just some of the things that are threatening our autonomy,' she said.

After hosting her Canadian exchange partner, Matt, Maree said she would like to see the organisers consider extending the programme beyond a week. 'A week just isn't long enough to explore everything we would like to examine about each other's education systems and different cultures,' she said.



Matt proudly shows off his tokotoko, presented at his poroporoaki

She applauded the initiative, however, and was much looking forward to visiting Matt at his home in Canada, in the third term. 'My own daughter, who is also my Teacher Aide, will be travelling with me. Having two sets of eyes in Canada, will add richness to the experience,' she said.

Last term, one of the first OPC–NZPF New Zealand exchange principals headed off to Canada. Ontario in Toronto was the destination for Cherie Taylor-Patel, former president of NZPF, who has now returned to West Auckland to continue leading Flanshaw Road School.

Cherie confirmed Matt Dodds' observation that schools in Canada are much larger than in New Zealand.

'The Toronto Board oversees around 600 schools, in a city of 10 million people,' she said.

In New Zealand, a country of a little over five million people, there are 2,500 schools. That is about four times more schools than in Toronto for half the population size.

'Generally, the Canadian schools are built of brick and blocks which helps with the weather. Temperatures range from 30 degrees celsius to –30 degrees celsius,' said Cherie. 'In the winter the children are continuously indoors, so schools are built spaciously to accommodate them,' she said.

'There was just one support staff worker at Elizabeth Simcoe Elementary,' said Cherie, 'but a similar sized school in New Zealand would have eight.'

It was the same for administration support, with just one person taking on the roles of receptionist, PA to the principal, administrator and bursar, whereas an equivalent sized school in New Zealand would have three staff members to cover these roles. The same applied to the senior management team. Elizabeth Simcoe Elementary had two senior leadership positions and both were full time teachers. In New Zealand the school would have a DP and five middle leaders.

The school timetable and class sizes are like a typical New Zealand school.

School budgets are overseen by the District Board and there are no local school boards, so parent involvement in Ontario is limited.

Cherie was matched to Ruth Coulter, the principal of Elizabeth Simcoe Elementary School in Scarborough, Ontario. She discussed Professional learning and development (PLD) with Ruth, to compare with New Zealand offerings.

In Ontario, the District Board runs all PLD and there is a wide range of programmes school leaders can work through to complete modules and qualify for promotions. To be considered for a principal's position, applicants must be approved by both their own school principal and the school's superintendent. Conferences for principals are held twice a year and resources for PLD are supplied through the District Office. Access to the Toronto District Board is difficult, compared to accessing Ministry regional support in New Zealand, but principals can readily seek support from their own school superintendent. Clearly, opportunities for principals to access PLD are far greater than for New Zealand principals.

Classroom teachers are given four hours release time each week and, as in New Zealand, finding relief staff to cover classroom release is very difficult. In Ontario, relief teachers must be registered teachers and be registered with the District Board. Retired teachers can relieve for just 50 days per year, before impacting on their retirement pension. Consequently, there is a chronic shortage of relievers and principals frequently cover classes throughout the year. This is contributing to 'burn-out' for Canadian principals. Cherie could see immediate parallels with the reliever shortages in our own country.

Culturally, Canada has not come to terms with First Nations issues as readily as in Aotearoa New Zealand. Despite many First Nations tribes signing Treaties with England, they are still, after 400 years, trying to establish the necessary evidence for historical grievances – and are doing so with the support of Māori constitutional lawyers!

Many of their issues are the same as for Māori – loss of land, language and culture through assimilation processes. First Nations history is systematically taught through the curriculum, however there is no local history taught in Ontario and the school culture very much follows westernised traditions. Cherie was pleased to be able to visit the Woodlands Cultural Centre, an indigenous First Nations education centre, where she observed many parallels with Māori history.

What is taught in all Canadian schools is French. A specialist French-speaking teacher takes all classes for the school. Certain professions in Canada require fluency in French, even though it is not commonly heard amongst the general population.

All schools in Canada are public schools. However, if parents choose specialist learning for their children, they pay fees. There are specialist schools and specialist classes within schools. For example, the School of Fine Arts, which has both public and private funding. There are 'gifted' classes in specific schools and outdoor education programmes which students might attend for half of the week. These are all fee-paying programmes.

On reflection, Cherie said there were many likenesses to our schooling system but also some stark differences, as noted in this story. Having the autonomy to make local decisions, in collaboration with school communities, is one thing Cherie said she will cherish after seeing Canadian schooling which does not enjoy that privilege. Being able to personalise learning for children rather than relying on standardised lesson plans and text books, was another plus for New Zealand schools, and infusing Te Ao Māori mātauranga | knowledge was a further special strength of our own education system. On the other hand, the superior principal PLD system was a strength for Canadian principals, from which we could learn.

Cherie Taylor-Patel with her Canadian exchange partner Ruth Coulter, principal of Elizabeth Simcoe School in Toronto

On balance the OPC–NZPF principal exchange programme is proving an excellent way for both Canadian and New Zealand principals to learn from each other and experience each other's similarities and differences. Judging by the level of interest from both countries, this programme is likely to endure for many years to come.

KAWANGA WHARE MŌ TE WHĀNAU HARAKEKE: ENACTING TE TIRITI IN OPENING NEW CLASSROOMS

Helen Kinsey-Wightman TUMUAKI | PRINCIPAL, RUAKĀKĀ SCHOOL

OUR KURA IS VERY fortunate to have a close and respectful relationship with our local iwi Patuharakeke, Takahiwai Marae is nine kilometres from our kura and earlier this term all of our 350 tamariki visited to learn about Matariki and Puanga.

In 2014, one of our kaiako sought the support of then Principal Marilyn Dunn, to begin a bilingual classroom – 10 years later we have grown five classes of Māori medium learning. In 2022 the whānau and kaiako of our bilingual unit, named Te Whānau Harakeke, made the decision that from 2023 all classes would become rumaki reo – full immersion Te Reo Māori learning environments. We currently have 100 tamariki in Te Whānau Harakeke – 99 per cent of whom whakapapa Māori.

We are midway through a roll growth project – much of that growth due to our Māori medium classes. As five new classroom spaces began to take shape, the Senior Leadership Team met to review what the overall plan for the school layout will look like when the building project is finally complete. The five new classes were originally intended for English Medium classrooms, as we talked, it became clear that these would make the perfect new home for Te Whānau Harakeke as a space dedicated to Te Reo and Tikanga Māori | Māori language and practices. It has been a privilege to enact Te Tiriti o Waitangi in our space through giving the best to our tamariki Māori.

Meaningfully incorporate te reo Māori and tikanga Māori into the everyday life of the place of learning

Seek advice from Māori on how best to include tikanga Māori in values, practices and organisational culture

Use development opportunities for teachers/kaiako and leaders to build their teaching capability, knowledge and skills in te reo Māori and tikanga Māori

Talk with learners/ākonga and staff about why correct pronunciation of te reo Māori is important, and provide them with opportunities to learn and practice without judgement

Having worked in many schools in Aotearoa New Zealand, both primary and high school, it has been my experience that classrooms dedicated as Māori spaces are sometimes the most rundown and often the furthest away from the hub of the school – the fact that Māori language programmes bring in additional funding to a kura means that we, as school leaders, have a responsibility (and the budget) to put this right.

As we planned for our Kawanga Whare | building opening, we worked closely with our iwi. Firstly, we used the Maramataka Māori | traditional Māori lunar calendar to plan the date for the opening – we were able to choose a day during Matariki which is an obvious time for a new beginning. Working with iwi takes time, these hui needed to be

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kanohi ki te kanohi | face to face. I take the time to be there, because through these hui, stories and tikanga are shared which enrich our knowledge as a kura and deepen our relationship with iwi. We first met with our kaumātua – who pointed us in the direction of who to communicate with to arrange the details for the dawn blessing.

We are fortunate to have several BoT representatives from Patuharakeke. One of them, Ari Carrington, proposed a mauri stone for the building opening. His kōrero was that the stone is a symbol of the hononga | connection between Patuharakeke and our kura. He (half jokingly!) said that if that connection is broken Patuharakeke will come back and reclaim the kōhatu | stone. Choosing the biggest stone we could find will hopefully make that less likely!

He gave his time to accompany us to a quarry in Otaika to choose a stone. The stone was delivered and lowered into place by a hi-ab. Several of our local iwi were passing by as the truck arrived and were able to come in and supervise the positioning. When it was in place we gathered around and put our hands on the stone to pass on our mauri | spirit to the stone. In so doing the stone gathers the mauri of all who touch it.

Kukunui, our kōhatu

Pirihi, our smaller mauri stone

The building was blessed before dawn with over 100 people in attendance. An ahi | fire was lit and kaumātua passed through each building saying karakia called waerea, we carried rau | branches to cleanse the space. We unveiled the stone and went through a naming ceremony. Our kaumātua called out, 'He aha te ingoa o tēnei kōhatu?' 'What is the name of this stone?' We called, 'Kukunui.' This was repeated twice more. Each time more people joined in calling the name. Kukunui is the name of the pae maunga | the range of hills behind the school. This was where Patuharakeke had an inland pā site in addition to their coastal sites. This process was also followed for the naming of the building. The building was named Te Pā Harakeke, a pā harakeke is the place where harakeke flourishes.

We also chose a smaller mauri stone which will accompany Te Whānau Harakeke to special occasions. A basket was woven for this stone and it was named 'Pirihi.' Pirihi is the name of the whānau of our kaumatua Paraire and Heidi Pirihi and their daughter Ramari who was the kaiako who started the first bilingual classroom 10 years ago in 2014. The selection of this name will help our tamariki to remember the whakapapa | history of those who have built our kura.

As the stone was named it was passed around the gathering. Following the classroom opening we held a whole school assembly, to celebrate the 10 year birthday of Te Whānau Harakeke and honoured all those who had played a part in the ara | journey of the kura.

Whatever tikanga you follow to mark special occasions, resourcing is required. Our local quarry donated the mauri stone to us and we paid for the transportation. We employed Visual P – a Māori photographer who understood the kaupapa – to record the occasion. We paid the weaver who created the kete for our kohatu Pirihi. We also gave koha to those from our local iwi who advised and attended. Our iwi cannot function on a cup of tea and a lamington – we need to pay for their time and skills. I find koha challenging – if in doubt, I think about how many hours have been spent and what I would pay for the equivalent to a PLD provider or in tradie hours!

The way in which we use the significant resources of our kura is political – we have a clear mandate to enact Te Tiriti in the management of those resources. Under Objective 3 of our National Educational Learning Priorities, Quality Teaching and Leadership, we should 'meaningfully incorporate te reo Māori and tikanga Māori into the everyday life of the place of learning.'

Looking back, I feel we honoured the journey and the achievements of the last 10 years and as we begin te tau hou Māori I am excited about our next steps.

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Harvey Norman®

BYOD

BRING YOUR OWN DEVICE *for Education*

To succeed, students need the proper study tools for their education and one of the most important tools is a computer device.

The idea behind Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) is to make sure that your child is equipped with the correct computer for use in class and at home.

Screen Size: Between 10" - 14"

This ideal size is large enough to use efficiently, but also keeps the device compact and convenient.

Connectivity

USB ports are typically required, but some schools may specify others such as VGA, HDMI or LAN.

Security

Although schools will typically have security software on their network, we highly recommend a complete security suite on all devices to protect them from online and offline threats.

Software

Most schools will require a word processor and spreadsheet program (Microsoft Office or Google Docs). Some may supply this to all of their students.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Battery Life*1

Will the device last all day without needing to be charged? 6+ hours is recommended.

Performance

Is it powerful enough to perform required learning tasks?

Durability

Will the device handle life at school?

Weight

Is it light enough to carry to and from school every day? Under 2kg is recommended.

Top Tip - Choose a model with a Solid State Hard Drive (SSD) for greater battery life and reliability.

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Colours may vary between stores. Not all products are available in all stores but can be ordered.

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*1. Based on average times of selected devices, battery life varies significantly with settings, usage and other factors.