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EDITOR

Liz Hawes
Executive Officer
PO Box 25380
Wellington 6146
Ph: 04 471 2338
Email: Liz.Hawes@nzpf.ac.nz

MAGAZINE PROOF-READER
Helen Kinsey-Wightman

EDITORIAL BOARD

Leanne Otene, NZPF President
Geoff Lovegrove, Retired Principal, Feilding
Liz Hawes, Editor

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Oral language learning and new entrants



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EDITORIAL

Liz Hawes EDITOR



NZPF AND APPA (the Australian Primary Principals' Association) are good friends . . . who have become great friends. There is nothing quite like meeting up with your Aussie neighbours for a cheap and cheerful dinner, a drink or two, a bit of sparring, and a few laughs. And where better to do this than at the Trans-Tasman conference?

After enduring the unsolicited 'Covid era' cancellations, this year's was the first Trans-Tasman conference since 2016 – eight years between drinks is a very long time.

The conference report (pp. 16–33), provides extensive coverage of the three-day event, hosted last month at Te Pae in Ōtautahi|Christchurch.

As *New Zealand Principal* readers, you can immerse yourselves in the professional learning and latest research from top-class presenters, such as Dr Hana O'Regan on race relations, Dr Jordan Nguyen on the use of AI to improve the lives of differently abled people, Sophie Renton on social research and trends in staff retention, the loneliness epidemic and other wellbeing related topics, Iain Taylor on transforming a school, and Gilbert Enoka on being an All Blacks leadership manager and coaching mental skills.

All speakers tailored their presentations to be relevant for school leaders, allowing ample 'take-aways' for delegates. The report provides a record of the conference – mocking jokes included – which all principals can enjoy and use, whether they made it to Ōtautahi or not.

What is particularly satisfying and confidence building about our Australian neighbours, is learning that our educational differences are few. Take literacy and mathematics, for example. There is little difference in the achievement levels of each country. We have both dropped a tad since the Covid era, and we both have relatively stable results over time. These results follow the same trajectory. The big difference is that Aotearoa New Zealand is showing growth in its inequities. Our inequities are not just greater than Australia's, they are greater than every other country in the OECD. This is well reported and thoroughly researched by renowned academics such as Professor Pasi Sahlberg.

Both our governments tend to focus more on the literacy and mathematics subjects rather than the much bigger equity issue. Politically, it is easier to focus on two 'basic' subjects, for which you can readily produce assessment data. Governments play up the weaknesses – manufacturing crises if necessary – then propose and enact solutions and trumpet the successes.

The Australians have their NAPLAN assessment data as a constant threat. As we all know, data and statistics can be used in many ways to either enhance results or diminish them. We

once had the national standards measures, but they didn't outlive the Government that installed them. Now we have a new Government intent on a different approach – broadly referred to as the Science of Learning – including structured literacy and structured mathematics. Our Australian friends are now experiencing the forced introduction of the Science of Learning too. Like the Neo-liberal Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) of the last decade, this 'Science of Learning' phase will no doubt run its course – until a new model emerges to take its place.

So why all this focus on two basic subjects, when we know that the much more serious problem is inequity?

Inequities are growing at viral speed and they impinge on the educational outcomes we see in schools. Take Māori and Pacific Island students as an example. They are over-represented in our low achieving group of students. They are also over-represented in societal inequities. They are more likely to be living in sub-standard housing and have poorer health. They are more likely to have lower incomes and struggle to provide food and clothing for their families. They are less likely to have books and technology in their homes. They are more likely to feature in the transience statistics as they move from social housing to rental accommodation and back again. They are more likely to feature in the court system and are over-represented in our prisons. They are more likely to be disconnected from society, to experience racism, and mental health issues and to be living in poverty.

All these factors impinge on young peoples' ability to concentrate and engage in school. In many cases, because of the highly stressful environments they live in, and the instability and insecurity of their lives, their school attendance is also erratic.

It is hardly surprising that these students are not featuring in the group of world class achievers. They simply do not get a fair go. Schools do their best and there are some easy wins for governments such as the supply of free school lunches to schools in the lowest socio-economic areas. That helps, but it will never be enough for the young ones experiencing the stress and trauma of living in insecurity and poverty every day.

All governments give inequities a wide berth. Resolving them means major upheaval and risks upsetting the government's voter base. In education, it's much the same for learning support. Learning support is riddled with inequities too, but what the system can't handle is the growing number of ākonga requiring learning support services. There simply aren't the specialists or therapists, counsellors or teacher aides to go round.

So, for now, structured literacy and mathematics it is.

PRESIDENT'S PEN

The Importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in Aotearoa New Zealand Schools

Leanne Otene NATIONAL PRESIDENT, NEW ZEALAND PRINCIPALS' FEDERATION



He mana tō Te Tiriti o Waitangi,
He mauri kei ngā waituhi o ngā tupuna i haina,
Hāpai ana tōnā mana motuhake,
Ita, ita, mau tonu e!!!!

Te Tiriti o Waitangi has authority
The signatures of our ancestors bind the life force
Upholding our autonomy
Bind, tight, take up!!!

I WANT TO HIGHLIGHT the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, not just for Māori but for all Aotearoa New Zealanders. Te Tiriti o Waitangi is a living document that continues to influence our nation's trajectory. In the context of education, the articles of Te Tiriti – particularly kawanatanga, tino rangatiratanga, and mana ōrite / ōritenga – serve as guiding principles for creating an inclusive and equitable system.

Kawanatanga emphasises the governance role of the Crown, ensuring that educational policies are developed in collaboration with Māori communities. Tino rangatiratanga asserts the rights of Māori to exercise authority over their own educational pathways, fostering cultural identity and relevance in learning. Meanwhile, mana ōrite / ōritenga promotes equitable opportunities for all students, affirming that every learner deserves access to quality education, regardless of their background.

Importantly, section 127 of the Education and Training Act highlights the necessity of 'giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi,' reinforcing the commitment to uphold these articles in our education system. By embracing these articles, we not only enhance the learning experiences of Māori students but also enrich the educational environment for all, contributing to a more unified and culturally vibrant society.

Te Tiriti: A living partnership

Te Tiriti o Waitangi, signed in 1840, established a partnership between Māori and the Crown. It is as relevant today as it was at the time of signing. It is our responsibility as educational leaders to ensure that we honour Te Tiriti and that it is actively enacted within our schools.

Incorporating Te Tiriti's values into our kura means creating environments where Māori language, culture, and history are not only acknowledged but celebrated. For Māori, this is vital for their well-being and sense of identity. For non-Māori, it offers an opportunity to better understand the richness of our shared history, to build stronger, more respectful relationships with Māori and ultimately, a more tolerant society.

Benefits for Māori students

The importance of enacting Te Tiriti in our schools is especially clear when we consider the impact on Māori students. When

Māori taura see their language, culture, and histories valued in the kura environment, it affirms their identity and fosters a sense of belonging. This sense of cultural pride is directly linked to educational success. Research shows that when schools actively acknowledge and incorporate Māori perspectives, Māori students feel more engaged, motivated, and empowered to succeed academically.

By reflecting Māori language, culture, and history in the curriculum, we give Māori taura the opportunity to see themselves in their education. Giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi also acknowledges te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori. It provides a focus on developing and practicing the use of Te Reo Māori me ona tikanga. This affirmation of Māori students' identity boosts their confidence and sense of self-worth, creating a positive cycle of engagement and achievement. Schools that embrace Te Tiriti are better positioned to meet the unique needs of Māori students, fostering environments where they can thrive.

Benefits for Non-Māori students

While the benefits to Māori students are obvious, it's important to emphasise that enacting Te Tiriti also has significant advantages for non-Māori students. Engaging with Te Reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and Māori histories enriches the educational experience for all students. By learning about Māori perspectives, non-Māori students develop a deeper understanding of Aotearoa's unique cultural landscape. This fosters greater cultural awareness, empathy, and respect for diversity.

Normalising Māori language and tikanga in schools helps build a more inclusive and cohesive society. When non-Māori students learn Te Reo Māori and engage with tikanga, they contribute to an environment where different cultures are respected and valued. This exposure helps break down cultural barriers and encourages greater social cohesion, teaching all students the importance of mutual respect and understanding.

Additionally, when non-Māori students learn about the historical and contemporary significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, they are introduced to critical discussions about justice, fairness and equity. Understanding the history of colonisation and the lasting impacts it has on Māori communities helps foster a sense of social responsibility and empathy. These lessons not only



benefit students academically but also help shape them into compassionate, informed citizens who are better prepared to contribute positively to society.

A path toward equity and justice

Te Tiriti o Waitangi provides a framework for addressing historical and contemporary inequities in our education system. By honouring Te Tiriti, we are working to ensure that Māori students have equitable access to education and the same opportunities for success as their non-Māori peers. This is not about giving Māori students an advantage, but about creating fairness – addressing the disadvantages that have resulted from systemic inequities.

Incorporating Te Tiriti into our schools is a step towards a more just and equitable education system. It allows us to confront and address disparities that continue to affect Māori students and to ensure that every student – regardless of ethnicity – can succeed. Schools that are committed to the intentions of the articles of Te Tiriti create environments where all students are valued, respected, and given the tools they need to achieve their potential.

The role of Principals

As educational leaders, we play a critical role in ensuring that School Boards demonstrate giving effect to Te Tiriti. This means more than just meeting legal requirements; it involves leading by example and fostering a school culture that truly reflects the authentic nature of a reciprocal relationship where mana is valued and upheld. We must support our staff in developing cultural competency, support them to learn Te Reo Māori, ensure

that Māori perspectives are embedded in the curriculum, and build strong relationships with iwi and hapū to incorporate local knowledge and histories into our schools.

Our leadership has the power to transform the way Te Tiriti is understood and enacted in schools. By embracing the intentions of Te Tiriti, we are creating educational environments that honour the unique cultural heritage of Aotearoa New Zealand and preparing our tamariki for a future of inclusivity and mutual respect. We have the honour and privilege of creating a more tolerant society.

A shared future

Te Tiriti o Waitangi belongs to all of us. It is not just an historical document, but a guiding framework for our shared future. By giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi through te ao Māori, mātauranga Māori, te teo Māori me ona tikanga in our schools, we are contributing to the development of a more equitable, compassionate, and unified society. This benefits not just Māori students but all students, and by extension, all of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Principals can lead the way in creating schools that reflect the true spirit of Te Tiriti – schools where every student feels valued, respected, and empowered to succeed.

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RUAKĀKĀ SCHOOL SHINES

Liz Hawes EDITOR

RUAKĀKĀ SCHOOL IS PROUDLY located near picturesque Bream Bay, about a half hour's drive south of Whangārei. Mount Manaia dominates the horizon and features in the pepeha of more than half the tamariki of the area. The mountain erupted about twenty million years ago and is now blanketed in a thick coat of native bush. A reserve forms the perimeter of the spiky peaks and steep cliffs which can be explored via a walking track all the way to the summit. The one-and-a-half-hour trek rewards the climber with spectacular views of the Whangārei harbour entrance.

The pure white sand of Bream Bay, protected by expansive tussock sandhills, would tempt the most reluctant exerciser to an early morning walk or sunset stroll. The beach is patrolled by the Ruakākā Surf Life Saving Club in the summer, making it a safe place to swim, fish, kayak or raft. Outdoor enthusiasts would be challenged to find a more alluring landscape to explore.

Ruakākā is a small urban area with a rural aspect. It boasts a growing population of 2,930 with just over 20 per cent under the age of 15 years. Whilst 42 per cent of those over 15 years old are full time employed, the median income is \$26,000, some \$6,000 below the national median income. The population is about one third Māori.

The school and its substantial grounds are situated on Sandford Road, just off State Highway 1. It is close to both the Ruakākā River and Bream Bay. Originally opened in 1896 at North Ruakākā, the school was moved to its current location in 1912. Since then, it has undergone several upgrades and is in the middle of another as I visit.

Despite the construction disruptions, Ruakākā School draws you in with its strong, bold colours and tidy, expansive gardens and playgrounds. The school's strategic plan clarifies that a safe, inclusive and attractive physical environment has a positive impact on the hauora of tamariki.

It is a vibrant, upbeat atmosphere in the school's front foyer, as parents drop off their tamariki. The setting is deliberately bicultural with teachers greeting parents and children in both Māori and English and parents and children responding in kind.

Tumuaki, Helen Kinsey-Wightman led me to Te Pā Harakeke, a cluster of five full immersion Te Reo Māori learning environments. This newly built space is where visitors are formally welcomed and entertained by tamariki, who are well versed in tikanga.

'We used to have four bilingual classes and just one full immersion class, but whānau drove the change for all the bilingual classes to become full immersion,' said Helen. 'Whānau want their tamariki to be fluent in te reo and they want to learn alongside them,' she said.

Having five rumaki reo (full immersion) classes has also led to roll growth, particularly of Māori ākonga, who already make up 56 per cent of the school's roll, and 99 per cent of the full immersion classes.

'All kaiako teaching in Te Whānau Harakeke give up their own time to go to wānanga,' said Helen, 'And the lead teacher is currently on study leave at Waikato University.'

'Kaiako in Te Whānau Harakeke have a huge weight on their shoulders, and we must give them all the support we can. They are the ones doing the mahi which benefits all of us,' explained Helen.

At every staff meeting, teachers learn a new phrase in te reo, and the

Māori Language Programme funding means that tamariki in English medium are also increasing their use of te reo. 'In this way we are enacting Te Tiriti o Waitangi responsibilities, and integrating bicultural practices throughout the school,' Helen explained.

Given the current Government's moves to dilute the influence of Te Tiriti and growth of te reo, I asked Helen what she thought about the Treaty Principles Bill.

'Across the motu Kura Kaupapa Māori, rumaki reo and bilingual units are flourishing,' she said, 'and the Treaty Principles Bill just takes us backwards.'

'But I don't believe it will happen, because we have come too far,' she said. 'It may have the opposite effect, and we all dig in.'

Tamariki Māori succeed as Māori at Ruakākā and the school's enduring relationship with the close-by Takahiwai marae, means the school's broad curriculum is well supported.

Local iwi Patuharakeke are keenly aware that healthy people



The map of Nga Iwi o Aotearoa sits proudly alongside the New Zealand and Rangatiratanga Flags in the school's front foyer



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Children prepare to pot seedlings for the gardens



Harvesting from the gardens is satisfying

need a healthy environment and work hard to play an effective role in local environmental management and decision-making. Ruakākā school is a 'Green/Gold Enviro School', runs the 'Garden to Table' programme and has beehives from which 'Tahi Honey' is produced.

Helen explained that the school's whānau don't always have the time to grow veggie gardens at home, so tamariki don't have the opportunity to learn how cultivating their own kai can benefit them.

The 'Garden to Table' programme means tamariki learn how to create a garden, build it up, feed it, plant it, water it and harvest the produce to cook a meal. It's a brilliant programme, filled with fun and gives tamariki a strong sense of success, when they sit down to share a meal, they have cooked themselves, from produce they have grown and harvested themselves.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, every school wants to improve every day, and every school aspires for every child to be successful. If there is one barrier standing in the way of schools achieving these goals, it is Learning Support!

At Ruakākā school, Helen has a roll of 350 and 53 per cent of her tamariki are on the learning support register. 'I don't think [politicians] have any understanding of what it's like in a classroom in New Zealand,' she said.

'For a mix of reasons, there are a growing number of tamariki who struggle to regulate their emotions,' said Helen. 'For some it's a result of traumatic experiences, neurodiversity, a lack of role models; for many it's transience because of housing problems, and for a few it's addiction of family membersto alcohol or drugs like methamphetamine. Some are living away from their parents, with grandparents or other relations. These situations create trust and shame issues for tamariki who are always 'on guard'. Some have no protection in their lives – no one has their back. Much of this is linked to poverty and

colonisation. Trying to build self esteem in these tamariki is challenging,' she said.

'We are very lucky to have a Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCo) in our school who has extensive experience in supporting neurodiverse tamariki,' says Helen. The challenge is that much of her time is taken up in completing applications for funding rather than being able to use her considerable expertise in supporting tamariki. Helen's SENCo is well known in the district for her talents and professional expertise with neurodiverse students, so Ruakākā has become a popular school for families with children needing extra learning support.

'On the one hand, that can be a blessing,' says Helen, 'but it also stretches our ability to meet all the needs. The most helpful thing any Government could do is give every classroom a kaiawhina, a teacher aide,' she said.

During my brief visit, Helen is interrupted three times, to support teachers with youngsters struggling with self-regulation. The school follows the Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) and Restorative Practice Programmes which, overall, are a good fit for tamariki at the school – but sometimes, they will still 'boil over'.

'What we try to do is to build a culture where positive behaviour and learning is a way of life,' said Helen. 'PB4L is tailored to our school's context and cultural needs,' she said. 'It's all about changing the environment and practices to support tamariki to make positive behaviour choices,' she said. 'Then it's about reinforcing positive behaviours when we see them, so they become embedded, but we have to make sure our expectations are clear and consistent,' she said.

All of this takes time and effort, and some tamariki take longer than others to turn around negative or anti-social behaviours.

continued on p.10



The te reo immersion classes benefits the whole school

Expectations at Ruakākā School are manifest through the school's values, which greet you at the school's front entrance. The first letter of each of the five values is displayed on five giant sized, outrageously colourful flowerpots and read the word SHINE.

The values are:

- Show respect (Whakaute)
- Helpful (manaakitanga)
- Inclusive (Kotahitanga)
- Never give up (Papahueke)
- Enviro Guardians (Kaitiakitanga).

It would be difficult to miss the **SHINE** values. They are prominently displayed in every classroom, and every space, including in a mural on the side of an outdoor playhouse, which colourfully screams 'Permission to Shine!'

A further mantra is the motto of the school: 'We love to learn together' – Ka aroha tatou ki te ako tahi. Like the values, this mantra is visible in multiple spaces across the school.

I ask Helen how she feels about the Government's introduction of structured literacy and structured mathematics.

'At our school we are already doing structured literacy, and our PLD is led by expert kaiako who are very good,' she said. 'We currently have 0.8 staffing for Reading Recovery four days a week which allows us to provide small group support and we really need to retain that support staffing for structured literacy,' she said.

To be successful Helen said schools need more staffing right across the board. She said introducing both mathematics and structured literacy by the start of 2025 is far too much at once. 'Where do we get all the relievers from, so teachers can attend PLD?' she said.

Helen acknowledged that she is lucky to have a good team of relievers whom she values. They are always invited to participate in school activities and celebrations, so they feel part of the wider school community. To cover all the new PLD on top of the regular classroom release time and teacher illness, however, will be a stretch.

She acknowledged that the PLD for literacy and mathematics

is free, which is great, but a further problem for schools like Ruakākā is the travel and accommodation costs for teachers to attend PLD, which is more likely to be held in the city.

Helen has been leading Ruakākā school for just 18 months, so I asked her what made her feel most proud about the school.

'Our practical enactment of te Tiriti o Waitangi,' she said. 'I am so proud of our rumaki reo with five classes, and that we have given Te Whānau Harakeke our brand new classrooms and they are running so well. That is a big achievement,' she said. 'That links to our strong relationships with Patuharakeke, our local iwi, Takahiwai marae and our whānau,' she said.

'Another thing we are doing is to follow the Maramataka – the Māori calendar. When we are planning an event we try to check the Maramataka. When we have a really crazy day with lots of unexpected events, we go back and check the Maramataka and we often see that it is a high energy day. 'The new buildings have meant that tamariki have less open space to play. So we are upgrading our outdoor playground and adding a new space to maximise the play area. Part of that is building a new bike track. Because we are right next to State Highway 1 our kids can't bike to school, so we have a container full of bikes and funding from Bike Northland for the bike track. This gives tamariki another outdoor activity to get involved in, and burn off some energy,' she said.

Ruakākā is a beautiful school, filled with energy, colour and positivity. It has a clear set of values that drive behavioural expectations, a strong environmental perspective and solid bicultural base – and it is most unlikely that any Government's Treaty Principles Bill will derail the progress made to enact Te Tiriti o Waitangi at Ruakākā school.

It is a strong community, committed to the kaupapa, with determined, moral leadership, and the collective will to offer every child the very best education possible. Some strong Government policy on increasing staffing levels and funding for learning support would accelerate progress for everyone, and greatly improve the future economic, social and emotional prospects for all tamariki in Ruakākā – but I doubt Helen Kinsey-Wightman is banking on those extra staff any time soon.

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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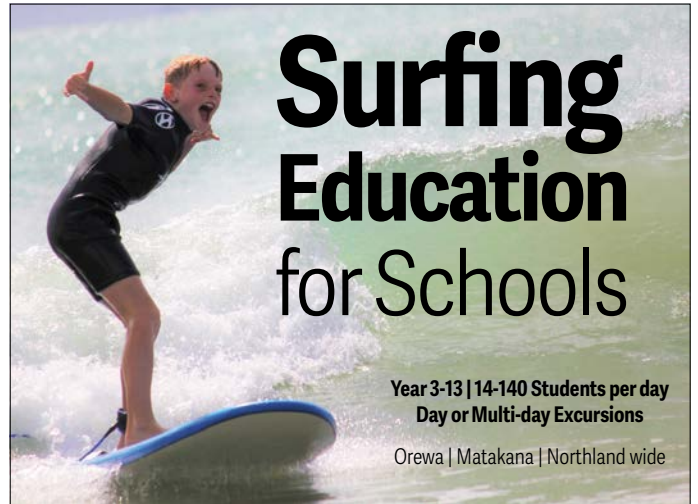
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ERO RESEARCH ON ORAL LANGUAGE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR NEW ENTRANT TEACHERS

Kipling Davies-Colley ERO

New research and resources to support students' oral language development

Te Ihuwaka | Education Evaluation Centre

Oral language is the foundation for literacy at school. The Education Review Office (ERO) looked at how well children are developing the oral language skills they need through the early years and into new entrance. We found that while most children's oral language is developing well, there is a significant group of children who struggle, and Covid-19 has made this worse.

To support oral language development, ERO has released new research and a suite of good practice resources including a short four-page guide for new entrant teachers. These publications look at Aotearoa New Zealand's challenges and successes with language development, what shifts need to happen to improve outcomes for all children, and strategies that teachers can use in their own classrooms.

What is oral language?

Developing oral language involves developing the skills and knowledge that go **into listening and speaking**, allowing children to understand and express ideas, knowledge, and feelings. Without these skills, children struggle in their learning for reading and writing.

What we found about oral language development

There is a significant group of children who are behind.

The Growing Up in New Zealand (GUINZ) study found 80 per cent of children at age 5 are doing well, but 20 per cent are struggling with oral language. New entrant teachers also reported to ERO that a group of children are struggling, and more than half of parents and whānau reported their child has some difficulty with oral language in the early years.

'Many also have significant delays in the articulation of sounds, are unable to talk in more than a four – to five-word sentence, spend large amounts of time on devices . . . They have had very little interaction with books. Receptive language is very poor alongside expressive language.' – TEACHER

Covid-19 has had a significant impact

Nearly two-thirds of new entrant teachers (65 per cent) report that Covid-19 has impacted children's language development, particularly their social communication skills. International studies confirm the significant impact of Covid-19 on language development.

'The majority of students missed ECE and were often at home on devices with very little input from whānau. I do wonder if they were spoken to, as many from this cohort have extremely poor oral language.' – TEACHER

Children from low socio-economic communities are struggling

Evidence both in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally is clear that children from lower socio-economic communities are more likely to struggle with oral language skills. Concerningly, we found that new entrant teachers we surveyed in schools in low socio-economic communities are nine times more likely to report children being below expected levels of oral language. Parents and whānau with lower qualifications are also more likely to report that their child has difficulty with oral language.

Boys are also having difficulties

Both in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally, boys have more difficulty developing oral language than girls. Parents and whānau report 70 per cent of boys are not at the expected development level, compared with 56 per cent of girls.

Difficulties with oral language emerge as children develop towards school age

Teachers and parents and whānau report more concerns about children being behind as they become older and start school. For example, 56 per cent of parents and whānau report their child has difficulty as a toddler (aged 18 months to 3 years old), compared to over two-thirds of parents and whānau (70 per cent) reporting that their child has difficulty as a preschooler (aged 3 to 5).

Teachers and parents and whānau reported to us that children who are behind most often struggle with constructing sentences, telling stories, and using social communication to talk about their thoughts and feelings. For example, 43 per cent of parents and whānau report their child has some difficulty with oral grammar, but only 13 per cent report difficulty with gestures.

What this means for students once they're at school

Children's early oral language learning is critical for educational achievement later. Early measures of language, such as vocabulary at two years old, can predict academic achievement at 12 years of age and in secondary school. Good oral language development links to better outcomes in reading comprehension, articulation of thoughts and ideas, vocabulary, and grammar. Without these vital skills, children can really struggle in their learning and fall further behind.

Additionally, children need oral language to become proficient thinkers, communicators, and learners. It is how we share thoughts and transmit knowledge, and is critical for children to recognise and express their own feelings and needs, and to recognise and respond to the feelings and needs of others. This can negatively impact their behaviour and their learning.

'A lot of children are not able to communicate their needs. They are difficult to understand when they speak. They are not used to having conversations.' – TEACHER

continued on p.14



- Children's early oral language learning is critical for educational achievement later
- Before children can read and write, they need to be able to understand language
- Children need oral language to become proficient thinkers, communicators, and learners
- Oral language is used for sharing thoughts and transmitting knowledge

What this means for new entrant teachers

Evidence and new entrant teachers tells us that one in five children are struggling with their oral language when they start school. This means that new entrant teachers can face challenges, and also that this is a critical time for oral language teaching.

'Many are attending ECE, but not being referred early enough once the delay in oral language is noticed. Then . . . the wait times are too long, and the support is inconsistent.' – TEACHER

ERO found that the international and Aotearoa New Zealand evidence is clear about what the best practices that matter for language development are. ERO's five best practices are:

Practice area 1	<p>Teaching new words and how to use them</p> <p>This practice area includes intentionally using words to build a child's understanding of words (their receptive vocabulary) and encouraging them to use and apply words in the right context (expressive vocabulary).</p>
Practice area 2	<p>Modelling how words make sentences</p> <p>This practice area includes intentionally using language to show how words are put together to make sentences (grammar) and providing opportunities for children to use this in their own speech.</p>
Practice area 3	<p>Reading interactively with children</p> <p>This practice area includes encouraging children to be active participants during book-reading. Teachers use prompts to encourage interactions between children and the person reading the book.</p>
Practice area 4	<p>Using conversations to extend language</p> <p>This practice area includes intentionally using language to engage children in activities that are challenging for them. It encourages them to hear and use language to understand and share ideas, as well as reason with others.</p>
Practice area 5	<p>Developing positive social communication</p> <p>This practice area includes providing opportunities for children to learn social norms and rules of communication – both verbal and non-verbal – so they can change the words they use, how quietly/loudly they speak, and how they position themselves when they listen and communicate with others.</p>

ERO developed these practice areas from international and local evidence, discussions with experts, and conversations with teachers and leaders. To support new entrant teachers, ERO has produced a short, four page insights guide that highlight the evidence-based practices that matter and provides quality reflective questions to help support new entrant students in their language development (see link at end of this article).

'We see a change in our playground behaviours. We've seen a change in children's wellbeing. They're actually expressing their feelings and needs . . .' – LEADER

New entrant teachers are less confident in certain areas

New entrant teachers are doing a great job, reporting that they use the five key practices very often. There are also some areas we found that could use additional focus and support.

Not all new entrant teachers are confident to assess oral language progress. Of the new entrant teachers we surveyed, a quarter reported not being confident to assess and report on progress.

Being able to assess children's oral language progress and identify potential difficulties is an important part of teaching

young children. However, not all new entrant teachers are confident to identify difficulties in oral language (24 per cent of new entrant teachers surveyed report not being confident).

For children who are struggling, support from specialists, such as speech-language therapists, who can help with oral language development is key. But not all teachers are confident to work with these specialists, with 17 per cent of new entrant teachers surveyed reporting not being confident.

What primary school principals can do to help

To be well set up, teachers need leadership and conditions that prioritise oral language teaching. They also need good professional knowledge and assessment understanding themselves, positive partnerships with parents and whānau, and a clear understanding of how and when to work with specialists around oral language.

ERO has identified four key supports that teachers need to do their best work using the best practices.

The four key supports are:

1. **Leadership and priorities** – providing teachers with the conditions and resources required for quality oral language support.
2. **Teacher knowledge and assessment** – teachers' professional knowledge about how children's oral language is developed, taught, assessed, and supported.
3. **Partnership with parents and whānau** – partnerships that need to be in place with parents and whānau, to support oral language development at school and at home.
4. **Working with specialists** – teachers having a good understanding of when and how to work with specialists around oral language support.

Practical steps for principals might be:

- **Using evidence-based professional learning to support teachers' confidence.** We heard how professional learning can help teachers overcome feeling 'awkward' about using oral language strategies, because they learnt how the strategies are based on strong evidence.
- **Having oral language as a regular staff meeting topic,** as an opportunity for the team to reflect on what teachers are noticing, and planning next steps.
- **Documenting a clear process for staff to follow,** including staff discussions, engaging in targeted observations, and gathering evidence, to make decisions about when and whether to seek specialist support.

What's next?

ERO has identified raising language skills in the early years as a key priority to boost student literacy and has made recommendations to Government, agencies, and schools. These include supporting teachers to use the most effective practices, helping parents to understand where their child is at and how they can support them, investing in timely targeted support for children who are having difficulties, and increasing access and support in language development for children in low-socioeconomic communities. In addition to these higher-level shifts, leaders can take action at their own schools to ensure that good, evidence-based oral language practices are in place in junior classrooms – setting their youngest learners up with this key foundation for learning success.

Would your new entrant teachers benefit from our short, practical guide? Check out *Insights for new entrant teachers: Oral language development in the early years* (ero.govt.nz).

You can also find Te Ihuwaka – ERO's Education Evaluation Centre – on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram, where we share our latest insights on our research and good practice.

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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

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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.

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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.

TRANS-TASMAN CONFERENCE 2024

Te Pae Christchurch

Liz Hawes Editor

PhotoLife Photography

YOU ALWAYS KNOW YOU'RE in a Trans-Tasman gathering. If the accents don't give it away – the mocking jokes and competitive ribbing will. 'To all the Australians in the audience,' announced MC Julian Wilcox, 'Thank you for having such a useless rugby team!'

When a conference business partner ran a quick multichoice competition with instant prizes, Julian Wilcox asked, 'Any Australians win a prize?' When the answer was no, his advice was, 'You'll get there one day.'

The ribbing wasn't all one-way. Angela Faulkenberg, President of the Australian Primary Principals' Association, took her opportunity by projecting the photo of a very long bridge on screen, saying, 'We call this the bridge of stories. They are the stories of our 2024 Olympic Gold medallists – our swimmers, runners, pole vaulters, skateboarders, cyclists, canoe slalom paddlers, sailors, tennis winners . . . and so many more,' she said, to the cheering, good-natured audience.

It's the sort of behaviour that comes naturally in a close knit family, and that's how we are with our Australian colleagues. We are far more similar than different; closer than distant. In the end, we are very good mates.

The conference opened with a ceremonial mihi whakatau as the thousand plus principals (manuhiri) were welcomed to the Te Pae events centre by Ngāi Tahu iwi, the tangata whenua of Ōtautahi, Christchurch. This was followed by an uplifting kapa haka performance by Te Wharekura o te Whānau Tahī. It was an invigorating way to begin conference and won the full attention and appreciation of Kiwi and Australian principals alike.

NZPF President, Leanne Otene followed with an opening

speech of her own, first acknowledging the Aboriginal and Torres Strait visitors saying, 'Just as you welcomed us to your shores last year in Hobart, by paying tribute to your first nations people, I have just done the same by paying tribute to our tangata whenua, or first nations Māori people,' she said.

After welcoming all the dignitaries and special guests from both Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand she said, 'Today I want us all to celebrate the very special and enduring partnership we have as Trans-Tasman colleagues. As we find with principals' associations across the globe, we have far more in common than we have differences, and I will address those in my speech this afternoon.'

Angela Faulkenberg – President of the Australian Primary Principals' Association (APPA)

APPA is broadly the Australian equivalent of NZPF, except APPA represents only the primary school sector. The big difference is in capacity. Whilst there is a total of 2,500 schools of all types in New Zealand, APPA represents 6,000 primary schools alone, making the membership numbers three times that of NZPF.

Lest there was any doubt, Faulkenberg strongly stated the moral purpose of APPA and Australian school leaders saying, 'APPA advocates for a world class education system that encourages and supports every student to be the very best they can be, no matter where they live, or what kind of learning challenges they may face.'

We could have been listening to the words of our own former Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, in 1939 when he proclaimed:

'Every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether



Julian Wilcox kept continuity in check with his sharp wit and professionalism



Angela Faulkenberg noted the educational similarities between Australia and New Zealand



Te Wharekura o te Whanau Tahī perform

he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right, as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted, and to the fullest extent of his powers.’

It is a proclamation that is still repeated whenever the ‘moral purpose’ of education is raised, because it represents our collective desire for equity in the system, for children, for teachers and for leaders of schools.

As is the case in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australian principals take their moral purpose as educators, seriously. ‘When they see service gaps or gaps created by lack of access to services, or long-term waiting lists, schools are increasingly the last village for the child,’ said Faulkenberg. ‘The [social] issues we are grappling with need to be taken seriously [by Government] because the goodwill that schools contribute to this broader societal work is volunteered and **finite** and should not be expected to prop up deficits in services elsewhere.’

Social determinants, she said, such as income, employment, housing, access to health care and social support shape a person’s opportunities and risk affecting both health care and educational outcomes. They also contribute to disparities between different communities..

Faulkenberg is a supporter of early intervention, and the earlier the better. She acknowledged the importance of the first 1,000 days of a child’s life and added that one of APPA’s current campaigns is to encourage schools to use their newsletters to share key messages about activities parents can engage in to provide their toddlers with the very best start in life. ‘We know from our research data that gaps in physical health, wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language, cognitive skills, communications skills and general knowledge can be present by age 5,’ she said. ‘That is why some schools are creating spaces for families to read with their young children and are holding free playgroups,’ she said.

She also agrees with OECD Director of Education and Skills, Andreas Schleicher, when he says we must amplify the Arts. ‘Having a crowded curriculum is unhelpful, but the Arts are

essential for growing empathy through reading, poetry and song. These are essential subjects that warm the heart,’ he said. Faulkenberg added that our school leaders must be trusted to make curriculum decisions because they, better than anyone, know the context of their schools.

That said, the National Assessment Programme – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) remains a potent weapon for politicians who love to use results to catastrophise – especially – the teaching of literacy and mathematics, and create shame for so-called ‘failing’ schools. ‘It is so easy to misuse the data,’ said Faulkenberg. ‘However, a University of New England researcher, Sally Larson, has shown that the long-term NAPLAN data does not support panic [as politicians like to promote],’ she said.

New Zealand Principals immediately related to this dilemma, remembering that it was just a few short weeks before conference that the Prime Minister and Minister of Education had misused data for testing out a new mathematics curriculum, announcing that only 22 per cent of year 8 children could pass mathematics. The intention of the announcement was to catastrophise mathematics teaching, and hastily force a new method of teaching mathematics to begin in 2025. The curriculum that researchers were testing had never been taught to year 8 students. It was still being written. Faulkenberg’s NAPLAN story was certainly not lost on the New Zealand contingent of principals.

Rising above politics, she then focused on the joys of teaching – such as when educators inspire and guide students to grow, learn and achieve their potential. ‘We find joy in seeing our students develop not just academically but also emotionally and socially, knowing we’ve played a role in shaping these confident, curious and compassionate individuals,’ she said.

It was then time to talk about leadership. ‘We cannot have healthy learning environments without healthy leaders,’ said Faulkenberg, ‘and we know that workload, wellbeing and challenging behaviours all impact the joy of the job and productivity.’

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Australia has a current workforce shortage. Faulkenberg acknowledged that research evidence is needed to better understand the reasons that principals and teachers are leaving the profession. 'APPA has recently acquired an \$80,000 research grant to examine this very question,' she said.

The mantra of APPA is to have the courage to speak the truth with integrity. 'That is why credible research evidence is necessary, and why we are so proud of our APPA executive predecessors who followed this mantra. 'Their commitment to advocate with integrity for so many teachers and principals, many of whom they have never met, is a legacy current executive members look up to. They have been selfless in their drive to improve conditions for school leadership over many years,' she said, 'and we remain forever grateful for their service.'

Cementing a special connection between Aotearoa NZ and Australia, Faulkenberg concluded with a beautiful story. An Australian teacher, Robin Havell, who lives in Adelaide, in 2011, connected children in Australia with the children of earthquake affected Christchurch, New Zealand. She wrote a beautiful song to frame the devastating event called simply, 'We are Christchurch'. This was the 'waiata' for Angela Faulkenberg from Australia to Christchurch.

A video recording of the song, sung by a huge chorus of Australian primary school children was played to an expertly choreographed ballet performance – on screen, in Christchurch, for Christchurch. The entire Australian contingent stood to sing along to the song, as principals of Christchurch listened and watched the children perform their dance – it was a beautiful and affecting gesture.

Fujifilm clocks up a thirty-year partnership with NZPF

Convenor of the NZPF Business Partners Team, Gavin Beere, took to the stage to congratulate Fujifilm on reaching its remarkable 30-year milestone as business partner to NZPF.

'We have partnered you through several iterations from Konica Minolta, when your main product was photocopy machines, to CSG (the Customer Services Group) and now FujiFilm,' said

Beere. 'You have been a loyal partner to us and our principals have always spoken highly, not just of your products, but of the support services you provide to schools,' he said.

In accepting the trophy, marking the 30-year anniversary, Wayne Ebert remarked that he had worked through all three iterations of the company. 'It's all about cementing the relationships,' he said, 'and I have thoroughly enjoyed visiting the NZPF National Office staff in Wellington every school term for many years.'

'Having morning tea and a chat with the staff and President and updating them on where we are going as well as hearing what is front of mind for NZPF is where it's at for me,' he said. 'That's what makes a true partnership,' he said. He then went on to explain that they had come a long way from just photocopying to producing machines that incorporated many digital solutions. Multi-function printers, including scanning, photocopying, faxing and printing functions all operating on a user-friendly interface were now the norm. 'We will never stop finding ways for schools to work smarter,' he said. He then outlined some of the newer services including recycling initiatives and running seminars.

The FujiFilm team on stage were all wearing green jackets which Ebert explained were 'happi' jackets. It was a practice borrowed from Japanese culture where 'happi' jackets were worn at Japanese festivals. 'We're wearing our 'happi' jackets because this conference is also a festival,' he said. 'Come to our exhibition post,' he urged the principals, 'where we have prizes galore from Whittaker's chocolate bars to overseas trips.'

The FujiFilm team departed the stage to enthusiastic applause.

Dr Hana O'Regan on race relations and equity

Dr Hana O'Regan is the Tumu Whakarae of Tātai Aho Rau Core Education. She has worked in language revitalisation, identity and cultural development, Te Reo Māori and education for over 30 years.

O'Regan is recognised internationally for her work in indigenous language acquisition and revitalisation and is widely respected for her Māori language contribution, skills

and advocacy – so much so that in 2021 she was appointed as a member of the Waitangi Tribunal. Māori development, national identity, health and Treaty rights are all bread-and-butter issues for this esteemed Wahine Māori.

‘Teaching is an honourable profession – not because it’s an easy gig – but because you all want the best for kids. Today, I will be talking about some confrontational issues,’ she said.

She admitted that after 30 years in education, she was right now worried about losing the progress made by learners, especially cultural and te reo progress which benefit both Māori and Pākehā students.

‘Stand as one and hold fast to the progress we have made. Collectively commit,’ she said.

She said acknowledging the cause of inequity in education today was necessary. ‘If we don’t voice it, inequity will continue,’ she said.

Anarrative common to both Australia and New Zealand feeds racism, she said, and leaders have a responsibility to call it out.

‘If you are not calling out racism, you allow it to continue,’ she warned.

O’Regan then introduced her audience to the notion of ‘Coloniality’.

‘Coloniality is a set of attitudes, values, ways of knowing, and power structures upheld as normative by western colonising societies and serving to rationalise and perpetuate western dominance,’ she said.

Describing coloniality, she said these are things we see and feel. Its major mechanism is creating hierarchies and education is one of those mechanisms.

The ‘Science of learning’ wasn’t needed back in the day, she said. French, Latin and the Classics were the pathways to get into university. They were the subjects at the top of the hierarchy.

Even now, we have people who say Mātauranga Māori is not a real science, because a different knowledge system doesn’t count. Coloniality is a continual process. The indigenous group is made to feel lesser or second rate because of these hierarchies.

‘The end of colonial administrations in the modern world was not the end of coloniality,’ she said.

She explained that the destruction of indigenous language is the blueprint of colonisation, and so in Aotearoa New Zealand, coloniality led to the cleansing of te reo by punishing those who spoke it.

‘We see it right now with current policies,’ she said, ‘removing Māori words like ‘kura’ (school). ‘The intent is the same as it was in colonial days,’ she said, ‘to destroy the value of the language.’

The objective of colonisation is to relegate the colonised to subservience, inhibit cultural cohesion and destroy the language. O’Regan offered several more examples. In Welsh culture, a piece of wood with the letters WN (Welsh Not) was hung around a child’s neck if they spoke Welsh at school. It was used as a ritual humiliation to dissuade children from speaking their indigenous tongue. At the end of the school day any child wearing the Welsh Not, was caned in front of the school. In America, native Indians in boarding schools were forbidden to speak their indigenous languages and children could be given corporal punishment, be deprived of privileges or have their diet restricted for speaking their native language. In Ireland the ‘Bata Scoir’ or ‘Tally Stick’ was hung around the child’s neck if they spoke Irish, and a notch was carved into the stick each time they lapsed into Irish language. Beatings were given at the end of the day based on how many notches were accumulated in the day. Similar punishments were enforced in Australia, Canada, Uganda, and any other



Hana O’Regan

colonised country. In the case of Aotearoa New Zealand, the Māori language had almost disappeared in one generation.

In 1931 the Director of Education reported to parliament ‘the natural abandonment of the native tongue involves no loss to the Māori.’

Colonisers were good at ‘colonising’ by then – the system in New Zealand worked well.

O’Regan invited the Australians in the room to offer words that describe ‘being a Kiwi’. Offerings included Number 8 wire; ingenuity – films like Lord of the Rings; the All Blacks; the Silver Ferns; the Haka; Scenery; Clean & Green; Crowded House; entrepreneurial; high achievers and punch above our weight; nuclear free; sheep; bungy jumping; hard working; first to give women the vote.

‘These are narratives that we use to describe ourselves,’ she said.

She then invited the room to offer common characteristics used to describe Māori.

This time the words were different. They included haka, poi, hangi, koru; sport; Matariki; whānau; waiata; second biggest economy in New Zealand; and more reluctantly, gangs, crime, prison; kai; lazy; mischievous; guitar playing; domestic violence and child abuse; beneficiaries; brown tail in literacy and numeracy; low education outcomes; good at singing; art.

‘So, if you are Māori and can’t sing, play the guitar or play sport, you’re stuffed,’ said O’Regan. ‘If we don’t reshape this narrative, it will continue,’ she warned. ‘As leaders, you have to prepare Māori students for the assault that will inevitably hit them once they are outside of your school gate,’ she said.

Returning to the colonisation plans she said that in 1862 the school inspector reported to parliament that ‘a refined education or high mental culture would be inappropriate for Māori because they are better calculated by nature to get their living by manual than by mental labour.’

In the 1880s Te Aute College, the Anglican boarding school for Māori boys in the Hawkes Bay, led at the time by John Thornton, produced the first Māori graduates but the College came under pressure to abandon the academic curriculum and teach agriculture instead.

Thornton wanted to give the boys the opportunity to go to university, so Latin, French and the Classics were on offer. Many got matriculation and went to university, including Sir Peter Buck, Sir Apirana Ngata, Sir James Carroll and Sir Maui Pomare. There was a wave of academics emerging from Te Aute at this time.

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But this was not the intent of the education system, so a Royal Commission of Inquiry was instigated to put John Thornton on trial. Thornton refused to stop teaching the boys academic subjects and so he and the Board of the school were sacked. The teaching of academic subjects was then withdrawn for Māori boys at Te Aute. It was not by chance that Māori boys were denied higher education and teachers subsequently set low expectations for them.

In the early 1930s the New Zealand Federation of Teachers attempted to have te reo introduced to the national curriculum, but this was blocked by the Director of Education who said, 'Education should lead the Māori lad to be a good farmer and the Māori girl to be a good farmer's wife.'

The colonisation plan, backed by the Director of Education, was again playing out as intended. By the 1980s Māori were well and truly over-represented in the lower echelons of society, so there was no further need to talk about non-achievement in ethnic terms. The narrative now shifted to socio-economic factors as the root cause of underachievement. Now you could blame Māori for not being ambitious and for not having high enough expectations for their children. The education system had done exactly what it was designed to do in terms of outcomes for Māori. It had achieved its purpose.

O'Regan then talked about commonly held descriptors of the 'ideal' Māori today. They are loyal to other Māori, attached to the land of their ancestors, observe obligations to whānau, generous – even at personal cost, sociable, enjoy group activity, faithfully attend marae gatherings, ceremonial, interested in whakapapa and Māori history, use te reo, have a happy-go-lucky attitude to time and money, refuse to worry about the future, love Māori kai from the sea and forest, especially when cooked in a hangi.

O'Regan challenged her audience to think about how these constructions influence the expectations of learners.

She shared another set of depictions including – Māori weren't the first here, Māori killed the Moriori, Māori ceded sovereignty, Māori would still be walking around in grass skirts, Māori were backward savages who were lucky to be found.

She asked her audience, 'What purpose do these portrayals have for Māori?'

Politically, the intent right now is to get rid of te reo in our curriculum, weaken obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and tamper with the Articles of the Treaty. Māori are portrayed as receiving privileges simply because they are Māori. These portrayals are intended to enrage non-Māori into action and have resulted in messages on cards, such as 'Fight back join the resistance' and 'Radical Māori are taking over our country' being delivered to citizens' personal mailboxes.

O'Regan then shared two powerful statements:

'If we aspire to equitable educational outcomes for all learners, then we must address the deliberate marginalisation of indigenous learners and their whānau, through the perpetuation of negative stereotypes and expectations.'

'If we, as educational leaders do not speak out and speak up, then we knowingly allow the racist and damaging rhetoric to go unchecked and continue to be heard and experienced by another generation.'

Finally, she said, as educational leaders we have a duty to know why the perceptions and stories exist and the purpose behind them. We must understand the impact of the narratives on people, how they feel, engage and participate. 'Be inclusive,' she



Dr Jordan Nguyen

said, 'and respect the knowledge systems, culture and languages of your indigenous learners. Principals and teachers have a role to play in making changes to society's perceptions and must be committed to sharing our whole story,' she said.

Remember, doing what's right is worth the fight!

Dr Jordan Nguyen

A Human's Guide to the Future

Dr Jordan Nguyen is an innovator, and biomedical engineer who is motivated to improve the lives of as many people as possible.

He opened his address asking the audience about their feelings towards technology.

About half revealed that they were optimistic about technology. They responded that they do not necessarily believe technology will save them time, and it may be developing too quickly. They were worried that computers may take over the world but at the same time were excited about Artificial Intelligence (AI). They were both excited and anxious at the same time.

Perhaps to boost audience confidence, Nguyen shared a personal story demonstrating the power of principals. 'In my fourth year of schooling, the notion of my own mortality, and that of my parents, hit me and I was feeling very lost. I let it all out just as my principal walked past. He gave me a hug and said I was going to be alright. He told me I could succeed in anything I did, and those words have stayed with me all my life.'

He said he grew up in Sydney, Australia, with his artistic mother and engineering father. 'My Vietnamese father was a Professor of Engineering, and early on I decided I was never doing that – and then I did.' He added that his parents were his greatest inspiration.

'My father made a robot that could play noughts and crosses, chequers and chess,' he said, 'so I could play games with it and then it would pick up my toys.'

Finding what inspires our kids in school is the key to their success, he said.

I grew up with technology and followed my father to study it at university. I even made a robot named 'Sandra' who took people on tours of the university,' he said.

'But sometime later I wanted to drop out and take Psychology,' he said. 'Before I could do that, I had a serious diving accident and almost broke my back. The diving accident prompted me to think about how technology could help disabled people, so back to technology I went.'

Nguyen was inspired to improve mobility for disabled people



NZPF President Leanne Otene

through technology. His personal mantra was 'one life to improve many'. Thinking about people living with cerebral palsy, who struggle with communication, drove his next phase of work.

He told the story of how he developed the technology that enabled disabled people to control their own wheelchair and other robots or machines with their own minds. These people could not use their hands to type or interact with a screen, nor operate a joystick or chin device to independently move a wheelchair. Nguyen developed the technology that allowed them to direct machinery through the movement of their eyes.

He designed a brain-computer interface – an electrode headband that picks up on the electrical activity of the brain. 'Humans are an electrical system,' he said. The headband allows you to focus on different thoughts that would steer a wheelchair in different directions and AI is used to read the difference between the brain waves. 'It's not reading your mind. It recognises when you are associating your thoughts with movements,' he said. It's only recognising patterns it has seen before.

Nguyen experimented with games using this technology and soon had a three-year-old child with cerebral palsy operating an AI game that required interaction with a rocket ship. 'It was the first time this little girl's parents could observe that their daughter actually understood things,' he said proudly.

Another success story was Riley, also living with cerebral palsy, who controlled his world through using his eyes. Riley loves technology and could already use his eyes to control the light in his own home – and he could drive a drone. But when asked, his great dream was to drive a car, using his eyes.

A buggy 'car' was acquired and using the headband technique, Riley was trained to send signals to the laptop to operate the buggy. Nguyen entertained his audience of principals by playing a video of Riley passionately and independently, racing a circuit in the car, whilst Nguyen sat powerless in the passenger seat. Nguyen then proudly told the principals that Riley co-founded his own company at the age of 12, and by the age of 21 had become its CEO.

AI, he said, is great at analysing data, so it is used to better understand climate change. One example was storing ice cores drilled from the Tibetan plateau. 'With the help of the ice cores we can track changes in the climate and environment for hundreds and even thousands of years,' he said.

It is also used in genetics research. Two researchers, Dr Emmanuelle Charpentier and her collaborator, Dr Jennifer Doudna won a Nobel Prize for co-inventing CRISPR/Cas9 which

edits genes by precisely cutting DNA and then harnessing natural DNA repair processes to modify the gene. CRISPR/Cas9 has revolutionised biomedical research and enabled many medical breakthroughs.

This same GM technology can be used in foods. As water becomes scarce in drought prone areas, we can learn to grow rice crops, for example, without water, by removing the gene that requires water for the rice to grow.

AI technology is also at the cutting edge of wildlife conservation and the protection of endangered species. It can catalogue every individual of a species in an area and track the animals. For example, one tiger was found to have travelled from Russia to China and back again. Through the tracking system, poachers can be identified and apprehended.

Nguyen also outlined some of the problems associated with AI, such as ChatGPT or other large language models that can generate both video and language. As the models become more sophisticated, it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between human generated and AI generated writing/visuals. Erosion of trust becomes a problem in this environment. Protecting original work is a second issue and Nguyen suggested a rule of thumb: 'Don't give others permission to train on your data.'

He also observed that with some notable exceptions, STEM is still male dominated. 'Providing more role models helps,' he said, 'and there have been changes in the last ten years.'

His final comments concerned androids. He described the phenomenon known as 'Uncanny Valley'. 'They can look too human,' he said, 'and our trust diminishes. We can't distinguish them from the real thing.'

And so, Nguyen brought his audience back to the main weakness of AI – that despite its advantages, it blurs the boundary between reality and virtual reality.

NZPF President's address, Leanne Otene

Having opened the conference earlier in the day NZPF President, Leanne Otene used her address to talk about the issues front and centre for both Australians and Kiwi principals. She talked about the ways in which APPA and NZPF had worked together over the years, sharing knowledge, skills and ideas for the betterment of each country's education system.

She used the Principal Leadership Advisory as an example, noting that an NZPF delegation visited New South Wales in 2015 to explore the Australian leadership advisory model which was later adapted to become New Zealand's Principal Leadership Advisory, now operating out of the Ministry with capacity for 22 Advisors across the country. It is one of the most successful and appreciated services for principals, by principals, in New Zealand.

NZPF continues to be involved with this service and is now working with the Ministry's Principal Leadership team on a 'Road Map' to sustainable leadership, from aspiring principals to retiring principals. Ultimately, said Otene, we want to see a Leadership Centre established that can administer all leadership related services, training, mentoring, professional learning, coaching and support.

'We thank Minister Stanford for her support of this concept and her ongoing support of the role of leadership in our schools,' she said.

Otene reiterated other common issues NZPF shares with APPA including, workforce shortages, recruitment and teacher training issues, attendance concerns and dips in our literacy and

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mathematics achievement. 'More important than all other issues we share is the increase in students requiring additional learning support and those presenting with challenging behaviours,' she said.

'None of these issues will be resolved for either country,' said Otene, 'without quality teachers and leaders and an education system that provides, equitable learning support, accessible PLD for teachers and leaders, high quality Curriculum Advisors, a well-trained education workforce and equitable collaboration and networking opportunities for teachers and leaders.'

'In the case of Aotearoa New Zealand, I would add the importance of enacting Te Tiriti o Waitangi in our schools which has led to our Māori students, for the first time, feeling they belong at school. They see themselves, their language and their culture reflected in their schools and are more engaged as a result. Our non-Māori students are also greatly benefitting. As principals and teachers, we are building a more tolerant society,' she said.

As the applause died down for these comments, Otene then moved on to current changes proposed for literacy and mathematics, referring to the well-respected research of Professor Pasi Sahlberg, who notes that Australian and New Zealand data on literacy and mathematics mirror each other. Both countries have slipped in recent years with Covid being a significant factor. But more importantly, the data shows the greatest difference between the two countries is the gap between the highest and lowest achievers. For New Zealand, that gap has grown significantly, but less so in Australia. 'That is the real crisis we need to address,' said Otene.

In dealing with the dip in literacy and numeracy scores, Otene said we must not forget the power of a rich broad curriculum to better access these two foundational subjects. Take music which is both an art and a science as an example, she said. As Dr Anita Collins, a specialist in neuroscience, emphasises, music education plays a significant role in developing skills like literacy and mathematics. It strengthens neural networks leading to higher cognitive capacities in language and problem-solving skills. In a multicultural country like ours, music's diverse expressions further enrich our intellectual insights, creativity, and cultural identity – a bonus for us, she said.

According to Dr Collins, said Otene, children who engage in music education exhibit enhanced cognitive abilities, continue their education longer, overcome cognitive challenges related to disadvantage, and contribute more economically throughout their lives.

The audience applauded again, recognising that conversations about literacy and mathematics in isolation are unhelpful and are better understood in the context of the whole curriculum.

Otene was clear that we must work with our politicians to share our knowledge and practitioner experience so that we do not derail the great things happening in our schools for the sake of political expediency. 'Our goal is the same – to give each one of our young people the highest quality education we possibly can,' she said.

She was clear about the Minister's intention to introduce both structured literacy and structured mathematics at the start of next year. 'The pace of implementation is unrealistic,' she said. 'Principals know that curriculum change requires time and professional learning and development, and they know that the professional learning must be ongoing,' she said. 'It is not a one-off event, and must be bottom-up, collaborative, contextually integrated and ongoing,' she said.

She concluded her address saying, 'Our young people are the



Minister for Education, Hon Erica Stanford

future leaders of our country. We want those young people to grow into well rounded, sound, confident, creative, problem solvers because we don't have too long to look far to see the magnitude of the problems they will have to solve. They are economic, social, and environmental,' said Otene.

'It's our job today, to give them the tools to do their job tomorrow,' she said.

The appreciative audience gave her a standing ovation and sang her an uplifting version of the waiata, *Tūtira mai ngā iwi*.

Next up was a pre-recorded message from the Australian Minister of Education, Hon Jason Clare.

Minister of Education Hon Jason Clare (Australia)

Minister Clare opened by congratulating both NZPF and APPA on hosting the combined Trans-Tasman conference, saying 'Between you, you represent 10,000 principals.'

'Education is a powerful cause for good,' he said. 'It turns imagination into reality, and you, as leaders of our schools in Australia and New Zealand, are critical in achieving that.'

'You are proud of your schools, and they are proud of you,' he said. 'You set the culture for your schools and that filters down to your staff and children,' he said. 'The culture you set is a powerful factor in deciding the commitment of your staff and student success in your schools,' he said.

The Minister then moved on to the main challenges, as he sees them, 'Shared challenges for both of us include commitment to indigenous kids, workforce shortages and classroom behaviours,' he said. 'We have a good system of education, but better and fairer is what we both need,' he concluded.

Minister of Education Hon Erica Stanford (New Zealand)

The Minister opened her address ebulliently telling her audience, 'I love my job. It is such a privilege to be giving you the tools you need to do *your* job,' she said.

'The passion and professionalism you bring to your job and the aspirations you have for every child in your school, is remarkable,' she said. 'You have a very complex job. On the one hand, you are dealing with me, and the Ministry, and on the other with the children and your communities,' she said, 'and you are the pivot in the middle.'

Minister Stanford was determined to show her audience not just how much she valued and admired them, but how much she wanted to work with them and listen to them.

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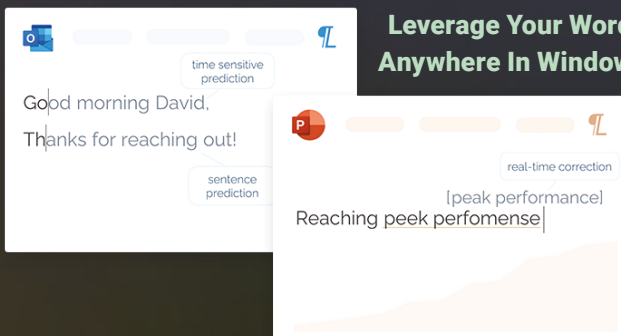
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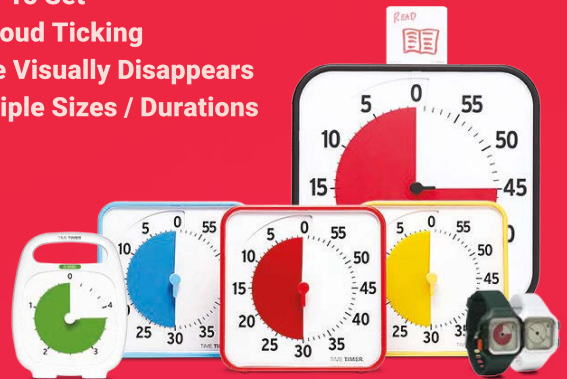
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Samoan rangatahi perform for principals

'I was in Southland visiting the principals there and they told me straight – what they thought needed to happen to fix the reliever crisis,' she said. 'That is the sort of relationship I value. Having your feedback and support are critical to me, so thank you for offering me your suggestions.'

'One thing I did in Opposition was visit you and that informed my six priority areas. Each is equally as important as the other. They are all connected. I want to work collaboratively with you to get those right,' she said.

'We want to lift achievement and close the equity gap. I want Māori achieving at the same rate as everyone else,' she said.

She then turned to the current state of the education system as a possible reason for the drop in achievement.

'I know that the system we work in has let you down. Initial Teacher Education is not up to scratch, learning support is lagging and teaching methods have not been working,' she said.

'We want to provide you with all the tools to succeed. The system has let you down,' she repeated, and now we have a drop in achievement. Only 45 per cent of 14/15-year-old students are passing Mathematics yet we used to be seventh in the world. We must turn it around,' she insisted.

The Minister explained the work of her Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) that concluded structured literacy and structured mathematics were required and would be fully supported by her government.

'Australia is on a similar trajectory,' she said, 'to engage with the Science of Learning. You [Australians] call it a phonics-based approach to learning Literacy, and we call it structured literacy, but it is the same thing.'

She then addressed the audience saying, 'To all the principals across New Zealand already doing structured literacy I want to thank you, because I couldn't have done this without you.'

'We want to close the equity gap, and we now know the best tool to use is structured literacy. Schools already teaching

structured literacy have managed to close those gaps within two years,' she said.

The Minister acknowledged that structured literacy is a big shift for many schools and will take two to three years to be fully embedded.

'I have got 'decodables' coming for you [sets of readers specific to structured literacy and phonics] on top of other resources from the Ministry. These resources will be needed for years to come to embed structured literacy well,' she said, 'because last year 10,000 young kids did not get NCEA. Just putting in a co-requisite won't fix that,' she said.

'It will be very similar for Maths,' she said. 'We will have an explicit, knowledge rich curriculum, and provide games and activities for you,' she said.

The Minister then turned to the Australians in the room saying, 'Thank you for your Literacy expert, Dr Pamela Snow, [from La Trobe University in Australia], who has shared her amazing resource – a phonics test – with us, which we will be trialling in 80 schools ahead of introducing structured literacy next year.'

The Minister was clear that she recognises every school is differently ready.

'Some of you are waiting to make a start on Mathematics, and others are already underway. We do not expect perfection on day one,' she said. 'You know the pace at which you can go, and we have built all the support and security for you into the curriculum,' she assured her audience. 'We are in this for the long haul,' she said.

In answer to an interjector asking where the learning support was, the Minister answered that she would address that later in her speech.

Returning to Literacy and Mathematics she said, 'We will have ongoing PLD for Literacy, Mathematics and Assessment, and we

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have doubled the number of Curriculum Leads for you. We are providing resources and PLD so that you can work at your own pace, and we will support you with what you want,' she promised.

'You have specifically asked me for bespoke PLD (Teacher Only Days) for Literacy and Mathematics and I have done that for you. You can pick from a range of resources, and you have total flexibility over those choices. If you don't want those resources, you can have your own – no problem,' she said.

'My job is to provide the 'what' but how you connect to children in front of you, that's your job. I say nothing about that and nor should I,' she said.

The Minister was also very clear that the rest of the curriculum would continue as now. 'I want to see the Arts and Music continue,' she said, 'and there will be no redirecting of resources for other curriculum subjects, to Mathematics and Literacy,' she promised.

Principals and Principals' Associations had been posting media releases objecting to the pace of curriculum change, prior to the conference. They had called for a slowing down so that schools, especially those that had never taught either structured literacy or structured mathematics, could have the time to fully understand these new approaches and feel assured that their teachers were well prepared and confident. Many had called for an introduction of just one subject next year, rather than both.

The Minister had assured principals she did not expect perfection on day one, but that was not the answer principals were looking for. When the Minister said at conference, 'There's a difference between being rushed and moving at pace,' the comment was not well received by the audience.

The Minister did return to learning support, as promised, saying, 'This is the single most difficult part of my job. There are children with complex backgrounds and those with high needs,' she said. 'The support system is broken. You were repeatedly writing long application forms for assistance for kids every year, and I said to the Ministry, "Stop that!"'

'The way the system delivers is broken,' she continued, 'and the Ministry doesn't have the skill to fix it, so I have asked for a complete redesign,' she said. 'The learning support review group will include principals, teachers, educational psychologists and other experts,' she said.

'We spend \$1.3 billion each year on learning support but that money is not getting to the kids who need it,' she said.

A principal from the audience called 'Do it at pace,' but this did not derail the Minister who stayed on message saying, 'It's a massive job and all six of my priorities are equal.'

In answer to a question from the audience about funding for 'Creatives in Schools' being cut, the Minister answered that, 'Ministers do sometimes have to make those tough decisions.'

At the conclusion of her address the Minister joined principals for a 'Meet and Greet' and in the evening, joined an invited group at the 'President's Drinks' function.

Principals Honoured for Extraordinary Service

Two outstanding school principals were this year nominated for 'Service with Distinction' awards by their peers. They are Dr Wendy Bamford, principal of Wanaka Primary School and Sandy Hastings, formerly principal of Beckenham Te Kura o Pūroto.

Dr Wendy Bamford was admired by her peers for several reasons, first of which was her passion for music. She organised music festivals that brought all the schools in the Upper Clutha area together. She would also visit each school and work

with students to help them prepare to sing in a massed choir, and to present individual school items. These events brought school communities together to celebrate music. In her own school, she became well known for producing pantomimes which received rave reviews.

Through her connections with the Rural Education Activities Programme (REAP) Wendy met Whaea Mary-Ann Tamati whom she persuaded to support schools in Upper Clutha and Central Otago to build teachers' knowledge and understanding of te reo and tikanga Māori.

Recognising that attracting sports coaches was becoming a challenge, she formed the Central Otago Primary Principals' Sports Association. This way teachers benefitted from coaches being available for multiple schools in multiple sports.

She was also instrumental in securing PLD funding for Literacy from the Central Lakes Trust which benefitted multiple schools in her area, and she was an active supporter of beginning principals. She set up a beginning teacher support group for Upper Clutha schools, mentored many new principals and supported experienced ones too with some challenging issues.

NZPF President, Leanne Otene, presented Dr Bamford with her 'Service with Distinction' award, congratulating her on her outstanding service to her colleagues in Central Otago and Upper Clutha.

In accepting her award Bamford said that her work and the work of all principals is always about relationships, seeing the lighter side of life and if she could leave her audience with one important take-away it would be, 'Do the right thing – don't just do things right!'

Sandy Hastings is first and foremost a role model, according to her peers. She mentored principals and executive members of the Canterbury Primary Principals' Association (CPPA) during her ten-year tenure on the CPPA executive committee, which included a year's Presidency. She similarly supported new members during her time on the national executive of the NZPF and became a highly valued member of the executive. Sandy is a naturally supportive person, generous with her time and expertise, and well known for her warm, friendly smile. Improving systems and streamlining processes was a passionate skill of Sandy's which she generously shared with many of her peers.

Her ability to connect with people and build strong relationships were key to her managing the school changes, demanded after the 2011 Christchurch earthquake. If that was not enough, in 2012 her school lost its library to a fire which meant rebuilding and then rebuilding again for roll growth, landscaping and upgrading her school playground.

The tragedy of the Mosque killings in 2015 followed, and Sandy was once again thrown into support mode for her staff and students. Throughout these challenges, her resilience shone and had a positive impact on those around her. Her entire school



Wendy Bamford and Sandy Hastings

community appreciated the way she kept them together and kept them safe because next on the horizon was the 2020 pandemic.

Sandy never considered herself exceptional because all Christchurch principals went through these same challenges, but few managed to serve their schools, communities and colleagues with quite the level of skill and care that Sandy achieved. For that reason, the NZPF executive had no hesitation in awarding Sandy the honour of 'Service with Distinction'.

In her acceptance speech Sandy thanked her colleagues saying, achievements are rarely attained alone. Nearly always colleagues have contributed, as a team, to successful school outcomes, and the same applies to work through principals' associations.

Sophie Renton on social research and trends in education

Sophie Renton opened her address saying that school can be exciting and fun, or it can be the exact opposite. But what we do know is that young people spend 15,600 hours of their life at school, which is significant.

Renton works as a Social Researcher, Trends Analyst and Managing Director of McCrindle in Australia, where she leads the research team. She said she believes in first obtaining the data then telling the stories that go with it.

Change, she said, is the only constant in life, and changes that are impacting the education sector are unparalleled. There are generational changes alongside growing cultural and linguistic diversity, said Renton.

'Educational communities bridge the widest generational gaps and have to respond strategically to changing demographics, technological shifts and societal change,' she said.

'According to the most recent census data in New Zealand while New Zealand as a nation has been growing at a rate of 17 per cent, the number speaking more than one language has been growing at a rate of 41 per cent.'

Another phenomenon, said Renton, is what she described as the loneliness epidemic. Compared to the Baby Boomer generation, Gen Z is 31 per cent more likely to feel lonely. Whilst the Baby Boomers had low technological engagement, Gen Z is highly engaged in technology. Social media is likely to be a culprit of loneliness for Gen Z however, 'while 74 per cent of students want to go off social media, they haven't because they would miss out on knowing what is happening in the world around them,' she said. The digital world is a challenge. While 82 per cent of students say they struggle with spending too much time on technology, 65 per cent said social media affected their mental health.

The challenge, said Renton, is not just getting kids off social media, it's making other social engagement more exciting. Rather

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than hiding behind a screen, they need to be enjoying the human community. Students remember how much their teacher cared about them, not how much they learned.

Add to this the challenges for schools of attracting and retaining staff, technological transformation, social changes, funding challenges, global influences, empowered parents (and students) and the growing focus on holistic student development and we can see that education has never been more taxing nor vulnerable to disruption, she said.

In her address she said she would be using the latest research to show what is having the greatest impact on transforming New Zealand and the future of the education sector.

Renton explained that social change was now enacted through schools and workplaces, rather than clubs or organisations like youth development organisations, service clubs, churches or religious organisations because involvement in clubs and organisations was changing, she said. This adds one more responsibility for schools, she said.

She briefly touched on the looming 'elephant-in-the-room' called Artificial Intelligence (AI) and assured her audience that people will control the future, not AI. 'The most valuable skills will be distinctively human characteristics,' she said.

She did acknowledge that the influence of AI would greatly increase, but did not believe it would eventually control humans. Perhaps hedging her bets, Renton then displayed a little anecdote that read:

'My husband asked me why I spoke so softly in the house. I said I was afraid Mark Zuckerberg was listening. He laughed. I laughed. Alexa laughed. Siri laughed.'

As her audience laughed, Renton shifted her focus to quality future focused learning environments and how to build thriving school communities. She first identified the three key components – teachers, parents and students – and shared her recent research insights.

'Her sample comprised 521 teachers, 557 parents and 350 students,' she said. First, she described the factors that contribute to the strengths and growth areas of thriving schools.

The most important strengths for teachers were student wellbeing, connection and belonging; for parents, student development and schooling experience; and for students, schooling experience and student development.

The most important growth areas for teachers were student development and leadership; for parents, connection and belonging and teaching; and for students, connection and belonging, leadership, and teaching.

Looking at the characteristics of strong school communities from the teacher's point of view, she found that when teachers had high engagement in the school community 74 per cent felt well supported by the school to provide a quality learning experience; 87 per cent trusted the school leadership and 77 per cent believe the school's leaders listen well.

When teachers have low engagement in the school community 30 per cent felt well supported by the school to provide a quality learning experience; 40 per cent trusted the school leadership and 38 per cent believe the school's leaders listen well.

When considering highly engaged school communities, parents felt that they belonged, and they believed that teachers catered for different learning styles.

Education has shifted from a service model to a partnership

model. Parents want this too. Looking after teachers looks after students and builds strong communities, she said.

'Principals who understand the times will influence the trends and shape the future,' said Renton.

She then introduced data on the impact of school leadership which can determine whether teachers consider leaving the profession or not.

What she found was that teachers were much more likely to stay in the profession if:

- They trust the leaders at the school
- The school leaders exemplify the school's culture and values
- The school's leaders listen well
- Teachers are well supported by the school to provide a quality learning experience

School leadership values and incorporates teacher input and feedback.

Feeling overwhelmed by workload drove 74 per cent of teachers to consider leaving and for those who did not consider leaving 67 per cent said their work/life boundaries were prioritised and respected. 'Bringing that balance between life and work is about leadership,' she said.

Leaders of schools face 'disruptors' too, said Renton, and top of her list was teacher burnout, followed by attracting and retaining teachers, supporting student mental health, growing parent expectations, tighter legislation and regulation for policies and procedures, changing student expectations, integrating AI into the classroom, online delivery of education, navigating student gender identities and deregulation of the curriculum.

Moreover, research into 'the world of work' shows that the new structure of work demands greater self-awareness and self-management, social and cultural awareness and skills for high performing teamwork. These skills include teamwork and collaboration, communication skills, problem solving skills and critical thinking.

It's a lot to be asking of schoolteachers and leaders, and if we want quality learning experiences for students, we need to invest in teachers and leaders. If we want to influence the future, we need to understand that it is shaped by the current trends, she said.

'Great education communities are focused not on the next programme, but the next generation,' she said.

Iain Taylor, Principal, Manurewa Intermediate School on turning around a failing school

Iain Taylor needs little introduction because he has been a school principal almost longer than he can remember. He told his audience that where he really learned about leading schools was as a first-time principal of a small, isolated rural school. Rural principals do everything from administration, leading the curriculum and teaching to sweeping the floors and putting out the rubbish, and all of this with one and a half hour's relief a week, he told his appreciative audience.

'To the rural school principals in the audience still doing all this today' he boomed, 'Big ups to you!' One critical learning from his rural school days, he said, was that you never ask anything of staff that you wouldn't be prepared to do yourself.

It is impossible to ignore Taylor's mega-personality. When he takes the stage, he owns it. He speaks in capital letters interspersed with colourful jets of exclamation marks. His thunderous voice and occasional irreverent diction are driven by his unmitigated

continued on p.30








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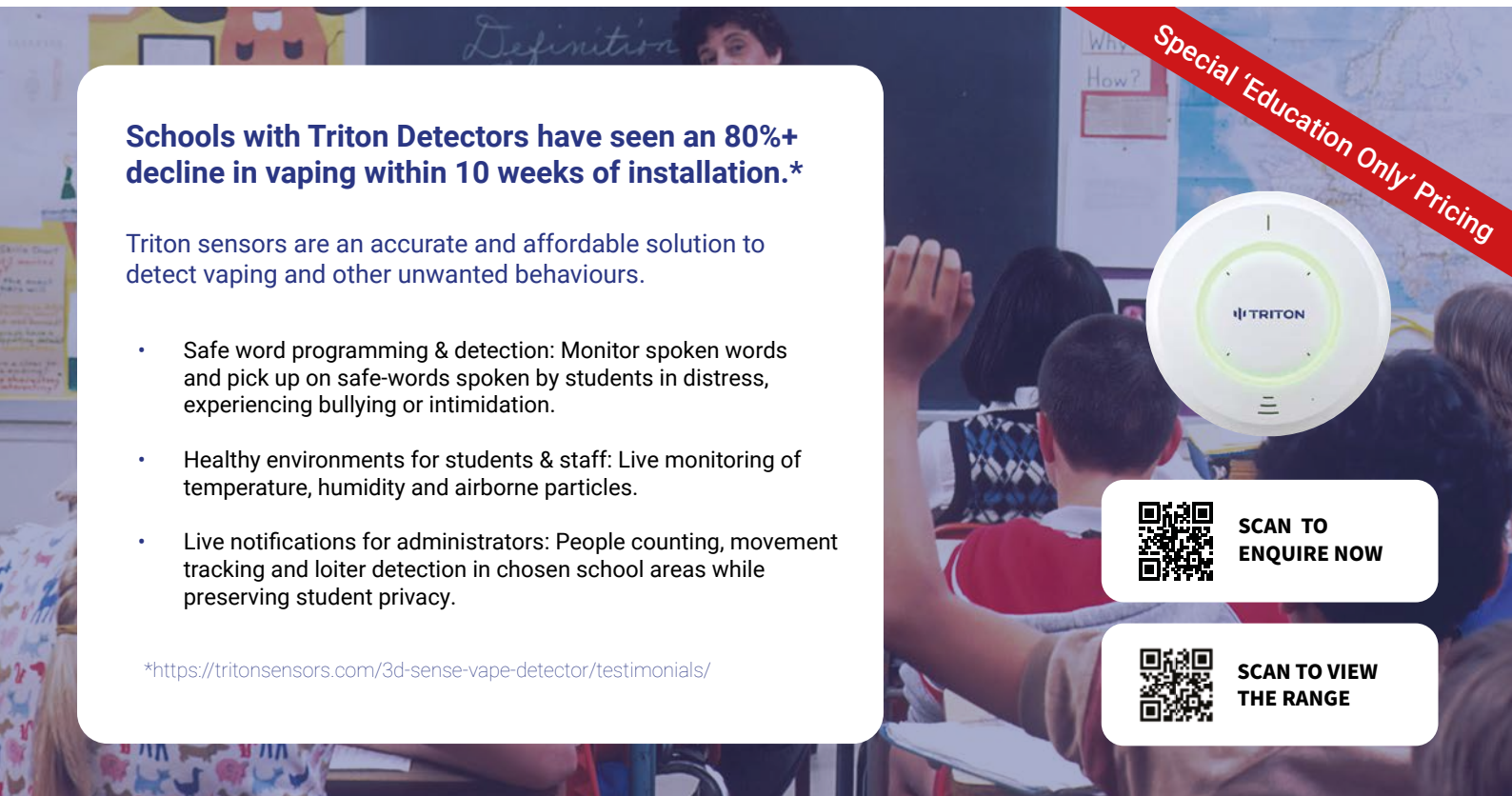
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passion. Taylor is an enthusiast who loves his job, loves the challenge of change and above all loves the kids in his school.

He was addressing principals to share his experience of transforming a failing school. He acknowledged that at the time, 'he was over' the mindset that only high decile schools could be successful, and he was looking for a challenge.

'In 2008, with 16 years of principalship behind me, I applied for the principal's role of Manurewa Intermediate, a decile 1A school which was under statutory management,' he said.

'Visiting the school for the first time, I was shocked. The school was run down and in poor repair. As I walked past one classroom, a desk came flying out the door followed by a screaming student and next a chair came crashing through a window,' he said.

'There was so much chewing gum everywhere, you could barely see the asphalt. Resources were negligible and classrooms still used blackboards and chalk. I was excited to see a new gym – only it leaked,' he laughed.

'The most recent ERO report said the students enjoy sports and the school's culture was about controlling behaviour, not learning,' he said.

Serious transformation was needed, he said, and urgent change is bloody hard work. I needed to know where I was going and all I had was a one-year plan – knowing I would need the staff to match it – and I would need total consistency.

I knew that personal influence would make the most positive impact, he said, and it was important not to get involved in personalities. I would have to reign in my own impatience and tone down my own personality to bond with staff. I would have to be consultative, he said. Cultivating trust and sharing ideas was imperative, so I would be in the trenches alongside the staff, holding small group check ins and having early 'commitment' conversations. To achieve educational outcomes my personal professional relationships would be critical.

Thinking practically, I got the waterblaster out. I figured if the school was clean and tidy it would be more appealing. 'Cleanliness and tidiness can be a trigger for many other things,' he said.

'School improvement had begun and next on the list was painting the school. I was lucky, I got that job done for free,' he said. Taylor says the environment makes a big difference to how kids feel about their school, and it affects their behaviour. 'They were now getting a beautiful school to respect and feel pride in,' he said.

In 2008 the school had the highest ever vandalism bill. Once it was tidied up that problem disappeared, he said.

Amidst the clean-up, said Taylor, I detected a smell. Unbeknownst to me, Manurewa Intermediate was a leaky school, he said, and then I discovered that the gymnasium also had a faulty floor. All of this was going to cost millions, and it did.

'When you have great people, schools pump,' said Taylor. 'Our school is together leading learning, and it is teachers who make



Iain Taylor

Manurewa Intermediate a great place for kids, giving them hope and optimism,' he said.

Taylor explained that what he needed next was a full staff of great people, who recognised that change was necessary.

'Leadership is about continuous learning, and leading by example,' he said. 'It takes courage, innovation and adapting to different situations. It is critical to invest in the people who will help you lead learning, have your back, laugh, and have fun,' he said.

Taylor came to recognise just how deep seated the problems at his school were, and that his philosophies for running a school were different from most of the staff. There were many conflicts, constant disruption and opposition to change. 'This kept me motivated, and I would not give up,' he said.

The school needed a culture change, and he needed a game plan to get the best staff. Taylor said that of the staff, only 22 were registered. Most were overseas teachers. Most were substandard, lacked commitment and had no experience in educating high needs students. On surveying the staff, he found that while they recognised the school was in a bad way, they expected someone else to fix it. They took no responsibility for their own ineffective practice and just blamed the kids. 'It is not ever the kids' fault,' he said. They expected the leader to fix everything. He found that a small core of the teachers was caring, and he would keep them.

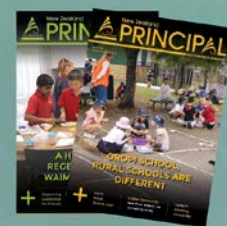
In the first few months, he realised how deep seated the problems were. 'Up to 200 kids would be missing each day,' he said. 'My job was to show them that Manurewa Intermediate was a great place to be. We had to make it worthwhile to come to school, and I had to make sure teachers were making learning relevant and absorbing,' he said. 'Students should want to walk into this place and just feel like this is an oasis. This is home. This is where they belong,' he said.

School rules are a big part of school culture and at Manurewa Intermediate, they all began with 'No,' he said. 'No gum, no



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swearing, no fighting . . .’ he said. ‘There was nothing positive.’ In addition, he said, for the safety of staff they did duty in pairs and had security guards on the gates. ‘Those interventions had to go, along with the brawling, fighting and screaming,’ he said. ‘The status quo was not an option.’

Fortunately, Taylor had an excellent Deputy Principal (DP) and recognised that together they could achieve great outcomes. He said an important lesson he learned from his DP was that the leader’s job is not to be an expert in everything or to know everything. It is to find people who are experts, surround yourself with those people, support them with PLD in what they don’t know and then be free to lead.

Schools are about people, said Taylor. To fix the school, he wanted to establish a leadership team of what he described as go getters. They would operate with high informality and high loyalty to each other. Together, they would form productive relationships. The teachers also had to be the best. Together, staff would celebrate achievements, be highly energised and enthusiastic.

I recruited some former colleagues, he said, for their charisma, chemistry and competence, and I knew they would pivot quickly. They would agree with my own mantra of ‘This school needs to be good enough for your OWN child, so teach as if you are teaching your own child,’ he said.

‘To go fast, you go alone. To go far, you go together,’ he said. Taylor knew that for success, he couldn’t proceed too quickly. Besides, Taylor wanted to do his homework, link his decisions to authentic research and get the detail right.

Having set the school’s vision ‘Moving On Up’ or MOU Magic, Taylor turned his attention to the school culture. First were the

school rules which would be written by the students themselves and would be positively based. They would reflect the students’ identity and culture, and what they valued. Taylor ran several workshops for the kids and together they wrote the rules, or ‘keys to success’ as they became known. These were based on:

- Manaakitanga – being kind, friendly, considerate, polite, respectful, effective communicators, compassionate, loving and caring.
- Manaaki Taiao – keeping a tidy environment, playing outside at break times, proud, ownership of the environment and recycling.
- Manaaki i Ahau – working hard, constructive, aroha/respect, motivated, punctual, positive, energised, correct uniform, personal hygiene, effort.

Alongside the students’ rules was a set of keys to success for the teachers, similarly, constructed by the teachers. These included, looking after each other, caring, fun, fair, humour, positive energy, passion, consistent, culturally aware, confident, understanding,

Environmental focused keys included being organised and tidy, a good role model, culturally aware, high expectations for property from books to toilet walls, no rubbish on the school grounds, report damage.

Staff wellbeing keys included unity, satisfaction in your lifestyle, open communication with staff, friendly, sharing ideas and concerns, socialising with other staff, including family in

continued on p.32



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school concerts and other school activities, supporting other staff, getting help for staff as needed.

In conclusion, Taylor said transforming a school is challenging and messy. It is serious work, and you are likely to upset a lot of people, especially those who are resistant to change.

Importantly, you need to know yourself well, your strengths and your weaknesses and remember that you are there to lead, not to know everything. Leaders are no better or more important than any other staff member, and EQ is just as important as IQ. Don't introduce too much at once, because for positive change to occur, you need everyone to be on board with you all the way.

And most importantly of all, never forget it's all about the kids. All decisions must be based on what is best for them and their future, he said.

Gilbert Enoka

In welcoming Gilbert Enoka to the stage, MC, Julian Wilcox, couldn't resist just one more jab at the Australian contingent. He turned to Enoka and said, 'Just tell us again, how many Bledisloe Cups did the All Blacks win during your time?' [The answer is 17.]

Gilbert Enoka was the All-Blacks Manager for Leadership and has had a long history of success as a mental skills coach for more than 22 years. He supports the players and staff to develop the skills needed to perform under pressure by creating effective systems and structures for the team to deliver results time and time again.

Enoka's days growing up, taught him an important life lesson. 'The past doesn't have to equal your future,' he said. Enoka's Cook Island father returned to the Islands when he was six months old. 'Our mother couldn't cope with us all (six boys) on her own, so we were sent to an orphanage in Marton, run by the Exclusive Brethren,' he said. 'That was my home for the next 12 years.'

'We were well treated there, but at the age of 12, I went back to live with my parents in Palmerston North. My father was an alcoholic, which made for a challenging household,' he said. 'I knew I had to get out and go it alone, so by the age of 16, I was off to Lyttleton,' he said.

'Choices not chances determine your destiny,' he said.

'I found a Physical Education course and started playing volleyball. People said I was very good, so I did more,' he said. 'Eventually I became a Physical Education teacher. Teachers are awesome and principals are fantastic,' he said to his appreciative audience.

'When teaching kids, I would start with the question - So, where are you at today?' he said. You make more progress by teaching the kid than by teaching the curriculum,' he said. Enoka then shared his 'four-minute rules of engagement', which were to connect before you correct, ask don't assume, and be curious, not critical. These comments drew affirmation from the audience of school principals who recognised the wisdom of his approach.

'Failure is a huge part of the learning process,' he said. 'People say you either win or you learn and they're right. Success is a lousy teacher,' he said.

'I was a volleyball representative at the time when Wayne Smith - revered rugby coach and assistant All Black coach - walked through my door,' he said. 'I was at the stage of wanting to unravel the challenges of the mind, so the two of us got chatting.'

This led to my focus on performance and pressure and managing the moments. Enoka explained that there's a combination of mindset and skillset which are crucial for success, but there's also

a third, equally important factor: structure. Together, mindset, skillset and structure make up Enoka's success triangle.

We understand what skills and a positive mindset are, he said, but structure is critical. Structure is the training and fitness, the nutrition, the hard slog, discipline and habits, he said.

'When the pressure is at its highest, champions don't necessarily raise their game, they just deliver brilliant basics,' said Enoka. 'What separates the greats from the not so greats is discipline in those moments of pressure,' he said. 'I was brought up to believe that to be great you must be at your best every day, but you don't. Be at your best when your best is needed,' he said. 'I was with the ABs for 23 years and I can say if, when under pressure, the team executes the basics well, is disciplined and brings their best when needed, they can manage the wobbles,' he said.

Turning to leadership and principalship, he said, ask yourself, who you want to be as a principal. 'Remember,' he warned, 'you will never rise above the opinion you have of yourself.' 'Know yourself, be yourself and stay yourself,' he said. 'Don't have a to do list – make a to be list and work on the things people can't take away from you.

'Ask yourself, what in your work gives you joy?', he said. 'Don't crush the joy. Vent about the joy. Make time to vent about your joy,' he said.

Enoka said, all leaders need a strategy and alongside it is your team. They must all be moving in the same direction. The reality is that things move around, but as the leader, you manage that.

If you want a successful team, school or organisation your greatest effort first goes into making sure everyone feels they belong, he said. That is the foundation on which you build your environment, set your values and your vision, he said. Make sure your vision energises and excites you, understand your current reality and you can build a successful culture.

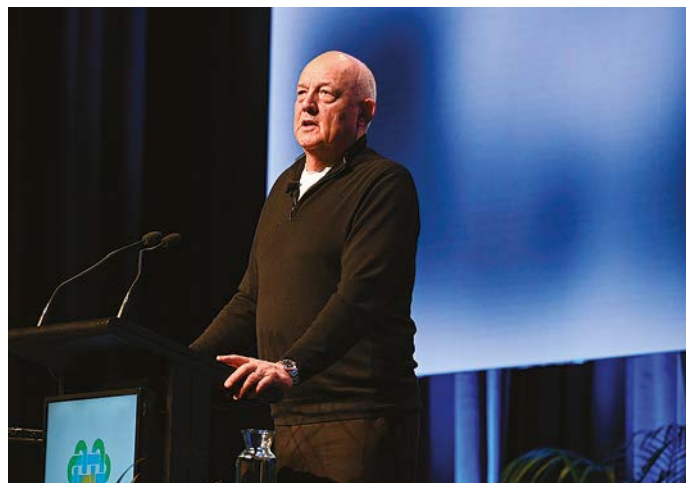
An inconvenient fact is [in any team, group, staff, organisation]:

- 32 per cent are energised committed superstars
- 51 per cent are neutral and do what's required
- 17 per cent are cave employees constantly against virtually everything.

Enoka had a long list of principles for managing teams, including teaching teams, which he shared with his audience. 'Irrespective of the sport code or the school you lead, you can be successful by following these principles,' he said.

Gilbert Enoka's Timeless principles:

1. No silver bullets. Magic is in the mahi.
2. Beware of garbage yardage – too much time wasted.
3. Dream big but remember every dream comes with a pair of overalls.
4. When you stay disciplined you create a vortex.
5. In the All Blacks you do it the right way and do it again.
6. Work smart and hard.
7. All students have a wish bone, back bone, and a funny bone.
8. Obstacles usually mean you're on the right track.
9. Just hoping will not work in parachuting or birth control.
10. Culture eats strategy for breakfast. Great cultures are caught not taught.
11. In my world of high performance teams it's all about brotherhood. The team towers above the individual. It's we, not me.
12. Standards and values. Sift out the fluffy values. I want to know what you stand for. Actions not intentions.



Gilbert Enoka

13. Love means action, trust means proof, and sorry means change.
14. Be where your feet are. Be in the conversation, with your mind and body in the same place.
15. Sometimes your impatience to win is the reason you lose. In the sporting context, it's all of me in every moment.
16. Structure your day and allow the work to stop.
17. Don't be interested in good, only great.
18. You must be at your best when the best is needed. Not all moments are equal. If you have to be at your best too often, it's time to look at your day.
19. Look for the gap or next step, create the gap, then bridge it.
20. The player who makes the team great is greater than a great player.
21. Doubt and fear are only problems if they trap you.
22. The language you use matters.
23. When you change how you look at things the things you look at change.
24. Be a leader worth following.
25. To handle yourself use your head, to handle others use your heart.
26. Anxiety only comes from the future or the past so focus on the present.

In the end, he said, it's You against You!

Principals always say, conferences are as much about the networking and social interactions, as the professional learning. What so often happens is that professional learning gets debated at social gatherings. The Trans-Tasman 2024 conference was no exception.

This year's conference was a wonderful celebration, much like a family reunion, as Australian and New Zealand principals learnt together, shared together and partied together. So many touching moments will live on well beyond the conference itself – like the sharing of the Australian children's tribute to Christchurch.

The ribbing and good-natured banter extended well beyond the auditorium walls – as it always does with our mates from 'over the ditch'. What brought us closer than ever was realising the many educational issues we have in common, which many of the speakers also highlighted. Equity would top the list alongside indigenous issues, literacy, numeracy and learning support.

Both countries of educators will be inspired, and strengthened in the wake of conference, which confirmed how connected we are, not just as people, but as whānau.





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THE POWER OF COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

Helen Kinsey-Wightman



I AM FORTUNATE TO have been welcomed into a great Professional Learning Group. Seven primary principals from a variety of schools, both town based and rural, who meet monthly. The host Principal chooses the venue, picks a short reading and pays for breakfast for the group. We start the hui with karakia and 'What's on top?' and then we talk about the reading. We employ a facilitator who keeps us all on track and makes a record of our hui which becomes a key part of our Professional Growth Cycle.

The power of this group is not that we all share the same educational philosophy and work in the same way. We don't. The power of this group is that it creates a safe space where we can share the joys, stresses and challenges of leadership with others who understand and whom we trust to keep it real. It is a safe space to be vulnerable – our group is made up of four male and three female principals and there are times when tears are shed and frustration is shared.

Unsurprisingly, we often talk about the amount of time and money we spend trying to meet the needs of tamariki who struggle to learn in classrooms and to regulate their emotions in the playground. It is apparent from the discussion that despite our considerable expertise and hardwork all of us are struggling. In our most recent hui, one of my Principal colleagues shared frustration at how much leadership time and energy this relatively small number of children consume and wondered whether we just need to get tougher with stand downs and suspensions. My instinctive response was to shake my head because this doesn't fit with my view of PB4L and restorative practice – but I stayed silent because I see that my kaiako are working so hard at rewarding desired behaviour but for some kids this just doesn't seem to make a difference and I know stand down days at my kura have increased this term.

At this point another colleague, who has been exploring trauma informed practice began to talk about a book she has been listening to by Dr. Ross Greene, that has deeply challenged her thinking.

I travel 35 minutes to school and on the way home I listen to audiobooks, so I added *Lost at School* to my reading list. Because the last week of Term 3 didn't seem like the time to take on a big piece of professional reading, I prioritised a light hearted novel. *The Rosie Project*¹ follows Don Tillman, a socially awkward genetics professor, who attempts to create a scientifically based Wife Project to overcome his ineptitude at dating. The book and the two other novels in the trilogy are laugh out loud funny, charting Dr. Tillman's progress through dating, marriage and fatherhood. He marries 'the world's most incompatible woman' and has a son. The final novel, *The Rosie Result*, sees Don working through his son Hudson's schooling; Hudson exhibits many of

his father's traits and the school wants him to have an Autism assessment. I found the series an unexpectedly thought provoking journey through neurodiversity. During the school holidays I embarked on my colleague's recommendation.

In *Lost at School*,² Dr. Ross Greene looks at why kids struggle with behaviour and how adults can help. He introduces the Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) model, which is all about understanding that 'kids do well if they can.' Greene argues that traditional discipline methods like punishment or rewards don't work because they don't get to the root of the problem. Instead, he suggests collaborating with kids to figure out what's causing the behaviour and solving it together. The key steps of the CPS process are as follows:

1. Identify Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems

Lagging Skills: Identify the specific skills the child lacks (e.g., difficulty with emotional regulation, flexibility, frustration tolerance).

Unsolved Problems: Identify the unsolved problems or situations in which the child's lagging skills cause difficulties. Greene provides a tool called the Assessment of Skills and Unsolved Problems (ASUP)³ to help adults to identify the specific skills and problems. All of his resources are available free to use online at Livesinthebalance.org.

2. Plan B: The Collaborative Problem-Solving Process

Plan B is the core of the CPS approach and involves a collaborative process between the adult and the child to solve a problem together. It has three key steps:

a) Empathy Step

Goal: Understand the child's perspective on the unsolved problem.

Approach: Engage in a conversation with the child to gather information about what's going on for them. Adults should ask open-ended questions and listen carefully without judgement.

Example question: 'I've noticed you've been getting frustrated during maths. What's going on?'

b) Define the Problem Step

Goal: Express the adult's concerns and share how the unsolved problem affects others.

Approach: The adult explains their perspective, focusing on how the problem impacts the child's learning, relationships, or the classroom environment.

Example: 'I'm concerned because when you get frustrated during maths, it's hard for you to focus and learn, and sometimes it interrupts the class.'

c) Invitation Step

Goal: Collaboratively generate solutions that address both the child's and the adult's concerns.

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Approach: Invite the child to brainstorm potential solutions, aiming for a realistic and mutually satisfactory outcome.
Example: ‘I wonder if there’s something we can try to help you feel less frustrated during maths. Do you have any ideas?’

3. Implement the Solution and Follow-Up

Once a solution is agreed upon, it’s important to implement it and follow up to see how well it’s working. If the solution doesn’t fully resolve the issue, return to Plan B to adjust the approach.

4. Use of Plan B Regularly

CPS encourages using Plan B regularly, especially when behavioural challenges arise. The goal is to address unsolved problems proactively, helping to reduce challenging behaviours over time.

5. Avoid Plan A (Imposing Adult Will)

Plan A involves imposing adult will on the child (e.g., using punishments or rewards). CPS suggests minimising Plan A because it can escalate challenging behaviour and doesn’t teach the child the skills they need to solve the problem.

The book gives lots of examples of how this approach works in real classrooms, showing that when teachers and students collaborate, the result is a more peaceful and productive learning environment. Greene emphasises that it takes time, communication, and respect from both sides to make this work.

To me, *Lost at School* offers a step that is missing from both PB4L and Restorative Practice. I know that our tamariki can reflect on their behaviour and contribute ideas and this is built into my restorative practice model – after a tamaiti has put things right I ask them, ‘What can we do differently so this doesn’t

happen again?’ But why wait for things to go wrong before having this conversation – why not have proactive Plan B conversations?

I have also been wrestling with my feelings around stand down and suspensions. I follow Trauma Informed Educators NZ on Facebook – this week they shared an American Academy of Pediatrics report⁴ on research over 20 years which concludes that suspensions and expulsions can have lifelong consequences, don’t necessarily deter misbehaviour and disproportionately impact students from marginalised communities. What does the AAP recommend? That schools reduce the use of exclusionary discipline through trauma-informed practices, as well as collect and analyse discipline data to identify areas for improvement.

As Maya Angelou said, ‘Do the best you can until you know better. Then, when you know better, do better.’

NOTES

- 1 Simson, G. *The Rosie Project*, Bolinda/Audible 2014.
- 2 Greene, R.W. *Lost at School*, Brilliance Audio 2015.
- 3 <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1d5v5ZxxvEESEuSUK6cRcUCR39CpXGtLa1rMGmFZZs/edit?tab=t.0>
- 4 <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/154/4/e2024068466/199495/School-Suspension-and-Expulsion-Policy-Statement?autologincheck=redirected>



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Arson prevention in schools

Schools can become an easy target for arson attacks. On average across the motu there are 230 suspicious fires in schools every year.

1

Keep rubbish bins and skips well away from outside walls

- We recommend you keep all fixed bins and wheelie bins at least two metres away from all buildings.
- Lock and secure bins so they can't be moved up against buildings.
- Empty bins every night and weekend if school grounds are being used e.g. sports and fairs.
- Lock recycle bin lids after hours.

FACT Most unwanted fires in schools are started using easy to burn, accessible items such as rubbish and dry vegetation.

2

Remove materials that can be used to set fires

- Remove loose combustible items from under buildings e.g. timber and desks.
- Monitor school boundaries, as nearby rubbish can be easily carried to school grounds.

FACT Most school fires lit by young people are opportunistic.

3

Install/increase security lights

- Leave external lights on or increase timer periods for sensor lights.
- Cut back vegetation to make school buildings more visible and minimise places for arsonists to hide.

FACT The most damaging fires are set at night. Additional security lights and surveillance systems help reduce fires and vandalism in schools.

4

Involve the community

Ask neighbours and parents to keep an eye on the school and report any fires and serious vandalism to Police immediately.

5

Confront all fire-setting behaviour – no matter how small

- Report minor fire lighting to Police as it has been shown it is likely to continue
- Increase night security patrols
- **Ahikura** – We work with taiohi (young people) who are curious about fire through to those who have undertaken risky fire behaviour. Ahikura Whānau-Centred Fire Education is here to teach our taiohi and their whānau (family) how to be safe around fire. If you want more information about Ahikura, get in touch with us.



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- Record all information about fire-setting incidents for possible use by Fire and Emergency.

FACT Schools often have a spate of small fires on their grounds before a major arson attack.

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