

NEW ZEALAND PRINCIPALS' FEDERATION

ANNUAL PRESIDENTS' MOOT

“Principals Taking the Lead”

President's 2015 Moot Speech

Welcome everybody. Looking around this room tells me NZPF is in really good heart. As leaders of your regions you have come here today in big numbers to represent the principals from your local areas. It is this representation that gives NZPF its shape and makes it relevant, credible and real. That in turn gives our executive the confidence that with you behind us we can be the most respected and most influential advocate for principals in New Zealand.

My aspiration as President of NZPF is above all to lift the status of our profession. I will tell the parents of NZ that we **will** lead high quality teaching and learning programmes in our schools. That our schools will be inclusive, safe and culturally sound and we **will** prepare their children to be great all-round 21st century citizens. I want to give parents the confidence and the certainty that at their local school, their children will receive the finest quality public education that it is possible to deliver.

This is not an unrealistic aspiration, provided that our educational policy landscape is benign and supportive.

It would be fair to say that since 2008 our profession has been struggling to feel optimistic and on top of things. We have witnessed a parade of policies which have been largely disempowering if not downright demoralising. It began with national standards and Public Achievement Information or the publishing of national standards results which the media could then turn into league tables. Then we had Novopay, charter schools, IES and now EDUCANZ. In between we have lost Ministry subject advisors, PLD programmes, special education is in a mess, we have 270,000 kids in poverty, a 'Grand Canyon' of a gap between the richest and poorest families and every day our parents and communities are looking to us to solve all the social problems.

Throughout these turbulent times, we have all continued to try hard to make sure our kids and their learning are front and centre of all our decision making. As professionals we know what is best for the kids in our schools; we know what is needed to boost the achievement of our kids and as leaders of our schools, we know what our teachers need to be the best teachers they can possibly be. What we have been experiencing for too long is frustration after frustration at not being able to pursue the course of action that we know is best for our kids.

The NZPF executive has been trying hard to put less focus on the frustrating aspects of policy and applying more energy into looking at ways we can help schools achieve their goals.

One area of concern for many schools is that Māori children have not been achieving as well as they might. NZPF recognised that although every school has a copy of the Māori education strategy, Ka Hikitia, many (especially Pakeha) principals have no idea how to unpack it. It just sits gathering dust on the shelf. Led by the NZPF Māori reps, a partnership was forged between Te Akatea, NZPF and the Ministry to develop what we call the Māori Achievement Collaboratives or MACs. These are clusters of principals in an area, led by a facilitator who has experience and knowledge in how to engage with iwi, who knows Tikanga Māori, knows how to build relationships and connections and most importantly how to apply the Ka Hikitia strategy in schools. The MACs are a positive response to an identifiable need. Through the astute and careful leadership of the facilitators, the principals in the MACs have been challenged to look deep into themselves and examine their own constructions of cultural awareness. Through sharing ideas with the group there has been a huge shift for many and for the first time these principals are on a positive journey to understanding an alternative world view and through their work in the MACs they are beginning to appreciate what it means for Māori to succeed as Māori.

The work of the MACs has been independently evaluated by a group of researchers from AUT and the evaluation shows we are making very good progress. I extend a very warm welcome to Ros Mc Quillan Mains who will be talking

to us later in the day about how the MACs work in practice. Ros is a facilitator in the Kahukura cluster, in Christchurch, which is my own MAC cluster. We know that there are principals all over the country who want to join in. Our limitation with the MACs is that we haven't yet identified enough facilitators to establish more MAC clusters. As the movement grows, we recognise that we will need a full time and fully paid national co-ordinator to administer the project and we have yet to secure the necessary funding for that position.

I want to publicly thank Hoana Pearson, who unfortunately can't be with us today, for all the work she has done so far not just as a MAC facilitator but also for taking on the report writing and for co-ordinating the project, this is while she was working full time as a principal and now in the Ministry. Hoana is 100% committed to this project as the means by which she knows we can make a difference for the success of our tamariki. The work she is doing is completely voluntary and in addition to all her other work, so from all of us a big thank you Hoana. I want to also publicly thank the MAC facilitators who, like Hoana, are doing this work voluntarily, in addition to running their own schools. The MACs could not have got off the ground without your generosity and commitment to your colleagues and our tamariki. So our very special thanks to the facilitators too.

I also want to acknowledge the participation of the Ministry in this project. The Ministry members who have helped us guide the project have shown the same enthusiasm and strength of commitment to the MACs as we have and I thank them very much for that. The Ministry has generously funded the travel and release time for our facilitators to allow the project to get established. With such positive results so far for a high priority group of learners, with the independent evaluation showing the success of the project and with the high interest from the sector I trust that our Secretary for Education Peter Hughes will see fit to not just continue the funding for the project but to increase it so that we can reach our goal of higher participation across the country to lift the achievement of even more tamariki in more regions.

This year NZPF will be turning its attention to another priority group, our Pacific Island children. We thank Enosa Auva'a for challenging us to think about why Pasifika children have been designated priority learners and what can be done to turn around the fortunes of Pasifika peoples in New Zealand. Already we have invited Pasifika Ministry staff to address our executive and we thank Gabby and Deb for appraising us of the work the Ministry is engaged in for Pasifika.

Our goal is to encourage all principals to implement a Pasifika plan for their school. The Pasifika strategy has been distributed to us all, but just as with Ka Hikitia, principals need some guidance in how to translate the strategy into practice. We want to see all Pasifika strategy documents dusted off the shelves and transformed into plans that are appropriate for each and every school.

Our first step has been to look for examples of good practice and we have begun setting up a cache of resources on our NZPF website to help you get started. You will find them at <http://www.nzpf.ac.nz/node/883> or just click on the quick link on our home page for 'Pasifika Education'.

The collection includes two Manurewa Intermediate documents as examples of a school Pasifika plan and the plan's analysis for which we thank Iain Taylor - and also a video for establishing a Pasifika focus at Manurewa Intermediate. We intend to keep adding to this collection and we look forward to contributions from schools throughout New Zealand who are making Pasifika a focus. This afternoon you will have an opportunity to unpack the key documents and share practices

These are just two ways that NZPF is taking the lead in helping schools raise achievement for two groups of kids identified as priority. We don't want to stop there. We want to encourage you all to take the lead in your own areas, unshackle yourselves from the burdens of inhospitable policies and refocus on what matters for kids.

That is why we have called this Moot 'Taking the Lead'. Perhaps a better title would be 'Taking BACK the Lead'. We have crafted a programme for today which is going to focus on leading and more leading. We will hear about leading in e-learning and growing leaders in your school. We will hear about leading in the special needs area and using collaboration to support mainstream schools to access special expertise. We will also hear about leadership in a local

collaborative cluster and how to build staff capability through PLD and appraisal. In advance I thank Stephen Lethbridge, James Le Marquand, Kaylene Macnee and Mike Anderson for leading us through these topics today.

I also want to thank all of you who responded to the survey we sent out prior to this moot. And I am pleased to say that quite a number of the issues that are of prime importance to you in your regions have been included in today's programme.

One of those burning issues is 'Special Education'. To put it bluntly, you have told us that special needs is in a mess! You rated the problems for special education as being your greatest concern. Well you are not alone. The Ministry agrees with you and wants to work closely with you to untangle the mess and streamline the processes. They will begin work through April/May to visit you in the regions and seek your participation in giving them constructive feedback on the state of special needs right now and they are asking you to co-construct a way forward alongside them. I encourage each and every one of you, as leaders in your regions, to take this opportunity with two hands and provide the Ministry with the all-important information and advice they need so that you can get the best support to help your special needs children in your schools.

Perhaps of greatest surprise was learning what is going really well in your regions. As I read through the responses the dominant word was collaboration, followed by collaboration and more collaboration. Yes, what the profession does best and most successfully is collaboration. So we probably don't really need a government policy to tell us to collaborate. But a policy that said our collaborative projects can be funded – now there would be a useful policy!

We know there is still much work to do especially in the special needs and PLD areas. For these two topics, I will be taking my lead from the presentations later in the day and will be listening carefully to the debates on these topics because listening to your views will help me and the executive identify the priority areas for our own advocacy work on your behalf.

I opened my speech saying that my ambition as President is to raise the status of our profession. That means sidelining all the issues that oppress us and drag us down. We will continue to work with the Ministry to support you in your work so we can all apply 100% of our attention, energy and enthusiasm to making things better for our children. We need to 'Take the lead' and I can think of no better first step, than inviting you as leaders of your regions, to join me in this mission because together we can achieve what alone, we never could.

Kaua e mate wheke, mate ururoa

Don't die like an octopus, die like a hammerhead shark