



PRINCIPAL MATTERS

NGĀ TUMUAKI O AOTEAROA

THE MOST RESPECTED AND INFLUENTIAL ADVOCATE FOR NEW ZEALAND'S PRINCIPALS

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President's Message



Kia ora e te whānau

The NZPF/Ministry of Education curriculum road trip has rolled forward this week with valuable meetings in Hamilton and Auckland.

We have been discussing the New Zealand Curriculum (2007) and the challenges that confront us.

To understand these challenges, we need to return to the design intent of the New Zealand Curriculum.

Underpinning the 2007 NZC was a recognition that the vast quantities of new knowledge generated by the information age made the learning of formal discrete knowledge in each curriculum discipline an impossible task. It was felt that knowledge should be generated in 'just in time' settings rather than 'just in case' it was needed. Within this approach, knowledge reflected curriculum contexts that were localised, and problem based.

An explicit goal of the NZC was its generic design (think Essence Statements) that required the application of local contexts so that relevant local knowledge goals could be joined to national 'big picture' curriculum statements. This process of localisation favoured giving students significant control over their learning. Students were able to decide what they learned

about, and this sometimes meant that core discipline knowledge that did not reflect a student driven context, was not taught.

Many teachers found themselves guessing at what the curriculum required of them. Teaching became subjugated to what was of relevance to the learner. Teaching was understood as facilitation of student enthusiasm.

We powered up the learner and disempowered the teacher.

In the recent televised Q&A debate on the nature of New Zealand's achievement challenges, I noted the tension implicit in the debate about who owns the knowledge – the learner or the teacher?

The debate was evenly split with traditionalists stacked on one side advocating for clear, explicit teaching goals and deliberate acts of teaching within an unambiguous curriculum. On the other side were the progressivists who were flying the flag of localised, inquiry approaches rooted in context and culture.

It was a shame that the debate encouraged such a simplistic organising principle between teaching and learning. We tend to fall to the binary response when dealing with complex ideas. The truth is that it is not one or the other, it is both!

Clear, explicit, discipline-based teaching goals are important and so too are pathways to help students make sense of knowledge in ways that are relevant and meaningful.

The alchemy of teaching has never been about letting students 'learn what they want' but rather for the teacher to lead students towards powerful understanding. Of course, the knowledge that underpins that understanding should be curriculum based because that is what a state school system commits to when implementing a national curriculum.

We have become overly enamoured with student centeredness to the extent that teaching appears to have become a 'dirty word'. I recently heard about a teacher that did not want to call out faulty thinking in a child's theory of the world in case they undermined the child and hijacked their theory.

Let's call this out for the nonsense that it is.

Young people are immature in their understanding of the world. A teacher's job is to lead young people to new and challenging learning. We know powerful learning occurs when we connect prior knowledge to new knowledge, to work from the known into the unknown. Leading young people to new knowledge does not disable them as learners, it does the opposite; it enables them!

We need to urgently confirm the importance of explicit teaching goals linked to a clear discipline-based curriculum and then celebrate the incredible talent of our teaching workforce and the many creative ways that they lead young people into knowing. Holding explicit teaching goals should not stop young people engaging in local context or problem-based learning to enrich curriculum learning, but it should occur in an environment where the teacher is crystal clear about the importance of deep curriculum learning with strong, purposeful teacher intention.

Briar Lipson writing in her book, *New Zealand's Education Delusion* has been harshly critical of New Zealand's commitment to child-centred schooling. If learning whatever you want in an environment of flimsy curriculum understanding and without the adequate challenge that arises from carefully curated teaching is what she means, then she has a point. However, any educator that holds such a view of child-centeredness in a New Zealand context is simply supporting a laissez-faire way of working.

Such an approach has no place in our education system.

Counter to this, New Zealand teachers have never embraced a 'flip-top' head approach to teaching where the teacher is the expert and simply pours their knowledge into the student. Such an approach ignores the opportunity to help the young person make meaning as they experience challenges carefully built into the process of learning. Powerful child-centredness values children's emerging theories about the world but never fails to challenge faulty thinking to drive young people towards a deep and appropriate understanding of the curriculum. That, after all, is the nature of teaching.

Child-centredness is an expression of the value of engaging the child in the process of learning so that teaching can be informed by a rigorous understanding of the potential and the fallibility of a child's knowledge, to lead the child more expertly into knowing.

It is time to check and reset our expectations for teacher knowledge of curriculum. We need to rediscover our mettle as teachers, confirm the importance of being clear about what the curriculum requires, and then join it to teaching that builds challenge for young people.

I look forward to talking with you directly about these matters when the NZPF/Ministry of Education curriculum road trip rolls into your neck of the woods over the next few weeks.

Congratulations

So many wonderful educators were acknowledged in the recent Queen's Birthday honours. We particularly want to call out two principals who have made us all very proud.

Helen Varney (Order of Merit) for services to education, particularly Pacific education. Helen is an outstanding professional most recently leading Target Road Primary School,

from 2012 to 2020. She now leads Tautai o le Moana, a community of practice strengthening the capability of principals to improve outcomes for Pasifika learners.

We also recognise Dave Appleyard (Order of Merit) who has been involved in education for 41 years and was latterly Principal of Rata Street School in Naenae from 2002 to 2020. Amongst many other things, Dave challenged the view that a school's decile is a proxy for quality.

Ngā manaakitanga

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NZPF Notices



Don Le Prou Awards 2021

NZPF congratulates the following successful applicants for the Don Le Prou awards 2021:

Kere Adams	Waihao Downs School
Rachelle Haslegrave	Tarras School
Andrew Kemp	Broomfield School
Michelle Nell	Ahuroa School
Judith Smallbone	Upper Atiamuri School
Teresa Topp	Waikite Valley School
Darryn Ward	Tihiraki North Loburn School
Rachel Weinberg	Ngākuru School
Wayne Whitney	Hikutaia School

Tauri Morgan Memorial Awards 2021

NZPF congratulates the following successful applicants for the Tauri Morgan Memorial awards 2021:

Rachael Coll	Waihi Beach School
Suzanne Goodin	Holy Family School
Melanie Taite	Tuahiwi School



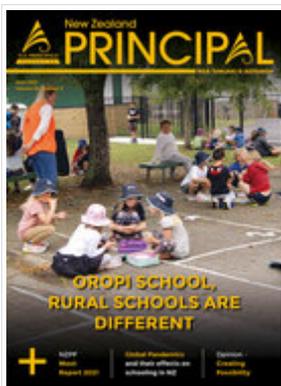
NZPF Conference - Rotorua

This year's conference theme is Power, Passion, Pace; Pai tū Pai hinga! Whakamaua kia tina! This signifies a need to renew,

refresh and move ahead after an unusually fragmented year in 2020.

The conference will be held at the Energy Events Centre, Rotorua on 2-4 August 2021.

For further details and to register for the conference, please go to www.nzpfconference.com.



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