



# PRINCIPAL MATTERS

NGĀ TUMUAKI O AOTEAROA

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

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## Issue 27, 7 August 2020

### President's Message



Kia ora e te whānau

We must never be a profession afraid to ask the hard questions for fear of offending each other.

On the recent NZPF road trip I asked principals about the future of Kāhui Ako. I was interested to know if principals supported the current model or whether they thought change was warranted.

The overwhelming response was a clear call for change.

This call was not a rejection of collaboration. It was a call to redesign the current model so that 85% of the funding was not spent on staffing. It was a call for a model to prioritise the funding of shared professional learning and not direct schools to cluster with each other artificially. Rather, it would support schools to choose meaningful partnerships that make educational sense.

There was recognition that much of the \$100m expensed annually on staffing would be better spent on front line support for young people in need.

I was humbled by the bravery and generosity of such a call. It speaks volumes of principals that they wish to champion collaboration and see it as a professional responsibility, without having to receive targeted remuneration.

Principals urgently need more resources to respond to students with mental health needs, who are violent or in crisis, and who require targeted learning support. Considering the serious fiscal challenges confronting our country now and, in the years ahead, principals want to prioritise funding to get the greatest value from the limited funding in the 'Education' purse.

As we think about the potential of a new way forward, let's look back and remind ourselves of the roots of the Kāhui Ako model.

This was a model of collaboration conceived by a National government who called the policy, 'Investing in Educational Success'. At its heart were clusters of schools led by a 'super principal' or as John Key described it in 2014, 'executive principals' who were the 'best principals with proven track records'. These principals would receive recognition and substantial monetary reward.

The approach had a strict focus on a pipeline of effort to see students' National Standards data improve. The goal was to 'lift' student performance.

The policy was launched as Communities of Schools, later softened to 'Communities of Learning (CoLs)'.

Many schools reported being directed by the Ministry of Education into a cluster relationship with other schools sometimes cutting across established relationships with schools nearby. Many schools reported feeling uncomfortable about forced collaboration and reported that they joined a CoL because they feared they would miss out on services and associated resources.

'CoL', later called Kāhui Ako was a corporate structure imposed on schools. Until then, principals had always valued non-hierarchical relationships and a belief that collaboration was a human experience borne of shared effort.

Many principals rightly believe that forced collaboration isn't collaboration at all!

With the change of Government and disestablishment of National Standards, CoLs morphed into Kāhui Ako and aspects of the model softened. The achievement challenges, previously based on National Standards, broadened and many principals

have worked hard to make something of them. Those principals in Kāhui Ako acknowledge the value of shared professional learning for staff. The good will and effort of principals and teachers in Kāhui Ako is acknowledged but there remains real difficulty in articulating the impact on the learning of young people.

The simple truth is that this policy of corporate collaboration and performance pay has not landed coherently across all schools. The national picture is a messy soup with some schools in and some schools out. Schools in Kāhui Ako receive resources such as significant funding for professional learning or *Learning Support Coordinators* that other schools do not have access to. The national picture is far from desirable. It is inequitable and unfair.

We must lift our sights beyond our own local circumstances. We are committed to young people in our own community, and we are equally committed to an education system that is fair and functioning for everyone. Anything less is not satisfactory.

That is why we need to galvanize as a profession and grow a more inclusive and natural way of supporting collaboration.

We have a wonderful opportunity to insist on a new approach that supports horizontal relationships between schools in a way that is ethical and equitable.

There are marvellous examples around.

The Upper Hutt cluster is one such community. It is not a Kāhui Ako having always insisted that they did not need Kāhui Ako to collaborate.

The Upper Hutt cluster has 12 primary schools, 2 state integrated full primary schools, 2 intermediate schools, 2 secondary schools, 2 state integrated secondary schools and the regional kindergarten association.

The Upper Hutt cluster has a strategic plan and action goals:

- To develop agentic learners across the cluster (actions focus on the development of a coherent pathway or shared understanding of essential student knowledge and understanding, as well as developing effective transition processes)
- To enact a shared resource model and plan that considers people, funds, time and their allocation across the cluster (actions focus on the establishment of UHub-a multi-agency group working together to support our vulnerable learners)
- To strengthen the professional capability of teachers and leaders (actions here are in communities of practice with the provision of PLD for senior leaders, middle leaders, and teachers across the cluster through shared cluster Teacher Only Days, PLD and reciprocal school visits).

Within each strategic goal, there is a group of principals who are responsible for activating a work stream. There are lead groups of teachers within goals who work on the action plans.

The Upper Hutt cluster is not over-burdened by achievement goals. Most importantly it affords an equal status to every teacher and principal participating without paying leaders to participate.

Collaboration and strong horizontal relationships are part of the DNA of Kiwi principalship.

Let's talk about how we grow a new approach that captures the ethos of non-hierarchical relationships where everyone is committed to working together because they choose to not because they are told to.

Let's redirect a good portion of the Kāhui Ako spend to young people in need. Let's put the ethos of educators back in the driving seat and deliver a great Christmas present for our system of schooling and for the young people of Aotearoa New Zealand!

Ngā manaakitanga

Perry Rush

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## NZPF Notices



### NZPF Electronic Ballot

This morning all **financial members** of NZPF, will have received an invitation from electionz.com to vote on a Notice of Motion.

If supported by two thirds of eligible voters, it will allow for one of the 12 NZPF National Executive members to be a Māori principal, endorsed by Te Akatea Māori Principals' Association. This change would take effect at the next Executive election in 2021.

The NZPF Executive unanimously endorsed the proposed motion which is entirely consistent with our own goals and principles and gives effect to our obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

We have chosen the option of electronic ballot, to allow as many of you as possible to participate.

As you are aware, we are not holding our Trans-Tasman conference this year due to COVID, and attendance at our AGM in September is therefore likely to be substantially impacted.

Normally, this motion would be voted on at our AGM, however our constitution also allows for electronic ballot.

I encourage all of you to respond to the motion to give us a clear result.

Perry Rush

PRESIDENT



## NZ Principal Magazine also Online

You and/or your team members can easily access the NZ Principal Magazines online, as an e-magazine or as a PDF. Additionally you can search for a previous issue, an article by title or by the author of the article. All magazines back to Term 1 2012 are available in this format. To view or search click [here](#).

## Useful Information



## WENZ Wellbeing in Education Conference

Join the team of respected local and international speakers at *Wellbeing in Education, he ākonga aumangea, he ākonga tū maia* – New Zealand's largest wellbeing conferences this September.

Coming to Auckland for the first time on 13-14 September and back for a fourth year in Christchurch on 16-17 September, both conferences are a must for anyone wanting to learn, share and connect with others around the important work of building hauora wellbeing in and across our school communities.

Click [here](#) to register now.

Take a look at [plenary speakers](#).

Check out the conference programmes in [Auckland](#) or [Christchurch](#).

## Business Partners

NZPF assures its business partners that, as members, you will contact them to have a conversation if you are purchasing products, services or solutions for your schools that a business partner supplies. Please support our partners as their assistance to NZPF means better membership services to you.

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