



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

There are many lessons this COVID age has taught us. Chief amongst them is the realisation that technology is an ubiquitous presence in our lives.

Whether as a tool to enable connection during lockdowns or access to digital learning, it has been enormously helpful. Despite this, I am concerned about our deference to screens and the impact this is having on the type of education that is vital for developing minds.

I note two significant issues with digital learning.

The first is the use of screens for low value learning that robs young people of rich and challenging tasks, experiencing the world primarily through their senses. Early language development is positively correlated to the quality of these interactive real-world experiences.

The esteemed kiwi educator Elwyn Richardson knew this. The quality of his students writing was built from stories inspired by the rural environment his students lived and played in. He knew the richer the experiences of the world, the richer his student's writing. The use of the environment, music, clay, myth, and story was a strategy to grow imagination, explore ideas, build meaning and turbo charge language development.

Digital learning is hugely advantageous when it does something that can't be achieved through other means. The problem is that many students trade time that could be spent working in rich primary modes with pre-packaged digital dross or low-level digital objects that could easily be replicated using other simple approaches. In doing so they lose valuable time that would be better spent on learning that is demanding. We must take a long hard look at children's use of some technologies and question what it is costing young people.

A second concern is the compelling nature of the digital experience. Technology is not neutral. It is not a blank canvass to be painted on at will by the user. Technology and the businesses who have developed and marketed the many programmes and apps our children use have a vested interest in making sure people are compelled to use and return to use them. There is a reason for the 'like' thumb! Research has demonstrated the significant addictive effect of technology on young people and the impact of constant dopamine hits on the brain. It appears that the Chinese are onto it! Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, adds a time limit of 40 minutes per day for children under 14 and bans night-time use.

Of course, there is much to gain from technology and the incredible connectivity, access to information, and use of new literacies such as single digital objects that combine sound, image, moving pictures, and text (think a movie or interactive presentation). I argue that we should be discerning users of technology or as the author Carl Newport describes, digital minimisers, only encouraging use when technology clearly adds value to learning and the wellbeing of young people.

Many young people have carte blanche access to technology in their homes or community. Understanding that schooling is an opportunity to provide balance is key, particularly as young people require learning experiences at school that help them to develop as a whole person. This means moving away from the dominance of screen centric learning to learning from and with people and the environment. This sort of learning provides balance in powering up language development, the capability at the heart of being literate.

It is time to audit your digital learning! Are you confident that young people are using devices for the right reason? Do you judge sufficient time is available to explore the world through other modalities?

Have a think, and if you are concerned then take action. Raise it with your team and use a simple traffic light thinking tool to agree; what stops (red), what you push pause on (amber), and what you enable (green).

Welcome to Haley Milne

Along with the principals elected to the NZPF Executive in 2022, I want to congratulate Haley Milne on her appointment by Te Akatea to the NZPF Executive as Tumuaki Māori, an inaugural appointment being the first since NZPF enacted change to its constitution to ensure Tumuaki Māori representation on NZPF as a matter of right.

I know Haley will be a passionate advocate for Māori tamariki and rangatahi. We are excited to add Haley to the 2022 NZPF team.

Finally, my personal congratulations to all the successful candidates and my special thanks to every candidate who accepted nomination to serve their NZPF colleagues.

Ngā manaakitanga

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NZPF Notices



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



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Chinese Language Week

New Zealand Chinese Language Week is on from **September 26 to October 2**, and there are lots of free resources in English, Mandarin Chinese, and Te Reo Māori available on www.nzclw.com – take a video of teachers or students giving Chinese a go, post it on social media, and be in to win.

NZ Chinese Language Week is a Kiwi-driven initiative to encourage Kiwis to give learning Chinese a go. A growing part of our school system, Chinese language is a significant part of New Zealand's story, with some Chinese families having lived here for over 150 years.

Each year, New Zealand Chinese Language Week helps people around New Zealand with events and activities to celebrate Chinese language and culture, including National Dumpling Day.

Food and hospitality are important to our cultures. Sharing delicious dumplings is a great way to include people and make them feel welcome – and it's great fun!

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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