



PRINCIPAL MATTERS

NGĀ TUMUAKI O AOTEAROA

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

Level 8 The Bayleys Building,
36 Brandon Street
Wellington NZ 6011

PO Box 25380
Wellington 6140
nina.netherclift@nzpf.ac.nz



Issue 31, 4 September

President's Message



Kia ora e te whānau

This extraordinary year has generated a 'new normal' for many of us. I say, "Let's seize this window to create a 'new normal' for our curriculum".

Here's an idea. How about we delete the 'literacy and numeracy' targets, that have monopolised student achievement data and introduce a goal far more human, exciting and embracing? We may never need to hear that repeated echo of 'boys' writing targets' ever again.

Annual literacy and numeracy data targets have become embedded in professional lore as if they were a requirement. Nothing could be further from the truth. The National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) set out the expectation to give *priority* to student progress in literacy and numeracy. They say nothing about giving priority to literacy and numeracy when setting targets. It is entirely possible to have a strong focus on the core curriculum without having data targets in literacy and numeracy as your annual schoolwide student achievement goals.

Acclaimed genius, Albert Einstein, said, 'the *definition of insanity* is repeating the same actions over and over again and expecting different results.'

Let's be clear. For all the emphasis and effort committed to literacy and numeracy targets and associated teaching and learning over the past two decades, we have seen negligible increases in national averages of student achievement.

Take for example the PISA 2018 data on reading literacy which found that New Zealand students reading literacy in 2018 was similar to 2015 but lower than reading literacy in 2000 and 2009.

The 2017 analysis, by the Ministry of Education, of the combined PISA and TIMSS studies found that the average maths score of New Zealand 15-year-old students **declined** between 2003 and 2015.

Yes, you read it right. Despite the heavy emphasis on target setting in the core curriculum and all the pressure to lift achievement in reading, writing and mathematics, the simple truth is that our national averages have not shifted and if anything, have declined.

Governments over the past 20 years, our Ministry of Education and our Education Review Office have all been profoundly mistaken in valuing and promoting outcome-based target setting in the core curriculum.

The outcome has been the death of spontaneity, creativity, curriculum integration, connectedness and risk taking.

There is now sufficient longitudinal evidence to **boldly reject** this educational dysphoria once and for all.

As the educational leaders of our profession, we do not suffer from a lack of vision or bravery when it comes to setting out how teaching and learning should work in our schools. Teaching and learning are not the responsibility of Government or the Ministry of Education, or indeed the Education Review Office. Teaching and learning are our professional responsibility. So, let's stand up as leaders and set the agenda.

In rejecting the dominance of data driven teaching, we need to energise ourselves around a new way to enact curriculum that is reflective of the child as a creative being and of the learning experience that embraces curiosity and the arts.

There is ample research evidence for doing so, especially right now. Our young people require a curriculum that supports them through the COVID crisis and beyond.

A curriculum focussed on creativity, curiosity and the arts is what we need to respond to the impact of the COVID crisis on young people's wellbeing. Such a curriculum:

- builds young people's sense of self-worth, increasing self-confidence, sense of achievement and feelings of empowerment. **Bungay, H., & Vella-Burrows, T. (2013)**
- develops student motivation and engagement and has demonstrated that it can decrease depression, anger and anti-social behaviours. **Caldwell, B., & Vaughan, T. (2012)**
- has a direct impact on academic success. Creativity and the arts programmes have been associated with gains in reading, identity and motivation, and higher levels of empathy and tolerance for others. **Catterall, J., Chapleau, R., & Iwanaga, G. (1999)**
- improves literacy and numeracy achievement including intrinsic benefits such as increased confidence and a more positive attitude towards learning. **Jindal-Snape, D., Davies, D., Scott, R., Robb, A., Murray, C., & Harkins, C. (2018)**
- positively influenced students' wellbeing in the domains of interpersonal skills, life satisfaction, perceived competence, and levels of anxiety. **McLellan, R., Galton, M., Steward, S., & Page, C. (2012)**

If ever there was a year that required a fundamental change to what we emphasise in schooling it is 2021.

As term 4 approaches, you will be starting to consider your professional focus for 2021. You will be thinking about student achievement and your annual goals.

I strongly encourage you to turn your curriculum thoughts towards the creative.

Professor Peter O'Connor from Auckland University will shortly be launching the *Creative Schools Index*, an exciting evidence-based initiative to grow more creative schools. The purpose of the *Creative Schools Index* is to provide schools with robust reliable data that measures schools overall creative environment. The nuanced and detailed data suggest ways in which classroom pedagogy might shift across eleven dimensions of creativity.

<https://creativeschoolsinitiative.org/>

Peter's work and the significant body of educational research pointing to the impact of creativity on learning makes any move to build student achievement goals focused on creative endeavour necessary and defensible.

So, go on, boldly set goals for creativity in your school for 2021. Align your professional learning to help your staff experience creativity themselves and free up your curriculum for young people to explore their world through creative endeavour.

The evidence shows that this focus will not detract from literacy or numeracy achievement. Rather, it will be the catalyst for

significant change in influencing learning in the core subjects and across other important domains.

Having recently lost such a keen champion of the arts and creativity in Sir Ken Robinson, let's pick up his challenge laid bare in his 2006 TED Talk when he stated that 'creativity is as important as literacy and we should treat it with the same status.'

The time for a curriculum and achievement reset is now. Let's not fail to seize it!

School Property Issues

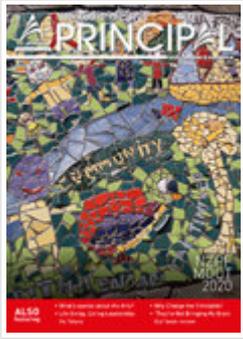
Last week's announcement that \$11.7million of public money was to be allocated to a private Taranaki school for an expansion project, drew outrage from not just Taranaki principals, but from principals across the country. Many principals wrote to me with their own stories of leaks, mould, over-crowding and their inability to either secure funding to address these problems or to hire contractors to do the work. This prompted me to write to the Minister of Education. You can read the letter [here](#).

Ngā manaakitanga

Perry Rush

perry@nzpf.ac.nz

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



Resene School Services - available free to you!

Bring out the very best in your school and save time and money with free Resene School Services.

School life is busy enough creating the best learning environments, let alone managing a painting project. Not only can Resene help you to protect your building assets, but they can also help you create a vibrant school environment for your students, staff and school community to enjoy.

Resene School Services are designed to help you manage your school painting and decorating projects, and save you time and money, while minimising disruption to your school. Resene School Services are free, so you can use us as much as you need, without worrying about the cost. We have assisted thousands of schools with their painting and decorating projects. Let Resene help you with yours.

Resene will make your painting and decorating projects easier. Find out more and request your free Resene representative visit at: www.resene.co.nz/schoolservices

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.

Gold Partners



Silver Partners



Bronze Partners

