



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



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President's Message



Kia ora e te whānau

This week I had the privilege of attending the Te Akatea Māori Principals' Conference in Auckland.

Dr Papaarangi Reid's wero to the conference was a powerful challenge for principals, 'We need pākehā to develop a critical consciousness of racism and disadvantage', she said.

As a pākehā principal myself, seeing past my own 'whiteness' is a challenge. Pākehā hold an experience and knowledge of the world that is informed by their status as the majority and colonising culture and its associated privilege.

As a benefactor of this privilege it is hard to see past its affordances.

There is little cultural dissonance for Pākehā daily life in Aotearoa. Pākehā live in a society that is affirming of their culture. From birth, Pākehā are conditioned by an ideology that reinforces western and Eurocentric norms. These norms are found in the interactions of daily life, in our schools and what they teach, in textbooks, politics, movies, advertising, holiday celebrations, words and phrases.

Pākehā do not see themselves in racial terms because they are the majority.

This is where Dr Reid's wero becomes significant. If we are to grow schools and educators to be genuine Tiriti partners, then it cannot always be, as the Hon Kelvin Davis described at the conference, 'Māori crossing the bridge to the Pākehā world'. It must be matched by 'Pākehā crossing the bridge to the Māori world'.

This is what the Tiriti partnership calls for.

It has been fantastic to spend the past few days with the Te Akatea Māori Principals in Auckland.

The NZPF leadership team attended not least to affirm our respect and admiration for the skills and expertise of Māori principals in Aotearoa but also to cross the bridge to Te Ao Māori and be learners within this conference that is by Māori, for Māori.

It was a powerful experience.

As a Pākehā, I was in the minority. It was my cultural sense of self that was challenged. I was the one having to adjust. I was the one feeling the prick of difference when we stood to sing the many waiata without always knowing the words. I experienced the frustration of trying to make sense of the kōrero at the pōwhiri, piecing together the words and phrases I recognised, without a sense of context or meaning of the oratory, of trying to guess the humour when laughter roiled the wharenuī.

While never made to feel uncomfortable by others, it was my own sense of inadequacy that was confronting. I was, on some occasions, a fish out of water.

And how healthy is that!

It benefits Pākehā to cross the bridge to Te Ao Māori and to experience the dissonance of being in the minority. If we are to truly grow as a country linked in partnership by Te Tiriti then Pākehā must learn to live in the Māori world.

As part of a dominant colonising culture, the onus is on every pākehā principal to step up to this challenge.

For the sake of the young people in our schools and particularly Māori tamariki in mainstream English medium schooling, it is vital.

If we are to truly turn around the inequities in the system and do our absolute best for Māori youth then we need to ensure that every school is not a reflection of the largely mainstream English medium society we live in but rather a place where Te Ao Māori is experienced in a way that is culturally sustaining and valued.

Dr Papaarangi Reid has set forth a wero.

If you are a Pākehā principal, then I encourage you, as ‘lead learner’ in your community, to respond in a personal way by stepping across into the Māori world. Power up your own capacity to lead the design and delivery of education that responds to Māori learners’ needs, sustains their identity, language and culture and demonstrates the value and relevance of Māori culture to all learners.

Māori have a right to have their highest aspirations met and every principal has a stake in making that happen.

That is true partnership!

Education Review Office

I recently met with Nick Pole and Jane Lee at the Education Review Office to discuss the new partnership approach.

It was clear that both Nick and Jane were genuine about implementing the model in a way that supports schools.

My challenge to them was to move away from vertical progress in the core curriculum as the only precursor for school improvement and to abandon the associated heavy emphasis on hard data and unscientific ideas like ‘acceleration’.

The new review model must reflect what each school and their community values – a broad and embracing local curriculum. Nick and Jane agreed that understanding each school’s context is critical to the new approach.

Last week I was concerned to receive a message from a principal who had been invited to be one of the 75 schools invited to participate in the new approach.

In the first interaction with the school, ERO was interested in initiatives the school had taken since the last review. There was no visit to the classrooms to experience the curriculum in action or understand the context of the school. Instead the reviewer dived straight into data.

The ERO reviewer focused discussion on what data supported the initiatives the school had undertaken and what the rationale for change was. ERO emphasised the importance of data in Reading, Writing, Mathematics to establish whether ‘sufficient progress’ was being made by target groups (inc. Māori and Pasifika) and address gender disparity. This appears to be a re-work on the notion of accelerated progress within a standardised mindset of age appropriate progress.

ERO referred to their own 2016 documentation *Effective School Evaluation and School Evaluation Indicators* – these documents appear to be the only basis for the new review approach. This is surprising as the new model surely demands a significant rethink of the basis for evaluation that embraces a partnership approach and a broader, braver concept of student success that reflects the post national standards age.

ERO stated that if the progress in the core curriculum is satisfactory then evaluation of local curriculum initiatives could be considered and agreed on.

Let’s be clear, this is not a partnership review nor a new approach. It is the same approach that schools have suffered in the past.

I am keen to communicate with the 75 schools involved in the new partnership reviews. To this end I have requested a list of these schools from ERO. To date, despite several requests, no list has been forthcoming. Consequently, I will now seek this information by OIA however, in the interim, I’d appreciate a simple email to let me know if your school was invited to be involved.

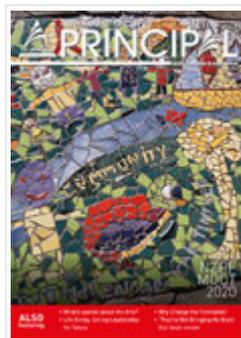
This will enable me to communicate more directly with you regarding the critical need to help ERO make the change to get these early reviews right!

Ngā manaakitanga

Perry Rush

perry@nzpf.ac.nz

NZPF Notices



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