



PRINCIPAL MATTERS

NGĀ TUMUAKI O AOTEAROA

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

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Issue 3, 12 February 2021

President's Message



Kia ora e te whānau

Last week I was invited to speak at the ERO National Forum for Professional Learning and Development in Hamilton.

I was pleased to have an opportunity to speak directly to ERO reviewers about principals' expectations for the new review model, especially our expectation that the evaluation mindset will honour the complexity of the human condition.

I am pleased to report that there was genuine excitement in the room about the potential for release from the straitjacket of hard data, paper evidence, vertical gain, acceleration and a 'no excuses' attitude.

It was clear to me that ERO is grappling with the change in direction. This, of course, is normal. The scale of the shift required of ERO is seismic. It starts with the examination of past practices and recognising that these do not fit with the new partnership approach to nurture the vision for learning we hold dear in our country-of constructing schooling that best fits the learner in all their diversity.

The need to examine past practices is prompted by a significant and growing body of research that tells us that most explicit evidence used to evaluate the success of schooling and the

enterprise of education is not particularly truthful and is imbued with serious flaws.

In the former review model, it was common practice to 'kill many forests' and 'burn the rubber' on the photocopier providing the 'right' sort of data and the 'right' story of achievement to win the badge. Never mind that the data often did not capture the real vision of the school or expound the context of the lives of the student body or even truthfully capture what learning really matters.

In my recent presentation to ERO I shared Professor Elliot Eisner's work. He states, "Not everything knowable can be articulated in propositional form." In other words, all learning is experienced internally and is personal, but the full scope of one's cognition cannot be made available as an object (paper or otherwise) for others to judge quality or outcome.

It is, in essence, impossible to truly judge the impact of learning. Any public artefact or evidence will only be a part of the picture and may miss entirely the learner's 'real' impact of learning.

Learning is a human enterprise and any form of external evaluation based on the judgement of public artefacts is at best only partially truthful.

That is why great educators grasp their fallibility. They know to be hopeful but also sceptical about their impact. Educators can be influential but never absolutely and never fully understanding the scope of that influence and what it might mean to a learner.

We celebrate the late Professor Graeme Nuthall's seminal research in New Zealand classrooms to reveal students' hidden curriculum. Using video and recordings he was able to demonstrate the 'real' learning children experienced when teachers taught. It was often diametrically opposed to what the teacher taught and expected. Evaluating assessment data that only measures what teachers teach misses the 'real' learning that students themselves deem relevant.

So much of what occurs in the educational setting reflects the complexity of humans.

I believe it is time for a new evaluation paradigm that is more truthful and more useful than the one we have had to endure these past few decades.

It is not the evaluation of narrow outcomes and data that tells the true story of school quality but the establishment of a new measure - '*confidence*'. This is a human scale that not only embraces multiple new forms of evidence but is much more embracing of teaching and principalship as a human enterprise.

If ERO wants to successfully implement a partnership model and be influential in growing powerful schooling then the new model must excite, resonate, and ultimately inspire principals.

ERO reviewers must develop the capacity to be naturally sceptical of the adequacy of evidence to be objective.

Change does not occur in the absence of genuine respect and positive engagement. Establishing relationships with principals over a longer period, as the new model promises, will demand real understanding of the tensions and challenges of principalship and schooling. It will also require understanding of the complex nature of learning and the brave thinking required to grasp that complexity and make sense of it.

Professor Stephen Sterling in his seminal book *Sustainable Education*, writes about the change required of organisations such as ERO. He discusses why we need to critique the narrow instrumentalism and managerialism that has affected so much educational thinking and practice. He outlines a unifying theory of education.

The four descriptors that paint the pathway forward for ERO is practice which is sustaining, tenable, healthy and durable.

- *Sustaining*: it helps sustain people, communities and ecosystems;
- *Tenable*: it is ethically defensible, working with integrity, justice, respect and inclusiveness;
- *Healthy*: it is itself a viable system, embodying and nurturing healthy relationships and emergence at different system levels;
- *Durable*: it works well enough in practice to be able to keep doing it.

We need our ERO reviewers to be able to shift up gears. It is vital that they achieve sustainable change.

Our commitment as a profession is to offer our collaboration with the proviso that we expect real change to occur.

In the meantime, I congratulate ERO for their bravery. I thank them for being open to constructive feedback. I encourage them to keep examining past practices particularly their evaluation indicators considering what we know about the nature of evidence and the complexity of teaching and learning. EROs development trajectory is demanding, but I was heartened by the many reviewers I spoke to who were keen to push hard and develop something of real value.

Curriculum Refresh

I was pleased to see Minister's Tinetti and Davis announce the detail of the Curriculum Refresh yesterday.

www.education.govt.nz/national-curriculum-refresh

It is good to see pace in this work that continues a huge effort in partnership with the sector over the past few years. This refresh is necessary and will give the sector an opportunity to hold onto the things we love about the Curriculum and make clearer the learning that can not be left to chance.

NZPF has met with the Ministry and together we have agreed to seek feedback from principals about curriculum change. In the first instance I'd like to identify a group of principals with passion and skill in the mathematics curriculum and pedagogy to join me here in Wellington for a focused look at the advice we can provide the Ministry as practicing leaders about what needs to change. It is critical that the Royal Society Expert Group of academics charged with investigating the mathematics curriculum and the best ways to teach it are not left to provide advice without corresponding advice from principals.

If you have expertise in mathematics and you are keen to put your shoulder to the wheel for a day or two here in Wellington, please make contact.

I hope your return to school has been a fun time for your children and your staff.

Ngā manaakitanga

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NZPF Notices



NZPF Moot

The NZPF Moot will be held on Friday 26 March at the James Cook Hotel Grand Chancellor, Wellington. Invitations will be sent out to all regional and large cluster presidents. This is a one day event which provides an opportunity to give feedback from regional membership.

What we look forward to is a robust debate on prominent issues that you raise.



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



Leaders Connect Zoom Hui with Perry Rush - Thursday 18 February 4-5pm

Rethinking Curriculum: Problems, Dilemmas, Possibilities, and the Way Forward

Curriculum leadership is our bread n butter! Work now taking place in the Ministry of Education seeks to provide greater support for curriculum. What change should we now insist on to better enable the curriculum and student achievement?

In the spirit of Leaders' Connect, as well as a Q&A time with Perry, there will be time for engaging in small group discussions for support and idea sharing.

Do come and join Perry and other principal participants for this hui.

Register at <https://leadershiplab.co.nz/events/curriculum-leadership/>



Getting Started - support for new school library staff

Beginning in Term 1 the National Library's Services to Schools are offering a free programme of support for staff new to working in the school library.

The programme includes opportunities to learn online, access to resources for professional learning, and expert advice and support from our team of staff around NZ. To find out more, and get your new library staff off to a great start, [visit our Professional Learning and Support website now](#).

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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