

TE PAPAPA SCHOOL

Onehunga, Auckland

Primary Years 1-6

Decile 1c

Roll 202

Ethnicity 66% Pacific Island groups; 14% Maori; 7% Pakeha

Principal: Ms Judy Innis

History

On her appointment in 1998, the Principal felt that she needed to improve “the spirit and soul of the place”. The school had had a history of short-term principals. Parents and staff expressed a need for a values-based approach as a solution to a range of issues the school was seeking to address. Such an approach was supported by the fact that many families in the school’s community attended church regularly, and had church-related values systems themselves where respect was important.

At about the same time the Living Values project was initiated, providing Ms Innis with a catalyst and a framework with which to begin. Staff were enthusiastic.

Several had religious spiritual values, and entered into the project wholeheartedly.

Early on, a staff-member attended a seminar on the Virtues project, and this approach, particularly as presented in Linda Popov’s book, *The Virtues Project*, has become their most important resource ever since. The school does not use the term “virtues” however, as it is not a word that its community would normally use. “Values” is used to refer to those qualities that the school seeks to instil in everyone in its community – all the qualities listed in the Virtues project based in the first instance on **respect and responsibility**.

Systems

- The project was driven by the Principal with keen support from the staff. No surveys or formal consultation were used though meetings affirmed for the Principal the community support that existed for the programme.
- Working together the Principal and her staff created a series of simple tools that articulated a clear message and provided students with easy and visible models of what was expected. A value will be selected in the classroom and this will not only be displayed in the classroom in varied ways, but it will be accompanied by “signs of success” so that children have a clear understanding of what is expected. “This is how you practise co-operation”.
- The school operates from the basis of a **Code of Conduct** devised by the staff and displayed all over the school. This code is an important element in the interviews with new families which Ms Innis conducts prior to a new student’s

arrival. It is also a “non-negotiable” element in the appointment process for new staff.

- There is major emphasis on personal responsibility. “We can all be winners at this school. Only one can be first but we can all be winners if we value people for what they can contribute.” Students are given many ways in which they can make a contribution, and then much is made of recognition and thanks.
- Students are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour, and to develop an understanding of their thinking and the importance of the element of choice in their behaviour.
- Sanctions for inappropriate behaviour are clearly understood and operate at Years 4,5 and 6 as a series of steps. First a name may go on a whiteboard (thus able to be rubbed off if behaviour improves), then may go onto a “list” which will result in a task which is expressed as “giving something back to us” – a contribution such as picking up rubbish. Further sanctions involve parents and a contract of good behaviour. At that stage the student is asked to suggest their idea of what a “fair consequence” would be. This has been found to work well.
- Teasing and bullying are dealt with by means of the “Bug Phrase” – a simple strategy that all the students are taught, and which is designed to build self-affirming ways of coping with negative behaviours. The document that is visible all over the school is enclosed. It demonstrates the approach that Te Papapa School has taken to everything in the Values Programme – it is very simple, it offers clear examples of what the students should do, and it is made memorable with the use of originality and humour. Everyone at Te Papapa knows what the bug phrase is.
- Praise is an essential element in the programme. “The Super-sneaker Award” (an orange sneaker mounted on a board) is presented once a fortnight to a student who has exemplified the current value that the school is highlighting.
- School counsellors must understand and sign a pledge which, along with the counsellors’ photographs, is displayed in the school.
- The school’s environment is bright, welcoming, tidy, free of litter, with well-tended and attractive grounds. References to the values are everywhere, in public spaces as well as in the classrooms. With little warning staff and students were able to pull out class activities dealing with the current value.

Results

- Informal feedback from parents is uniformly enthusiastic.
- Staff is very stable, and warmly support the programme.
- Observations of student behaviour suggest the positive effects of the programme. Spontaneous help for elderly visitors, comments that the students of the school have good manners. The dental nurse has been known to comment that the children say thank you to her – rare in some schools apparently.
- The latest (2005) ERO report states that the reviewers found that children are “effectively engaged in their learning” that “classroom emphasis on thinking skills enables them to evaluate the choices they make...” Also that “Fair-play is a school-wide value and is practised widely by children”. “Children are enthusiastic learners and demonstrate respect for teachers. They take

responsibility for their learning as a result of teaching approaches that reinforce their independent work skills in a wide range of learning experiences...”

Concerns

- The Principal notes that some children who have achieved excellent progress after behaviour modification through the Values Programme fall back or “lose it” after they go on to Intermediate school. At present there is no link with other schools and students do not receive support from a consistent on-going system later on.

Key Features

- The energy, enthusiasm and drive of the Principal. Her active involvement and total commitment are the most important elements in the success of the programme at Te Papapa School
- Although consultation with the school’s community has been minimal, informal discussions with parents affirm the values approach taken by the school. A survey of parents of Year 6 in 2004 further affirmed the values programme.
- The programme is kept very simple. The vision for it, its “language “and its systems was well thought through at the beginning and then adhered to consistently so that the programme is well embedded in day-to-day school life.
- Good use is frequently made of humour and fun.