

Presentation Changing Lives Education Forum

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Kia ora,

I feel that I am a poor substitute for Mary Jones, Principal at Pukerua Bay School, but I am pleased to share the KWNS experience with you.

I am speaking as a third generation on one side and fourth generation on the other side member of the Petone community. My teaching career has been in the Hutt Valley and now, as a Principal in Wellington.

So, my focus will be on the big picture and I hope you people, can make the links to your area.

If we believe in the following, that:

Most of our primary aged students will:

- have jobs that have yet to be created
- have many different careers and many of those careers will be in the service sector i.e. working with people.
- be part of a society that will become increasingly more diverse, more multi-cultural while at the same time recognising the tangata whenua.

Then, schools should focus on two main areas firstly, developing students who are positive, independent and socially able citizens and secondly, developing students who know that learning involves thinking and risk taking:

I would also hasten to add that good schools have always tried to do this.

Firstly: developing students who are positive, independent and socially able citizens. Schools have a unique role in modelling what we want from NZ-Aotearoa. We already know that the “best” schools are those who can develop positive and appropriate relationships with their students. This is shown by the research of the Ministry of Education’s Best Evidence Synthesis: Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling, and Russell Bishop’s research. Our school is a very multi-cultural and socio-economically diverse place and we talk about being part of a family-whanau. We talk about taking responsibility for each other and we encourage the concept of service particularly with our senior students. We try to model these concepts in everything we do.

Our charter developed through community consultation, recognises this and has such values as:

- **Respect: whaka-ri-te:** I consider others in my thoughts and actions.
- **Openness: ma-hora-hora:** I listen to others and share my ideas and feelings.
- **Co-operation: mahi tahi:** I work with others and share the load.
- **Care and Compassion: aroha:** I am kind and caring.
- **Self-worth: whakaa-ro-nui-ake:** I value who I am.

But we also recognise that modelling is not enough and we explicitly teach values as the new New Zealand Curriculum is encouraging us to do.

Our school has introduced the **Virtues Programme** as a means of moving on from basic student management processes. We want students to be intrinsically motivated to know the right thing to do. We teach the virtues - one a fortnight. It is interesting to note that when we were consulting our community about introducing this programme, our Pasifika Support group commented that they were glad the school was going to do so, but they were sad that the school thought it necessary. Through Peace Foundation: Aotearoa, we have a **Peer Mediators Programme** in which our Years 7 & 8 students are trained in conflict resolution techniques. They operate in pairs, each lunch time in our playground, communicating with me by walkie-talkies which they love. We have 90 Year 7 & 8 students and 30 of them have been trained and are on the roster.

Also this year, we are part of the trial **Roots of Empathy Programme**, in which a Year 5 & 6 class adopts a baby from our community and watches him grow and develop. This is based on the Canadian research, that if a child has not developed empathy by the time they are 10 years, it is just about impossible for them to develop it. There will be New Zealand research as a result of the three year trial that the Ministry of Education is funding.

These are just some of the ways we have thought of to achieve this goal of developing students who are positive, independence and socially able citizens! There are, however, a variety of ways, programmes or projects that will develop this goal.

Secondly, developing students who know that learning involves thinking and risk taking. We know that there is not a set body of knowledge that we teach these days - gone are days that students were a "vessel to be filled rather than a fire to be lit".

But I would like to go off on a little tangent and talk about literacy and mathematics - these two subjects do need to be carefully and explicitly taught. Most of my teaching experience has been in the junior school and I feel strongly that skilled first teaching in these two subjects will set a child up for life. Both these subjects should be taught with superb and relevant books and structured equipment by pedagogically thoughtful teachers. An appreciation and enjoyment of literature and a solid knowledge of mathematical thinking defines us as human beings and ensures the lessons of the past are not repeated in the present - I say optimistically!

It is essential that alongside this instruction is a process that encourages thinking and risk-taking. It concerns me that we are noticing a trend of 5 year old students coming into our schools who have three issues. Some are not risk-takers, they are afraid to make a mistake so they don't try. Others are not ready to learn as they are not independent enough to think for themselves. While some are not physically coordinated in either gross or fine motor skills so they can't kick a ball, climb a tree or hold a pencil correctly.

The trend is irrespective of gender, socio-economic position and early childhood experiences - though I hasten to add our local kindergarten has recognised these issues and has developed appropriate programmes. You are welcome to speculate on why this is happening.

Schools are developing or adopting their own thinking processes - De Bono, Art Costa, Gwen Gawith, inquiry skills, thinking skills - there is a wide variety. We, at Karori West Normal, have developed our inquiry skills process based on Information Literacy, using Te Awa o Tupu - River of Learning - our library which encompasses both written and technological resources. We have a full-time Librarian, as well as a part-time Information Literacy Facilitator.

Our community has recognised the value of this by including the following values within our charter:

- **Curiosity: whaka-mate-mate:** I enjoy discovering the world around me.
- **“Give it a Go”: wero-hia:** I will challenge myself.

We have developed an Independence and “Give it a Go” matrix of four levels as we work with students and parents/carers to develop these concepts to ensure that we have students that are “life-long learners”- an often quoted phrase - so they can meet the challenges of the future.

Kia ora-thank you.

Janice Shramka