

A photograph of the two Muppet characters Statler and Waldorf. They are both elderly, with white hair and mustaches, wearing dark suits. They are leaning over a red velvet rope railing, looking down with expressions of disdain or boredom. The background is a dark, draped curtain.

# Statler (Hamish) and Waldorf (Leo), a monthly vent from the balcony.....

**(often referred to as a bit of dribble from two crusty old principals...)**

*Last week Hamish and I were engaging in a amber liquid hydration and hauora session (which is super important during COVID) and attempting to solve the problems of the World. As we were arguing, debating and verging on violence (Hamish being a magnet for this), our esteemed WPA Leader, Les, interceded. Her suggestion being that we grow up, tone it down and that rather than winding up each other, we share our thinking and potentially wind you up instead.*

*So with a mindset towards informing, provoking conversation, sparking dialogue, sharing some war stories, inadvertently upsetting the odd organisation and maybe even a smile to your faces, here is our first monthly rant.....*

*Disclaimer: To any people we offend, or for those of you who are slightly sensitive, we do apologise. If you are REALLY upset, disagree or feel like hurting one of us, please contact Hamish directly. (He lives in Cambridge, address available on request.)*

## **So what's on top May 2022**

The cynical side of my personality seems to be seriously dominating my thinking at the moment and there are a few things that don't quite make sense, or sit right with me. Now this could be due to my old age, or short man's syndrome, or that the hamster's legs are starting to tire, or just through a general lack of intelligence on my behalf, but regardless, I need to vent. My apologies to those of you who might feel this is irrelevant but I'm sure you'll cope while I stand on the soap box.

1. What the hell is going on in regards to **Principals Appraisal**? What do I have to do? What is the Education Council doing? It's not like I haven't paid them enough over the last 30 years and who is driving the thinking, decision making and rationale around this? I have Boards questioning Principals about appraisers, Principal colleagues forming professional growth 'reflection' groups, NZSTA sharing perceptions that are confusing, ERO documentation highlighting that appraisals are mandatory and the Principals Collective telling me it's a must. Now, I have no issue with being progressive or adapting to change, don't get me wrong. That said, as a busy Principal fighting COVID issues, wellness, staffing, day to day learning, parenting issues and trying to do my job, I just need clarity, a consistent message and to figure out who is driving the horse around this. In my mind Principals, particularly new ones, need to know what to do, how to do it and when. Phew! Breathing, mindfulness, hauora check...

2. **Initial Teacher Education Programmes**-Now what's up with that? As I was trolling through the mass of emails that had flooded through my inbox last week, my attention got caught by a piece written by Liam Rutherford pertaining to ITE 2040 and the launch of the associated NZEI discussion document. With my curiosity piqued, I started looking deeper into the associated presentation and grudgingly have to admit there were certainly some things that resonated. Liam's definitely an astute character and says a lot I like. A BT process which is aimed at redeveloping systems through a non colonialist lens-**Yes**. Creating teachers ready to hit the ground on day 1- **Amen**. Teachers provided with a skill set aligned with need and a 21st Century, futures, culturally focussed mindset- **Check**. All great stuff and I especially loved the aspirational statement made by one of the experts, who stated that the ideal would be that "No 'L' Plates would be required on the door of any BT classroom"- **Yup-I'll sign up now**. All good so far....

The problem for me is that during the same fortnight I had received communications from our incredible Col Te Pae Here, the School of Ed and unbelievably NZEI, all offering or updating us on BT support programme opportunities all for pretty much the same thing. Now, I was always of the belief that offering a BT an internal support mechanism (e.g a teacher mentor) and one external support programme (e.g. Col or SOE) was enough. My issue is now we have three potential external providers in the game and my concern is around who is coordinating between these associated agencies around what is actually needed and what is not. I would also question NZEI in regards to why they have chosen to get involved in BT training, at a time in which I believe their energies would be better focussed on PUM, Claims, ECE and selfishly, outcomes for Principals moving forward. As an avid advocate of NZEI, I have to admit to a little concern here and after the last Principals negotiation rounds, I think NZEI needs to do a little more to reassure us that life is going to get better. Let's face it, looking at the last wellness survey, we know conditions for school leaders are tough.

3. With the Curriculum refresh, the redesigning Te Marautanga o Aotearoa, a new curriculum timeline, accountability reporting discussions, the new ERO School Improvement Framework to adhere to, NELPS and a goal of all schools using the refreshed curriculum by 2025, the pressure is certainly on schools, Principals and communities. Now, I have to agree that all these things are needed, exciting and there is a lot to like within the proposed changes. That said, I do ask who is driving the change timeline or considering the actual logistics of making this happen? Where are the MOE curriculum advisers or mechanisms to support schools? Will this be facilitated through CoLs too? What consideration has been made around COVID impact and a possible second wave? And how do schools fit this all in? If you add in Climate Change, Sexuality Education, Local Histories, re-engaging whanau post COVID, absenteeism, hauora, transition and a bit of structured literacy, I would suggest we have a little bit going on. (That was dripping in sarcasm). As a crusty long serving principal this makes my remaining brain cells spin, I can only imagine what this would look like for a new principal fresh off the boat.

From a personal perspective, I have always been an advocate of maybe driving 1-2 big pushes or strategic initiatives going through our school at any time. The old adage from my mum being that doing one or two things well, as opposed to multiple things badly comes to mind. Again, the cynical side of me looks at the massive push around this from the Ministry (directed by the government) to enact all of this change (now), as more of a political lobbying point than a solution to our challenges. Is this more of a Labour and Ms Adern opportunity (after a relatively poor goal attainment term), to say 'Hey, look at what we achieved!' as opposed to let's do this together, collaboratively and carefully to support genuine outcomes. Apologies Jacinda, I was once an avid Labour supporter but am not sure what your team have achieved in education recently except for the abolishment of National Standards.

Now that I have gotten that off my chest, washed it down with a couple of Waikato's and have had a good moan, I do feel a little better. On a more positive note, it is my recommendation to principals that you do:

- Feedback on the ITE NZEI survey. Have your say. Let's face it, things have to change and now is the time to share thinking, ideas and support our future colleagues. We have a responsibility as leaders to assist;
- Explore the recent updates on the MOE website pertaining to the curriculum refresh. Taking five minutes to ensure you have an awareness of what is coming will never hurt;
- Do attend the regular Principals workshops facilitated by our Director of Education, Marcus Freke, these are timely informative and food for thought. He's also a good bloke and was one of us;
- Do read Iona's Bulletins, despite the length, they do help;
- Vote for any party that will; reduce Principal stress, provide free alcohol, remove helicopter parents from playgrounds, and teach parents to parallel park on wet days.

Finally in closing this rant, I would like to quickly acknowledge WPA legend Tony Grey for his recent efforts in tackling MOE resourcing around the funding model for relief teachers within our operational grants and the ongoing implications of COVID. This is an issue we are all concerned about and I would urge those of you who are nervously looking at reliever staffing to be proactive and engage with MOE resourcing.

Have a wonderful week. Can't wait to sit down with Hamish next to debate the budget, Principal negotiations and resourcing in schools. In the meantime, if you have anything that you thinks is worth sharing or deliberating, drop us a line.

Leo and Hamish.

**Useful reference links:**

<https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/changes-in-education/curriculum-and-assessment-changes/>  
<https://campaigns.nzei.org.nz/initial-teacher-education/>

A couple of awesome learning videos form Tony that might provoke some cool teacher dialogue. They certainly worked well in our place.

Janelle Riki-Waaka (both are gold, and only 3 mins)

<https://vimeo.com/209466110>  
<https://vimeo.com/205147189>  
<https://nzareblog.wordpress.com/2018/04/26/rakau-ngakau/>



Decile 10 parents parking on wet days!