

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

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

I am hoping that you have all managed to find some time to relax, have fun with whanau and step away from the office during the holidays. Lets' face it the last two terms have been fairly intense and the pressures don't go away. I would also remind you all in the start of a new term that the only person who can truly support your wellness is you. **Remember self care is a strategic leadership action.**

This month I want to address two things that have caused the old blood to boil and created a bit of noise, frustration and angst for local principals. (Aside from COVID, property, attendance etc.)

So let's start with **Education Council Fees**- What a bloody fiasco this has been and it is hard to see how an independent agency that was once established to advocate, champion and support the interests for teachers, has worked so hard in recent times to shaft them. How is it possible at a time when interest rates are creeping forward, inflation is escalating, there is a nation wide teachers shortage (most heading to NSW), and we have desperately sought to support teachers, that they decide to double fees. How dumb is this? Now, I am aware that this has been a long drawn out process but whose finger calculator did they use to do this math! I am also concerned that what the EC offer are proposing going forward, doesn't really match teacher need. How they are justifying the spend is farcical and listening to key stakeholders obviously is not a requirement.

To be honest I could (at a push) understand a fees increase to match inflation. I'd be delighted to see an incremental payment plan put in place to mitigate the big hit for teachers. I'd be happy to see a slight difference between what new teachers and old fossils like me have to pay. What I can not appreciate though is some of the direction and areas the EC have elected to explore supposedly based on our need. Common EC you got to do better. As Forest Gump once said, "that's enough said about that."

Recently, I was invited to a neighbouring school where I sat down with a good Principal mate who needed someone to vent at and have an extended Tourette's moment with before they opted to do something rash. This was a pretty challenging, and confronting conversation around resourcing and support mechanisms for high needs and extreme behaviour children in school. The two things that hit me hardest about the conversation on reflection were 1. The genuine stress, emotion and physical toll I could see this was taking on my mate and 2. The fact that this was the third conversation of a similar nature with a principal in the last month.

I spent a fair bit of time pontificating (cool word for thinking) over this and then saw the piece below in a recent NZPF mailing, which just added my concerns around the apparent lack of strategic planning or resourcing around this. I did think to myself, is anyone really brave enough to instigate a system change?

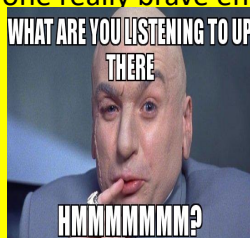
MOOT - The Feedback

The NZPF "Moot" is about listening to regional voices. This year, over 100 regional leaders filled the seminar room with positive kōrero and discussion. They consistently said the most pressing issues facing education are:

- Allocating Learning Support resourcing that is consistent and equitable
- Providing counsellors for all schools
- Centrally funding support staff and
- Providing parity of staffing with secondary.

Other issues raised included principal leadership PLD, principal wellbeing, lack of equity for property, lack of availability of both teachers and relievers and the need to lift the level of overall funding in schools. Some of these issues will be addressed through collective bargaining. Others will link to current and future NZPF advocacy priorities.

To all the regional presidents, thank you for sharing your thinking, debating your views and giving the NZPF executive a steer on its future direction.



Scary when you consider; CoL feedback about the biggest issue in schools being resourcing, and the NZEI survey repeatedly highlighting for the last few years that learning support resourcing is the biggest issue in schools and when in general that everyone is screaming that this is No 1 crisis in education, that **NOTHING** has changed.

Things were further compounded by a conversation I had with the resourcing team over a child in our school whom we currently receive 15 hours of funding for per week. This child has ORRS, global delay, autism and severe learning needs well beyond the capabilities of our staff and school. When I raised the concerns for the child with the team, they then proceeded to quote me the 'Education Act', clarify their perceptions around 'Mainstreaming' and ask me if the child was happy. As you can appreciate the conversation went fairly pear-shaped at this time and sadly I learned that Tourette's can be contagious between principals.

Like most principals, I understand the critical needs of children with learning challenges and am totally committed to securing outcomes for them. That said, I am also well aware that:

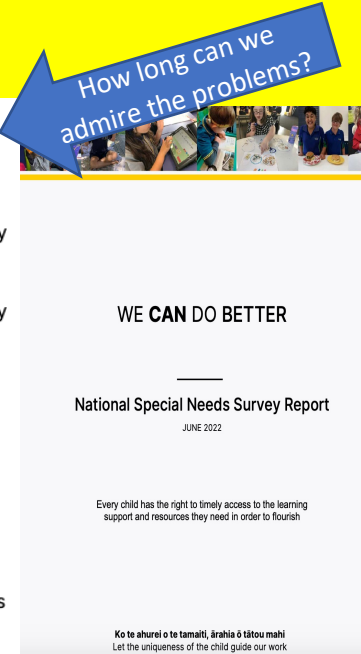
- Mainstreaming is **not** always the answer. **Sometimes the classroom is the wrong place;**
- State schools don't have easy access to therapists, speech language, counsellors, specialist care workers etc.;
- The average classroom and associated programme is not easily adapted to suit children with severe learning challenges;
- Teachers will leave, resign, change schools when they are severely challenged;
- Just because a child is happy, it doesn't mean they are learning, being adequately supported or effectively engaged;
- Teachers, LSC and LSA are incredible people but most don't have specialist care qualifications and much of what they have learned in regards to working with children with high needs, has been acquired through experience.
- We still need to engage, support, progress and keep safe the other 90% of our student population who don't present with severe learning challenges.
- I also know the findings of the SNS report below won't be a surprise to anyone.

Special Needs Survey Report

Key Findings (Quantitative Data)

- 56% of responses (466) reported having 10% or more students with additional needs on their roll requiring extra support but without additional funding
- 99% of responses reported having students with additional needs on their roll requiring extra support but without additional funding
- Only 21% of responses had a full time SENCO and 6% reported having no SENCO in their kura
- 74% of responses received support from the Ministry of Education
- 94% of these responses received RTL support in their kura
- Only 44.9% of responses agreed that the service received from the Ministry of Education was effective in supporting their students with additional needs
- 44% of responses had access to LSC support
- 83.6% felt supported by their LSC to enable their school to meet the needs of their students with additional needs
- Only 59% of responses had heard of the Specialist Teacher Outreach Service (STOS) and the service had been accessed by only 39% of responses to support their ORS funded students
- 83.5% of responses felt their staff were well supported by the STOS service to meet the needs of their students with additional needs

- 84% of responses agreed that some students were at significant risk due to emotional and behavioural challenges
- 64% agreed that emotional and behavioural incidents are impacting significantly on the safety and emotional wellbeing of other students
- 58% agreed that emotional and behavioural incidents are impacting significantly on the safety and emotional wellbeing of staff
- 93.5% of responses agreed they would benefit from professional development to adapt the curriculum for learners with additional needs
- 85.7% of responses agreed they would benefit from professional development to support students with emotional and behavioural challenges
- Around half of responses felt that they didn't have access to quality resources to provide equitable learning opportunities for their students with additional needs



In concluding this section of this rant, I do want to acknowledge the support, care and dedication demonstrated by many of our incredible Waikato MOE team. Marcus, Dale, Paul, Alison, Tania and Kuvern are **always** willing to support, advise and make themselves available. That said, we **DESPERATELY** need your help. As you all hold high level positions within the MOE, you are closer to Wellington, Jacinta, God and the Government than we are. In essence, we need you to push, cajole, rant and seek elements of change. I would suggest that there is certainly enough evidence to suggest that the 'ambulance at the bottom of the cliff' approach has done its day.



There were a few other things that came up in the various principals hydration therapy sessions I attended over the holidays that we could have a rant around including; changes to deciles, nationwide teachers shortage, potential mask mandates, operation grant top ups (or the lack of) and the fact teachers are still not considered essential workers in regards to booster vaccinations. That said, I feel like I am feeling a little less burdened after a good moan. Take care you lot and keep smiling.

A final special mention to a great WPA legend, stalwart and adviser Mr. Tony Mangan (aka Angry)- Hope you are on the mend, take care and we look forward to catching up soon. Kia ora wawe.

