LEADING LIGHTS

NEW ZEALAND EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION & LEADERSHIP SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 1 | 2018

ENHANCING LEARNER AGENCY:
ENGAGING APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY TO SUPPORT SCHOOL TRANSITIONS
Rachel McNae & Natalie Kirk

LEADING A KĀHUI AKO
DAME HERBISON AWARD-WINNER
Melanie Taylor

COLLABORATION AND LEADERSHIP
CREATING A COMPELLING VISION FOR CHANGE
Carolyn Marino

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NZEALS CONFERENCE
18-20 April 2018
Pullman Auckland

MEET THE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS
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The New Zealand Educational Administration and Leadership Society (NZEALS) promotes and supports quality leadership for learning across all educational sectors. To find out more go to nzels.org.nz or to join simply click here. Complete your details and pay the subscription online, or download a form if you prefer to make direct debit or cheque payments.
In this issue of Leading Lights, you will get an excellent overview of NZEALS biennial conference: Reconceptualising Leadership, to be held in Auckland 18-20 April, 2018. This conference draws on our own experts in leadership covering three main themes - Leadership for Inclusivity, Leadership for Collaboration, and Leadership for Sustainability. Be sure to register.

We have two principal practitioner stories. Riki Teteina shares his journey of building bicultural partnerships through strong reciprocal relationships. The turning point for Riki was finding the Māori Achievement Collaboration. Carolyn Marino shares her experience of driving change through collaboration and how to get the emotional investment needed for change.


Finally, the President’s Pen has words of wisdom and encouragement for you to join NZEALS at the biennial conference on 18-20 April. This is going to be a fabulous conference celebrating our researchers and practitioner experiences. I look forward to meeting you there.

Ka kite, Annette
G rowing leadership potential

As we reflect on Waitangi Day 2018, it’s a good time to consider how far we’ve come as a nation, and how far we still have to go in understanding what it means to be a bi-cultural society, honouring the intent of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. At Newton Central School, the first school in New Zealand to develop a co-governance structure which provides equal partnership in governance of the school with both Māori and non-Māori representation, we continue to evolve and develop. Appointed to the role of principal a year ago, I have learned that partnerships are about relationships. The strengthening of these relationships between Māori and the school are the responsibility of the principal, and are critical in making any real impact on improving Māori student achievement within a school.

It is a concern, however, that very few schools have chosen to pursue this approach, particularly when the evidence is abundantly clear that we are failing Māori students in our schools. The snowball effect of our collective failure to increase Māori student achievement means that they are negatively represented in many tables that reflect repression, and over represented in unemployment, incarceration and homelessness to name a just a few.

As principals, we can make a difference by doing all we can to provide opportunities to strengthen whānau involvement in schools.

Engaging with local iwi and hapu, providing opportunities for students to learn about their whakapapa, and including opportunities for Kapa Haka and Te Reo Māori within our schools are just the first steps in providing a bi-cultural climate. What really matters is the opening of the heart and the mind of the principal to gain an appreciation of the Māori world view.

As the majority of our schools are led by non-Māori, many of which have large populations of Māori students enrolled, this effort by the principal is critical. And yet, while many of us want to make this effort, we don’t know where to start. This was certainly the case in my situation and am thankful to have across the Māori Achievement Collaborative. As outlined in its purpose, \textit{The Māori Achievement Collaborative} (MACS) is a professional learning and development pathway by principals for principals focused on changing education outcomes for Māori students’. Certainly, by joining this organisation, it has challenged my thinking and provided me with the professional readings and resources to shift my thinking, and have more understanding of how my decisions impact on Māori achievement. In my role as principal, I am still learning how to strengthen relationships with whānau, and am thankful for the patience and support I receive as I make this transition.

I encourage all principals, if you really want to make a difference to Māori achievement in your school and are unsure how to make a start, make contact with your local MACS cluster. These clusters have many non-Māori principals enrolled, and provide an excellent opportunity to share and support one another in our commitment to do everything possible to lift Māori achievement in our schools.

**Daniel Teteini** holds a Masters Degree in Education Administration and has 28 years experience in education, 14 of those in leadership positions. Over the last 18 years Riki specialised in International Education, leading schools in Indonesia and Thailand. Riki returned to New Zealand in December 2016 so his family could enjoy a ‘Kiwi education’, taking on the role of Principal of Newton Central School.
I am on the countdown to our amazing NZEALS conference being held in Auckland from 18-20 April. The programme captures what NZEALS stands for - inclusivity, collaboration, and sustainability. When the Auckland Branch, of which I am a member, started their planning, we realised that many world experts in the area of reconceptualising leadership are home-grown.

New Zealand researchers, teachers and school leaders, across all sectors, are globally sought after for their expertise. Our leadership practices are innovative and often extend thinking beyond what is being developed and conceptualised overseas. Visitors to New Zealand are keen to see and talk with educational leaders, to examine what we do. Our reading programmes, numeracy problem-solving and literacy learning are outstanding. Our continued broad curriculum aspirations envied by many.

I know when Carolyn Marino returned from her ASB/APPA fellowship in 2017, six months spent looking at flexible learning spaces and innovative practices, she commented that some of the most amazing things were happening right here in our country.

However, blowing our own trumpet across such a range of educational leadership aspects does not stop us exploring the areas we need to improve: cultural inclusivity, learning inclusivity, non-deficit thinking, differentiated practices, and equitable outcomes for all. Although I look at PISA results as only one determinant of educational quality, the results are fairly compelling that we have disparity across learners of all ages and need to consider further our educational inequity.

The conference on the first day, I think, will excite attendees as we explore how we can be better inclusive leaders and educators. We have three well-respected key note speakers, and the breakouts will provide a balance of school practitioners and researchers considering notions of social justice, and what is needed to ensure the development of culturally responsive leaders.

The collaboration focus on day two is equally stimulating, and certainly a key focus for my school. Collaboration has been talked about for years, but it has always felt a little cursory. Schools are realising it is not just a team of people planning a
It is about everyone knowing the children; their data, their motivators, their family, their needs. It is about staff valuing each other’s differences and working to those strengths. It is about working as a team, at the same time recognising personalised and group learning needs. It is about student agency and student voice being implicit in the collaborative learning environment. It is an enabler for true inquiry learning. It is enhanced when we incorporate flexible learning spaces, and where staff are developed professionally to understand and apply collaborative pedagogies.

The third day is centred around sustainability. Ross Notman will open with his key note ‘Fire and Ice’, where he considers sustainable leadership success. Martin Thrupp will consider how we best sustain high quality public education, and Peter O’Connor will remind us of the beauty of leading. Over the three days of the conference, the breakout sessions will hopefully help us reflect on our own practices past, present and future.

The conference dinner is included in the conference pricing as we feel it is as important to socialise and talk with colleagues as it is to listen to experts. My own research has made it very clear that networking is perceived by school principals as imperative in their learning process. The dinner speaker will be a representative of Team New Zealand (winners of the America’s Cup and Halberg overall best sports team), providing a close look at their team work and leadership.

In closing I have to say, if you have never attended an NZEALS conference, I can assure you that attendees leave feeling revitalised, reenergised, and always take away new ideas and thinking. They truly are the best conferences my staff and I attend. The number of attendees is maximum 250 to ensure a boutique conference experience. I look forward to meeting many NZEALS members and their colleagues from around New Zealand in April.
In 2016 I was the fortunate recipient of the ASB/APPA Travelling Fellowship and spent six months visiting schools around New Zealand and the world to better understand what conditions enable our schools to function effectively in flexible learning spaces. At the heart of this was a burning question: how do we support our teachers to shift their mental models to be able to work effectively in innovative and collaborative ways?

Whilst school leadership has a pivotal role to play in establishing the necessary conditions to allow collaborative working relationships to flourish, nothing is truly possible unless the hearts and minds of each staff member are truly engaged and committed to challenge, growth and learning.

“If I am not convinced at a deep level about why change is necessary, then I will not develop the willingness essential to support a new direction” (McGuire, 2003, p. 5).

As individuals, our readiness for change directly influences our individual decisions to either resist or support a change effort (Choi & Ruona, 2011). Researchers identify three things that increase a person’s readiness for change:  
• a belief that change is needed; and  
• a belief that the proposed change is appropriate to the challenge at hand; and  
• a belief that the organisation has the capacity to implement the change.  
(Choi & Ruona, 2011).

Central to creating any lasting change, staff need opportunities to explore their own beliefs or mental models regarding student-centred learning, collaborative practice and a myriad of other practices that they perform on a daily basis.
The espoused theories-of-action of the school in relation to shared visions, and the principles underpinning this change process, are only as effective as the theories-in-action when evidenced in daily teacher practice. Involving teachers in collaboratively developing the ‘why’, and co-writing the change story, can result in high levels of emotional investment in the change process. To actively participate with some degree of comfort, people need to understand how the change links to the organisation’s shared vision and values, and what role their actions play in the outcomes associated with the change. They need to be confident that the organisation has the capacity and capability to successfully implement the proposed change, and they need to believe that their participation and contributions are worthwhile and will make a difference. Co-constructed statements outlining the ‘why’ - or purpose - must be alive in the hearts and hands of everyone in the organisation. From this foundation, clear guidelines, expectations and aligned practices help to ensure that everyone feels they are on the same page. Thus, when difficult decisions need to be made, the purpose, not the wants and needs of the loudest voices, offers direction.

“To sustain momentum through a period of difficult change, you have to find ways to remind people of the orienting value - the positive vision - that makes the current angst worthwhile” (Linsky & Heifetz, 2017).

**CASE STUDY: WESTMERE SCHOOL**

Westmere School is a large inner-city primary school which undertook a major revisioning process in 2012. The school had experienced rapid growth in a short period of time and could see the value in providing an opportunity for the community to revisit its vision for the school and its learners. The process involved the board, staff, parents, and key community members. Senior students were also invited to share their aspirations for their school. A broad set of inquiry probes covering many aspects of school life were developed. Through a process of guided facilitation, groups of 6-8 participants shared their ideas through two processes - classic brainstorming and 10/4 voting. Using key communication protocols like these ensured that all voices had equal airtime and any discussion was eliminated. Once the top ideas from each group had been collated onto a master list, each person voted for their top ideas. These were then drafted through two to three iterations into a shared vision statement, a three or four paragraph description that painted a picture of what the school and learning would look like when the vision was realised. Over the next year, staff formed project teams to research what each of the four key themes identified in the vision statement might look like in practice in the school’s context. At the conclusion of this research time, each team shared their recommendations for action, which then formed the long-term strategic plan for the school. At this time, it was felt that having the vision as a rather wordy descriptive paragraph made it inaccessible to the community, and in particular to the learners and teachers.
There was a real need to embed a shared language of learning and shared belief that aligned with the aspirations of the school’s vision. Using the descriptive vision statement, the pictorial metaphor for the vision (to the right) was developed.

Bringing the vision alive in the day-to-day operation of the school, required further unpacking of the ‘why’. How could these underlying beliefs be realised? What would a visitor or new teacher to the school see, hear, or witness as the vision in action?

With the rebuilding of the school as open flexible learning environments in 2015, and the move to working collaboratively in large studios with two to three teachers and 60-90 learners, the importance of one of the key focus areas in the vision - Mahitahi: Working Together - took centre stage.

To support the transition, the shared understanding of what collaboration meant to the team was further explored by staff, starting with Simon Sinek’s question, “Do we know our why?”

Why would we work together? What are the purpose and beliefs we hold as a team about the value of mahitahi? How can we work collaboratively within our teaching teams to share responsibility for our studios of students? The table below illustrates the initial thinking of the staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY</th>
<th>TOGETHER WE ARE BETTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be an active participant</td>
<td>Be totally committed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be accountable</td>
<td>Do what you say you are going to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be honest</td>
<td>Be honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be present</td>
<td>Be accountable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be solution-focused</td>
<td>Be present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| OPEN TO LEARNING | |
|-------------------| Have a growth mindset |
|                    | Seek and be open to receiving feedback |
|                    | Be reflective, enquiring and curious |
|                    | Hold ideas lightly |
|                    | Ask ‘So what?’ and take action |

| MAINTAIN HAUORA | |
|-----------------| Take the time to get to know each other |
|                 | Have each other’s backs |
|                 | Be mindful, give and take |
|                 | Share the load |
|                 | Value your own time and that of others |
|                 | Self manage |

| COMMUNICATION | |
|---------------| Be positive, solution focussed |
|               | Operate above the line |
|               | Honestly and constructively deal with the issues (not the person) |
|               | Focus on the ‘student agenda’ rather than ‘adult agendas’ |

| SYSTEMS | |
|---------| Follow our shared and clear protocols |
|         | Live our vision and values |
|         | Set clear expectations |
This then provided a lead in the further unpacking of the ‘what’. For example, what protocols do we need to all be on the same page? Starting with their own beliefs and values, teachers shared their preferences to develop a set of shared agreements or protocols for working together, as in the example below. These formed the touchstone for effective collaboration, as the school moved through this major transition process. Each group leader signed the protocol and agreed to review it each term:

YEAR GROUP LEADERS AGREEMENT
Together we have developed these shared protocols for how we will work effectively:

- We agree to come from a positive place when working together. We bring things to the table with a solution-based focus to come to a shared vision of what we want.
- We agree to a five minute debrief at the beginning of the meeting, and park issues that arise from that 5 minutes unless they can be sorted quickly.
- We agree to talk honestly and openly.
- We agree to take personal responsibility to be fully prepared and focussed for and during meetings.
- We agree to rotate a team member to chair our meetings to ensure people have a voice and meetings stay on track. The chairperson has the responsibility to identify when an item needs to be parked to become an agenda item for the next week, or whether we move on to another item.
- We agree to present a united front to our year group team. We will ensure that what is discussed in this team is debated to gain clarity and purpose and a shared language constructed/agreed upon before presenting it to our teams.
- We agree to put items on the agenda by Sunday 5.00pm.
- We agree to build in a once a term ‘team health check’ and provide each other with pastoral care.
- We agree to adopt the following resolution strategies:
  - Give each person time to talk without interruption;
  - Listen for intent and check in with the other when you think what is heard may not be what was intended;
  - Deal with the immediate issue - don’t bank issues and let them fester;
  - Professional not personal - put the issue on the table not the person.
FINAL THOUGHTS
The implication for leaders driving such change is that where there is alignment between a strong shared vision and values espoused by school leadership, and the shared mindsets of the majority of people who work there, the work done is both compelling and motivating. Likewise, when the practices (the systems and structures) that are established to support and reinforce the shared mental models are closely aligned, people ‘walk the talk’.

Focusing unrelentingly on the vision can lead to a creative tension that brings out a capacity for perseverance and patience. If we are working alongside others going through similar changes, the shared commitment and passion can be incredibly energising. The current reality does not disappear, but when dealt with through a future lens, the positive collaborative process has the power to shift our mindsets.

REFERENCES


TAHU KUKUTAI (Ngāti Tīpa, Ngāti Kinohaku, Te Aupōuri) is professor of demography at the National Institute of Demographic and Economic Analysis, University of Waikato. Tahu specialises in Māori and indigenous demographic research and has written extensively on issues of Māori population change, Māori identity and official statistics. Tahu is a founding member of the Māori Data Sovereignty Network, Te Mana Raraunga, and is vice president of the Population Association of New Zealand. She was previously a journalist.

DR Melinda Webber is an associate professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Auckland. She is a former Fulbright/Nga Pae o te Maramatanga Indigenous Scholar who has published widely on the nature of ethnic identity development, examining the ways race, ethnicity, culture and identity impact the lives of young people, particularly Māori students. In 2016, Melinda was awarded an esteemed Marsden Fast-Start grant to undertake a research project examining the distinctive identity traits of Ngāpuhi, New Zealand’s largest iwi and in 2017, Melinda was awarded a prestigious Rutherford Discovery Fellowship to tackle an important question facing educators; “How can we foster cultural pride and academic aspiration among Māori students?”

DAMON SALESAA is university director of Pacific strategy and engagement, and associate professor of Pacific studies. He is a scholar of Pacific politics, history, technology, culture and society. He is a prizewinning author of works on the Pacific, race and government. His latest book, Island Time: New Zealand’s Pacific Futures, was published in December 2017.

MANJULA WANIGANAYAKE is professor of early childhood at the Department of Educational Studies Macquarie University, Sydney. Over three decades, Manjula has been involved in the early childhood sector as a teacher, a parent, an advocate, a policy analyst, a teacher educator, and a researcher. Her teaching and research interests cover educational leadership and family diversity, as well as childhood socialisation and quality assurance matters. She was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Tampere, Finland, for her scholarly contributions to early childhood leadership. Manjula has been working with colleagues from England, Estonia, Finland, Malaysia, Norway, Singapore, and South Africa. She believes in diversity and social justice, and values learning from others through respectful collaborations.
**ENCE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS**

**DR HOWARD YOUNGS** is a senior lecturer in the Master of Educational Leadership department at AUT. He has a leadership role in international development and relations. This role and his engagement with the leadership studies field beyond education enable him to bring other perspectives into his research, teaching, supervision and professional learning/development workshops in education settings. His current foci span collaborative inquiry, distributed leadership and the emerging area of **Leadership-as-Practice (L-A-P)** within and across organisations. Howard started his career as a secondary school educator, then moved into preservice teacher education, before focusing on postgraduate education in leadership. He has been a member of NZEALS since 1995 and is on the editorial board for the Journal of Educational Leadership, Policy and Practice (JELPP).

**RACHEL MCNAE** is director and associate professor of the Centre for Educational Leadership Research at the University of Waikato. She is also the co-founder of The Good Human Project - an organisation supporting young people to flourish in educational settings. Rachel’s research agenda is founded on a firm belief for social justice, and her numerous research projects span the fields of student voice and agency, strength-based inquiry, youth leadership, leadership innovation and curriculum generation. Rachel’s recently published books include; Realizing Innovative Partnerships in Educational Research (Sense, 2017), Educational Leadership for Social Justice in Aotearoa New Zealand (New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2017) and Harnessing the Joy in Leadership, (Rowman and Littlefield, 2018).

**ROSS NOTMAN** is professor in education at the University of Otago, and director of the Centre for Educational Leadership and Administration (CELA). He is the New Zealand project director of an international research study, across 25 countries, into the leadership practices of successful school principals, and the ISLDN study of leadership in high-needs schools and centres. Ross presents at international leadership conferences, and has edited significant publications about successful leaders in New Zealand schools. In 2016, he was made a Fellow of the New Zealand Educational Administration and Leadership Society for his contribution to educational leadership development and research in this country.
PROFESSOR MARTIN THRUPP is head of Te Whiringa School of Educational Leadership and Policy at the University of Waikato. His research interests span leadership and policy, with a particular focus on the importance of school contexts. A former secondary school teacher, he has undertaken detailed research in primary and secondary schools in both New Zealand and England. Thrupp recently published a wide-ranging book about New Zealand’s National Standards, *The Search for Better Educational Standards: A Cautionary Tale*. He is currently working on a comparative study of the privatisation of schooling in Finland, Sweden and New Zealand, funded 2017-21 by the Academy of Finland.

PETER O’CONNOR Peter O’Connor is professor of education and head of the School of Critical Studies in Education in the Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Auckland. An internationally acknowledged leader in creating theatre in marginalised communities Peter’s most recent work includes developing and leading a multi-arts project in schools severely impacted by earthquakes in Mexico City. He currently heads an international research project exploring creativity in schools.

WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

At the end of the email you received with this issue of *Leading Lights*, you will find your membership details, including your postal address. This is the address we use for mailing your copy of JELPP. With each JELPP mailing, we receive at least one member-subscription’s-worth of copies returned for re-mailing, because members have moved house and not told us. This last time, we asked for updates in advance of the mailing. Several members responded - but we still had copies returned. In one case, the building had been demolished, and we didn’t know! As it happens, there were also other problems with this last mailing, which compounded the difficulty.

Please take a moment to check your postal address on the *Leading Lights* email, and let me know if you have moved. That way the next JELPP mailing will reach its target without any hassle.

Many thanks, Ann Briggs, NZEALS National Secretary  EMAIL: ann.briggs@ncl.ac.uk
An investigation into the professional learning available to support principals who have been appointed as Kāhui Ako leaders.

**PURPOSE**
The New Zealand education sector is embarking on a new era of collaboration. While some principals have transitioned their schools to collaborative learning environments, collaborating across multiple school sites is new to the sector. The purpose of this small research project is to establish what effective leadership practice in a Kāhui Ako (Community of Learning) might look like, and how leaders of these across-site collaborative environments can be best supported, specifically documenting professional learning that might be offered to leaders of Kāhui Ako to assist with the development of skills and attributes required to lead collaboratively.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**
The New Zealand Ministry of Education (MOE) has strongly encouraged the formation of Kāhui Ako. The key objective of Kāhui Ako has been identified by the MOE as raising achievement for all students across the compulsory educational pathway. This is achieved by sharing expertise and supporting each other (MOE, 2016).
Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom (2004) state that “effective educational leadership makes a difference in improving learning”. Research also suggests that high quality collaboration positively impacts teacher practice and student achievement (Ronfeldt, Farmer, Mc Queen & Grissom, 2015). It is suggested that school leaders need assistance in developing their collaborative leadership practice. If effective leadership and effective collaboration both have a strong influence on learning then it can be assumed that a Kāhui Ako leader’s role is a critical success factor to Kāhui Ako meeting their achievement objectives.

A key aspect of the Kāhui Ako lead principal’s role is to collaboratively lead member principals from primary and secondary schools (and also possibly iwi and ECE contributors) to lift student achievement. As a result, school leaders find themselves grappling with the complexities of collaboration across multiple school environments.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Research Questions**

**MAIN QUESTION**: How should we provide support for new Kāhui Ako leaders to improve collaborative leadership resulting in positive outcomes for students?

- What collaborative leadership experiences do Kāhui Ako leaders bring to the role?
- What leadership support/training can they access to assist them in leading their Kāhui Ako?
- Which aspects of the support are useful/not useful and why?
- What type of support could be offered to meet their needs?

**Collection of Information**

Information about support, training and mentoring was gathered from the MOE, NZCER, ERO and the Education Council. This provided some base knowledge about the support currently available for lead principals and what other programmes or support was in development.

Following the collection of this information, participants were interviewed to record their prior experiences of leading collaborative environments and what support, mentoring or training, they are accessing.

Participants were asked to identify needs that they feel they had and comment on the relevance of the support that they are receiving. They were also asked to suggest other programme content or support that could help them in their roles.

**Information Analysis**

Data from interviews has been divided into three areas: current skills and experiences, current provisions of professional learning and access to them, participants’ perceived needs and recommendations for the future.
Information was examined for trends and connections. There were a number of common themes, including barriers to success. I have included them as a relevant aspect of the leadership role.

**FINDINGS**

While the perspectives of leaders differed slightly, there were common themes that are worth exploring.

**Current skills and experience brought to the role**

Leaders interviewed for this study all gave their time graciously and generously. All were experienced principals leading Kāhui Ako ranging in size from 2,000 to 7,000 students. Only one of the principals interviewed had led a project across schools prior to their appointment as Kāhui Ako lead. This meant that the majority of the principals leading Kāhui Ako experienced the role for the first time once appointed. All principals felt that they were involved with other principals in a collegial way prior to their appointment, with all of them having worked with most members of their group in some fashion, often as a cluster. This meant that Principals had some prior relationship with the people in the group.

The principal who had led a project before had been part of an Extending Higher Standards Across Schools (EHSAS) project as leader so felt very comfortable with his colleagues in the other decile 8 schools. He was already very visible in the schools in the cluster and there was a good collaborative relationship already formed.

**Leadership Professional Learning - current provisions and access**

All principals interviewed described some level of frustration with the lack of support that they have had to prepare them for and during the role. Professional learning that participants noted included the following:

- **National days** which included conference type workshops and keynotes. The event was described by one leader as a ‘great big talk-fest’. The workshops at these events were run by Kāhui Ako, selected to present as they were considered successful by the Education Council and/or MOE. Leaders described networking with other Kāhui Ako Leaders as the main benefit of these sessions. Half of the leaders interviewed described these (and the regional days) as interesting but the result of them being a lot more ideas and things that were needed to be done due to new MOE initiatives.

- **Regional days** which provide networking and sharing of ideas. These sessions also left leaders stressed at times as new initiatives and ideas were shared.

- **Expert Partner** discussions. Leaders expressed mixed emotions that the Expert Partners skill bases were most suited to working with across schools teachers. While using them with the teaching staff alleviated their workload to an extent, they have not supported the leader in their development as a
change manager or collaborative leader. Most leaders felt that Expert Partners did not necessarily have the expertise or knowledge in the areas they needed to know about.

- Education Council webinars.
- Self help - leaders generally spent significant amounts of time problem-solving for themselves.

There was significant frustration voiced about the lack of planned professional learning to support the leader specifically in their role. Specific areas that principals would have liked support included the following:

**Understanding the learning and leadership theory behind the model**

Half of the lead principals felt that it would be useful to understand the research behind the collaborative leadership model as this would give them a good understanding of what they are trying to achieve, why it is important, and some evidence-based data to support the theory.

Others felt that some understanding of collaboration would be useful. For example, to expect storming as a phase before performance improves and collaboration is effective.

**Coaching collaborative leadership skills**

Principals felt that leading their own school was quite different to leading across many schools, with most stating that they felt totally unprepared for the role once they were in it. Despite most of the leaders stating that there was good social capital in the group before their Kāhui Ako was formed, moving from congenial to collaborative relationships takes time. Even the leader who had a lot of experience and good prior collaborative relationships felt that as tricky issues
arose, he was always working with one or two others in the team. A coach or a mentor to work alongside leaders as they learn to work more collaboratively would assist leaders as they form effective relationships within their groups. The coach would be able to guide the leader through the complexity of mediating relationship problems.

All principals felt that there was no formal support in the leadership sphere. As a result, all principals felt that leadership learning, specifically targeting leading across schools was an area that would be helpful to develop.

**Systems development**

Leaders believe that generally, systems are created as they are required, and that there is very little preparation in advance for the tasks that they are required to manage or lead. Some of these areas are considered significant with legal and financial implications. For example, in finances, there have been some changes to the system around budget time frames (accounting year versus school year). Leaders were not informed of these changes and the implications are significant. Another example is in the human resource component of the job. As leaders finish their contracts, there appear to be no guidelines to support the process to reappoint. Leaders feel that they are constantly chasing someone to find out how they should approach simple management structures. This is time consuming, and is the same for everyone, so a system solution would be useful.

Administration systems and support were also identified as an area needing extra support. Leaders expressed frustration that they were completing simple tasks that were time consuming. This included timetabling of meetings and minute taking, completion of documentation, and budgeting. One principal described his role as having two senior leadership roles in one, and felt he needed a personal assistant to manage all the meetings as he has so many more people to deal with.

**Just-in-time learning**

Lead principals described feeling tired of the catchphrase that they were ‘building the plane while flying it’. While they agreed that they were, they felt that having been in the role for three years it would be useful to have developed some of the work already. Leaders felt that it would be helpful if the MOE supported them by preempting the knowledge or skill that they would require before they needed it, allowing them to tap into information as required. For example, knowing that a number of Kāhui Ako were due to re-advertise for a new leader, it would be useful to know what to expect and what was required to be done, rather than having to work this out for themselves. This could easily be achieved by calling all Kāhui Ako leaders in this timeframe to meet to discuss requirements and expectations.

One of the observations made by leaders was that while there was more support being developed, it was not differentiated and Kāhui Ako just starting
out, and those who were early adopters, were all getting the same information. This was not useful. One leader summed it up by saying “our bucket is just not being filled.”

**Barriers to success**

All Kāhui Ako leaders expressed frustration with the lack of development of the system that their roles are entwined with. They include the lack of support and professional learning for them but also many other areas. While this was not originally part of my study, I have decided to include these frustrations in the hope that some changes might be able to be made which will allow the leaders to be more successful in their role in future.

1. **Collective agreements**

   Every leader interviewed was frustrated with the rigidity of both of the collective agreements (NZEI and PPTA), even describing it as a ‘millstone’. They were clear in their understanding that the collective agreements clauses were originally designed to cater for career pathways, however this was impeding the progress of their targets. Leaders felt that most often the people that would be most successful in roles working both within and across schools were their senior leaders (deputy and assistant principals) who were experienced in instructional leadership and expert curriculum leaders. As senior leaders were excluded from the process (unless there was an in-school work around), appointed classroom teachers were asked to deliver across-school content without the expertise required. One leader described this as like “having eight brand new deputy principals that you have to manage”. Leaders felt that they were not getting the best people filling these positions and the backfill teaching staff were weakening their school curriculum further.

   The solutions offered included removing the requirement for the teaching component, seconding to the role and/or allowing deputy principals to be in the role. There was also some concern that across-school teachers were earning more units than deputy principals with much less expertise and experience. This was described as an urgent matter to find a solution to. Some leaders had tried to apply for variations to the role of which none were successful.

   The consequence of these challenges is that part of their leadership role is now developing leaders to work effectively in their roles across schools. This is a significant problem considering the 0.4 allocation of time that the leaders receive.

2. **Time**

   Kāhui Ako leaders describe the time allocation of 0.4 per week as not enough, especially during the initial set-up phase. One pointed out that if an equity model was to be established, it would be fairer as currently all Kāhui Akos get the same allocation, regardless of size.
Leaders approached the allocation differently, with some choosing to spend it in their own school, using it as a base and coordinating from there. Others chose to be out in all the schools in the Kāhui Ako on a regular basis. One principal had delegated whole portfolios to other senior leaders (for example, health and safety) and others had released their deputy principals to do the principal’s job for two days per week.

All agreed that the job cannot be pigeon-holed into two days per week with all needing to spread tasks across the week where they are most relevant. Most leaders spent at least 0.6 on the role, with one spending 0.8, despite being beyond the setup phase.

More than half of the principals were struggling with the administration requirements as their schools were smaller, and they didn’t have the administration capacity in their own schools that could absorb all the work. A larger part of the group felt that an administration person specifically allocated to this role would be beneficial, as using their own staff was not useful if they hadn’t been involved in the meetings. For example if a letter needed to be written, or a document produced, unless the administration person was in the meeting, then it was too difficult to explain what they were required to do. It was easier to do the extra work themselves. One leader described their Board of Trustees (BOT) having to financially support the appointment of more administration staff to cater for some of the tasks that she was doing originally, for example, Novopay. This leader was grateful that her BOT support her to ensure that she would prioritise her time more effectively.

Another area taking up significant time with successful Kāhui Ako was the constant requests to help other Kāhui Ako. While the leaders are willing to support other principals in their learning journey, and these requests were initially always accepted, leaders have struggled with the time it takes to fulfil these requests while they are battling with their own workload. As a consequence, the ‘yes’ responses have reduced.

Requests also came from the Ministry of Education to host workshops at National Events or to respond to various staff with new initiatives. One leader described being contacted every day in July by someone different in the MOE to discuss bundled services, special needs, ECE or other projects. It appeared that there were people in the MOE being appointed for special projects specific to Kāhui Ako that needed to be rolled out. There was simply no time to be involved in these projects.

3. Collaboration

The other main barrier described by leaders was collaboration itself. Most described the challenge of leading collaboratively as very difficult. One described trying to “work with high-functioning individuals who have been in a Tomorrow’s School setting” as demanding. Silos had been
operational for some time and the view was “what’s in it for me and my school?” Another used an example about the ‘within school roles’ being just for a member’s school and that they wouldn’t allow them to be used for the collaborative goals. The difficulty with these perspectives is that member schools have no accountability to the leader for what they are actually doing in their school. One leader’s strategy was to move with the willing and create such a compelling story that others want to be part of it.

It was also acknowledged by most leaders that it was difficult to navigate the complexities of collaboration as all other principals in the Kāhui Ako are busy and typically focussed on their own schools.

4. Timely communication

Leaders felt that communications regarding expectations were not delivered in time for thoughtful action. One leader expressed exasperation about messages coming from NZSTA at their conference that were not aligned with information that they had been given as a leader. Another had information that the MOE support staff did not. A consistent timely approach to communication is imperative to success.

Reflections of the Kāhui Ako leadership role

Most of the principals in the Kāhui Ako lead role felt that the role had provided them with challenge and the opportunity to develop their skills. While they generally felt that they had had to problem solve with little support, they acknowledged that the leadership role had been good for their leadership practice. Most enjoyed the networking aspect, including the opportunity to share problems and solutions.

However, only one leader felt that they could continue beyond their current appointment, with the drain on them both personally and professionally being too much. Leaders also expressed concern about the lack of focus in their own schools. One leader who bases herself in her own school described being in her school but absent. She feels unable to get to the staffroom to talk with teachers as she is constantly in meetings.

Leaders described the lack of systemic practice and support which made the role too challenging while trying to lead their own school.

Recommendations

All leaders were asked how they would improve the experience for others in the future. I have divided the recommendations into leadership and learning, and management and systems. Recommendations were the following:

Leadership and learning

1. Create Kāhui Ako leader positions that are secondments for at least two years or provide fixed term or permanent contracts so that leaders only have to focus
on their leadership role with the Kāhui Ako, rather than splitting their time between their own school and the group of schools.

2. A well-researched programme of leadership development specifically aimed at the leader of a Kāhui Ako. This might be a programme with a sector developed leadership matrix (for example, see the Ontario Leadership Matrix).

3. Provision of a coach/mentor for each Kāhui Ako leader. This coach must have skills in coaching and collaborative leadership and should have experience in doing so. Their skill base should also include change management. Leaders did not see the current expert partners fulfilling this role.

4. A programme of learning for leaders that is differentiated to the stage of development that their Kāhui Ako is at.


6. Access to people with expertise in specific areas that are relevant. The expert partner role is not enough on its own. One point person is not always best.

**Management and systems**

1. Review the time allocation given to leaders. This could mean increasing the time allocation for Kāhui Ako leaders during start up, providing a more equitable allocation for larger Kāhui Ako and/or a general increase to 0.6.

2. Remove the barriers in the collective agreements, including teaching component and unit holders. Ensure that senior leaders have the opportunity to be part of the learning landscape in a Kāhui Ako.

3. Bulk fund the resourcing and funding allocation including the release component.

4. Funding for administrative support needs to be increased. Leaders should not have to be booking rooms and organising lunches.
5. Multiple across-school roles could be held by one person freeing up the need to have a classroom responsibility.

6. Ensure that all messages going out are consistent. What is promoted at one educational event should be the same at others.

Conclusion

This project has enabled me to explain the perception some Kāhui Ako leaders have of the support and learning programmes provided for them in the New Zealand context. It has also established the perceived barriers to success and the recommendations made by leaders to further improve the system.

It is interesting that our model has been informed by academics based outside the New Zealand system. As part of this study, I am inquiring into collaboration across schools in both Canada and England. I am hopeful that from speaking with leaders from these countries, I will be able to uncover success stories, advice and examples of what is working for them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I feel very fortunate to have been able to take the time to reflect on education, take some refreshment time and recharge. I would like to thank the following people for allowing me to take this time:

- MOE/Teach NZ for providing the opportunity to take a sabbatical - the first in 30 years of education.
- NZEALS, for the Fuji Xerox Dame Herbison Award.
- Golden Sands School Board of Trustees for supporting this application.
- Matt Kennedy (acting principal) for leading the school in my absence,
- Kāhui Ako leaders across New Zealand who were gracious with their time.
  I appreciated their honesty and their quest to improve the system.
- Members of our sector who offered advice or leads.

REFERENCES


There is a growing body of literature highlighting the various challenges both teachers and students face when students transition between schools, (e.g. from intermediate to high school), with very little focus given to transitions within school contexts. The nature of common transition processes frequently positions students within a deficit model as individuals needing to be fixed, reflects managerial rather than pedagogical decision-making, (e.g. fluidity, staffing considerations, time management, maximising time on task and minimising disruption), and can lack overall pedagogical focus. As a team of educators and researchers, we strongly believed that Appreciative Inquiry had the potential to be an innovative practice which can aid in creating coherent learning pathways for a more seamless education experience.

Transitions are an important part of educational journeys - physically and culturally (Paki & Peters, 2015). We believe that by changing the way we view learners and perceive our teaching practice, we can expose, shift and counteract traditional models of teaching and learning which continue to suffocate innovation, curiosity, and the courage to try new things. Appreciative Inquiry supports the notions of dialogue and reflection which we believe can be suitably linked to transitions within schools (Peters & Roberts, 2015). Like teaching, it is a relational practice (Gibbs, 2006). It prioritizes students and their success, illuminating to those supporting the student in their learning, important elements which have the potential to enhance learner agency. This often occurs through the provision of new information about the strengths students bring to their learning which teachers, students and families can use to develop personalized learning plans, better align
teaching practices and approaches to support students, making “a faster and greater difference to ... students learning outcomes” (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 4).

A project following this philosophy was located in a rural primary school in the Waikato district. It investigated children’s understandings of learning to assist current and future teachers to shift their pedagogical approaches in order to provide learning experiences which are more meaningful and relevant for learners. Through using Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005) a learning community which could confidently and meaningfully inquire into how students were ‘learning at their best’ was created. Students and teachers worked collaboratively to generate a sense of agency about their own identity as learners working within this learning community. Central to this approach was its collaborative and relational nature, where students shared the information they discovered about themselves as learners with teachers and whānau to strengthen support structures, enhance teaching pedagogy and improve the overall transition experiences within and between classes.

Emerging findings from this work illustrate that appreciative inquiry has the potential to foster both student and teacher agency to effect change in learning and teaching relationships. This inquiry approach supported students to articulate their own learning needs, and engender a sense of belonging across learning spaces. This inquiry also provided both teachers and students with new information to respond to these needs in meaningful, creative and courageous ways.

If you would like to learn more about this project, we will be sharing findings from this work at the upcoming national NZEALS Conference, April 18-20. We look forward to seeing you there.

REFERENCES


The International School Leadership Development Network (ISLDN) connects researchers from around the world with a shared interest in investigating the intersection of social justice leadership and high-needs schools. The New Zealand lead researcher, Ross Notman, and colleagues Rachael McNae and Michele Morrison, have collaborated to gather the voices of leaders in New Zealand early childhood, primary and secondary high needs settings to produce a volume of work that will challenge, inspire and motivate readers.

*Educational Leadership in Aotearoa New Zealand: issues of context and social justice* is an edited collection of research studies by contributors who have met leaders in settings from the north to the south of the country, across a wide range of education contexts and at different stages of their careers. Each contributor brings the voice of the leader to the forefront, creating a series of authentic, personalised accounts of leadership dispositions, moral purpose and experiences. Using their own research framework, each contributor brings to us a perspective on the challenging, frustrating and sometimes even humorous task of taking a high needs school to success through social justice leadership.

One of the consistent messages I took from the research studies was the leaders’ uncompromising belief in their students’ abilities, and their entitlement to teachers with high expectations and responsibility for student achievement. Often arriving in schools where the students, teachers and community had all but given up hope, several of the study leaders had significant barriers to overcome. For Sheralyn Cook at Taupiri School, the deficit thinking of her students, teachers and community was having a significant impact until she moved her school to a place of hope and high expectations, expanding the students’ views of what is possible. Leaders in the case studies, such as Robyn Curry at Te Papapa School, focused on building teachers’ capacity to identify and support individual learning needs, building their efficacy and prioritising staffing resources to develop a shared understanding of pedagogy that works in their setting. Steve Berezowski of Te Wharau School worked to build respect for his staff, addressing their workload and reigniting their passion for their
work, through connecting his staff to their community. Lisa Morresey arrived to find Mount Maunganui Intermediate School in an “appalling” state; she described her impression that, “Someone needed to love this place” (p 51). She went about doing just that to improve student behaviour and academic outcomes. Deficit thinking was having an impact on Taitoko Kindergarten in Levin too, until a new general manager set about redirecting resources, building staff capacity and belief, and building the capacity of the parents to be children’s first teachers and leaders of their families.

Each chapter describes the context of the high needs school or centre, and the multiple obstacles to success that the leaders face, including those sometimes imposed by the very agencies that should be in place to support our most vulnerable children in education. Principals, such as Robyn Curry, sought solutions to the barrier of low school attendance by accessing food and clothing for the children, and removing the school donation, leading one parent to say, “The school doesn’t give you any excuse for your child not to be here!” (p. 15). Accessing resources to meet various needs and fill funding gaps required a great deal of creativity and time from the leaders. Introducing programmes such Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) and reading development programmes, and scraping together funding for new technologies and facilities are testament to the leaders’ tenacity, and belief that their students deserve the same advantages as any others. Steve Berezowski explained that he was always “looking for ways I feel will improve our school; that will improve our learning outcomes” (p. 84). Bringing parents and community on board was a challenge met by many of the case study leaders. At Te Papapa School parents were brought in as partners in learning and teaching, with Robyn creating a welcoming environment, running workshops, and engaging multiple cultures. She also engaged community agencies, including the police, to utilise all resources available to her. Taitoko Kindergarten took a leadership role in supporting vulnerable young parents, running parenting workshops and a flourishing coffee group. At Wairoa College the Māori community was widely consulted and engaged to find solutions to the multiple issues facing the town’s young people. As a result, teaching of te reo and tikanga Māori was resourced, a services academy and rugby academy were introduced, whakairo (carving) became an NCEA course, and the school structure adopted a whānau-like model of pastoral care.

Many of the leaders in the case studies shared very personal accounts of the toll taken on their own wellbeing and that of their families in leading such challenging schools. Sheralyn Cook described the feelings of loneliness and vulnerability she experienced, not knowing who to trust in a new community, while also learning to not take things personally and staying true to her values and beliefs. Lisa Morresey unashamedly shared her emotional approach to leadership of a high needs school and the impact that approaching her students and community with love had on
bringing about change. In another perspective, teacher Penny Deane of Omanu School taught her students the value of thinking of others who may be “worse off than ourselves”, by leading her class and community through a major social justice project that sent aid to a community in Samoa. The vision and collaboration of this project was a mutually beneficial experience. Leaders in high needs settings described feeling a calling to such schools, where the challenging environments saw the odds stacked against the children and the leaders. Steve Berezowski was one such leader who described himself as not “really a decile 10 person” (p. 73), choosing to remain in a challenging high needs environment for over 15 years. Leaders shared their own backgrounds and values that shaped their moral purpose and social capital, such as the impact of growing up in a small rural community “where everyone looked out for each other” (p. 114).

Each chapter concludes with a set of reflective questions for the reader to consider in their own context. I found chapter four had the most confronting questions, as researcher Christopher Branson demands a reflection on the level of emotional response that is applied to social justice in leadership practice. Chapter six also challenges the reader to consider definitions of social justice, with researcher Michele Morrison asking, “How do you disrupt unjust practices in your educational setting?” (p 86). Following a study of a high needs East Coast secondary school, where teachers had much to learn about cultural competencies and to deprivatise their practice in order to reach their predominantly Māori students, Mere Berryman and Zac Anderson ask the reader how they consider kaupapa Māori theory in informing leadership theory and practice.

In their concluding chapter, the editors draw on the threads of key messages from each of the leaders in the case studies: that social justice leadership is complex, it takes time and resilience, is demanding on the leader, and is heavily located in context. Morrison, Notman and McNae leave us with a call to action on social justice, including for all leaders to sustain their personal wellbeing, to lobby policy makers to remove “structures that perpetuate inequality” (p. 167), and to expect pre-service education providers and those preparing for leadership to adopt a social justice lens in order for a sustainable improvement in education and social outcomes for all children. Their final provocations are suitable for principal learning groups as well as teacher reflections on classroom practice and discussions at board level, to build understanding of social justice issues in classrooms, schools and communities.

This book is supported by the New Zealand Educational Leadership and Administration Society (NZEALS). Educational Leadership in Aotearoa New Zealand: issues of context and social justice brings the Aotearoa New Zealand perspective to the ISLDN, and adds to an international movement of discussion and debate on meeting the needs of our most vulnerable children. Through its collaborative content and its place in the ISLDN, this book remains true to its opening whakatauki: Ehara taku toa, I te toa takitahi engari he toa takatini - My strength comes not from myself alone but from the strength of the group.
NZEALS Conference 18-20 April 2018 in Auckland

The Auckland Branch of NZEALS look forward to welcoming you next year to the City of Sails for the biennial International Leadership Conference. The conference is being held at the Hotel Pullman, a 5-star central city hotel.

Conference sub-themes:

| Leadership for Cultural Inclusivity | 18 April |
| Leadership for Collaboration | 19 April |
| Leadership for Sustainability | 20 April |

Key dates:

| Online conference registration opens | 16 October 2017 |
| Early bird registration closes | 31 January 2018 |
| Final submission of full papers for journal | 1 February 2018 |

Keynote Speakers:

- Distinguished Prof Paul Spoonley, Massey University
- Prof Manjula Waniganayake, Professor of Early Childhood, Macquarie University
- Prof Ross Notman, University of Otago
- Prof Peter John O’Connor, University of Auckland
- Prof Martin Thrupp, University of Waikato
- Associate Prof Rachel McNae, University of Waikato
- Dr Howard Youngs, Auckland University of Technology
- Associate Prof Damon Salesa, University of Auckland
- Dr Melinda Webber, University of Auckland

Registration Costs

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Conference Dinner and Cocktail Party included in price

Additional Guest Costs

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For enquiries, please contact the conference convener, Graeme Macann at graeme.macann@xtra.co.nz

NEW ZEALAND EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND LEADERSHIP SOCIETY
www.nzeals.org
I would like to encourage you to provide an article for Leading Lights, which might outline new policies and programmes, legislation, trends, developments, research or education debates in your own locality. Your topic should be relevant, and of professional interest, to educational leaders in New Zealand. I am seeking short articles (500-1,500 words) and photos for forthcoming issues of the magazine.

Your own topic, based on your own area of interest/expertise (and keeping in mind current issues and developments in educational leadership) is most welcome. We are also seeking papers of emerging findings from educational leadership research being carried out by post-graduate students. If you are seeking a publication opportunity for your work this is a great place to begin. Longer papers are published on the NZEALS website under a collection of Members’ Publications.

Your target audience is cross-sector leaders throughout New Zealand. A brief outline of the context of your education setting would be useful for readers. Any recommendations you might make to readers, based on your experience, knowledge or research, would be most appreciated.

Prospective writers who wish to discuss a possible topic before commencing writing, may email me. Otherwise, completed articles can be emailed directly to me at annette.sheehy@ikindergartens.nz as attached Word files or as plain email messages and their receipt will be confirmed by return email. Please also include a one-paragraph ‘about the author’ and attach a head and shoulders photo of yourself as a separate file (high resolution jpeg preferred).

SUBMISSION DEADLINES: 2018: 2 MAY; 2 AUGUST; 2 NOVEMBER

Annette Sheehy
Editorial Committee, Leading Lights
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The NZEALS Council is elected by the membership at the biennial NZEALS conference, or co-opted to a certain portfolio, and reflects the cross-sector nature of the society. Council members hold key portfolios for the services of NZEALS, and meet bi-monthly by tele-conference to progress strategic work. Questions or ideas may be directed to any Council members using the contact details below.

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