

**SABBATICAL REPORT - NEW ZEALAND**

**AREA SCHOOL EDUCATION  
IN TAITOKERAU**

***he waka eke noa***

*a canoe on which everyone may embark*

*dedicated to Hon Brian Donnelly*

*whetumarama - guiding star*

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**Whangarei, New Zealand**

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*Ma tini, ma mano, ka rapa te whai. By many, by thousands, the object is attained.*

### **Ministry of Education Teacher Study Awards / Sabbaticals**

#### **Mangakahia Area School Board of Trustees**

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Bill Morgan (acting principal), Terri Cunningham (acting DP), Kaye Davey, Lesley McCardle

#### **Northland Area School Principals**

Grant Burns (Tauraroa), Pani Hauraki (Manganuiowae-Broadwood), Tiere Maoate (Opononi) Mina Pomare-Peita (Panguru), Pateriki Toi (Taipa); and the writer, Anne Stead (Mangakahia)

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Secondary Futures Project: Dave Armstrong (Auckland), Sue Crawford (Whangarei)

**Ministry of Education Schools Resourcing Division (Wellington)** Manager Anna Cook

## RATIONALE

*Ko te kai, a te Rangatira te korero. Discussion is the food of chiefs.*

Area School education in New Zealand has had too low a profile for too many years. I could find no qualitative research literature, in the public arena, on who we are, where we are, what we do, how we do it. Yet the area school network makes a significant contribution to the lives of rural heartland students and empowers rural communities. In 2006 I conceived and wrote the NZASA Handbook. I use some of my original material here in the sections headed *Who We Are, Where We Are, What We Do, How We Do It*. The *whakatauki* are very carefully chosen. I hope you reflect on them.

There is little understanding about what makes us unique – the Ministry lumps us in with ‘composite schools’, a large number of which have little in common with us apart from a Y1-13 roll. National forums focus on primary and secondary school education, with occasional mention of intermediate schools. In a statistics-driven Ministry, area school education is dismissed as ‘too small to take into account’ as there are only 39 such schools. The quantitative contestable funding model sets the bar so high that area schools are excluded from many initiatives.

## PURPOSE

*E iti noa ana, na te aroha. A small ordinary thing, but begotten by love*

This sabbatical gives me time to reflect on and synthesise the rich professional development afforded by the executive lobbying, conference attendance and professional reading of the last three years. It gives me the chance to elicit the perspectives of area school colleagues on the connectedness, coherence and curriculum characteristics of their own schools. I thank them for their contributions. As the above acknowledgements indicate, a force is certainly with us.

## **ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN**

*Tau mahi e te ringa whero. Fit work for the hand of a chief.*

The paper draws on my experience as principal, curriculum roll-out sector leader, and recent NZASA national executive lobbyist and networker. It also draws on the perspectives of the Northland principals, and Fullan's writings on turnaround school leadership and community empowerment (2006).

In the three-year period 2005-2007, while representing Northland on the NZASA national executive, executive meetings included regular sessions with School Support Services 2005-6 and the Schools Resourcing Policy Division 2006-7. The executive meets regularly with the Minister of Education, Chief Review Officer, and Secretary for Education. I represented NZASA on national assessment panel meetings, and RERG (Rural Education Reference Group). All provided valuable insights.

Each year since 2002 I have attended the NZASA annual conference. In 2006 and 2007 I presented interactive workshops for principals on 'making the most of your area school'. I also attend annual SPANZ conferences/symposiums. International guest speakers at these conferences, such as Professor Patrick Duignan (Australia), advocate exactly what area schools already do, for example personalising learning, integrating curriculum and empowering community. Coherence with the international view is very affirming, given our significant marginalisation in the New Zealand education sector.

Further activity occurred in 2008. As a sector leader of the Ministry of Education curriculum roll-out project, I convened a professional learning community of the six Northland Area School principals. During the year, the group met on four occasions to explore the new curriculum and its implementation, in particular how to formally integrate its vision, principles and values into each school's charter, strategic planning and pedagogical practices. Presentations on the connectedness, coherence and curriculum characteristics of their own schools, made by principals at the August session, are incorporated into this study, with their generous permission. The fortuitous coincidence of the two projects, and the commitment of the principals to both, proved invaluable.

My professional reading affirms what area schools do. Northland area schools in particular implement the precepts of Angus Macfarlane and Russell Bishop regarding the education of Maori students, who are the majority of five out of the six school rolls.

A more recent affirmation came in Michael Fullan's book *Turnaround Leadership* (2006), which specifically challenges schools to empower their communities. A recent Secondary Futures newsletter asks us to imagine a future where schools do exactly that. My response is that in area schools, the future is already here.

## **DISCLAIMER**

*Ko te kairapu, ko ia te kite. They who seek, will find.*

This does not pretend to be, nor is it, a rigorous academic exercise. The work that has gone into this paper is my own. The views expressed and conclusions reached are based on shared experience, affirmed by NZASA. The *whakatauki* are carefully chosen.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*He manga wai koia kia kore e whitikia. It is a big river indeed that cannot be crossed.*

Each of the 39 area schools in New Zealand is the hub of its rural community. Each meets staffing, roll and resourcing challenges posed by distance. Each is passionately committed to provide the best possible education to rural students living at home. This paper seeks to inform, challenge, and convict the hearts of education sector readers.

Area schools are supported by strong national and regional association networks. Trustees, principals and senior managers attend top quality annual conferences. Students take part in keenly contested provincial and national sports tournaments. Head students attend annual 'outward bound' leadership camps. Students of all abilities enjoy the individual attention, leadership and travel opportunities denied to too many students in big city schools. They follow coherent learning programmes sequenced from years 1 to 13 that incorporate and integrate rich learning opportunities beyond the school gates.

Of the six Taitokerau area schools, five serve predominantly Maori communities that are closely connected with the school. The principals strive to make the most of their unique opportunities as area school leaders, on behalf of their trustees, staff, students and communities. They are reflective and enterprising practitioners holding fast to their collective Taitokerau school identities. They value the new curriculum emphasis on connectedness and coherence and its relevance to their mission as area school leaders.

New Zealand area schools may be small in number, but they are huge of heart. They epitomise the best of theories about education espoused in current international research. Taitokerau area schools are the diamonds in northern heartland communities.

### ***Turnaround Leadership, Fullan*** (Jossey-Bass, 2006)

Michael Fullan is professor of policy studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, Canada. He explores what it takes to motivate large numbers of people to go beyond short-term solutions to achieve fundamental, sustainable reform: *'One unified agenda: to turn a system around by substantially raising the bar and closing the gap in educational performance, while realising that this is part of a larger goal to reduce the income differential in society as a whole'* (p97).

It was a relief to discover in Fullan's work, vindication of my vision for the Mangakahia Area School community – a community health centre on the southern boundary of the school grounds – and what we had already achieved, in taking over the School for Teen Parents in town. It made up for comments such as 'Your job is to run your school, not build a health centre' (a former Minister of education) and 'What do you want to take that dump on for?' (no town schools would take on the STP). It was fortunate indeed that our board and staff shared the vision, commitment and work, applying what Fullan calls *'our human and social ingenuity'* to *'accomplish two giant things at once: greater equality and multi-faceted prosperity'* for our disadvantaged, decile three community.

Having closed several gaps in educational performance for our own students in the years 2002-2006 (Education Review Office report 2008, [www.ero.govt.nz](http://www.ero.govt.nz)), extending our sphere of influence to give back to our school community was the next logical step.

*'This is education's true calling in the twenty-first century. It is time to go beyond turnaround schools and to tackle head-on the deep system transformation called for in order to reduce income and education gaps. The stakes have never been higher.'* (ibid.)

## **AREA SCHOOLS IN NEW ZEALAND**

### **CONTEXT: WHO WE ARE**

In the 1970s District High Schools were renamed Area Schools, rural schools in rural communities educating students from Year 1-13. There are 39 area schools in 2008. Because Area Schools teach students at primary (Y1-6), intermediate (Y7-8) and secondary (Y9-13) levels, their Ministry of Education technical 'roll' designation is that of 'composite schools'. This blurs perceptions of our identity, because the term composite schools also includes any state or integrated school catering for Y1-13 students, eg Kura Kaupapa Maori, integrated schools (eg Christian, Muslim), urban or rural. Kura Kaupapa and integrated schools hold fast to their special characters and missions. They have their own funding formulae, employment contracts and professional associations, and can be urban as well as rural (wharekura). They are not 'Area Schools' per se.

#### **Area Schools retain their original character, purpose and features. They are:**

- state, rural, community-based and seamless education providers for Y1-13
- cornerstone schools for rural education in the heartlands
- the social and economic heart of our rural communities
- funded according to the Area Schools funding formula
- operated according to the Area Schools Collective Employment Contract
- active members of provincial & national associations, tournaments & conferences

**The New Zealand Area Schools Association (NZASA)** advances and promotes the cause of Area Schools in particular and rural education in general, the ongoing improvement and delivery of education for students of all ages, and the development of skills and training for boards, principals and teachers.

The association ensures that the collective views and opinions of Area School personnel are canvassed and heard nationally on matters of educational significance. It provides a forum for the exchange of ideas, support and advice for member schools, and representation on education sector organisations such as Ministry of Education reference groups, PPTA, NZEI, and RERG.

NZASA provides leadership training for Area School head students in April, a national conference in June, and a national sports tournament in July. The executive meets each term, usually in Wellington. It comprises principals and trustees representing the regions, chaired by an elected parent trustee. NZASA annual conferences are unique in that they cater for boards of trustees, principals, and senior managers.

### **WHERE WE ARE**

#### **NORTH ISLAND (20)**

**Northland** Taipa, Opononi, Panguru, Broadwood, Mangakahia, Tauraroa  
**Central** Coromandel, Coastal Taranaki, Mangakino, Mercury Bay, Ngata,  
Onewhero, Patea, Raglan, Rerekohu, Taihape, Te-Whanau-a-Apanui,  
Tolaga Bay, Tongariro, Whangamata

#### **SOUTH ISLAND (19)**

**North** Collingwood, Karamea, Murchison, Rai Valley, Reefton,  
South Westland, Tapawera  
**Central** Akaroa, Amuri, Cheviot, Hurunui, Oxford, Rangiora  
**South** Lawrence, Maniototo, Roxburgh, The Catlins, Tuatapere, Twizel

## **CONNECTEDNESS: WHAT WE DO**

### **Like any state school, we teach students and keep them safe and well.**

We teach the national curriculum and focus on national and local education priorities. We teach students to be the best they can be, good sports and good citizens. We respond to the needs and aspirations of our local communities. We benefit from the collaboration of primary and secondary teachers and primary and secondary students.

### **Like any rural school, we also have added duties of care.**

We educate students from New Entrants to NCEA Level 3, including whole families, often through generations. We provide many students with their only opportunities for travel in New Zealand. We are often our community's biggest employers and providers of facilities. We double as de facto health, welfare and sports providers and are usually the sole provider of community education programmes.

### **We directly reflect New Zealand's diverse rural communities.**

We vary in roll size from under 200 to over 700 students and in Maori roll from under 20% to over 90%. We vary in community earning power from decile 1 (low) to decile 10 (high). We vary in location from remote rural to urban hinterland, and in distribution from isolated single schools to connected clusters.

### **We share common achievements.**

We know our students well and provide family-whanau oriented attention. We deliver programmes tailored to meet their individual needs. We provide excellent travel, sports and leadership opportunities. We support students to achieve well in NCEA, sport and outdoor education. We support our community in many ways, tangible and intangible. We are innovative and entrepreneurial in 'doing it for ourselves' and each other.

### **We share common challenges.**

Our two biggest challenges are geographical distance from main centres and erosion of rural community services, which impact on all aspects of area school education.

Distance means travel costs. We have variable access to student support and teacher advisory services. We struggle to recruit and retain teachers in some subjects and to access relieving teachers to cover staff PD and illness. The cost is high for transporting students to off-site learning and sports, staff travelling to courses and meetings, and for incoming technicians and maintenance service providers. This was to some extent compensated by a rural isolation index. Many of us lost this funding in 2005, a result of a new, flawed, inequitable formula. Increased fuel costs in 2008 are hitting us harder.

Distance means time costs. Attendance by students or staff at a day event can take three days, two to travel (there and back), with overnight stays, draining staff relief budgets. E-learning means nothing to area schools without broadband access.

As the steady erosion of rural community services depopulates rural communities, the roll-based funding model puts undue pressure on their schools to staff all subjects. The subsequent lack of the 'critical mass' that enables big schools to more easily absorb the increased duties and functions of schooling, creates unique and complex challenges for area schools. We live or die by our communities in ways that urban schools do not. And we live with the knowledge that if we go down, our community goes down with us.

## ***CURRICULUM: HOW WE DO IT***

Area schools deliver seamless primary, intermediate, secondary and community education services to heartland communities. We do the very best for our students, in close partnership with our rural communities. We integrate and coordinate national and local curriculum priorities. The new curriculum themes of connectedness and coherence are not new to us. They are our lifeblood. They are what we are all about.

We tailor courses to the needs of senior student cohorts by running multi-level and/or small classes. Loyalty to our seniors is important, eg offering NCEA Level 1 art can mean a commitment to cater for the same students in Level 2 and 3 in subsequent years. We keep Correspondence School courses to a minimum. Only those area schools with broadband and VC facilities can take advantage of e-learning. We are well placed to develop middle-school courses / awards for Y7-10 students. Y1-8 students benefit from specialist teachers in physical education, technology and the arts.

We welcome the many people (school and community) who front up in our busy foyers every single day. Trustees, staff and students work daily in the community spotlight or 'fishbowl'. Facilities must be safe and user-friendly to students aged 5 to 18. We also share them with the community – especially our libraries, halls, gymnasiums and pools. We are de facto community social welfare organisations, working closely with agencies.

All our employees multi-task. Teachers carry responsibility for delivering seamless education that underpins student achievement and learning behaviour Y1-13. Secondary teachers are frequently the only teacher of their subject. Area schools do not have guidance counsellors, so form teachers, deans and managers share pastoral care.

Area school principals and managers teach as well as manage, monitor and review. There are usually no 'walking managers'. Principals carry responsibility for Y1 to 13 student achievement and teacher performance, often working without a secretary or PA. Their deputy and assistant principals are frequently teachers and heads of their own subjects as well as moderators, performance managers and deans. All work through discipline problems at the expense of teaching and administration time. Executive officers can have a full and wide portfolio, for example, ancillary staff manager, board secretary, network administrator, finance manager, community education coordinator.

Area schools depend hugely on their busy, well skilled and experienced support staff. Most live locally, are at the top of their pay scale, and can be extremely hard to replace. Office staff process everything to do with primary and secondary students, including the operation of ENROL, and can also be the school nurse, Gateway or Sportfit coordinator. The caretaker often maintains grounds as well as pool and property. Teacher aides can be scarce, but worth their weight in gold. They work with Y1 to 10 students, 1:1 or in small groups, and usually support a wide variety of student activities, including behaviour, sport, art, drama. Community leaders can also be bus drivers, cleaners, teacher aides, bible teachers and sports coaches, school parents or grandparents. Area school support staff are guardians of much of the school's institutional knowledge.

Area schools work closely as a national group and as connected clusters. We run an annual conference and leadership camp, national and regional sports tournaments. We operate robust provincial associations that inform the work of the national body. We work hard at our relationships with Ministry divisions, especially the Schools Resourcing division with whom we have a productive partnership. We are proud of what we do.

## **REFLECTIONS - AREA SCHOOLS IN TAITOKERAU**

*Nau te rourou, naku te rourou, ka ora te manuhiri.  
With your food basket and my food basket, the guests will have enough.  
Let us work together for the benefit of all.*

There are six area schools in Taitokerau: three in the Hokianga, one on the east coast, and two in the Whangarei hinterland. Opononi overlooks the entrance to the Hokianga Harbour. Panguru and Broadwood nestle in the maunga of the north Hokianga. Taipa perches on the shore of east-coast Doubtless Bay. Mangakahia hides in a river valley north-west of Whangarei, and Tauraroa is tucked away on a plateau south of the city.

Each individual school section in this paper begins with the context - roll, community decile, staffing entitlement, and distance from main centres. There is a statement of iwi affiliations and current links to education support services and agencies. The principals reflect on three other aspects of their schools: connectedness (culture and community), coherence (changes and challenges), and curriculum (direction and delivery).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century most Taitokerau rural communities began with three common focal points - a marae, a church, and a school. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw thriving farming, logging and gum-digging businesses attract stores, hotels, banks, and post offices. Many such amenities disappeared in the late-century rural economic downturn. Tiny schools closed. Failing schools were reformed through Ministry intervention. Iwi set up their own local health services, for example Hokianga Health and Ngatihine Health.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we have come full circle. The marae, churches and schools remain. Farming and logging continue, albeit in different guises. There are some thriving new developments. Tourism ventures and burgeoning cottage industries are the new lifeblood of several communities. Schools in the mid and far north are in much better shape. NCEA, Gateway, Youth Transition and Sportfit initiatives have made a huge difference to rural student development and achievement. New curriculum emphases on connectedness and coherence suit Taitokerau schools particularly well.

There is no doubt that, as in the last two centuries, challenges remain. Board elections in 2003 and 2007 challenged already shrinking area school communities to put forward trustees. Principals no longer stay in schools for long periods of time. In 2000, most Taitokerau area schools had long-serving principals. Four have since moved on. Three schools have had two changes of principal. Whatever benefits accrue from new boards and principals, changes bring challenges. Staff turnover may be relatively low in many area schools, but national shortages of maths, technology and relieving teachers are a much bigger challenge for rural schools than urban schools, exacerbated in 2008 by spiralling petrol costs. Y1-13 schools are rendered particularly vulnerable to the twin vagaries of rural population transience and a roll-based funding formula. At least the decile system compensates us to some degree.

So, Taitokerau area schools are used to meeting challenges to make the best of our lot. We remain dedicated to doing our students and our communities proud. We work through the troughs and the triumphs, the bad times and the good. We met a huge challenge at the end of May 2008, when we staged a stunning national conference attended by area school trustees, principals and senior staff from all over New Zealand. The early morning powhiri on the beach at the Waitangi Treaty Grounds moved many to tears. The conference packs were kete decorated with feathers and paua shell. The speakers and workshops were excellent. Kia kaha e Te Taitokerau. Tino pai rawa!



# **MANGAKAHIA AREA SCHOOL**

## **TE KURA TAKIWA o MANGAKAHIA**

### **CONTEXT**

Mangakahia Area School is situated in the Mangakahia River Valley at Titoki, a decile 3 community 30km north-west of Whangarei, where three rohe (tribal areas) of Ngati Whatua, Ngatihine and Ngapuhi intersect. The school embraces and is embraced by six marae: Korokota at Titoki (our mana whenua); Tau Henare at Pipiwai; Te Aroha at Parakao; Te Tarai o Rahiri at Pakotai; Parahaki at Twin Bridges; Maungorongongo at Poroti. 1200 people celebrated the school centenary in 2007. Titoki School was established 1907, renamed Titoki District High School in 1950 and Mangakahia Area School 1976.

The school's catchment area is the Mangakahia River Valley. Its maunga Houto looks north to Twin Bridges, Parakao and Pakotai; west to Tangiteroria; east to Pipiwai and Purua; and south to Poroti and Maungatapere. A board-subsidised bus brings 30 students from Whangarei. Main contributing schools are Pakotai and Te Horo (Pipiwai). Others are Poroti, Maungatapere, Tangiteroria, and Purua. Y7-8 visiting technology classes come to us from Pakotia, Te Horo, Poroti, Maungatapere, Kokopu, and Purua. Most students travel by bus or car. A dozen live across the road, in Titoki village.

The school roll of around 165 (60% Maori, 60% boys) is evenly distributed across the year levels. The staffing entitlement is 16 FTEs (20 teachers). We employ nine support staff in varying capacities. The campus has a school-community library, hall-gym with attached community room and kitchen, and local Playcentre. We run community education classes and, from 2009, an on-site community health centre in partnership with the Ministry of Social Development and Manaia Primary Health Organisation.

The school hosts He Mataariki School for Teen Parents, located in Whangarei. The unit's five staff educate and support 35 pregnant / parenting teens aged 14 to 20, whose children attend an attached childcare centre. Running a dual campus is a challenge the board and staff enjoy and meet successfully. The two campuses are well integrated.

The school has been an enviro-school since 2003, in partnership with Northland Regional Council. It gained a Bronze Award in 2006 and a Silver Award in 2007. A feature of the campus is the spacious grounds, groves of trees and environmental art. It has been a Health Promoting School since 2005, in partnership with Manaia PHO. The school holds dual Sportfit and Sportmark Awards. It has a very active Sports Council. Students run all these initiatives, as eco-educators, Wellness Team members, and physical activity leaders. They are fully supported in their efforts by staff and whanau.

Highlights of each school year are the Powhiri and Taitokerau Festival in Term 1, Area School Sports tournaments and Matariki Celebrations in Term 2, Junior Hut Building and Musical Production in Term 3, and Show Day and Prizegiving in Term 4.

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## **CONNECTEDNESS: CULTURE & COMMUNITY**

Our school charter is a working document. It defines a kaupapa that rests on the cornerstones of spirit, unity, family, and education. Our wairua is our spirit, our shared vision, beliefs and values that shine through everything we do. Our kotāhitanga is our strength, through internal and external unity. Our whānaungatanga is our inclusiveness, promoted through the whare wānanga, a forum where all may feel welcome and comfortable. Matauranga is our mission - high quality education for every student in every lesson, in classrooms that are a forum where everybody learns with and from each other.

We aim to provide a caring, supportive learning environment for active, well presented, respectful learners making academic, cultural, physical, and social effort. In other words, a learning community of responsible, resilient young people secure in themselves and their futures - confident, connected, and actively-involved lifelong learners. Our school has a culture of high hopes, high expectations, high standards and high spirits. The warm wairua of the school, invariably noted by visitors, is underpinned by our cornerstones of whanaungatanga and kotahitanga.

Our strategic goal is to equip students to take responsibility for their own health and well-being, personal growth and development, academic and vocational success, bicultural and cultural confidence. This requires key annual objectives. Students must attend school regularly, eat healthily, and care for their bodies. They are to strive for age-appropriate fitness and demonstrate fair play and teamwork. Academic and personal success is predicated on their resilience, goal-oriented learning and visibly positive behaviours. Behind each objective sits an achievable and measurable plan.

Since 2005 we have specifically fostered student voice, through active student participation in decision-making across the school and through the year levels. We abandoned the traditional (largely ineffectual) 'school council' model. The enviro-schools model of student voice, action and decision-making works better. Supported by the integration of education for sustainability into Y1-13 learning programmes, all students are eco-educators working through junior and senior focus groups. Every student takes part in recycling, anti-pollution and campus beautification projects. We apply the same model to physical activity. Students run the school sports council and whanau sports, and weekly lunchtime activities as designated physical activity leaders. Rotating vertical groups attend monthly school wellness team meetings where their views on health and welfare issues are addressed. Students take a tuakana-teina role in kapa haka, and in peer mediation in the playgrounds and whare wananga. They make a visible difference.

The school implements the key principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, which we understand to mean partnership, protection and participation. Partnership is predicated on the school cornerstones. The School Runanga is a whanau support partnership between the school board and the kaumatua-kuia of Korokota, with periodic input from those of Tau Henare and Parahaki marae. We have an explicit commitment to the protection of our tāonga, these being our tamariki-mokupuna, te reo me ngā tikanga Māori, and the kapupapa of local iwi (Ngatiwhatua, Ngatihine, Ngapuhi). Participation of the community in the education of its children is paramount. Parents and children of all cultures are made welcome. All students have access to school-wide kapa haka and participation in festivals. The school for Teen Parents and community health centre are two community empowerment projects arising from a deliberate effort to widen our sphere of influence to close the gaps between our community's haves and have-nots.

## **COHERENCE: CHANGES & CHALLENGES**

Our understanding of coherence is based on the premise that every student has the right to consistent classroom expectations, values, routines and relationships as they move across subjects and through year levels. Each student also has the right to a quality of health and wellbeing conducive to learning. Well managed transition points and systematic scaffolding support effective change. Learning conversations focus on excellence, inquiry, diversity, equity, community, sustainability, integrity, and respect.

The school charter is our blueprint for direction and development. Through it we address coherence in six inter-related ways: professional development, research-based pedagogy, collaboration with advisers and agencies, single-sex personal development initiatives, the amplification of student voice, and social outreach projects.

Whole-staff, school-based professional development focuses on resilience, classroom culture, relationship building, and behaviour management. The work of Angus Macfarlane and Russell Bishop focuses our practices. Teachers collaborate with subject advisers, managers with leading-managing advisers. We have worked through Ministry contracts on literacy, numeracy, education for sustainability, and behaviour management. Students take part in agency-based, single-sex personal development initiatives and in school-wide forums for student voice and decision making. We are a health promoting school with a strong emphasis on mana founded on reciprocal respect. Teen parent education and community health services are recent outreach projects.

Area schools face challenges common to most schools, yet these can impact on us and our communities in far sharper ways than big city counterparts. Untoward events are highly public given our small rolls and campuses. What happens within any cohort is seen or quickly known about by students aged 5 to 18, many of whom are siblings or cousins. The consequences of committing serious harm, on-site or on the school bus, can mean the end of schooling for the perpetrator, as distance from main centres presents no viable alternatives. Trustees, staff and families face difficult choices. The coherence of our work with troubled students and their families is a continuing priority.

## **CURRICULUM: DIRECTION & DELIVERY**

The generic scheme is our blueprint for curriculum direction and delivery. It defines how education programme delivery coheres with the charter vision, principles and values, so that both cohere with and connect to the national curriculum. The generic scheme stands behind the subject schemes, which in turn guide Y1-13 learning programmes.

For us, curriculum direction and delivery is all about making the most of being an area school. We take full advantage of having Y1-13 students and teachers on-site to deliver a seamless curriculum, through the cohorts and across the learning areas. Whole-staff professional development and training sessions underpin school-wide practices. Teachers plan collaboratively in primary and secondary syndicates. Learning is sequenced and integrated, builds on prior student knowledge, and facilitates knowledge and skills transference. Y1-6 student-led conferencing and Y7-10 Triple-A Awards (attendance, attitude and achievement) reinforce student responsibility for learning.

In accordance with NZQA policy, each year we re-design Y11-13 courses to meet the varying needs of learner cohorts, supplemented by Gateway courses delivered on- and off-site, so that the balance of Unit and Achievement Standards varies each year. Our students enjoy gaining NCEA credits. Virtually all Y11-13 achieve the national awards.

**BROADWOOD AREA SCHOOL**  
**TE KURA TAKIWA o MANGANUIOWAE**

*“Whakatakoto tikanga –a –rua, akonga o te Ao Taiawhio,  
hei wero i a tatou kia whakatutuki i a tatou pumanawa.”*

## **CONTEXT**

We are a bicultural, rural area school located in decile one community in North Hokianga, mid-way between the upper reaches of Hokianga and Whangape harbours.

Our school is 99% Maori: the majority of students have affiliation to Te Rarawa, Ngapuhi and Te Aupouri iwi. We are proud to have the Manganuiowae marae situated on our school grounds. Te Whiringa o te muka tangata is the wharehui and Maria the wharekai.

Our whanau and students affiliate to other marae - Te Karae, Pikiparia, Tauteihiihi, Motukaraka, Morehu, Taiao, Ohaki, Motuti, Matihetihe, Ngatimanawa, Waipuna, Mangataipa and Mangamuka. School buses transport students from Pawarenga, Mangamuka, Mangataipa, Kohukohu, Motuti, Panguru and Awaroa.

We promote competition within sport and students are involved in sporting activities throughout the year. We are privileged to be in partnership with the Nga hoe horo waka ama club and have students who compete at International, national, regional and local levels. We have held National secondary schools waka ama championship titles.

Our school attends the annual Northland Area Schools sports tournament and this year 2008 were Northland champions in Girls and Boys Volleyball, Girls and Boys basketball and 1<sup>st</sup> XV Boys' rugby. Students represented Northland and annually aspire to gain selection into New Zealand teams.

We have a very proud, strong kapa haka and performing arts group. We take part in the annual TaiTokerau Festival, have been part of Manu Ariki and are often invited to perform at private and public functions. As a member of Matauranga Taiao, our students and communities promote and support the care of our environment - te manaakitanga o Papatuanuku.

In 2008 we celebrated the Centennial of the Broadwood and District schools. This event was held over three days and was attended by over 2000 manuhiri, students and community members. It was a momentous occasion.

Popular highlights throughout the year include the Tai Tokerau Festival, the New Zealand and NZ Secondary School waka competitions, TaiTokerau Manukorero, the Northland and NZ Area school sports competitions, the Far North and Hokianga Cross Country competitions, the North Hokianga and Far North Swimming Sports and the Auckland Leadership Symposium.

## **Contacts**

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## **CONNECTEDNESS: CULTURE & COMMUNITY.**

*“Ruia, ruia, tahia, tahia.*

*Ka hemo ake te kaakoko ka herea mai te kauwai koroki.*

*He kuaka marangaranga i taatangi mai ana i roto i tana puukoro, whaikoro.*

*Tau atu ki te tahuna, tau atu, tau atu, kua tae mai.*

*Tihei mauriora.”*

Our school charter is our foundation document which is reviewed as necessary. It reflects our belief that aroha, te tika me te pono is essential in our school, our homes and in our lives. We share a common ancestry which is reflected in the whakapapa of our contributing communities. Whanaungatanga is acknowledged and respected. We acknowledge the prowess of te reo Maori me ona tikanga. We strive to ensure that our students graduate from our school secure and proud of who they are and where they come from - “the children of Hokianga”.

Our mission to provide a supportive bicultural school where we are challenged to fulfil our potential is reflected in quality programmes suited to the learning levels, need and wants of individual students. We strive to provide an attractive, safe, caring, challenging environment. We challenge our students to take responsibility for their education, aim high, and hold fast to the values that serve them well throughout their lives. We encourage parents and caregivers to support the school, emotionally and physically prepare their children for the school day and life in general, and to be honest and respectful, approachable and receptive. We expect our teachers to maintain high professional standards and, above all, to be aware that *unconditional love* of a student is the basic attribute of an excellent teacher.

We endeavour to make the most of our area school status. Data is shared across the school. We celebrate weekly the success of our students. Whenever possible we provide professional development opportunities for staff across the syndicates. We promote our bicultural, bilingual status school-wide. We are proud of our unique wairua.

## **COHERENCE: CHANGES & CHALLENGES**

The school was originally designed for children of the local farming communities, the majority of whom usually left at the end of year 8 to attend boarding schools. The school community has changed dramatically in the last decade; the majority of land owners are aging and no longer have children attending our school. The demography of the area indicates a declining population. As social welfare benefits are no longer available to non-workers, many families are moving to Australia or are being relocated by WINZ to other parts of New Zealand. At present, children have been returned to Hokianga to learn tikanga Maori and values. Many have been “at risk” and reside with grandparents and whanaunga. Hunga kainga have taken the children to ensure that they grow up in a safe, loving environment. We have a majority of solo parent families.

We korowai the “Tumaia” Te Rarawa sports academy, the students are dually enrolled with us and the correspondence school Tumaia students are based in Kaitaia. This is a very successful partnership, Tumaia attend selected lessons and sessions on our campus and our students benefit from focused coaching and training from Tumaia specialists. We unite to play in competitions and for kapa haka and performing arts. Through our membership of FARNET, our school now has superb video conferencing facilities that enable our students to access quality teaching from a wide range of subjects from across New Zealand. We are able to link with other schools with VC

anywhere in the world. We are very fortunate to be a “Mainfreight” school and we receive generous sponsorship that enables us to be a Duffy school. We are an active member of Health Promoting Schools and our students receive daily fruit. We are committed to being drug and alcohol free and promote healthy eating and healthy living.

## **CURRICULUM: DIRECTION AND DELIVERY**

*“Te Kura Takiwa o Manganuiowae/ Broadwood Area School will provide a supportive, bicultural learning environment challenging us to fulfil our potential.”*

The NZ National Curriculum is the tuara, the back bone of education. The charter is our foundation and the scheme like whariki weaves the pattern for curriculum delivery and direction. Subject planning defines Y1-13 learning programmes. These are delivered in twin language streams: Te Puna in immersion te reo Maori, and Endeavour in English.

In accordance with our NZQA quality management system, we revise senior programmes annually and offer NCEA achievement standards and unit standards. Many of our graduates reach NCEA Level 3 and gain University Entrance. The Gateway programme and Top Energy sponsored work programme give students the opportunity to gain credits within their chosen workplace. STAR funding gives students access to tertiary level programmes. Students have gained stage 1 Maori from Waikato University and the Diploma of Maori through Raukawa whare wananga.

Improving student literacy skills is a major curriculum component. Through Te Kete Akoranga Literacy programme, we now have an effective database that shows progress in literacy through Years 1-10. Teachers implement effective literacy practices across the curriculum. They are trained in formative practice through the Assessment to Learn (AToL) contract. The data-driven literacy programmes determine teaching and learning levels. Student literacy levels have improved.

We are also part of local literacy cluster groups - Te Rarawa for Years 1-8 and the Far North for Years 9-10. The clusters initiative enables us to measure our levels against the levels of other schools and to ensure that our reading and writing levels are correctly levelled. It is too easy when working in a remote location, to make the assumption that standards are appropriate. The introduction of asTTle and participation in local literacy clusters gives us security that quality systems are in place.

We have prioritised the need for our students to be computer literate and confident in the use of ICT. This year in 2008 the most modern computers were leased for the computer suite. We now have a skilled, qualified video conferencing teacher on our staff. We have recently procured professional development for our teachers in Numeracy. The goal is to ensure that teachers competently and confidently understand the number framework and offer challenging and appropriate learning opportunities.

The CPaBL careers programme has ensured staff in middle and senior syndicates are informed and confident in careers education, and our students leave school with definite career paths or into employment. Students access relevant information on availability of scholarships, allowances and awards. Individual student leaver files record destinations of leavers. Their progress is tracked for a year after leaving, giving the community added confidence in our school as one that launches and cares about its graduates.

***“Ahakoa he iti he pounamu” We may be small yet we are of the most precious greenstone. Tau atu ki te tahuna, tau atu, tau atu e.....!***

# **TAIPA AREA SCHOOL**

## **CONTEXT**

Taipa Area School is located in scenic, historic Mangonui in Northern New Zealand, directly overlooking beautiful Taipa beach, (35° South, 173°28' East) north-east of Kaitaia. We became an Area School in 1976, having existed as a District high school since 1956. We are the northern-most of the 39 Area Schools in New Zealand.

The diverse nature of our decile 3 community, combined with a geographically broad school area, (from Kaeo to the Karikari Peninsula, and inland toward Kaitaia), presents a unique school climate and culture. The community comprises predominantly Maori and Pakeha families, whose socio-economic circumstances vary greatly. The school has a total roll of 470 students, 67% of whom identify as Maori. The primary school roll is just over 100 and 90% of these students identify as Maori. Contributing schools include Kaingaroa, Mangonui, Oruaiti, Peria, and Te Kura Kaupapa Maori Rangiawhia.

The best property feature of the school is the Whare, which was designed and built collaboratively with the community. Its initial kaupapa is to serve as an interface between the school and the community and its various groups. Its specially chosen name - 'Nga Tai Tokorua', the meeting of two tides – is reflective of that kaupapa.

We have developed a bilingual unit with a roll of 60 students from Year 7–13. As well as developing Te Reo Maori, its purpose is to provide a context for increased academic performance for Maori students. We have a dedicated professional staff of 53 who provide a full range of academic, sporting, and cultural programs for our students.

## **Contacts**

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[www.taipa.school.nz](http://www.taipa.school.nz)

## **CONNECTEDNESS: CULTURE AND COMMUNITY**

Our mission is 'To demand excellence of ourselves and others in everything we do'

The community is connected physically to the school by bus routes throughout the region upon which numerous buses transport 95% of our students. Parent faces are not generally seen at school on a day-to-day basis, so developing a sense of family and togetherness is an aspect we hold as important. The physical distance that separates the school from its contributing families is an obstacle that is overcome by regular newsletters, a school website and annual school events. We are constantly reviewing ways in which to encourage meaningful community interaction with the school.

This strong drive to foster connectedness is maintained through our goals. We actively foster respectful relationships among staff, students and community so that the school provides all with a sense of place, purpose and identity. Teachers must implement effective teaching strategies to increase the engagement and achievement of all students. The school is actively developing and promoting distributive leadership among staff and students. We aim for the school to be a place where all students like to be. By establishing and maintaining respectful relationships among students, colleagues and community we maintain the integrity, dignity and mana of the groups and individuals.

## **COHERENCE: CHANGES & CHALLENGES**

High expectations of teaching and learning, of students and colleagues, drive us to achieve these goals. We demand improved academic achievement and engagement from all students through effective teaching strategies, restorative practice, and respectful relationships. This requires teachers to commit to specific aspects of professional development in all these areas, key foci in our strategic development.

The challenge is to shift traditional teaching practice to a more formative approach. The deputy principal has developed and implemented a professional development 'coaching' model where teachers are observed and teaching data is collected and analysed. The information gathered is then used by teachers to decide what the next steps for professional development will be. The overall goal is to increase the use of formative or discursive practice, including cooperative learning strategies, co-construction, and quality academic feed-back and feed-forward to personalise learning.

Another strategy has been to widen the course selection available to year 11-13 students to improve retention and achievement rates. We have a wide range of academic courses available, incorporating learning activities that reflect the cultural diversity of our students, and harness the potential of the local environment. These activities include aqua sports, surf lifesaving, diving and sea kayaking, Maori performing arts, and performance dance and music.

We have recently planned a major building upgrade for the school in order to improve the learning environment and encourage opportunities for socialisation and relationship building for students and teachers. The school website and intranet allow teachers, students and community to communicate using blogs, wiki and other e-learning tools.

## **CURRICULUM: DIRECTION AND DELIVERY**

The direction and delivery of the curriculum in terms of structure is still very traditional. The primary, intermediate and secondary departments have operated independently, so losing the advantage of area school seamlessness. This barrier is now being removed by the creation of a middle management team representative of all departments, which meets regularly to streamline reporting processes, assessment practices and curriculum implementation. We are currently exploring the viability of establishing a middle school structure with a curriculum specifically focused on catering for the needs of years 7 – 10.

We are interested in creating different learning structures, teaching strategies and environments that will better cater for the varying needs of a diverse student population. A major emphasis in 2009 will be to implement Cooperative Learning strategies across the school and to streamline curriculum and assessment practices. We are also exploring the viability of a junior Maori immersion class to feed into the senior bilingual unit.

The school continues to be committed to numerous Ministry of Education contracts in order to achieve our goals. These include the Student Engagement Initiative, the secondary numeracy contract, junior literacy, CPaBL and FarNet (Video Conferencing) and Engaging Tamariki in Learning. Next year we will be looking to cull these to just three. ICT and e-learning is an important focus in 2009, not just in providing the tools and skills to teachers, but ensuring that it becomes integral to what is regarded as good teaching practice at Taipa Area School and supports our goal to unify our far-flung community.



# **TAURAROA AREA SCHOOL**

## **CONTEXT**

Tauraroa Area School is situated on a rural plateau 22km south-west of Whangarei. The school is four kilometres from the village of Maungakaramea, which has a garage with a shop and postal facilities, a sports complex and a hall. The decile seven community comprises mainly farmers and small block holders. The current boom in dairy prices has had a significant impact in the spending power of many school families.

Tauraroa District High School opened in 1958 and was renamed Tauraroa Area School in 1983. The school celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee in November this year. Contributing schools include Waitotira, Maungakaramea, Portland and Otaika Valley. Over 100 students travel to school from outside the area, from as far afield as Paparoa, Dargaville, Waipu, Onerahi and Kamo. No marae exist within the school catchment area. The nearest is Porowini Marae in central Whangarei, which the school visits.

A steadily rising roll stands at 460 in 2008, approximately 170 in Y1-6 (seven classes) and 290 in Y7-13. 15% of students are Maori. Most students travel to school by bus. The school has 25 classrooms, a general purpose hall, artificial turf surfaced courts, a community library and a community heated pool. There is strong community involvement in school activities.

The school is staffed with approximately 34, a good blend of beginning and experienced teachers, including ESOL and LSU staff. An outstanding team of teacher aides serves the school through the learning support unit. Support staff comprise an executive officer, administration assistant, computer technician, part-time librarian and caretaker. Outside contractors (OCS) undertake cleaning. The school attracts a large number of candidates for most advertised positions. An adult community education (ACE) programme, supported with Tertiary Education Commission funding, operates in the evenings. It seeks to provide life-long learning opportunities for the Tauraroa community.

Highlights of the year include music, debating, drama and sporting opportunities. Many students participate in winter sports teams through Maungakaramea's Mid-Western sports club. EOTC is a high priority, with all year levels having camps every year. The rural setting of the school is celebrated each year through a calf-club day.

## **Contacts**

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## **CONNECTEDNESS: CULTURE & COMMUNITY**

The school enjoys close links with community organisations, such as the Mid-Western Rugby Club, service clubs, contributing schools and play centres. The community has a strong sense of ownership of the school, but only a relatively small number of parents will commit time to special activities. However, school camps are well supported.

A whanau advisory group comprising staff, parent and board of trustees representatives actively promotes the needs and interests of Maori in the school community, in addition for providing practical support for special events. The whanau group meets at least

twice a term. Te Reo is taught to Year 9 by a full time staff member, with plans to extend this subject to Years 10 and 11 in 2009. Powhiri are held as appropriate for visitors and new staff. Waiata are sung at assemblies and on other occasions, to reinforce the bicultural heritage of New Zealand.

### **COHERENCE: CHANGES & CHALLENGES**

The school is enjoying the benefits and difficulties of a rapidly growing roll, with its current size of 460 being 60 more than 12 months ago. A roll of 494 is expected at the start of the 2009 school year. The growing roll is putting current facilities under pressure, with areas such as the dental clinic and library being used to provide overflow teaching space. The Ministry of Education has stipulated an enrolment scheme as a condition of building funds access. Trustees would like to see the roll stabilise at 450 students.

Increased staffing, management units and building entitlements have had a positive impact. A 0.6 FTE guidance counsellor has been appointed, as has an ICT specialist. The appointment of a part-time junior music specialist has had a major impact in the school. A new junior class is about to be established (Year 1-2) to cater for the increasing numbers of primary students. An increasing number of options for senior students are on offer in 2009, including Level 2 music, history and computing.

Administrative under-staffing cannot be remedied until the upgrade and extension of the administration building are complete. The school is beginning a new 10-Year Property Plan, with \$1.5million (School Property Guide), \$540,000 (5 Year Agreement) and 2 roll-growth classrooms accounted for. Building projects include the construction of a new science block and library, administration and staff facilities, a sheltered student lunch area, senior common room and upgraded student toilets. Commitment to ICT has seen \$28,000 of hardware purchased this year.

### **CURRICULUM: DIRECTION & DELIVERY**

The school is organised into Primary (0-6), Intermediate (7-8) and Secondary (9-13) areas, with many staff teaching across year levels. Features of curriculum delivery include: the promotion of Cornerstone Values embedded into classes at all levels, the use of Unit Standards as formative assessment activities and 'back up' credits for Achievement Standards, a very strong 'Gateway' programme, and a major emphasis throughout the school on inquiry learning. STAR, correspondence school, Gateway and other external courses supplement teacher-led education at years 11 to 13.

In recent years students have enjoyed a very high rate of NCEA success. Level 1 and 2 success rates have been at or near 100% for the past two years, with an approximate ratio of 3:2 for unit standards:achievement standards. A goal for 2008 is for 25% of candidates at levels 1, 2 and 3 to achieve 'Merit' or 'Excellence' endorsements.

### ***OPONONI AREA SCHOOL and PANGURU AREA SCHOOL***

Falling rolls and acute staffing difficulties in 2008 prevented principals of these schools from contributing their unique perspectives to this study in time. Area schools are so vulnerable to the vagaries of remote rural locations and struggling communities. We acknowledge their efforts and their courage, and the cost to, and support of, their families. We wish them and their schools and communities well in 2009. Ma te Atua koe e tiaki e manaaki i ngā wā katoa. May God take care of you and keep you at all times.

## ***IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS***

Five major implications and conclusions arise from this study of Area Schools in general and Taitokerau Area Schools in particular. The schools are:

1. community empowerment schools at the heart of their rural communities
2. affected by government policies and social change in ways other schools are not
3. rich in their potential to enact educational theory based on international research
4. responsive to and worthy of Ministry of Education contracts and initiatives
5. passionate in their determination to serve their students and communities well

## **REFERENCE**

***Turnaround Leadership, Fullan*** (Jossey-Bass, 2006)

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Anne Stead has taught in Northland since 1967. She worked in state secondary schools as teacher (state co-educational, single-sex girls, single-sex boys, integrated Catholic), HOD English, and assistant principal. From 1995 she worked for six years as an education review officer based in Whangarei and Auckland. Anne has been principal of Mangakahia Area School (near Whangarei) since 2002. In 2006 the school took over He Mataariki School for Teen Parents (Whangarei city) and is opening a community health centre on the school grounds in 2009. Anne served on NZASA executive 2005-2007 and in 2008 was sector leader for Northland Area Schools curriculum roll-out project. She is now focusing solely on student engagement at Mangakahia Area School.

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