

SABBATICAL REPORT

Term 3 2008

MONITORING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND MEETING STUDENTS' NEEDS

INTRODUCTION

My thanks to the Secondary Principals Council and the Ministry of Education for negotiating the entitlement for this sabbatical into the secondary principals' collective agreement, and my thanks to my own Board and senior staff for supporting it and in the case of the latter for covering for me for a term. I was also very appreciative of the time principals and other people in schools gave me when I visited their schools. It was wonderful to be able to visit their schools. As I visited schools it often happened that principals would discuss innovations outside the scope of my original field of inquiry. In fact some of the most interesting practices discussed with me were of that nature. For that reason I have not limited the following discussion to the original purposes for the sabbatical.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The New Zealand Secondary Principals' Council study tour to Queensland in July 2008 highlighted interesting comparisons and contrasts between their secondary school system and ours. The secondary school system there is more centrally controlled than here. For example, Queensland schools don't appoint their own staff. Most of our principals and boards would see that as a disadvantage, though maybe not our hard-to-staff low decile and rural schools. Those schools often have very little real choice in who they appoint. Queensland is more advanced than New Zealand in the area of secondary/tertiary/work training interfaces. Much that is anticipated in the Schools Plus initiative, for example, is already in place in Queensland. Their senior school qualification being introduced this year, the Queensland Certificate of Education, is similar to the NCEA though it is notable that there is no external assessment in the Queensland senior school system. They use panels of teachers to moderate decisions made in schools, and participation in those panels was seen to be an excellent form of professional development for teachers. Key findings from my New Zealand schools visits were that there are some wonderful innovations occurring regarding the following: providing academic mentoring for all students; setting data-based academic targets for students individually, for teaching departments and for schools; involving parents more with their youngsters' education; providing opportunities for students to engage with learning where there were gaps in their academic and social skills or where aspects of their backgrounds put them at risk of not succeeding at school; and the use of very flexible software to track students' learning and other outcomes.

PURPOSES

I had the following as focus areas to study during my sabbatical leave:

1. The streaming of students by ability in Years 9-10.
2. The provision of literacy and numeracy support for students who have particular needs in Years 9-10.
3. The use of IEPs for non-ORSS funded students who have learning or behaviour difficulties.

4. The strategies schools use to successfully integrate students with challenging behaviour into mainstream classes.
5. The use schools make of diagnostic and achievement data to facilitate the above, as well as monitor and report NCEA achievement.

BACKGROUND

I settled on the above-mentioned purposes because all of us working in secondary schools are being increasingly challenged to provide equitable learning outcomes for all our students, to use data more productively to achieve that goal, and to personalise learning as much as is practicable as we strive towards those high outcomes for all our students. I was keen to see what innovative practices other schools in and around Auckland were undertaking in those areas. Also, before taking up the sabbatical I worked with another Auckland principal to organise a study tour to Queensland for New Zealand secondary school principals. That tour provided a wonderful opportunity to visit some Queensland schools, and to hear from a number of their principals, from key policy makers from the Queensland Department of Education Training and the Arts and from the Queensland Studies Authority and from some of their academics. In this report I refer to some findings from visits to two Queensland schools.

ACTIVITIES

As part of this sabbatical I spend a week in Brisbane in July 2008 as organiser and participant in the New Zealand Secondary Principals Council tour to Queensland and I visited eight secondary schools in and around Auckland. I also read the books listed in the references below on educational leadership and practitioner research. Reflecting on them helped me make sense of the discussions I had on the school visits.

FINDINGS

1. Some forms of streaming were used in all the schools I visited, made up of two to four bands.
2. Most of the schools made specific, focussed provision for students to make progress with literacy and numeracy. For example, School 4 (Decile 6, roll of 1600) runs three special literacy and numeracy classes in Years 9 and 10. School 3 runs an extra block of English in its Year 9-11 development band classes. In School 7 the Head of the Learner Support Unit takes students individually or in small groups for additional work on literacy. These students' literacy progress is logged in the Learner Support Unit. This Head of the Learner Support Unit works with HODs and departments to help them differentiate their learning programmes and to identify key vocabulary that needs to be taught. He also oversees the material presented during in-school teacher professional development on literacy; ten of their professional development slots for 2008 are committed to reading instruction. It's worth noting that this Head of the Learner Support Unit has only three hours of class contact time per week.
3. Some of the schools I visited use homerooms, and one which doesn't plans to in the future (School 6). That noted, some schools have made a deliberate decision not to use a homeroom for students with social or learning difficulties citing the problems that were created if students were grouped together this way. The homeroom I looked at most closely was at School 7. This Decile 4 school with some 1800 students has a homeroom for up to 12 Year 9 students.

This homeroom is emphatically not a ‘dumping ground’ for naughty children. Students are placed there because they lack social or literacy skills. The homeroom teacher has this group for 19 hours a week and has support from a teacher aide for about 80% of the time. This homeroom was sited within the Learner Support Unit.

4. Several of the schools are putting a particular focus on teachers having more data about their students, and having teachers use that data effectively to create suitable learning programmes thereby ensuring an effective match between teachers’ goals and students’ abilities (see School 4, for example). Schools reported that getting this match right improved classroom management issues (see School 3, for example).
5. Parent/Whanau engagement is one of the three strands in the government’s Schooling Strategy because it is potentially powerful in improving student learning outcomes. School 9 has increased parent/caregiver turnout for ‘meet the teacher’ interviews from about 15% to about 75% by creating a very coherent and obviously attractive programme of interviews. School 3 tells parents at mid year what their students’ NCEA results are to date in relation to the credits assessed to date and provides prompt questions for parents to ask their children regarding these results which parents find empowering. Also a staff member at this school has researched barriers to parental involvement in the school the findings of which the school found useful.
6. All schools are pouring significant resources into gathering and utilising NCEA data. That said, some schools manage to get much more information about cohorts and individual students’ progress with NCEA internally assessed standards through the year to teachers and parents than do others. For example, School 9 below employs a Student Data Manager who gives all 2400 students in the school academic targets based on their asTTle or NCEA data and she provides deans and teachers with very regular updates on how all students are performing in internal NCEA assessments. The same school’s Student Data Manager produces school-wide student achievement goals using asTTle and Midyis data. In School 3 the Deputy Principal in charge of curriculum provides snapshots of students’ NCEA results to date in June, August and September. School 5 (decile 10, 1500 students) creates an impressive quantity of NCEA data in what is a very competitive environment among schools in its region. Using this data in professional conversations with HODs, teachers and students has help lift their results.
7. School 8 uses very innovative and flexible software called Fathom to track students’ performance. Although this software was designed originally to track animal movements in specific environments, it is a wonderful tool to analyse students’ performance and to assess the impact of a variety of variables on performance.
8. Queensland has mandated the use of School Education Target (SET) documents in secondary schools. These ensure that every year beginning in the equivalent of our Year 9 students, parents and representatives of the school discuss and sign off curriculum pathways suitable for each student. The SET takes on more importance as students progress through school (see School 1 below for more details). Something akin to this is used in School 9. In that school (roll 2400) in what has become a comprehensive academic mentoring programme deans meet all their students twice a year to help create and

monitor their students' personal educational plans. The use of such plans is foreshadowed in Schools Plus.

SUMMARIES OF MY SABBATICAL SCHOOL VISITS

The first two schools I mention were visited while on a New Zealand Secondary Principals' Council Study Tour to Brisbane 21-25 July. While the focus of those visits was different to the visits I made to local schools nevertheless there were some interesting comparisons and contrasts to be made.

School 1

Co-educational state school in Brisbane with a roll of over 2000.

This school has a selective roll, with some 40% of students coming from within the school's zone, and the other 60% being accepted according to their ability in sport, music and the visual arts. All courses are designed as half year courses, though students study English and Mathematics for four semesters in Years 8-9. Studying a foreign language at secondary school is mandated in Queensland. The schools run two streams; those for students with prior knowledge and those with none. Students study six subjects at any one time.

This school has 70 minutes a week of religious instruction and has to accept any offer from a bona fide religious group that wants to offer instruction. Students whose families opt them out of that programme attend an assembly.

There is no Queensland equivalent of asTTle; the school gets a sense of Year 8 students' abilities in the first weeks of term one.

All courses have open entry in Year 11; prerequisites exist for some Year 12 courses. The principal noted that the Queensland Government had a goal of having 98% of each cohort going through to Year 12 by 2010. To assist with this goal all students in the state have to complete a School Education Target (SET) document starting in Year 8. This document provides students with a clear sense of curriculum pathways and assists them to make sensible choices regarding the pathways they will take. Schools have to keep a copy of these plans. At this high school parents bring the completed document in, signed, at subject selection evening. Teachers can ask to see students' SET plans. The SET documents take on more importance as a student progresses through the system, with Year 10 being particularly important.

Regarding school/tertiary interface in Queensland, it was noted that the numbers of Year 12 students going on to tertiary education was dropping. Low unemployment and the popularity of a gap year were cited as factors, as was the cost of tertiary education. They have an excellent system to simplify admissions to universities and TAFE colleges through the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC). The centre sorts students into institutions according to their ranked preferences and according to the relevant results they have from school (known as the OP or Overall Position). Once the sorting is done QTAC makes a student an offer of a place at an institution the student has included in their preferences. Application dates for all the Queensland universities are standardized through QTAC.

School 2 Aviation High School Brisbane

This school is a specialised high school taking Year 8-12 students who are interested in aviation and aerospace industries. The school is located near Brisbane Airport. While the school offers Queensland Studies Authority subjects similar to all Queensland schools the subjects it does offer have been conceptualised and contextualised with the aviation industries in mind. So the school offers Aeroskills

Technology in Years 8-10, and Aerospace Studies and Aerospace Skills in Years 11-12. The school is supported by industry partners with the provision of equipment and professional development for staff. The school also has a close relationship with the burgeoning aviation industry sited at Brisbane Airport.

School 3

Decile One, single sex Catholic Integrated Secondary School.

NCEA results

2007 – 83.7% of Year 11 students gained NCEA Level 1. This was a rise from 57.4 in 2005 and 75.9 in 2006. 2007 literacy and numeracy results for Level 1 were 93.3 and 94.8 respectively.

Year 9 students are grouped into four bands: development, ESOL, mid and high.

Writing and mathematics tests are used to place students and asTTle is used in Week 4 to confirm placements or to shift students. The development band classes have an extra block of English at Years 9-11 (three of the Year 9 classes get some extra English, if not a whole block). The HOD Learner Support gets core subject teachers together at the start of the year and goes through all the known issues with those classes' students, including health and learning disabilities. AsTTle data is discussed in professional development time (Thursday mornings from 8.00-8.45am). HODs monitor the use teachers make of asTTle data.

One of their teachers researched the barriers parents face coming into school. As a result the school runs a lot of programmes for parents and the principal visits all the churches that their students attend. Programmes for parents include healthy eating, keeping fit, the NCEA, how to provide for their children's success, including adult literacy programmes, and getting parents to cut back expectations of children's childminding activities or house keeping, for e.g. preparing meals for parents busy on shift work.

The school provides many curriculum focussed lunchtime 'clubs' for NCEA as the year goes on, and they provide advice to students regarding how many assessments to focus on in the external exams so that they don't spread their efforts too thinly in the exams.

The school runs many conferences with parents. Very few students are withdrawn from classes, and parents are brought in quickly when it does happen.

The Deputy Principal in charge of curriculum produces a snapshot of NCEA results for June, August and September, and graphs them comparing the current year's results to previous years'. This doesn't take long on Kamar. She does the same for literacy and numeracy. Mid year reports tell parents what a child has achieved in relation to the credits available, and include prompt questions for parents to ask their child. This gives parents more power compared to the previous sort of question they would ask: 'Is my child doing well?'

Regarding classroom behaviour, very few teachers send a student to timeout. If they do, they go to a deputy principal initially, and are then referred on to a dean. The DP I interviewed had had only two referrals this year. A reason given for this low number of student withdrawn was the effort teachers are putting in to teach at levels suitable to the students' abilities. There is also a data projector in each classroom thus making the use of IT in lessons more possible than it would otherwise be. The principal believed it was crucial that teachers understood their students' lives and the pressures they may be under. Such pressures may include childminding and preparing a lot of meals.

School 4

Decile 6, co-educational school with a roll of some 1600 students

The principal noted that the data they got about students from partner schools was of little use. The school arranges its own asTTle testing of Year 8 students in October in their own schools and arranges another series of tests in February for those students they don't have data for. The school also uses PATs for Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary and they use a test they have developed themselves for Mathematics. AsTTle and the Mathematics tests are run again in August to see what progress has been made. Year 9 classes are placed into either two advanced classes or a number of mixed ability classes. They run special literacy classes - three in Year 9 and three in Year 10 - for those who need them. Students in these classes have literacy classes instead of English. The same arrangement applies for numeracy. This school does not have a homeroom.

Understanding and using data is a key item in the school's strategic plan. A desired outcome is that teachers will gain clear understandings of their students' abilities and will teach to those rather than teach a predetermined course. Thus a new focus for the school is for teachers to manage their teaching and the students' learning to effect a suitable match between the teachers' goals and the students' abilities. There is no school-wide withdrawal system for misbehaving students.

The school uses Kevin Knight from Christchurch to get a school-wide view about appropriate classroom management. He has trained six mentors/coaches who volunteered for these positions. He visits the school for a couple of days a year. In addition to the six mentors he has worked with 30 teachers.

The principal also cited Todd Johnson from the USA and his philosophy of the efficacy of early and appropriate intervention regarding classroom management issues. The school also has just over 60 teachers involved with Te Kotahitanga and the principal noted that that programme encourages teachers to be reflective about their relationships with students.

School 5

Decile 10, Co-educational, with a roll of around 1500.

The most impressive thing I saw about this school was the quantity of achievement data they used and the direct links the principal could make between the data and the improvements they had made in their NCEA results. The school uses data extensively to check on value added in the junior school and to help drive up their levels of achievement in the NCEA. Their successes in the NCEA compared to other decile 10 schools and compared to other schools of their type in their part of Auckland are impressive and have improved significantly over the last four years. The main reasons cited for the improvement were as follows:

1. The SMT now collect NCEA data class by class, subject by subject, external achievement standard by standard and make comparisons with comparable schools.
2. The principal uses that data to have professional conversations with the HOFs.
3. They have tightened up on pastoral care issues. The principal noted that too many people would 'flap' if something untoward happened (for example, if a number of students skived off into the nearby bush). Now he expects that sort of issue to be dealt with, without it having an undesirable impact on staff.

In the junior school use is made of asTTle and PATs. They also resort to doing their own testing rather than relying on the results they received from partner schools.

There is limited streaming across the school, with four classes taken off the top and the rest being mixed ability in Years 9-10. The principal noted that his teachers did not want more streaming. Some students may be withdrawn for English and Mathematics for several weeks to give them remedial work. The school reports good gains from this process.

With regard to the NCEA, the new principal has put a huge amount of emphasis on collecting data and then using it for professional conversations with Heads of Faculty and with the school community. The principal has made a conscious effort to clear the decks of other issues that might distract teachers from overseeing learning.

Professional development is very focussed. HOFs determine who gets into which courses, and Deans have to negotiate with HOFs when wanting to place students outside the start of year cycle. Choices are data driven, and there is a right of reply from students/parents. The school may counsel some students to withdraw from some externally assessed standards, but their default position is 'don't withdraw; the school has gone to a lot of trouble to get you into the right course.' The school tracks its performance against other schools of its type, standard by standard, and tracks the performance of its cohorts regarding their Year 9, Year 10 asTTle results and their NCEA Level 1 results.

School 6

Decile 6, roll of approx 1500, with a growing Maori roll reaching 30% in Year 9 this year

They use Midyis and Blis from the University of Canterbury to produce reports on valued-added for each cohort and for predicting NCEA results by subject for each cohort and for each student.

With regard to the junior school the following was of particular interest:

1. The principal cited the practice of getting data from partner schools which identifies those 30-40 Year 8 students who will be most at risk of fitting in successfully at high school the following year. Those students are brought into the high school several times before they end their Year 8 year. They are buddied up with a Year 12 student who intends to return the following year. That person becomes their mentor once they begin Year 9. The school tracks their performance and engagement through Year 9. The principal cited a practice at a neighbouring kura which provides adult mentors for at-risk students at a ratio of 8-10 students per mentor. The mentor meets those students almost daily.
2. Two young Maori female staff members get a Management Unit and some time to act as mentors to self-selected Year 9 students. The mentoring programme includes home visits.
3. About 60 Year 9 students get additional literacy tuition instead of taking a language. This takes place over a semester (half a year). These classes are taken by the literacy specialist (called the Literacy Coach). She provides information to the teaching staff as well; for example she has provided booklets on dyslexia.
4. Students who need ESOL are pulled out of English classes to get additional ESOL tuition.
5. Students design the Student Diaries. They are produced in-house at a cost of around \$7000 per annum. They create separate junior and senior diaries. Students get a new diary each term (except seniors who get a combined Term 3-4 diary). There is House specific information in the diaries, and there is

encouragement in the diaries for students to be reflective learners. The Alfriston model was cited in this regard. They look to get about \$5000 worth of sponsorship for the diaries from companies the school does a lot of business with.

6. They have two advanced classes out of 12 in each of Year 9 and 10; the rest are mixed ability.
7. The school doesn't have a homeroom, but there are plans to set up one up next year. This room is expected to be run as follows. It will be for students with social needs and who truant. It won't be for academically slow students. 12-14 students will be in the Centre at any one time, and they will stay there for a term. The students will come from Year 9 and 10. The school won't employ a homeroom type teacher. Instead they expect the following to staff the room: a guidance counsellor for some of the time, to teach social skills intensively, and teachers of Technology, Mathematics, English/Social Studies and Science. So the students will stay in one place but they will have a number of teachers. The school may give the students breakfast; experience suggests that many of the candidates for this room come to school unfed.
8. The school was part of the ATOL project. They take a broad view of formative assessment (not just treating it as 'practice assessment'). Students get used to marking their own work or that of peers by using exemplars in class.
9. Values are currently being taught in tutor classes one tutor time a week, with the focus being on one value a term.
10. This school doesn't pull students out of NCEA external assessments. They have had very high rates of success in literacy and numeracy for Level 1. As noted above, they track expectations for their results in the NCEA for each cohort through Midyis.

School 7

Decile 4 co-educational, with a roll of some 1800 students

Our HOD Learner Support and I interviewed this school's Head of the Learner Support Unit. Key features of their work with Year 9 and 10 students were:

1. They divide their Year 9 and 10 classes into three streams by ability and have a homeroom as well for up to 12 Year 9 students. Four classes are banded together in the third stream/band, and students in those Year 9 classes have the same teacher taking them for English/Social Studies and Mathematics/Science. The teachers of the Year 10 band three classes have tried barbeque evenings to try and encourage parents into the school and have also encouraged teachers to email parents regarding such things as what homework has been set. Students are placed in the homeroom for social reasons and for lack of literacy skills. The homeroom is specifically 'not a dumping ground' for naughty children.
2. One teacher takes the homeroom students for 19 hours a week and has been in that role for five years. A teacher aide is allocated to the homeroom for about 80% of the time. There is some movement in and out of the homeroom during the year.
3. The school employs five teacher aides in total, and they focus on Year 9s in the lowest of the three streams and the homeroom.
4. The Head of the Learner Support Unit has three hours a week allocated to classroom teaching, and spends much of the rest of his time taking students

individually, or in small groups, for additional work on literacy. He has a classroom allocated for this purpose next to his office. Students who need additional work on literacy, numeracy or social skills come to that room to work with him, or with a teacher aide, or sometimes to work on their own following a structured programme. A file for each student in the Unit logs what a student's issues are and what s/he ought to be doing. The Head of the Unit may see such students two times a week for up to a year.

5. The school has a PD period one morning a week, and this year 10 periods of that time are allocated to instruction for teachers in reading. Several people share in the task of preparing for those PD sessions on reading, including creating booklets for staff use.
6. As well as playing a key role with the above-mentioned professional development, the Head of the Learner Support Unit works with teaching departments re differentiating the curriculum. This typically involves encouraging departments to identify key vocabulary with units of work for Year 9-10 students and to get teachers to teach those terms explicitly. This helps to reinforce the expectation that teachers will use material appropriate for the students in front of them.
7. Year 10s weak in English will take extra English rather than taking another language.
8. The Head of the Learner Support Unit also has a reading/ESOL (40:60) teacher working in the same complex.
9. Year 11 students who cannot cope with the Year 11 programmes may still come to the Unit.
10. The school has 1.5 RTLBs. One focuses on students who have street gang tendencies.
11. Teachers of core classes are brought together on an as-needs basis to reinforce common rules. The school doesn't use generic school-wide processes regarding classroom management such as Bill Rogers'.

School 8

Decile 4 co-educational, with a roll of some 2250

Interview with the principal and a deputy principal. Most of this visit focussed on this school's use of software called Fathom which the deputy principal has mastered and worked on with staff. The software costs around \$2,000 as a one-off cost for 50 users. It was developed as package to help scientists track animal movements in specific environments. Once relevant data is loaded into it, the software provides a remarkable range of options regarding what can be correlated with what and what can be tracked in terms of student achievement. No one in New Zealand offers training with the software, though it does have self tutoring elements as part of the package. The deputy principal provides data for the departments regarding their NCEA results and the HODs have a template to complete when responding to that data, which invites them to comment on successes and future challenges.

This school does not track students' success or otherwise in internal NCEA standards as the year progresses.

Regarding homerooms and related issues:

1. They have a Learning Extension Department led by their RTLB with 15 teacher aides.
2. They track some 200 Year 9-10 students

3. They also have an Alternative Learning Department with homerooms for Years 9-10 students. These are students who have learning issues, not behavioural ones. Students stay in the rooms; a variety of teachers come to the rooms to teach them.

School 9

Decile 6 coeducational with a roll of about 2400

Interview with the Principal about academic counselling. He initiated the idea of having staff act as academic counsellors after seeing some models in operation in the USA and Finland. In the USA school counsellors are academic counsellors and a school of around 2500 may have eight people in this role. They have social workers as well and pass on personal/social problems to outside agencies. Finland has one academic counsellor per school. In Finland each form teacher has to meet each parent for 25 minutes at the start of a year to develop an academic plan for their child.

There are four main elements to academic counselling at the school I visited.

1. The Role of Deans as Academic Counsellors
The Deans meet all their students twice a year to help create and monitor each student's personal education plan. In some cases the Deans were initially reluctant to make that sort of commitment, but once they did they very much appreciated the time they spend with their students, especially the able students who they otherwise spent very little, if any, time with. In the junior school the Deans met students in small groups; they met Year 11-13 students individually. There are 10 Head and Assistant Deans spread over five Houses. The Head Deans used to teach about half a normal load and the assistants three quarters. Their teaching time was reduced by a class each and more time was found for their Student Data Manager. The total cost was about three FTTEs.
2. Student Data Manager (SDM)
This person is on half a normal teaching load. She establishes academic targets for every student: asTTle targets regarding numeracy and literacy for junior students, NCEA targets *standard by standard* for seniors. She talks to teachers about every student. Students found this very motivating once they had a discussion about their targets with their teachers. The SDM also provides the data for school-wide goals, using asTTle and Midyis to produce asTTle goals and goals for Year 11 Maths and English for example. She uses Kamar to track every Year 11-13 student every fortnight in terms of their success ratios: their successes in relation to the assessments they have had. This information goes to the Deans who pass it on to the subject teachers, who discuss it with their students.
3. Student/Parent/Teacher Interviews and Revamped Role for Form Teachers
As part of its academic mentoring initiative, the school wanted to engage better with parents. It had a history of about 15% of parents turning up to parent interviews. To improve parental engagement they set up a system of 20 minute parent and student interviews with Form Teachers. Subject teachers provided information to teachers, including one feedback and one feedforward comment. Attendance printouts were prepared for each parent along with midyear reports. The interviews occurred from a Thursday afternoon (students were released at lunchtime), into the evening with a dinner break, and all through the following Friday. The carparks were emptied to allow for parent use. Each parent received a letter from the principal which stipulated their interview time and which urged them to treat the appointment as seriously as

they would an appointment with a doctor or dentist. In the letter it was suggested that they show the letter to their employer if relevant. At the same time the school took out a full page advertisement in the local paper explaining what they were doing thereby supporting very publicly the messages in the letters to parents. The letters were followed up with a phone call home by Form Teachers who had a script to use. The Form Teachers could, if really necessary, renegotiate the appointment times. Student Leaders acted as hosts and guides. Tea, coffee and biscuits were provided for parents at different points through the school, and a free sausage sizzle ran for most of the Friday. Careers displays were set up in the school hall. The result? They got an overall turnout of 76%! Maori and Pasifika parent turnouts were around 70% which was very gratifying too. The school received 1000 evaluations which were overwhelmingly positive, and several employers made a point of expressing their support and telling parents they wanted feedback on how the interview had gone. Parents said they very much enjoyed talking to one teacher only about their child, though they were given their child's subject teachers' email addresses as well. The Form Teachers' responses were very positive – they enjoyed the chance to get stuck into a 'real' form teacher's role. Staff were thanked for their efforts with a special morning tea. The school has now used this process twice, at the beginning of Term Two. There is a place for parents meeting subject teachers too, and vice versa, and this school does run a more conventional parent/student interview system with subject teachers. Numbers have not increased for this type of interview. In this system, parents get 10 minutes with each teacher.

4. Mentoring of Maori and Pasifika Students by Tertiary Students

This school has an arrangement with the University of Auckland whereby 70 of their Maori and Pasifika students are mentored by students from the university. This follows a model that applies between the university and some South Auckland schools. The tertiary students are taxied out to this school once a week. The main goal is to encourage the mentees to go to university.

Regarding their timetable, they have a five day cycle, five periods a day, and seniors take five subjects only and have each subject every day. Juniors have the same arrangement, through a semester system.

School 10

Decile 1, co-educational, with a roll of some 1300 students.

I visited their bilingual unit/wahanga (Putaka) and spoke with two staff who worked in the unit and to the principal. The principal noted that in some respects the unit was like a school within the school. The unit has two classes at each of Year 9, 10 and 11. Students in the unit enjoy being part of a big camp at the end of the year for a week or so and every two years about 30 students/families fundraise to travel to the UK. The head of the unit accesses a trust and corporate sponsors for this and the students fundraise by performing at hotels etc. Students have to excel at kapa haka to be on the trip.

About one third of Maori students are accepted into the wahanga, that is, about 230 at the start of each year, reducing to about 180 by the end of the year. Students and parents are interviewed for places, and there are very clear expectations set regarding commitment to study and to kapa haka. They must make a commitment to kapa haka

every interval, every lunchtime, every Friday afternoon till 5.00pm, and students in the wahanga must be there by 8.30am each morning for a karakia and a brief meeting before school proper starts at 8.40am. Kapa haka is used as a key element to bind the students together and for them to demonstrate a commitment to the learning and discipline in the wahanga. Year 9 and 10 students have all their core subjects taught in the unit by Maori teachers, along with te reo. Most of these students are not at all fluent in te reo when they arrive at the school. Te Reo is compulsory, and their teachers in the unit use a lot of English as the medium of instruction weaving in as much Maori as seems useful and possible as they go along. There are eight teachers in the unit and two support staff, including a resource manager. Whanau members feel free to drop in to the wahanga. In Year 11 students are sorted into achievement and unit standard courses as used in the rest of the school, and in Year 12 students are in mainstream classes, but still attend the morning karakia/meeting and the kapa haka meetings. They have a small canteen in the unit recognising that with all the practices wahanga students don't have time to get to the school canteen. The school-wide uniform rules apply to wahanga students, but they do have a dress uniform if they are going out of the school for a function. The same parent interview evenings apply to whanau attached to the wahanga as for the rest of the school.

IMPLICATIONS

Two main implications come to mind following this study:

1. Our secondary school system would benefit enormously if there was more face-to-face meetings of principals to share interesting practice going on in our secondary schools. That is a challenge the regional principals' organisations and the two national ones, NZSPC and SPANZ, could take up. Some of the former do this well, I suspect, whilst others don't do it at all. The Ministry of Education could also lead in this area.
2. Second, there is a groundswell of opinion amongst the government agencies and in schools that we need to base our work with students on good data, and several of my school visits highlighted some excellent practice in that regard, but there is no central co-ordination of that, which seems a lack. Schools need access to what Professor Viviane Robinson calls 'smart tools'. AsTTle is, of course, such a tool, but where are the others?

CONCLUSIONS

As noted above, I am very grateful to have had the time the sabbatical provided to do professional reading, to visit other schools and to learn about another jurisdiction in the company of enquiring colleagues. Visiting another system with colleagues had much to recommend it. Doing this as a group meant that we were able to access key policy makers, academics and principals and to reflect on what we learned from them and the schools visits together. The New Zealand school visits brought home to me how little principals often know of interesting innovations occurring in other schools in their own region and while a sabbatical provides a unique opportunity to do this nevertheless we should find time to learn more from each other in the normal course of our work.

REFERENCES

The following books read during the sabbatical leave helped inform my approach to the topics discussed above.

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