



# Principal's Sabbatical Report

Term 3, 2015

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## Overview

As I reflect upon a term's leave I have had from my position as Principal at St. Oran's College, I realize what a privilege it has been to have had this opportunity. I have no doubt that the benefits are many, some immediate but that there will be others that will come to light as I settle back into the rigours and demands of the new term.

Before I attempt to share some of my reflections and thoughts, I must firstly acknowledge the support of the Board of Trustees and Board of Proprietors for the time off and for the support for my overseas travel. I must also sincerely thank Anne Seabrook, who acted as Principal in my absence. She was supported by Amanda Gibbs, Charlotte French and Cherie Wildon. Thank you to them for their assistance and to all other staff who got on with business as usual.

I have decided to structure my report in the following way:

- Conference in Finland.
- Schools visits.
- Personal Professional Learning and Development.
- Conclusion.
- Attachment.
  - Vibrant Hutt Article October 2015

## Conference in Finland

The 12<sup>th</sup> Convention of the International Confederation of Principals (ICP)

LED – Leading Educational Design

- 3-6 of August 2015

The conference had over 1000 delegates, representing 26 countries with 52 from NZ. It was a wonderful opportunity for professional development and collaboration, meeting with other principals from around the world. We were treated to great hospitality and as such had a fabulous time in Helsinki.

The theme Leading Educational Design had a strong focus on the future including the current state of affairs in education;

- what direction schools/policies are going in
- what are the new learning or motivational environments like
- what are the biggest challenges in the world of education

Key note speakers:

**Andrè Noël Chaker** a French-Canadian Lawyer who has lived in Finland since 1990.

### The Finnish Miracle

Finland can be considered a success under many of the most common and significant international standards and benchmarks eg -the best country in the world - Newsweek magazine 2010 -Best basic education (Numeracy, Literacy and science) in the world based on PISA test results -Happiest country in the world -Gallup world poll 2010 -Least corrupt in the world - Transparency International 2007 -Top 10 most competitive country in the world - world economic forum from 2000-2011. This is certainly an enviable record for a nation that has come a long way in gaining its independence and developing its prosperity.

Andre explained this Finnish success by a road map he has termed "The Possibility Model."

"Most of us are inspired and fascinated by stories of the impossible made possible. They function as a drive for human development. I believe that human miracles occur in part as a result of a certain state of mind, a certain way of living your life. This is summarised in a framework called "The Possibility model" which includes five steps, a set of prerequisites for generating success."

1- OPEN MIND-to maintain an open mind we must have a good knowledge base, be tolerant of diversity and have energy.

2-TRIAL and ERROR- we need to trust our intuition when making decisions. Errors can be seen as the stepping stones to success.

3-Working HARDER and SMARTER. The hard yards have to be done to give you the competitive edge.

4-SISU - This is the Finnish word for determination, courage and tenacity. Lots of Sisu is needed!

5-BE YOURSELF - "Be yourself as everyone else is already taken" Oscar Wilde.

Andre gave many examples of Finish success based on the above Possibility Model.

Refer to

- [TED x Talks – “Three Finnish S’s”](#) – by Andre Chaker

Andre also spoke about his book to be published November 2015 – ‘Santas Dream’ – The secret to making Dreams come true’ – a symbolic story about how Santa Claus became Santa Claus by a journey of learning of what it really takes to make positive things happen in our lives.

[www.santadream.fi](http://www.santadream.fi)

**Pasi Sahlberg** a Finnish educator, author and scholar – “Invisible Learning”. Hidden features of successful education system – Pasi’s keynote spoke about the success of the Finnish education system summed up in his book “Finnish Lessons – what can the world learn from educational change in Finland?”

- [Youtube.com-address’finnishlessons](#)
- “The myth of Finnish Education”. TED x East – “GERM that kills schools” 2012

**Alf Rehn** a Finnish Professor, author and speaker based in Finland. He currently holds the chair of management and organization at Abo Akademi University in Finland.

“Creativity, Critique and Care – on designing Thinking Organisations – address on website [www.alfrehn.com](http://www.alfrehn.com) under ‘speaking and such’ – ‘Dangerous Ideas’.

Key ideas of Alf’s address:

- We have created ‘innovative fatigue’ – we need to look at what creativity means.
- Creative culture – not about individuals being creative but the combined creative potential.
- Need to show ‘care’ for different ideas, different perspectives.

**Vanessa de Oliveira Andreotti** associate Professor, Canadian Research Chair in Race, Inequalities and global change.

‘Ethics and Global Citizenship Education’.

“The Political Economy of Global Citizenship Education 2014 – copy of her talk is available on her website [www.ubc.academia.edu/vanessdeoliveiraandreotti](http://www.ubc.academia.edu/vanessdeoliveiraandreotti)

Key ideas:

Global focus brings unprecedented challenges in education.

#### **Focus**

Migration  
Interconnectivity  
Cultural hybridity  
Ecological vulnerability  
Wealth concentration  
Armed conflict  
Re-configuration of economy and political exposure

#### **Specific Education Challenges**

Transient families  
Entertainment/enlightenment  
Conflictual identities  
Complexity – misinformation  
Uncertain future – stress/anxiety  
Systematic process of violence – cyber bullying  
Political mistrust

Need to equip leavers to deal with a world which consists of:

- Uncertainty, complexity and growing levels of inequality and violence

Need to focus on global citizenship, technology and individual learning.

Recommended book: 'Alone together' by Sherry Turkle 2012

Eduardo Andure – from 'Learning environments to motivational environments'

- Summarised in book Teachers' Perspectives on Finnish School Education  
ISBN 978-3-319-02824-8

## School Visits in New Zealand

Iona College – Integrated Presbyterian School – Havelock North Focus – Special Character Review
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It was a privilege and pleasure to work with Sharon-Ross Ensor, Director of the Presbyterian Schools Office to conduct a Special Character review at Iona College. The review was based on the model used for our review in 2014, using the Appreciative Inquiry process. A draft report has been presented to Iona College for comment.

Wellington Girls College/East Girls College/Hastings Girls/Napier Girls High School and Woodford House Focus – Student Wellbeing
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All schools acknowledged the importance of student health and wellbeing, and all had an increase in focus in this area over the last few years.

Some key points:

- One school had two part time social workers available for students and families as well as staff.
- Some schools had dedicated health centres with a school nurse and access to a Doctor
- All had a counsellor, some two and some a school Chaplain as well.
- A move to vertical tutor groups from horizontal was observed in some schools with tutor group size of 20-25 and one school had a mixture of support/teaching staff as Tutor group teachers. They felt it was important that all staff are involved in the wellbeing of students, this enabled them to reduce the size of the Tutor group.
- Some schools have Academic Conferences held with the parents, student and Tutor group teacher instead and in some cases as well as Parent Teacher interviews.
- With the vertical tutor group the Deans were house based as opposed to year level.
- Focus on "Relationship practices" instead of 'Restorative practices'
- All schools facing an increase in student anxiety and stress and of concern is the increase of students suffering depression, anxiety in the younger year levels.
- One school had run a "Wellness day" for senior students where guest speakers were invited in to speak to groups of students who were able to select topics of interest.
- Some of the school counsellors run in house sessions on various wellness topics.
- One school has set up on their website resources for parents in relation to wellness.

## Programmes used

- The Rite Journey – pitched at Year 10 – Australian based
- The Travellers Programme – Year 9 – a New Zealand programme, developed by skylight a Wellington based agency specializing in grief and loss.
- SPARX – an online game developed at the University of Auckland to learn resilience and coping skills.

One Guidance Counsellor had spent some time in Christchurch schools looking at how they coped with the earthquakes in particular with building resilience. From her work she identified two programmes that seem to be useful:

### **Passage Works:**

One of the counsellors at Hagley Community College had been trained in a model to work with students who are undergoing transitions in their school lives. She had worked within classrooms (at the invitation of teachers) using an adaptation of this model. The training and curriculum resources for this are available at:

<http://passageworks.org.school-support/curricular-resources/>

### **My FRIENDS:**

My FRIENDS Youth Resilience Programme is a pilot programme developed and funded through the Ministry of Education. Avonside Girls' High School is one of the schools in the pilot.

The Head of Health/PE at Avonside Girls' was extremely positive about all aspects of the programme. It is for Year 9 students and is designed around ten lessons which means it can be run in one term, one session a week. The material has been developed using some of the resources from the American-based 'Passages' above.

Students all have a workbook which they work from and fill out responses in each lesson.

The topics covered are as follows:

1. Introduction – understanding what the My FRIENDS programme is about
2. Feelings – being aware of your own and others' feelings
3. Friendship and confidence
4. Relaxation and mindfulness – being aware of yourself, others, and your environment
5. Inner thoughts – turning unhelpful thoughts into helpful ones
6. Using “self-talk” to challenge unhelpful thoughts
7. Exploring solutions – working out a “coping step plan”
8. Problem-solving – a five-step plan
9. Handling conflict. Now reward yourself!
10. Applying what you've learnt. Do it every day. Stay strong!

These topics cover all the essential tools of maintaining mental health. They also cover all the main points that re in the Travellers' programme.

The programme is designed to be covered in a class group and to be taught by the Health/PE teacher. The Ministry organizes training for this and the programme is only allowed to be taught by those who have done the training.

The programme is outlined at:  
<http://pb4l.tki.org.nz/My-FRIENDS-Youth>

### **Senior Health:**

Avonside Girls' High School has Health as an academic subject at the three levels in the Senior School. It is one of the most popular subjects in the school. They also have a study period for their seniors where for one term they run health seminars, often using community presenters. Topics include Self defence, Womens Health issues eg Breast Cancer, endometriosis and other topics at the request of the students.

Ideas for St Oran's College

- Discuss merit of the above programmes – in particular the My FRIENDS and how it fits into our current health, Christian studies programme.
- Develop on our school website resources for parents in relation to student wellbeing.
- Run workshops – in house and or by external providers for staff, students, parents on topics relating to wellbeing.

## **Professional Learning and Development**

Earlier this year I enrolled in a Level 3 Certificate in Tikanga Māori He Papa Tikanga with the open Wānanga of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa.

It is a 12 month distant learning course on the understanding of Aotearoa NZ history and foundational knowledge of Te Ao Māori.

Papers completed to date:

- Whakawhanaungatanga
- Te Reo Maori me nga tikanga: An introduction
- Values and belief systems

## **Conclusion**

My sabbatical leave has been a wonderful opportunity to reflect and recharge. Once again thanks to all involved with making this opportunity possible for me.