

# **Sabbatical Report**

**Term 1, 2007**

**Purpose:** To investigate how principals provide effective staff professional development to enhance teaching and learning in their schools.

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## **Acknowledgements**

Anderson's Bay School Board of Trustees  
Anderson's Bay School Staff

### *Otago Primary School Principals*

Gary Tenbeth, College Street School  
Ros Mains-McQuillan, Tainui School  
Brent Ward, Tahuna Normal Intermediate  
Richard Newton, St Clair School  
Nigel Wilson, Kaikorai School  
Clarke Bragg, Mornington School,  
Tony Hunter, Wakari School  
Noel Matthews, Calton Hill School  
Jenny Clarke, Opoho School  
Robyne Selbie, Port Chalmers School  
Paddy Ford, Balclutha Primary

### *Canterbury Primary School Principals*

John Anderson, Woolston School  
Owen Arnst, Cathedral Grammar School  
Lex Telfer, Russley School (also President of Canterbury Primary Principal's Association)  
Stephanie Thompson, Aorangi School  
David Brown, Westburn School  
Ian Poulter, Bluestone School

### *Southland Primary School Principals*

Roger Stephenson, Windsor North School (also President of Southland Primary Principal's Association)  
Kerry Hawkins, Waverley Park School  
Malcolm Walker, Limehills School

### *Los Angeles, USA Principals*

Luis Velasco, Melrose Avenue Elementary School  
Ken Urbina, Gardner Street Elementary School

### *Niagara Falls, Canada Principals*

Bob Salter, Princess Margaret Elementary School  
Susan Boychuck, St Patrick Catholic Elementary School  
John Dickson, Kate S. Durdan Elementary School

## **Preamble**

I am very grateful to the Ministry of Education for making sabbaticals available to New Zealand principals and to the Anderson's Bay School Board of Trustees for granting me leave.

I thought long and hard about in which term to do the sabbatical. Upon reading previous sabbatical winners' reports, it became evident that many earlier recipients took time to unwind from their jobs and leave the running to their replacements. I felt by having the Christmas break combined with term one and the following holidays, it gave me a potential eighteen week sabbatical.

## **Executive Summary**

For schools to move forward, principals agreed that effective staff professional development must be provided. This was usually school based and often aligned to Ministry of Education contracts.

Staff professional development is generally determined by the school's strategic plan/charter which will reflect the spirit of the expectations for the school, community and the government's National Administration Guidelines.

Successful professional development programmes were those run by staff or high calibre facilitators. These programmes were practical with a variety of delivery approaches. Staff needed to see the relevance and how it related to the classroom.

There was no consistency as to what schools budget for, with staff professional development programmes.

The ICTPD model where a cluster of schools work together is proving popular.

Principal Associations see their role as providing professional development along with collegial support.

I would like to recommend that:

- the Ministry of Education allow schools the freedom to have at least one Teacher Only day during the school year.
- the Ministry of Education allow schools flexibility to alter the length of the school day so that banked time can be used during the school day, as they do in Los Angeles, USA.

## **Purpose**

To investigate how principals provide effective staff professional development to enhance teaching and learning in their schools.

### **Key Questions**

- What are the components of an effective staff professional development programme ?
- Where do schools source staff professional development opportunities from?
- How much do schools budget for, in their staff professional development programmes ?
- What influences schools, when deciding their staff professional development each year?
- How do local principal organisations provide professional development opportunities for principals?

## **Rationale and Background**

During the 2006 school year, staff at Anderson's Bay School were asked to have a conversation with a Dunedin College of Education facilitator who was doing research for the In-Service Teacher Education Practice (INSTEP) project, launched by the Ministry of Education to explore and develop ways to enhance the professional learning of in-service teacher educators.

A staff member voluntarily took notes of the conversations, and the responses from staff indicated that I needed to look at how other schools deliver staff professional development. At Anderson's Bay School the majority of our Professional Development was delivered by Ministry of Education contracts. The range of effectiveness in the delivery of Ministry contracts ranged from fair to excellent.

From this, the idea of investigating staff professional development was born.

I was heartened by the statement "There is increasing evidence that the most effective way to achieve improvements in student outcomes is by investing in teacher professional knowledge, education and development. 'Of all the options available to policy makers seeking to improve student outcomes, the most effective are those that invest in teacher knowledge and skills' " (Ministry of Education, 2004).

## **Activities Undertaken**

Questionnaires were compiled and I had face-to-face interviews with twenty principals from Christchurch to Invercargill as follows:

Otago 11 principals, Canterbury 6 principals, Southland 3 principals

The decile rankings of their schools are as follows:

<b>Decile</b>	<b>No. of Schools</b>	<b>Decile</b>	<b>No. of Schools</b>
<b>1</b>	1	<b>6</b>	0
<b>2</b>	1	<b>7</b>	2
<b>3</b>	2	<b>8</b>	3
<b>4</b>	3	<b>9</b>	2
<b>5</b>	2	<b>10</b>	3

N.B. Cathedral Grammar School does not have a decile ranking.

Two of the Principals were Presidents of their local Principal Associations and were interviewed about Professional Development opportunities for principals in their areas. As a member of our local Principals' Association Executive, I was in a position to comment on the Otago Primary Principals' Association activities for principals.

Although I initially decided to only look at New Zealand schools, I made a late decision to visit schools in Los Angeles and Niagara Falls, Canada. I chose the two schools in Los Angeles through searching the internet and the Canadian schools, as they had come through a difficult time politically in Ontario. North America was chosen, as their education system is vastly different to ours in New Zealand, with mandatory assessment a key component.

## **Findings**

Good PD looks a lot like good teaching. (Lee, 2006)

### **1) Responses from Anderson's Bay School Staff on reflecting about past Professional Development**

- Facilitator is crucial, must be flexible and fit in with school needs, be fun, creative and interesting to listen to.
- Staff must see purpose for PD provided.
- Programme length 6 months – 2 years, prefer an hour in length starting at 3.15pm.
- Like opportunity to visit other classrooms in Dunedin and out of region.
- Like “experts” to visit school.
- Happy to have callbacks providing there was advance warning and was worthwhile – food, good coffee, at start or end of holidays.
- Staff should know how PD is organised.

## **2) Principal's Philosophies about Effective Staff Professional Development**

- School based
- Linked to appraisal
- Has various levels

All principals interviewed stressed the importance of the school being in control of staff professional development as opposed to sending teachers to one-off courses. These courses have value if they are sourced for teachers as part of their personal goals. Principals see staff professional development linked to appraisal at another level. i.e. Staff and Principal will look at individual goals for the coming year as a follow up to appraisal feedback. This may require the school to source professional development for a teacher. "Although overlooked, an opportunity to operationalise the link between strategic planning and development is provided in appraisal." (Piggot-Irvine, 2007)

The Education Review Office (ERO) in their "In-service Training for Teachers in New Zealand Schools" report (2000) showed that 40% of schools indicated that teacher appraisal was one of the bases used to decide priorities for in-service training.

Principals saw professional staff development as a total package but offered at various levels a) whole staff b) syndicate c) individual goals

## **3) Determining a school's staff professional development focus**

- Availability of contracts
- Team decision
- Strategic Plan
- Needs of school

Without exception, principals talked of Ministry of Education contracts being the biggest contributor to staff professional development. Since 1992, schools became locked into this form of training as they came to understand the then new curriculum framework. From there a number of schools moved to assessment programmes, as the ERO put emphasis on this in their audits of schools. In the three areas visited by the ERO in their 2000 report, between 79%-87% of training providers were Ministry of Education contractors.

In 1999 ICTPD became available for schools to receive intensive professional development. Initially ICTPD was for skill improvement but now it is linked to inquiry learning and thinking skills. There is resentment from some principals about how contestable funding is distributed. Programmes that come under this category are ICTPD and Enhanced Higher Standards in Schools (EHSS).

Some schools are now moving away from contracts as they look at their specific needs as identified in their strategic plans or operational goals. "The principal holds responsibility

for focusing development and learning by ensuring that development is strategically linked to school goals.” (Piggott-Irvine 2007)

#### **4) Components of successful professional development programmes**

- Run by staff
- Calibre of facilitators
- Relevance and relates to classroom
- Practical
- Variety of delivery approaches

A feel good factor was often mentioned, when a staff member or members took a successful professional development session with their colleagues. It was often seen as relevant and meeting their needs. The calibre of outside facilitators was crucial, particularly for Ministry contracts. They would usually last between six and twelve months. Staff would feel frustrated if the facilitator did not deliver what was expected in their already busy schedule. “Facilitation skills significantly contribute to the effectiveness of professional development.” Piggott-Irvine (2007). “The person leading the implementation must be seen as credible and the ideas being promoted must be as well.” (Lee 2006).

As schools look at learning styles, principals are aware of creating the right environment for their staff as well. Food and good coffee was always well received. Schools would provide whole staff training, but intertwined with group work and movement.

#### **5) Timing of staff professional development programmes**

- Length of PD sessions  
60 minutes 30% 90 minutes 55% 120 minutes 15%
- Start time  
3.10pm 10% 3.15pm 30% 3.20pm 10% 3.30pm 25% 3.45pm 5%

The bullet points above relate to the percentage of principals interviewed in my study.

Principals varied in their opinions as to what the length of staff professional development should be and what time to start at the end of the school day. Principals who like to start earlier talked of frustration of having all staff arrive on time. One principal was adamant that a 3.30pm start allowed all staff to be on time and the fifteen minutes for early arrivals was good for fellowship.

Peter Lee (2006) states, “The length of training doesn’t matter. Effectiveness is related to quality.”

## 6) Where Do Schools Source Staff Professional Development From?

Indications from my study and the ERO's (2000) report, show that schools predominately use the Ministry of Education contracts as the major source of staff professional development.

Other sources include:

School Support Services	Colleges of Education	Trainers contracted by school
Local Associations	Polytechnics/Universities	Learning Network NZ
Other Schools	Subject Associations	Teacher Union
Community Groups (e.g Sport Otago)		

Many schools, through the ICTPD contracts or a commercial group like Learning Network NZ, are using national and international facilitators like Kath Murdoch, Guy Claxton, Michael Pohl, Julia Atkin, and Tom Hoerr to name a few. The Dunedin College of Education, now called the University of Otago College of Education, also brings in notable speakers and facilitators to the Otago area.

## 7) Teacher Only or Callback Days

Schools used a teacher only day before school begun at the start of the year , in a variety of ways. Some used the call-back provision of the Teachers Collective Agreement, to have up to three days of professional development. Other schools had administration meetings for the whole school, followed by syndicate meetings.

35% of New Zealand principals interviewed confirmed they used call-backs to provide staff development during the school year. These mainly occurred at the beginning or end of the school holidays. Principals gave advanced warning, but mentioned that call-backs were part of their school culture.

Credit must go to the Ministry of Education, for allowing schools to have a Teacher Only Day to consult on the new curriculum. Many principals said it was one of the best Professional Development opportunities they had experienced. New Zealand schools should push for the Canadian model of having Professional Activity (PA) days each year. If this idea was to be adopted, parents would need to be given a year's advanced warning of the dates of PA days.

## 8) What do schools budget for, with their staff professional development?

Operational Budget	Percentage of schools	Operational Budget	Percentage of schools
1-2%	5%	6-7%	5%
2-3%	10%	7-8%	10%
3-4%	5%	8-9%	10%
4-5%	15%	9-10%	0%
5-6%	20%	10% +	10%



Principals were asked what percentage of their school's budget they allocate for staff professional development.

50% of principals spoken to in my study, said their schools spent 4-8% of their operational funding on staff professional development.

The ERO (2000) findings for funding teachers at the various decile levels were:

Decile ranking	Funding FTTE	Decile ranking	Funding FTTE
1	\$592	6	\$1034
2	\$917	7	\$1170
3	\$1161	8	\$883
4	\$1045	9	\$1227
5	\$882	10	\$1158

The ERO (2000) stated that the average budget per Full Time Teacher Equivalent was \$1060. This compares similarly with the average cost taken from schools' operational budgets.

One interesting fact that could be followed up, is the comparison between lower and higher decile schools in what they spent on staff professional development. The lower decile schools in my study tended to spend more on staff professional development. In the ERO report (2000), the decile factor was inconsistent.

## **9) An international perspective.**

a) *Los Angeles, California, USA.* I visited two elementary schools, Melrose Avenue (184 pupils) and Gardner Street (475 pupils), who are part of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). This district has 635 schools, consisting of 37,500 management, teaching and ancillary staff. Their 2007-08 budget is \$6.2 billion. All schools in this district have banked minimum days, where schools have longer days than regulated, but bank the time so children go home early and staff can have Professional Development on selected afternoons. In the case of Melrose Avenue, they have 27 banked minimum days (shortened days) on Tuesday afternoons for staff to have Professional Development for an hour.

I was fortunate to observe a staff Professional Development session taken by a mathematics coach (Schools have assigned Literacy and Mathematics coaches, as part of their staffing). I watched a session on "Open-Ended and Closed Questions in Mathematics". It was a fast moving and well thought out session. The session ended with a class related "task", for the teachers to do by a future date. Coaches are trained by the Board and pass on new ideas to their designated school.

At the end of the Professional Development, a faculty (staff) meeting was held. Unions have a strong say as to meetings being held out of school time. These meetings are no more than three a month, must have an agenda and the union representative must have a time slot (not last).

Mandatory testing drives professional development. I sense it is all about schools trying to improve the Academic Performance Index (API) score. The API range is 200 (low) – 1000 (high) with the goal of 800 for LAUSD schools. Melrose had a 755 API and Gardner had an 814 API. All staff development is data driven.

Another interesting feature is that all schools in the LAUSD have only one reading programme – SRA Open Court Reading.

b) *Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada.* Ontario has come out of a difficult time (8 years) when the Conservative government had put a lot of pressure on schools to lift their academic standards. Their testing regime was closely monitored by our National government in the mid 1990's. I felt schools have put this behind them and have moved on significantly. I also sensed that pressure created by mandatory assessment is not as intense as in the United States. I visited Princess Margaret (380 pupils) and Kate S. Durdan Elementary (571 pupils) schools from the District School Board of Niagara (DSBN), and St Patrick's (260 pupils) from the Niagara Catholic District School Board (NCDSB). The DSBN has 119 schools and 23,400 staff, and the NCDSB has 61 schools and 1858 staff.

In Niagara Falls they have four professional activity days held during the school year. The District Board has a huge input as to what Professional Development is provided, with the Principal taking a lead role. The District Board trains school curriculum leaders through consultants.

From a provincial perspective (Ontario), the focus is on Literacy and Numeracy, and the message is consistent – data driven instruction – research based – best practice. They mandate strategies teachers will use e.g. shared reading, guided reading for 15 minutes per day. School administrators are charged with the responsibility of ensuring this happens and that data is being collected. Principals are viewed as the curriculum leaders of their schools.

At Kate S. Durdan School, staff felt their principal was innovative in his thinking towards providing effective staff development. The principal saw his role as a filter for passing on mandated messages from the Province and Board. It was crucial that the professional development met school needs, as specified in the School Growth Plan, and be sold to the staff. His beliefs for staff professional development was for the staff to work as a team, based on trust, data collection and clear expectations. He also believed professional development should also be tied to 1) personal growth, 2) school growth and 3) research exploration.

## **10) What do Principal Associations offer their members?**

As schools were being visited in three provinces, the opportunity was taken to interview presidents of two associations and to compare what Otago offers its principals. As an executive member and Past President of the Otago Primary Principals' Association (OPPA), I felt I was in a position to comment on what they offer to their members.

OPPA strongly believes in providing 1) support for principals 2) professional development opportunities. Over the years this has varied in the way professional development is offered. Three or four one day seminars are offered annually and these are organised by a sub committee. A needs analysis is done and from here, seminars are organised. The day is mixed with well known facilitators from Dunedin, with input from officials from the Ministry of Education, Education Review Office and Group Special Education. In 2006, OPPA, in association with Learning Network NZ, offered two one-day seminars with Guy Saxton and Michael Pohl as the facilitators. Many schools took the opportunity to bring their staff to these seminars as well. Principals liked the high calibre presentations but there is a feeling from some members that a local flavour is preferable. OPPA is proactive in providing some funding for principals to attend the national NZPF conference.

The Canterbury Primary Principals' Association (CPPA) saw principals' professional development as no longer a high priority as there were other providers offering this. The current president is promoting welfare and collegiality as the main goals during his time in charge. A recent two-day seminar in Hanmer over a Sunday and Monday was well supported and was subsidized by CPPA.

The Southland Primary Principals' Association (SPPA) saw professional development as a major focus for its members. Principals expect effective professional development and one seminar per term is held. The Invercargill Licensing Trust runs conferences for principals and teachers. These evolved from ICTPD and are a highlight.

## **Conclusions**

The question was asked, "What are the components of an effective staff development programme?"

I firmly believe it should be defined in the school's charter/strategic plan and have relevance for staff. There should be a clear delineation between staff professional development and staff meetings. The former should be sacrosanct, well organized and have facilitators who understand what is required. This could be a staff member or outside facilitator.

The principal (or head learner as one principal describes himself) is crucial for providing staff professional development, from being a good role model to creating an environment or culture for staff to move forward.

Staff will respond positively to professional development, if they see its need and relevance to the classroom.

If a school has a sound philosophy for staff professional development, budget or length is not significant.

New Zealand should look at North American models of providing Professional Development during the school day. From 2008 in New Zealand, the school year is being reduced from 394 half-days to 384 (2008), 388 (2009) and 388 (2010). A suggestion could be to start earlier in the year and have a professional development day, or days, during the year. It would be crucial to give parents a year's warning, as they do in Canada and the United States of America.

It would be worthwhile to also look at banking time to allow afternoons to be spent on Professional Development.

I would like to recommend that:

- the Ministry of Education allow schools the freedom to have at least one Teacher Only day during the school year.
- the Ministry of Education allow schools to alter the length of the school day so that banked time can be used during the school day, as they do in Los Angeles, USA.

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