

Principals Sabbatical Research Project

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Topic 1: Major Focus Area. 'Student Achievement through Portfolios for Learning.'

To further develop the effectiveness of "Portfolios for Learning" and how portfolios can be used to not only monitor and report on student achievement but as an essential tool for students and teachers to plan a path forward.

Topic 2 - Minor Focus-Year 7 and 8 students in a Full Primary.

Do we cater adequately and effectively for these students?

How do we know their needs are being met and we are preparing these students in the best way possible to meet the demands of secondary school and for future life?

Topic 1. Portfolio Survey-Analysis of Results

Portfolios were introduced at Waiau Pa School in 2003 as a tool for assessment and reporting to parents about student's achievement. As part of my Sabbatical I have reviewed Portfolios to allow us to make improvements, develop these further and to ensure they are indeed the effective tool we believe and desire them to be. I issued a survey to parents at Waiau Pa following mid year reporting, after parents received the Portfolios and had completed Mid Year Interviews where this document was used as the basis for discussion with students, teachers and parents.

Dr John Edwards, (2002) said that *"to move forward and be involved in future's thinking is about believing in change and believing in the people in your organisation and trusting in them to make these changes. There must be a reason for change and it should be supported by conclusive and authentic data."*

We have moved on and change has been necessary as these documents evolve to meet needs of students and the changes to society and the curriculum.

As professionals and leaders we must be open to and value the skills and knowledge that others in the community bring, and collaborate with parents and caregivers in ways that form a genuine partnership for the educational benefit of students. (McGee & Fraser, p.320. 2001).

This statement supports the process that there is a need to constantly evaluate and involve the parents, staff and students in the gathering of relevant data for this study.

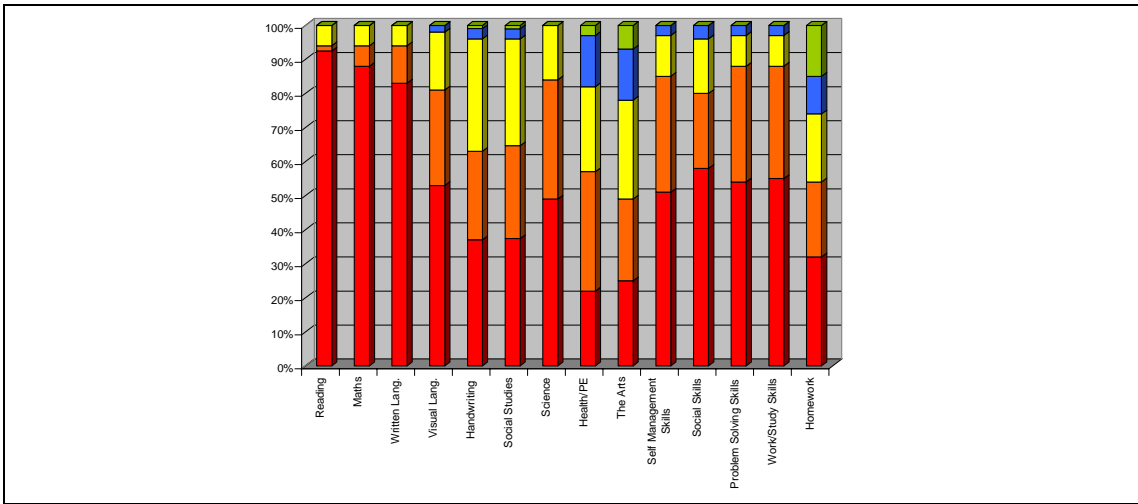
Question 1-*What do parents really want to know about their children's progress and achievement?*

A total of 86 families completed the survey. Results shown indicate % of parents that mentioned these aspects of need in reporting about their child's progress and achievement. Some parents indicated more than one point.

<p>89% of parents want to know that students are learning at the appropriate stage according to their age and in comparison with national class and levels. They want to know the progress their child is making in line with the National Curriculum.</p>
<p>25% of parents want to know when their child needs help and what is needed and how to get it and if they need extension and how this is being met.</p>
<p>24% of parents want to know that their child is developing confidence, decision making skills, able to time manage and is responsible and independent.</p>
<p>12% of parents want to know if their child is socially well adjusted and that behaviour is of a high standard.</p>
<p>12% of parents felt that an emphasis for them was on effort and that their children applied them selves.</p>
<p>Other areas mentioned were:</p>
<p>Getting test results.</p>
<p>Knowing all areas of development.</p>
<p>Finding out everything that their child does at school.</p>
<p>That effort wasn't so important-just results only.</p>
<p>To view samples of the work students do.</p>
<p>To know if their child was working to potential.</p>

Question 2-How important is it to report on and know where your child is achieving at in the curriculum and skills areas indicated on the survey.

Parent Ratings for Reporting Priorities.



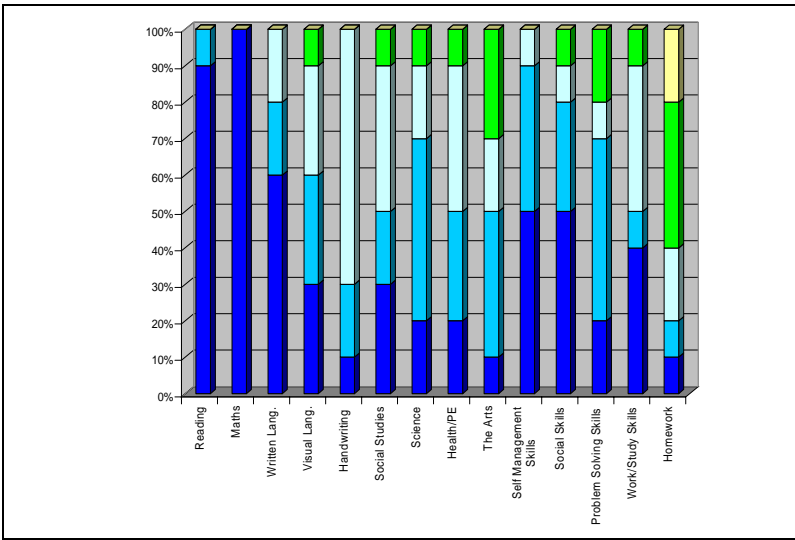
- Priority 1 for Reporting to Parents.
- Priority 2 for Reporting to Parents.
- Priority 3 for Reporting to Parents.
- Priority 4 for Reporting to Parents.
- Priority 5 for Reporting to Parents.

As the results indicated there was a strong emphasis for reporting to parents in the ‘core’ Numeracy and Literacy subject areas than for other areas such as the Arts, Handwriting, Health and PE and Social Studies and Science. Reading, writing and Maths areas were consistently high with either a four or five rating.

Parents also placed emphasis on the social skills areas of education and felt these were an important part of reporting to and on. In particular the social skills, problem solving and work study skills were rated as being most important.

There were some differences in the junior school survey as compared with the senior school survey. Parents of younger students placed more emphasis on reporting on the whole Curriculum where parents of older students were more focussed on Literacy Numeracy and Essential skills and key competencies of study and management skills.

Staff Results
 Show similar emphasis to parents. This has influenced the changes made this year in the degree of assessment of integrated topics, the Arts and PE.



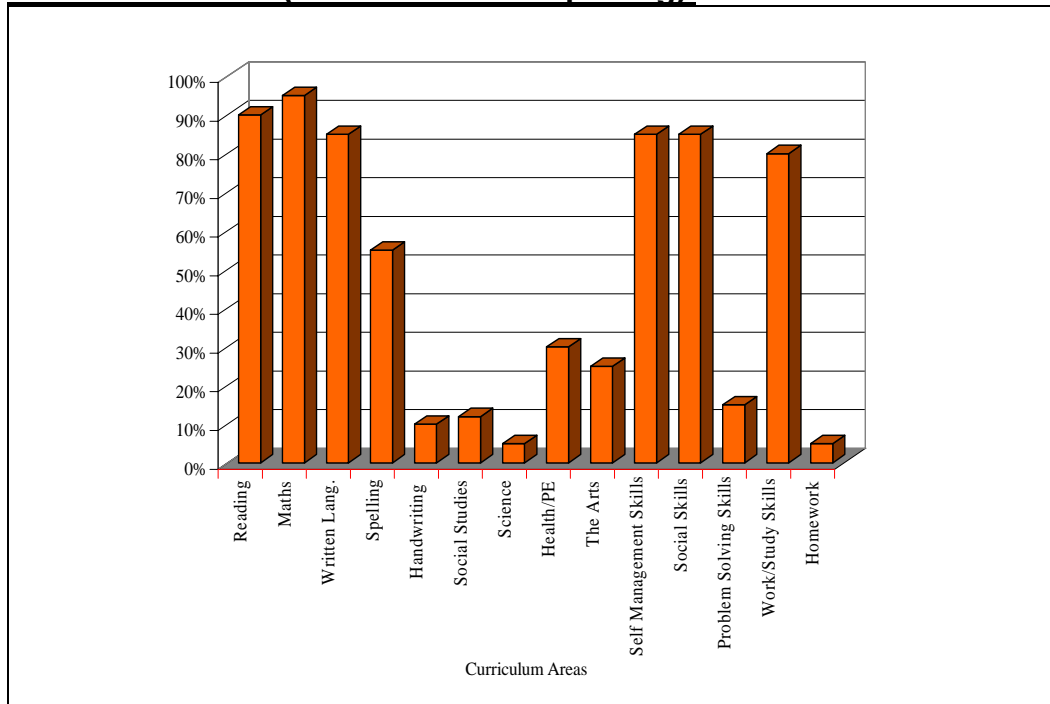
- Priority 1 for Reporting to Staff
- Priority 2 for Reporting to Staff
- Priority 3 for Reporting to Staff
- Priority 4 for Reporting to Staff
- Priority 5 for Reporting to Staff

Students were also interviewed and asked – “*What are the areas of your learning that are the most important to you and that you want the most feedback on.*”

Students also strongly indicated the importance of not only the Literacy and Numeracy areas but social aspects as well. The students surveyed ranged from 9

to 12 years and placed a strong emphasis on feedback and learning skills for the future. They wanted to share their learning with parents and for parents to see “*how good they were at things*”. To celebrate their achievements not just a mark.

Student Priorities (Feedback and Reporting).



Analysing the Data.

This data shows clearly the messages from staff, parents and students as to the curriculum areas that needed to be emphasised in any reporting that would take place. At Waiiau Pa School we place a high emphasis on Literacy and Numeracy, as per Government priorities, but we also want our energies and portfolios to reflect this. We also had an indication from parents that they strongly want a clear picture of **where** their child is and **where** they should be in line with New Zealand curriculum levels. Parents also expressed how much they enjoyed and valued the Portfolio as a clear and positive form of reporting and were beginning to understand and use stanines more easily. Using the aggregated data for whole school reports helped parents to gauge a better idea of where their child is in the comparison to others of the same level and age.

Reflection – Conclusion

The reflective component of any research process is never easy but a necessary aspect to enable the whole process to spiral and move forward. A significant factor is the consideration of the goal and the questioning of where we are at in achieving this goal.

Have we moved along the continuum towards achieving our goal?

Have we actually achieved our goal already?

Are our Portfolios the effective reporting tool that we desired?

What do we now need to consider developing these documents further..... And so on- the questions are constant.

The learning process for our whole staff over the last few years has been meaningful and the end results aside, has given us an enormous sense of unity as we work together on this process. The journey has been the key to our learning and we are satisfied with the developments and now the finished result. The positive aspects of this journey are clear, the partnership of the stakeholders, the collaborative and consultative manner of the process, the gathering and processing of data, and the strength of a staff in the way we have confronted a problem and endeavoured to solve it in not only the presentation of the data but also in the way we have modified and adapted to improve the document.

The Education Review Office clearly states in their publication on Reporting Student Achievement (1996- Section 77.b.i.), *that it is the legal obligation of the Board of Trustees to report on student progress and achievement.* They go on to say that *the professional staff, through the Principal must take reasonable steps to report to parents on such matters parents are told of such matters.* The same report indicates a means for allowing teachers to report on formative and summative assessment could be through the use of portfolios. Students would then have a better understanding of the purpose of the activities completed and the graduated achievement steps would enable them to recognise their progress and share the responsibility of their learning. Parents too would have more understanding of the progress and achievement with greater understanding of the process rather than just the end results.

The Education Review Office, in their report on our school, at the end of 2002 supported a need for the change I have facilitated in the reporting to parents on student achievement. In a more recent ERO report 2005 it clearly indicated the development of these portfolios and the praise to the school for the improved depth and quality of assessment through these portfolios.

In the research process to date I know we have to develop further the concept of more student choice in their portfolio. This is I believe a training process and will continue to develop. After discussing this aspect with team Solutions advisors and through researching various publications such as, "Unlocking Formative Assessment", (Clarke, S. Timperley, H. and Hattie. J. 2003), "The Case for Authentic Assessment ", (Wiggins 1990), this is an area for us to readdress in future months. This is an area that will take considerable planning and student learning over several years, to ensure student selection and involvement in choice is meaningful and a valuable tool for their learning. The data collection from stakeholders, which has played a significant role in the ongoing process of this topic has taken has been invaluable and promotes the strategy of partnership in learning

In conclusion I need to highlight the level of professional growth and reflection I have undertaken through this sabbatical. It has been enormously enlightening and informative, I have enjoyed the opportunity to 'sit back' and evaluate where the Portfolio process is at and the impact it has on student's learning, teachers assessment and empowerment of students, and way that relationships with parents, student's and teachers develop through these documents.

One area of concern was the expected level of work load. Having surveyed parent groups to gain data, we were worried that now our parent groups may have unrealistic expectations of what we could achieve. It is important to remember that this process must be achievable and must continue to evolve in a spiral motion planning, modifying and evaluating at all phases. Suggestions for a folder type set up may be looked at for 2007, as this would then rule out pasting of documents.

The challenge now is re evaluate each year to incorporate as many areas of the surveys as we realistically could, including formative assessments, and feedback and feed forward comments with emphasis on enhancing and improving student outcomes.

Schools Visited.

Case Study One

This school has used Portfolios for 2 years now and has set out Portfolios very similar to our initial example-data and assessment is in order of the events with samples of work throughout. Assessment sheets are similar and CM printouts are included as is the essential skills and curriculum levels report. A different set up is used for the NE reports. Year 7 and 8 are using a clear file as opposed to the scrapbook. Reports are completed term 1 and 3.

Case Study Two

This school has used a work book for student assessment for 3 years and has set this out with assessment in order of the events with samples of work throughout. Reports are also completed term 2 and 4 with interviews in Term 1 and beginning of Term 3.

Case Study Three

This school has used Portfolios for 4 years now and has set out Portfolios very similar to our initial example-data and assessment is in order of the events with samples of work throughout. Assessment sheets are similar and they are using stanines, curriculum levels and percentages more frequently at parents request to know more base line data on their child.

Case Study Four- French School

Reporting to parents was in the form of a twice yearly report of one page. It was very brief and clearly stated the marks gained by the student in all curriculum areas, showing the child's marks in averages, and compared the school average and national average. Comments were brief and very simple – 'a great year', 'works seriously', 'good participation in class', "always participates well" etc.

There were no feed forward type input and students who don't reach desired levels often repeated this course.

Other examples of school visited or looked at included a wide variety of report systems and sample folders / portfolios which ranged from 'tell it all' as far as curriculum levels to effort ratings, stanines, percentages, comments, and self evaluation to more comment based on what students have achieved.

After viewing such a wide range of methods for reporting to parents on students achievement I appreciate that there is no standard or indeed 'best' method, and nor

should there be. The needs of the students, the assessment structure of the school, the views and consultation of parents and the designs, modifications and reviews made by staff all play significant roles in the reporting process for that particular school. This process needs to be constantly reviewed and updated as Curriculum and Education changes by retaining the best of the old and embracing the new.

Topic 2- Minor Focus-Year 7 and 8 students in a Full Primary.

Do we cater adequately and effectively for these students?

How do we know their needs are being met and we are preparing these students in the best way possible to meet the demands of secondary school and for future life? Are there innovative programs and / or other opportunities we could be providing?

This issue has also been a focus in our school charter for 2004 and 2005. We have endeavoured to raise the profile of these students, liase with college and provide opportunities for these Year 7 and 8 students over and above curriculum areas and link to career awareness and decision making.

This aspect came up again in our recent Consultation and the school is seeking the analysis skills of an outside consultation to monitor the achievement of Year 7 and 8 students at this school compared with others.

I would like to base my research on what are the needs, what is it that parents expect when they leave their child at a full primary for Year 7 and 8, and what other opportunities we can provide for these student to prepare them for the future.

In researching the position of Year 7 and 8 students in the full primary situation I have visited other full primary schools, Intermediates and use parent surveys and current relevant information relating to the achievement and development of Year 7 and 8 students.

It is evident in our schooling in this country that whilst many students enjoy and perform well at Primary school some students 'switch off' or simply don't achieve at secondary school.

This transition phase is therefore of vital importance for the success of not only our Year 7 and 8 students but for the country as a whole. Engagement of learning, high quality Literacy and Numeracy programs as well as a range of interesting and motivating opportunities in these very vulnerable and informative years of early adolescence are imperative.

Parent Survey

I invited parents of current and past Year 7 and 8 students to complete a survey/questionnaire. This included questions about *what we are providing now that parent's value and wish to see retained, what areas we can improve develop and what are the most important areas they consider necessary for their child as they transition to high school.* (Further data re: advantaged/disadvantages in appendix).

Parents felt these points were vital for students to successfully integrate to College.

<i>Students KNOW about high school, what to expect, how it works, and are able to visit.</i>	<i>Students have a strong social skill base to assist them with peer pressure, make decisions and deal with the 'knocks'</i>
<i>Students have strong self esteem, feel valued, and the confidence to participate fully.</i>	<i>Independent work skills, ability to research, problem solve, and self manage-know strengths and weaknesses.</i>
<i>To have a strong Literacy and Numeracy base-allowing them to cope in all areas of the Curriculum. Focus on the BASICS.</i>	<i>To have respect for others (especially those in authority), responsibility for learning and behaviour, tolerance for others, follow rules and instructions.</i>
<i>To cope with exams and the pressure of study.</i>	<i>Honesty and integrity-able to play fair.</i>
<i>To interact well with others and have FRIENDS.</i>	<i>Academic achievement and opportunities for extension when they need it-also support for those who need it.</i>
<i>Have a balance of academic, sporting cultural and social opportunities at school.</i>	<i>Gain leadership skills-buddy others, peer mediation.</i>
<i>Provide or share a counsellor for students to talk to and share problems.</i>	<i>Have a separate program for these students-not mixed with other levels.</i>

Shaded areas indicate the areas that were rated highly by MOST parents who completed the survey.

Programs for Year 7 and 8 students-ERO Publication “*Students in Years 7 and 8*”2001.

Whilst most full primary schools have different features and or programs for their year 7 and 8 students it is noticeable that what is lacking is a separate philosophy for these students. Approximately 40% of full primary schools cater fully for extension programs, or alternative elective type programs, but these types of figures usually reflect the whole school and not just directed at Year7 and 8. It is clear that the quality of liaison with the relevant Secondary School is vital to ensuring transition to high school is as seamless as possible in areas both academic and socially. Transition policies were evident at some schools.

Post Observations

After researching, visiting schools, talking or communicating with a variety of Principals and educationalists from a range of schools-full primaries of various sizes and Intermediates I have compiled a list that seems to be generic to all.

Successful programs for Year 7 and 8 students should include.

- Programs to develop independent learning, decision making and research based learning-(This is what Steve Maharey, Minister of Education referred to as Personalised learning at a recent APPA Forum)- setting own learning goals, teachers are facilitators of high quality learning opportunities, students know and understand learning objectives and assessment and evaluation clearly linked to planning and reporting.
- Ceremonies and events to celebrate, graduate, and recognise achievement and learning. Students need to be involved in these events, organising, facilitating with sense of ownership.
- Skills for adolescence-confidence building, self esteem sexuality and puberty, self management and leadership opportunities. Peer mediation, school council, buddy systems, involvement and leadership in the issues of the wider community.
- Frequent association to the High School-visits for students and teachers for both orientation and seamless transition, and links to the curriculum and establishing a positive and smooth curriculum flow in all areas.

- Guidance and counselling opportunities, behaviour, and emotional needs which are common at this stage of student's development. (Counselling shared between schools or with the high school).
- Career advice and awareness-interaction with past students, role models from the community and society.
- Policy and Charter inclusion to raise Year 7 and 8 profile, and provide for the needs of these students to be fully met. Principal, Staff, BOT support and resourcing to cater for these needs.
- Opportunities for students to develop relationships with a wider base of their peers, view other school environments as well as extending their knowledge and experience in the 'greater 'environment.
- Providing students with positive, accessible and ethically sound role models- teachers, support staff, ex students, members of the wider community. Role models across genders, ethnic diversity and in various age groups to promote diversity and understanding.
- Access to and the opportunities, training and support in ICT programs and integration into all aspects of the E world-keeping up to date with methods, equipment and learning.

Conclusion

This level of development in our students is unique and these students must be valued for the special qualities they bring to their school. Year 7 and 8 students are vulnerable, they are at times difficult and hard to understand, but they are rewarding and they do have special needs that need to be met to ensure they are ready to take on the challenges of the future.

As a school and also nationally it is vital to provide enriched programs that engage student learning but more so engage their interest, inspire drive and motivation. Just as the rich language programs set the building blocks for our junior students so too must we as educators accept this turning point in our students and address the needs of these emerging adolescents as they formulate the strategies and tools for their future of lifelong learning. Students at this level have an overwhelming desire to be loved, liked and achieve success in their world. Providing that love, acceptability and support as they grow is the challenge that the school, family and

community must jointly envelop as we prepare our Year 7 and 8 students to face the world.

CASE STUDIES

What opportunities are other schools providing for Year 7 & 8?

Our school-Waiiau Pa. Full Primary U5.

- Quality classroom Teaching- Literacy / Numeracy
- Extension class.
- NSW and Otago Testing.
- Camps, Drama Productions, Technology-off site and within Integrated topics
- Second Language Teaching
- Sporting Opportunities.
- Transition Visits to College
- Career Awareness Units /Focus Term3
- Specialist Music program-School Band
- Kapa Haka –one term per year.
- School Council-Leadership Opportunities.

1. Very small rural full Primary

- 1 Year 6 / 7 / 8 class – provide extension / remedial opportunities
- High quality teaching programs
- Visits to city schools / Intermediates for sport / exchanges.
- NSW Challenges

2. Full primary – 400 approx pupils

- Intensive Literacy / Numeracy
- Technology / 2nd languages
- Responsibility & Leadership
- Quality class teachers
- NSW Testing.

- Yr 8 – work in Personalised Learning Environment – Contracts, Action Learning, Weekly & Daily goal setting – some thoughts that these students will next year at College take step backwards as they have developed such independent style – took 6 – 8 weeks to ‘teach’ the style and slowly develop this approach.

3. Intermediate – U4

- Strong emphasis on leadership programs – selected students
- Employs Guidance person part time
- Accelerate class for Gifted & Talented at Yr 8 level-independent studies and development of active learning.
- Kapa Haka. Cultural Performances.
- Enrichment classes and electives opportunities.
- Health, Sexuality and Puberty sessions.

4. Large City Intermediate – U5

- Integrated studies based around own model of inquiry
- Huge emphasis on ICT integration-interactive whiteboards, data show projectors in each room
- Knowledge Net-intranet and students have own web page-75% students do homework on line.
- Gifted Kids Program-satellite class on site.
- Enrichment programs- Rock Band, Kapa Haka, Visual Art, Science, Maths, School Magazine, Robotics, Media, Dance....
- Traditional Specialist Tech. subjects-Food Tech, Electronics, Graphics....
- Performing Arts, Camps, Sporting Opportunities...

Survey Results.

Advantages of Yr 7 / 8 at Waiau Pa School

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extra responsibilities and duties-trust and support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encouraged to give service and responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Small class sizes..
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Friendly, helpful teaching environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Smaller school and students are known 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better chance to develop relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More individual personalised attention-help when needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sense of duty to set and role model positive behaviours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leadership opportunities for more students-also student council.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public speaking opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less exposure to big city influences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confidence to take part and participate fully
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sense of Community and belonging. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Great trips, calf club camps etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ WISH Program – respect, caring, responsibility.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cross grouping – interchanges – prepares for High School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maths, Literacy programs are great-also ICT and Computer opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Technology off site but also within the school.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quality of teachers / staff caring and encouraging. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learning languages is great-and extension classes for bright students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Great preparation for High School- security and learning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DARE program and interaction with Police. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Safety-Physical and emotional in these vulnerable years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less disruption – moving schools too much

Disadvantages

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Need more male teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disruptive students could be managed better 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transition Yr 8 – Yr 9 important to get this right.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Time lost in travel to Technology. Good to have Technology on site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mixed classes- when there are Year 7 and 8 in same class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Huge adjustments to make from small school to very large but also advantages of attending small school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Need greater exposure to the 'World'-more cultural diversity opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not enough own age to relate to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are students educated at same level as they would in an Intermediate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More electives and other topics and subjects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not enough extra help for students who having problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None- Students served well at Waiau Pa

Opportunities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Streamed classes – extension for Gifted and Talented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More boys sports – not just Rugby and more drama / music 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More Literacy / Numeracy tuition rather than Productions and Calf Club
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More foreign languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Early in year reporting re achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus on core Literacy / Numeracy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exam techniques ready for NCEA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased homework to help ready for College. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student Advisor – careers and social issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More interaction with bigger schools / intermediates to help broaden outlooks. ▪ More transition needed before high school – visits to college 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Career Advice – know what to expect - Advice from past students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Specialist Science and PE. More Technology needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Already full program – hard to fit more in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A great balance now in all areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More Puberty – Health Education and Sexuality talks.

References and Thanks

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Acknowledgment of Schools:

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Orini Combined- Principal Barbara Lawson

Waikowhai Intermediate- Principal Howard Perry

Rosehill Intermediate-Sue Jordan

Westburn School

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