

Sabbatical Report

A South Auckland Principals' Association

**Rex Maddren
Leabank Primary School
Term 3, 2010**

Purpose

The purpose of the sabbatical was to investigate the possibility of forming a coalition of principals association from the South Auckland region which could address some of the issues unique to the area.

Background and Rationale

Having been a school principal for over 24 years in both rural and urban areas and in both high and low decile schools, I have come to appreciate the need for principal clusters and support networks to be strong. Only collectively can we hope to overcome underlying issues which affect an entire district and try to improve educational opportunities for the children of the district. I have represented two different clusters at the Auckland Primary Principals Association for a period of seven years in total and spent five years as President of one or other of these two associations. These experiences have deepened my belief in the absolute need for principals to be part of an association that can represent them, advocate on local issues, provide professional development, offer opportunities for collaboration and provide the mentoring and support to look after the welfare of its members. In my time at APPA I have come to be very impressed with its work and I am very appreciative of the efforts and scope of what it achieves on our behalf. I have also had the opportunity to speak more informally with other representatives from across the Auckland area and have been interested in the passion that delegates from West Auckland have for WAPA (The Waitakere Area Principals Association). This has often been reinforced when speaking with principals who have moved schools from the West Auckland area. This is what prompted me to try and find out what makes this coalition of principal clusters so effective and to be so highly valued by its members. My aim was to try and understand the things that make WAPA successful and to see how this might be of benefit to schools in South Auckland.

Methodology

It was firstly necessary to contact the Waitakere Area Principals Association in order to ask for their assistance and to see if I could attend one of its meetings and speak with members present. WAPA has its own website which was extremely useful in gathering general information, gaining a broad idea of its activities and in making contact. From this it became apparent that an extremely close association has existed between WAPA and the West Auckland Education Centre (new Learning Network NZ) from its inception through to the present. With the recent demise of both the Papakura Education Centre and the Manukau Education Centre this immediately added another major thrust to my research. The Waitakere Area Principals Association allowed me to attend and speak about my research at one of their meetings. Several members were helpful in providing further background after the meeting by completing the questionnaire below.

WAPA Data Gathering Questions

1	How well does the WAPA organisation fit with local associations and APPA in terms of time commitments, purpose and conflict of interest?		
2	What are the most significant benefits of the association for members?		
3	What is the relationship between WAPA and the West Auckland Education Centre?		
4	I am hoping to develop a similar organisation in the South Auckland region. What advice can you give me e.g. size of the association, goals of the association, avoiding duplication or conflict with other associations.		
5	Our local association has a strategic plan based on five areas of operation. Please give me an indication of the importance of these areas to WAPA and an idea of what actions are undertaken under each.		
	Importance 1 - 5	Current Actions	
	Representation		
	Advocacy		
	Professional Development		
	Collaboration		
	Pastoral Care		
6	Can you explain the origins of WAPA e.g. What prompted its formation? How the practicalities such as finances, sponsorship, meeting formats and schedules, purposes etc were developed from scratch.		
7	Current developments e.g. sponsorship. Do they create conflicts of interests?		
8	What do members feel that they get from WAPA that is not available from local organisations or APPA. What are your typical agenda items.		

The passion of these people was obvious and I am most grateful for their assistance.

A visit was also made to Learning Network NZ which was equally helpful and passionate. This was of great help in coming to appreciate the closeness and interdependency of the two organisations. Time was spent collating and reflecting upon what had been discovered. Contact was made with the local principals' clusters in order to arrange to attend a meeting of each cluster. Meetings were arranged with the clusters from Otahuhu, Mangere, Papatoetoe and Otara. The Counties Professional Development day allowed me to address several clusters and over 100 principals all at the same time. These included my own association Manurewa, Papakura, Waiuku, Hunua and Franklin. Attempts were also made to speak with the South Auckland Secondary Principals but to no avail.

After all of this data gathering and setting up of meetings a lot of time was spent on reflecting upon how the success of WAPA might be of benefit to principals in South Auckland. In doing so consideration was given to where such an association might fit in, how the WAPA structure could help a similar association in South Auckland and what strengths and opportunities such an association might add. These possible benefits were considered under six main headings:

Representation

Advocacy

Professional Development

Collaboration

Pastoral Care

Education Centres.

A twenty four slide presentation was designed in order to try and encapsulate all of these findings and ideas which was then used to talk about during presentations.

Contact was made with COMET (City of Manukau Education Trust) and the presentation was made to them as a potential partner for such a group, particularly around the Professional Development aspects. COMET was receptive to the idea and provided me with a letter expressing their support and involvement conditional upon support from the principals and schools of South Auckland.



MAKING EDUCATION WORK FOR MANUKAU

CITY OF MANUKAU EDUCATION TRUST PHONE [09] 968 8773, Private Bag 94006, Manukau City, New Zealand

15 July 2010

Rex Maddren,
243 Hill Road,
Manurewa.

Dear Rex,

Re: Professional Learning Hub, South Auckland

Thank you for your presentation of the concept of a professional learning hub for South Auckland, a local co-operative owned and driven by the schools of the area and local partners.

The concept has value, and should it be supported by the principals and schools of the area, we would be happy to play a role in supporting its establishment, governance and operations. We note that the success of initiatives of this nature is dependent on the commitments of partners and the development of a sound business case.

As the new Auckland Council and its Local Boards become established, there may be further opportunity for endorsement by Local Boards. I am happy to facilitate this at the appropriate time.

Meanwhile, all the best for your exploration of this idea that builds collaboration among a network of schools.

Yours faithfully,

Bernardine Vester
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

In association with

comet@manukau.ac.nz www.comet.org.nz



Meetings were held as scheduled with all of the associations except for the Papatoetoe Cluster. Three meeting times were arranged but on each occasion things were rescheduled with the result that I was unable to meet with this group. The Secondary Principals did not respond either. In both of these cases the slide show was sent for distribution but I was not able to speak to members in order to provide background, context or elaborate on key aspects. However I am grateful for the openness and hospitality of the majority of clusters who did allow me to address them and consider the proposals made.

The slide show which follows is the presentation made when speaking with clusters and at the Counties Professional Development Day.

Clusters were then asked to discuss the concept at an upcoming association meeting and feed back to me their thoughts and expressions of interest in the concept. In several cases the slide show was requested and sent out to all members of each cluster.

1.

Aims of Sabbatical

To meet with the Waitakere Area Principal's Association (WAPA) in order to try and find out what makes it so successful and to subsequently meet with local South Auckland Associations to canvas support for a similar initiative for South Auckland.

2.

Education Centre

An independent Education Centre has existed in West Auckland for as long as WAPA has existed. We have lost two centres in South Auckland that were run by the University of Auckland. An opportunity exists to set up a similar, independent Education Centre in South Auckland.

3.

WAPA - Purpose

Mission Statement: To provide collegial support, to promote professional development, and to actively develop the role of principals in the Waitakere area.

Objectives: In the Waitakere Area..
To be the key player in collegial and social support.

To co-ordinate PD activities

To be a political voice for education

Educate the public on educational matter

Promote quality education for all students

4.

WAPA - Structure

6 Sub-clusters with two representations each at Executive level.

Henderson

Te Atatu

Kelston – Kelston, New Lynn, Glen Eden, Laingholm

North West – Massey, Kumeu

South West – Blockhouse Bay, Avondale, Waterview

Waitakere Area High Schools

5.

WAPA - Benefits

Networking amongst principals.

Growth and support of leaders.

Purpose is more local – more focussed.

Local initiatives for local issues.

Access to quality speakers – national

- International

No competition, boundary issues, infighting.

Relationships between leaders are very strong and positive.

6.

WAPA - Benefits

Political voice

Close links with High Schools

Profession learning Groups

Set up Trusts – 20/20 Learning

- Piha Education Centre

- Learning Network NZ

Mentoring from local experts for new and first time principals.

Friends – WAPA is supportive.

7.

WAPA – 20/20 Learning Initiative

This is a learning initiative driven by WAPA focussing on where children in Waitakere will be by the year 2020.

It has similarities to SEMO, MEI and PAI and links to the MOE etc but is owned and driven by WAPA.

12 schools have completed the pilot.

8.

Where the Association Fits

NZPF - National Body

APPA - Regional Association

WAPA - District Association

Local Associations - Suburbs

9.

Vision for South Auckland

My proposal explores the opportunities for a South Auckland Association under the following headings:

- Representation
- Advocacy
- Professional Development
- Collaboration
- Pastoral Care

10.

Representation

Opportunities: Stranger representation with:

- Ministry of Education
- Other Ministries (Police, MSD, Health, Housing)
- Local Ward Members – New Council
- APPA, NZEI, NZPF
- Feedback to and from local clusters.

Strengths

More united decision making and a greater voice with large agencies.

11.

Advocacy

Opportunities

A collective voice to air concerns about issues common to our district e.g. National Standards, loss of Education Centres, Truancy and Transience, G.S.E, Social Services etc

Strengths

A united and credible voice on issues that impact upon the South Auckland area in particular.

12.

Professional Development

Opportunities: Access to

- National and International speakers
- Support from our own Education Centre
- A Counties-Manukau Annual Conference
- District-wide networking and support from our own education experts

Strengths

Professional development tailored towards the unique needs of South Auckland Principals.

Greater size gives more opportunity to access quality PD.

13.

Collaboration

Opportunities: Create the ability to:

- Set up Working Action Groups on key issues.
- Develop and work alongside our own independent Education Centre.
- Run district wide sporting/cultural events
- Bulk purchase services and products.
- Source sponsorships & Partnerships.

Strengths: the greater size and geographic clustering makes many initiatives easier to achieve and on a larger scale.

14.

Pastoral Care

Opportunities: To enhance

- Principal networking and mentoring
- Strong relationships across the district.
- Opportunities to meet with principals from other clusters and share ideas.
- A sense of collective unity, support and care.
- Opportunities to recognise and value principals.

Strengths: A wider pool of local experts to support new principals and drive local initiatives to deal with local issues.

15.

Education Centre

The Current Situation

- Both the Manukau and Papakura Education Centres have been closed.
- Advisers are only available for Literacy, Numeracy and National Standards.
- Kohia is the nearest centre
- Team Solutions is driven by MOE and University of Auckland directives.
- Beginning Teacher Courses are available but tutors are external.

16.

Education Centre

The Learning Network NZ Example

- An integral part of WAPA and both support each other.
- Is an independent organisation.
- Provides venue, resources, PD for WAPA.
- Markets itself Auckland wide.
- Offers support in all curricula and in accordance with WAPA schools needs.
- Management committee from WAPA membership.

17.

Education Centre

Opportunities for South Auckland

- Manukau, Papakura and Franklin all have councils which may leave a legacy for education.
- COMET and the MIT Campus still exist.
- A sister-centre relationship may be possible with Learning Network NZ.
- Sponsorship and business partnerships in South Auckland can be explored.
- With commitment we can achieve a great deal by ourselves.

18.

Possible Structure

- 6 Sub-Clusters with each having two representatives on the Executive Committee.
- Part-time co-ordinator (Possibly a retired principal from the area).
- Mutual membership with an Education Centre if possible.
- Open to all South Auckland principals.
- Constitution of the Waitakere Area Principal's Association is on-line to assist.

19.

Possible Structure

6 Sub-Clusters

Manurewa

Mangere

Manukau – Papatoetoe, Otahuhu, Otara

Papakura – Papakura, Hunua

Counties – Franklin, Pukekohe, Waiuku

South Auckland High Schools

President and Vice President separate from clusters.

20.

Possible Structure

Meetings Schedule

Executive Meetings x 1 per term

WAPA Meetings x 1 per term

WAG's as required

Conference x1 per year

Executive and WAPA meetings will be breakfast meetings at a suitable venue.

21.

Where to Next

Commitment

- We need clusters to consider the proposal and make a definite commitment.
- A committee to represent clusters in the setting up group needs to be formed.
- Explore the viability of an Education Centre and commitment from schools.
- A timeline, constitution and first AGM need to be planned.

22.

What Do We Need

Resources / Partnerships

- A suitable venue for meetings.
- A suitable venue for an Ed Centre
- Sponsorship and business partnerships.
- Income streams and staff for an Ed Centre.
- Continued links with WAPA and Learning Network NZ.
- A committed and hopefully iconic principal as our first President.

23.

Ideas to Consider

- Lobbying councils for property and set up funding as a legacy to South Auckland.
- Possibly schools could contribute 0.1 of staffing or similar to start things off.
- Linking with other organisations e.g. COMET, MIT, NZEI, Learning Network NZ.

24.

Comments from WAPA

- Go for it!
- Go with the “early adopters” – you don't need everyone.
- Create a common purpose.
- Inclusion of the High Schools is crucial.
- An ex-principal as a paid, part-time Executive Officer is the ideal.
- We need resources to support our principals, our schools and our kids.

The slide show is also included as an attachment.

Findings

Feedback from clusters and individual principals has been mixed. Two clusters expressed interest in the idea and were prepared to go to the next stage should other clusters be willing. One gave a mixed response in that some members supported the concept and some did not. Two did not respond at all and three others indicated that they were not interested for a variety of different reasons. These reasons tended to focus around the following issues.

1. Some clusters felt that time and travel was an issue and that principals just didn't have time for any more meetings.
2. Some felt that their issues were not always those of more urban focussed groups.
3. All groups strongly support APPA and their local associations and some felt that the proposal would dilute the strength of the APPA.
4. One association felt that the proposed association would be too big and unwieldy.

Therefore, while interest was shown by some groups, there appears to be insufficient support either numerically or geographically to take the idea any further at this time.

Conclusions

From my research and experiences the strongest impression I have come away with is the success and strength of the Waitakere Area Principals Association. The achievements of WAPA were obviously appreciated by the principals of West Auckland judging by the passion and positivity of these that I met during my visit. Achievements such as retaining an independent Education Centre in Learning Network NZ and opening the Piha Education of the commitment of members to the collective good of the children of West Auckland. This is further evidenced by the 20/20 Learning Initiative which involves schools working together to share good practice, source relevant PD and collaborate to achieve a collective vision for children learning in the year 2020. While there are many examples of schooling improvement initiatives, these are usually driven by the MOE whereas the 2020 initiative is driven by the schools of WAPA themselves which will probably give it a greater purpose and longevity as it is locally 'owned'. This passion was re-enforced by principals that I met during my visits to South Auckland clusters who had worked in the WAPA area before.

The South Auckland area is geographically large and has a mixture of large urban schools and smaller more remote rural schools. Therefore there are issues around travel, time and common ground that concern some of the principals. The clusters feel well served by APPA and that there are plenty of conference options available currently. Some areas are heavily involved in MOE driven schooling improvement initiatives which demand significant PD and commitment of time from those involved. Support for the concept was strongest in clusters that have been through such initiatives but are now more free to determine their own PD programmes.

There may be a time in the future when such a collaboration of South Auckland clusters will be possible but at the present time there appears to be insufficient interest and commitment to proceed any further.

Acknowledgements

Many people assisted me during the course of my sabbatical and I would like to acknowledge the following people/groups for their support.

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- Learning network NZ for its openness to my questions.
- Bernadine Vester from COMET for allowing me to present to her and for the expression of support.
- Dr Laurie Thew for his sage advice while drafting my presentation.
- The Principals Association of South Auckland for allowing me to speak at their meetings and for their consideration of the proposal.