

Principal Sabbatical Report: Term 1 2006
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Focus:

To establish a school collection of historic and irreplaceable images for the benefit of students and the local community.

Background

I have been teaching for approximately 33 years and a Principal at Whangamarino School for ten of those years. In 2005 I decided to apply to the Board of Trustees for one years leave. This was going to be a time for me to step back from the constant juggling of the continuous paperwork, school organization, teaching and the pressure that comes with trying to make a difference to children's learning.

I live in the local school community and feel that I have nearly reached the end of my teaching career. I was really concerned that our school, which has a proud Ngati Pikiao history, has very little photographic images of its 76th year of existence. I felt it very important to begin establishing a pictorial collection for the school hence the project

My personal involvement in this project has also stemmed from the fact that my husband and my two children have all been educated at Whangamarino.

Method

During my recent sabbatical leave, I spoke to school principals about the systems they used to record and collect their school history. This was a very interesting exercise for me. I found that some schools keep their hard copies of photographs in boxes or displayed in the school. Others keep the hard copies in boxes at the school and duplicates in the Wellington archives. The copies for the Wellington archives are collected several times during the year. After much discussion and time spent gathering information on photographic care, handling of art on paper, handling of family collections and personal archives, and use of photographic prints, negatives and slides, I decided that a hard copy collection of the schools history of photographs, bulletins and slides (with a back up on CD) would be the best way of portraying the schools history. This would also suit the limited budget the school had allocated for this project.

After this decision was made, I spent most of my time talking with the local community, visiting people at home and collecting various photographs, slides and school bulletins. Looking back, I heard many stories and consumed a very large amount of tea and coffee.

Collection of Items

News items were photocopied onto appropriate paper and placed into acid free flat boxes. These boxes are not affected by moisture, are virtually indestructible and are safe for long term storage.

All original photographs were scanned on to CD and one hard copy was printed and then arranged in photo albums. I chose a photo album system because it gives people an easy yet quick illustrative glimpse of the schools past. The albums were expensive, but are acid free and interlaced with clear polyester film for protection against the oils and acids in fingertips.

I have colour coded the albums for ease of use. Blue and black albums are for class photographs and red is for staff photographs. Each album represents a 10 year time frame. Some photographs taken at special occasions or events over the years had been used to make big books and were located in the schools library for use by the children. The books were well worn but the photographs are still in a good condition. I have removed the photographs from the books but as yet have not decided how to store them. The options are to make new books, a major job on its own, to laminate and make captions using A3 size so that they can be used in the library or display in smaller albums. The laminating is not recommended as it eventually makes the prints yellow but for the children's use in the library it is more practical.

Summary

This project has been enjoyable and rewarding for me. Our small school now has something they can contribute to on a regular basis.

I would recommend that the school send its photographic history to the archives in Wellington and that the albums are available to both past and present pupils. I would also suggest that some photographs are placed on the Old school friends' site and more importantly that the school continue to collect school history.