

SABBATICAL PROJECT

August - October 2007

~ CAREERS INTERVIEWS ~
~SCHOOL TRANSITION AT YEAR 11 ~
~ SCHOOL VISITS ~
~COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF OUTSTANDING TEACHERS ~

Undertaken by Alan Harrison

Principal of Hillview Christian School



Table of Contents

A. Impact of Careers Interviews Conducted at Years 8 and 10

B. Academic Impact of Transitioning Schools at Year 11

**C. Is it More Difficult to Transition Schools Socially at Year 11
Than at Year 9?**

D. School Visits

E. Common Characteristics of Outstanding Teachers

A. Impact of Careers Interviews Conducted at Years 8 and 10

1. Historical Perspective

Prior to my present principal's position at Hillview Christian School I had worked at Middleton Grange School where one of my roles was as a Careers Adviser for Middle School students. I was privileged to be able to write the job description for my position so one of the tasks I decided to include was to interview approximately 100 Year 10 pupils each year about possible career directions. I found these most worthwhile as I discovered that many of the students had ideas about what they wished to pursue once they left school. I was able to assist a number of the students with ideas of possible career or study pathways. These ideas I shared with them came from my limited knowledge of the students coupled with what they shared with me about their interests and strengths.

I only had the opportunity to interview two Year 10 cohorts before I was appointed to my principal's role at Hillview, so sadly I wasn't able to continue something I felt was most worthwhile. During the next four or five years I was amazed at how many of the pupils that I interviewed during those two years when I would meet them socially and ask what they were doing would respond with something similar to this:-

“You should know, can't you remember what we talked about when you had the interview with me in Year 10.”

In the light of this I decided in 2002, my fifth year at Hillview, to interview our Year 8 students (now in Year 13) in a similar way to what I had done at Middleton with Year 10 students. I knew the students well as I had taught them Maths and English in Year 6 and many of them had been in extension classes I had taken. In this first year the interviews were based on academic records I had for each student. They were quite basic and in looking back at the data that I kept from those interviews it is evident that I made very limited suggestions regarding career possibilities.

By my second year of interviewing, my written record of the interviews was much more comprehensive. The main reason for this is that at the end of 2002 all our teachers at the end of the year were asked to do a task to help keep us honest to the school's mission statement which is as follows:-

To provide a quality education in a Christian environment where children can develop their God-given abilities.

Each teacher on a class list noted down any areas of excellence (talents) that the children in their class possessed in the following three areas:-

- Academic
- Co-curricular
- Special Character of the school

For an area of excellence to be recognised the child needed to be perceived by the teacher to be in the top 20% of their age in that particular area. Our reason for doing this was to judge how effective the school was at in finding a talent for every child by the time they graduated from Year 8. We started from the premise that we believed God has gifted every child with at least one talent.

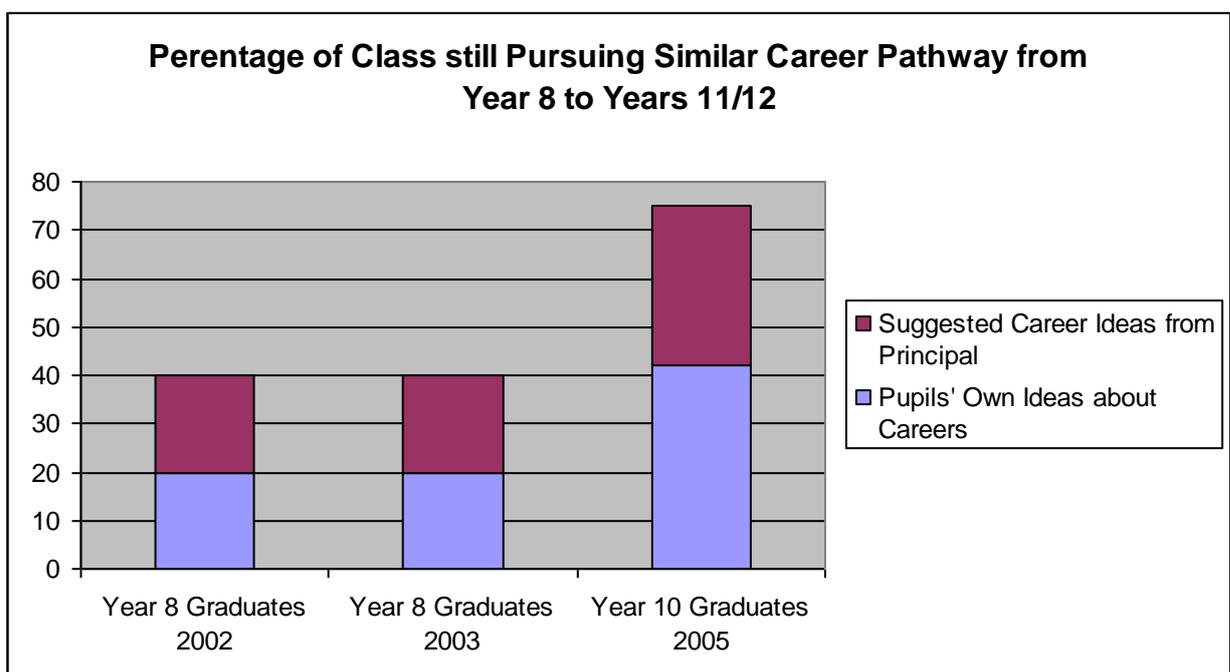
During the second year of interviews as well as academic records and my personal knowledge of each child I also had the class list of the areas of excellence for the class. I found this the most beneficial information I had about the students. Because of my strong interest in career education I have asked many people over the years whether they like their job. I have discovered that only about 33% respond that they really enjoy what they do. I've learnt that the happiest people are those who are actually employed in a job that involves the utilisation of natural talents they possess.

My intention when starting the interviews at Hillview in 2002 was to interview this same cohort of students during their last year at school (Year 13 in 2007). When awarded a sabbatical I decided also to interview the Year 12 ex-pupils from our school at the same time as most of the students from these two year groups now attend Middleton Grange. The Year 12 group is an interesting group as it contains three distinct sub-groups:-

- 10 pupils that transferred to Middleton at the end of Year 8 (left Hillview at the end of 2003)
- 12 pupils who stayed on at Hillview for their Year 9 and 10 education then moved to Middleton (left Hillview at the end of 2005)
- 8 pupils who joined Hillview for their Years 9 and 10 education before moving to Middleton (left Hillview at the end of 2005)

2. Findings from my research

- (i) **What percentage of students are still pursuing a similar career choice to what they thought when they were in Year 8?**

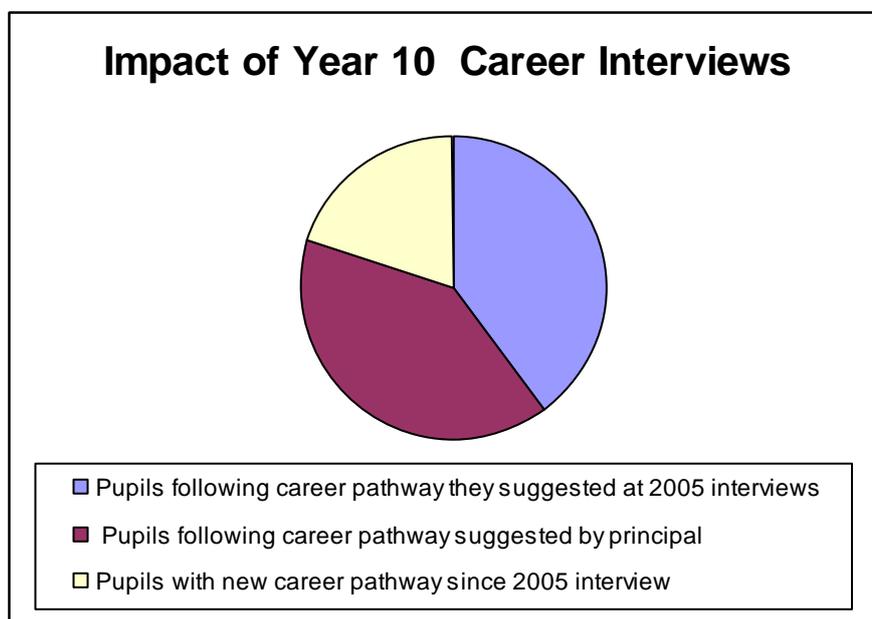


The Year 10 graduates were interviewed at the same times as the Year 8 graduates from 2003 so the only apparent reason why there's a much greater percentage of the group following through on what we discussed when they were in Year 8 is that they also had another interview with me late in Year 10. The affirmation that they were heading in the right direction possibly has encouraged them to keep pursuing their dreams and aspirations.

It is interesting to note that 50% of the pupils that are still pursuing a similar pathway to the one discussed in Year 8 have actually picked up on a suggestion that I made to them as they had no ideas themselves at that time. For all of them the idea suggested in Year 8 had by Years 12 and 13 become their own. Some of them reminded me that it was something I had suggested and others had no recollection of me suggesting it to them.

(ii) What percentage of students are still following a similar career choice as they were in Year 10?

In 2005 I was able to interview our 20 Year 10 pupils regarding possible career directions. Of this group 12 were from the original group and eight joined the class for Years 9 and 10. During the interviews conducted this year I was able to assess the impact of my input two years ago.



3. Summary

- 80% of the students in Year 12 are still intending to pursue the same career option as they did in Year 10. In comparison the groups who were only interviewed at Year 8 only had 40% still desiring to follow the same career option when in Year 12/13 (as shown on the first graph)

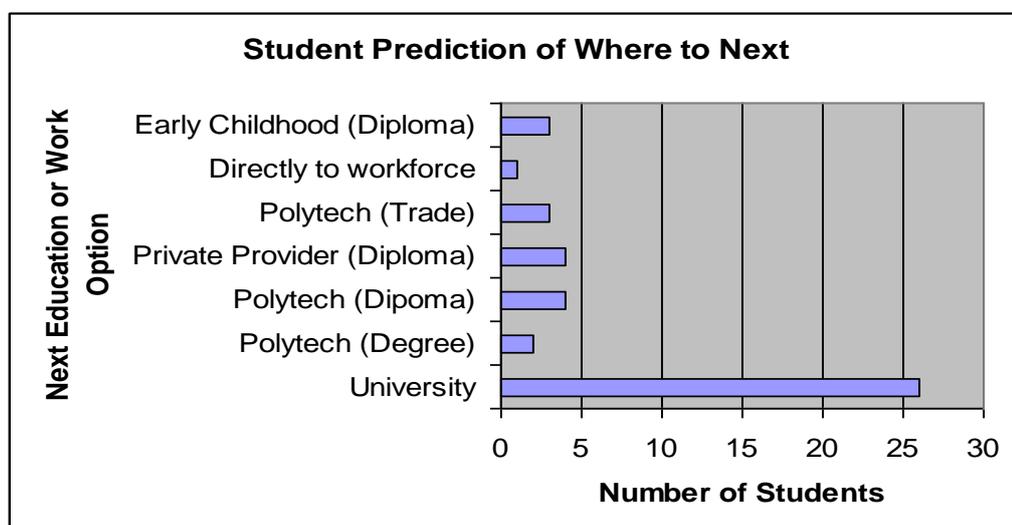
- 57% of the group of students who joined Hillview for Years 9/10 signified in Year 12 that they were following a possible career pathway discussed in Year 10
- this is significantly less than the 75% of pupils who were interviewed in both Years 8 and 10 who are still pursuing a pathway similar to discussed in earlier interviews but considerably more than the 40% result from those only interviewed in Year 8

4. Conclusion

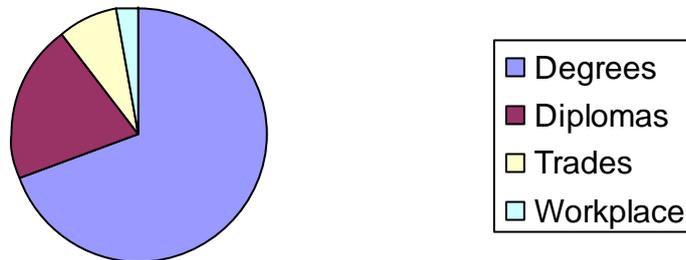
- career interviews conducted in Years 8 and 10 are most valuable in motivating young people to think about career directions
- interviews at Year 10 (57% follow-through) have a greater impact than those undertaken only at Year 8 (40% follow-through)
- career interviews conducted at both Years 8 and 10 (75% follow-through) have the greatest impact of all
- suggestions made by the principal have a big impact in stimulating students to think about the possibilities and choosing one or two to pursue. Exactly 50% of the students who had a clear idea in Year 12/13 of what they wished to pursue were following an idea suggested by the principal in an earlier interview
- the person conducting the interviews must have information about the pupils in order to make suggestions. In this case it was pupils responses to questions posed in the interview, academic data and areas of excellence that had been identified for the students by their teachers

5. Desire for Tertiary Education

With the data collected I thought it may be interesting to see what impact the career interviews may have had on the desire of the students to seek tertiary education.



Percentages of Students Choosing Specific Destinations



- Considering the students interviewed for this project are graduates of a decile 6 school, the number who at this stage are intending to pursue a degree qualification is exceedingly high
- Half of those intending to gain a diploma I'd consider more than capable of gaining a degree but have chosen a diploma course because that is the best qualification for what they would like to do in the workplace

Work in Progress

This has been an exciting project to work on and the findings have definitely confirmed the gut feeling I've had as I followed-up in an informal manner with the students who have passed through our school during the past decade. The next stage of this project will be to interview the same students in five years time, in the first two years after graduation for those pursuing a degree or diploma, to find out what percentage have followed through on what they are intending to do at this stage and also to ascertain how many are able to work in the field that they are aspiring to at this stage of their lives. It will be marvellous if I could be granted another sabbatical in 2012 to complete the next stage of my on-going research into the impact of career interviews upon students.

B. Academic Impact of Transitioning Schools at Year 11

As part of my sabbatical project I interviewed graduate students from Hillview Christian School that now attend Middleton Grange as Year 12 students to determine how well they've made the transition from Hillview to Middleton. As part of my study I asked if the interviewees were happy to share with me their NCEA Level 1 results that they achieved in 2006. Over 80% of the students were willing to do this and this group is without a doubt an accurate sample of the whole group. Of the 18 who shared their results with me, nine graduated from Hillview as Year 8 students and the other nine as Year 10 students. I was very keen to discover whether transitioning from one school to another at the end of Year 10 has a detrimental impact on the qualifications achieved the following year. This had become an issue earlier this year when parents of our present Year 8 class had shared concerns they had with me. While they were very keen for their children to continue at Hillview for their Years 9 and 10 schooling they were worried that their children would be disadvantaged because of the following:-

- their children would be adjusting to a new school, new teachers, new classes and new friends while at the same time becoming familiar with NCEA
- their children wouldn't have the opportunity that Middleton Grange Year 10 pupils have to undertake 20-30 NCEA Level 1 credits during that year so they would not be as confident as their peers

To be able to compare the two groups academically I used standardised Progress and Achievement results that I'd obtained when the 18 pupils were at Hillview in 2003. This assisted in evaluating the relative academic strengths of the two groups of students. The Progress and Achievement tests that were administered were Reading Vocabulary, Reading Comprehension, Listening Comprehension and Mathematics. The group that moved to Middleton at the end of 2003 came out slightly higher.

Some of our parents had come to the conclusion that the factors mentioned above would mean their children, if they stayed at Hillview until the end of Year 10, wouldn't achieve as well as their Middleton peers in Level 1 of NCEA. As part of my sabbatical project I could see an opportunity for me to statistically discover whether there is substance to their fears or whether the extra maturity that these pupils gain in the two years before transitioning to secondary school could be advantageous. The data I gathered from our school-wide assessment records and from the interviews conducted with students is as follows:-

2003 Graduates	PAT Total	Credits	Merits	Excellences
Student 1	347	148	8	22
Student 2	345	106	6	1
Student 3	316	147	16	8
Student 4	270	118	8	9
Student 5	232	123	10	0
Student 6	197	101	5	2
Student 7	178	128	6	5
Student 8	162	128	11	4
Student 9	142	103	0	0

2005 Graduates	PAT Total	Credits	Merits	Excellences
Student 1	335	137	11	23
Student 2	314	121	19	2
Student 3	299	128	6	3
Student 4	295	137	16	4
Student 5	208	135	10	6
Student 6	195	121	8	3
Student 7	190	139	12	4
Student 8	181	123	11	0
Student 9	139	81	0	0

Statistic Summary

Year 8 Graduates	
Average PAT %ile	61
Average No of Credits	122
Total No. of Merits	70
Total No. of Excellences	51

Year 10 Graduates	
Average PAT %ile	60
Average No of Credits	125
Total No. of Merits	93
Total No. of Excellences	45

- The two groups were very similar academically in February of 2003 when the standardised tests were administered with the Year 8 Graduates slightly ahead.
- The two groups achieved similar levels of achievement in regards to number of credits gained in Level 1 NCEA with the Year 10 graduate group a little ahead.
- The Year 8 graduates gained six more Excellence awards than the Year 10 graduates but the Year 10 graduates considerably more Merit awards.

Conclusion

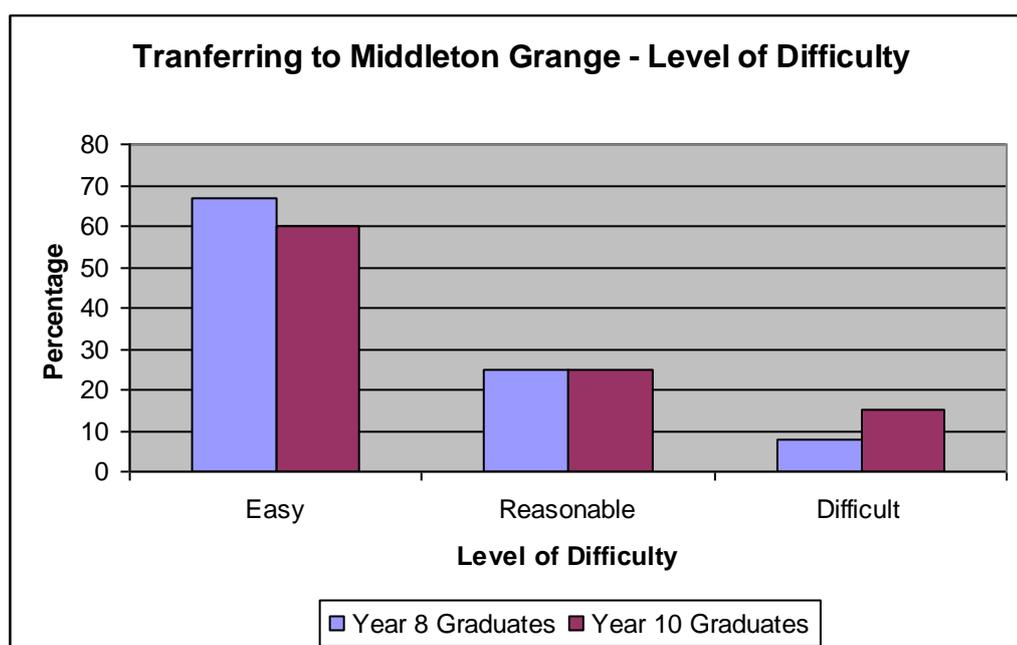
- Graduating at Year 10 instead of Year 8 has no apparent negative impact upon the achievements gained at Level 1 of NCEA and possibly it is beneficial.
- The students interviewed that graduated at Year 10 did not believe that they had been disadvantaged transitioning at that time instead of Year 8.
- Almost all the interviewees that stayed on at Hillview for Years 9 and 10 believed that there were many benefits from staying at the same school for their primary and middle school years and if they were able to do it all again they would still choose the same option.

C. How does the Transition to Secondary School at Year 11 Rather than Year 9 Affect Student Socialisation ?

During Term 2 of this year we became aware that a number of parents of our present Year 8 pupils were concerned about how well our Year 10 graduates are transitioning to Middleton Grange and whether the difficulties in forming friendships during Year 11 would be more difficult than if they transferred at Year 9, which is a natural transition point for New Zealand when schools intake a large number of new students. As I was already going to be interviewing our ex-pupils in Year 12 at Middleton anyway, it was a relatively straightforward task to add a number of questions relating to socialisation during the students first year at Middleton.

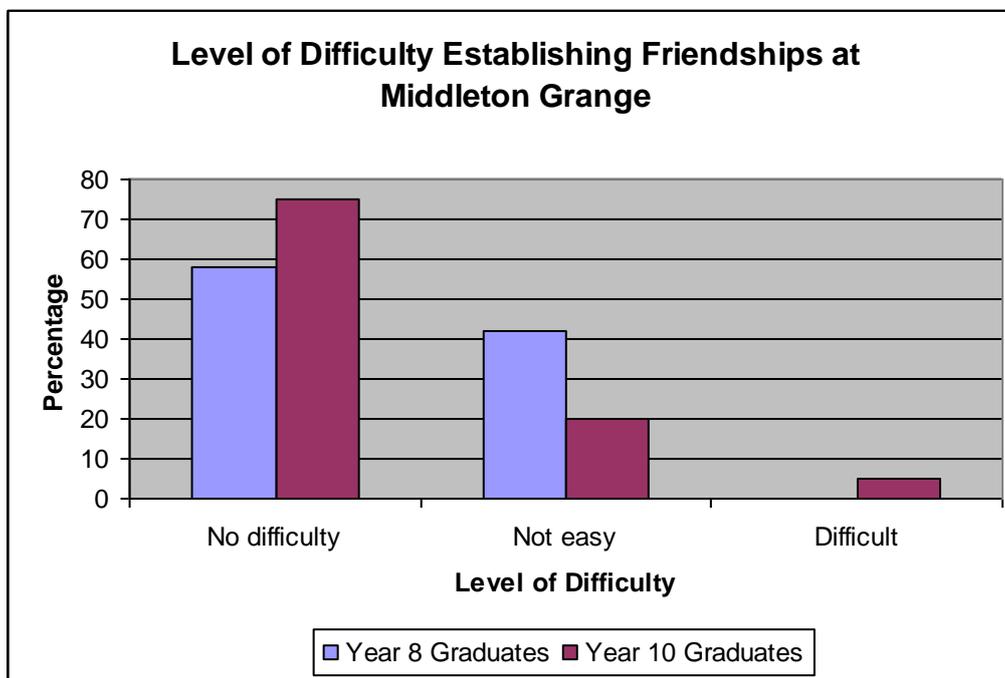
I interviewed 32 ex-Hillview Year 12 Middleton students, of whom 12 had transitioned to Middleton Grange School at Year 9 and the remaining 20 transitioned at Year 11. Included below are graphs based on the data collected.

1. How easy did you find it transferring from Hillview Christian School to Middleton Grange School?



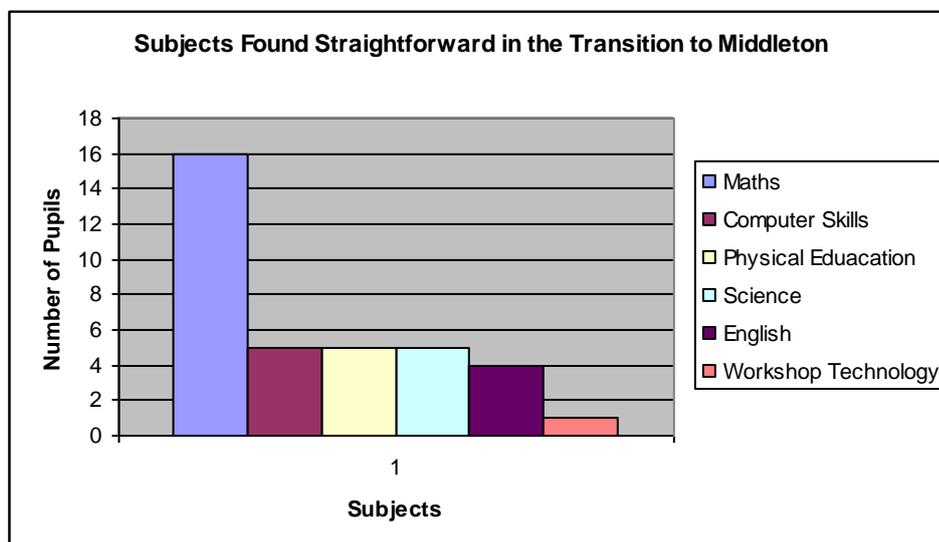
As can be seen most students who graduated from Hillview at the end of Year 10 found the transition to Middleton easy with only four young people finding it difficult. Of those, three had decided that they wanted to stay at Hillview for their final three years at school and it is apparent they didn't work hard at making it work during their first year at Middleton. The other one had difficulties because of shyness. All are finding it easier at Middleton in their second year and all intend to stay on at the school for Year 13. As three of these students had only ever attended Hillview prior to moving to Middleton they had the expectation they could finish their education at Hillview. Subsequent classes have been aware that this isn't an option and they would move onto a new school for Year 11.

2. Did you find it difficult establishing a network of friends at Middleton?

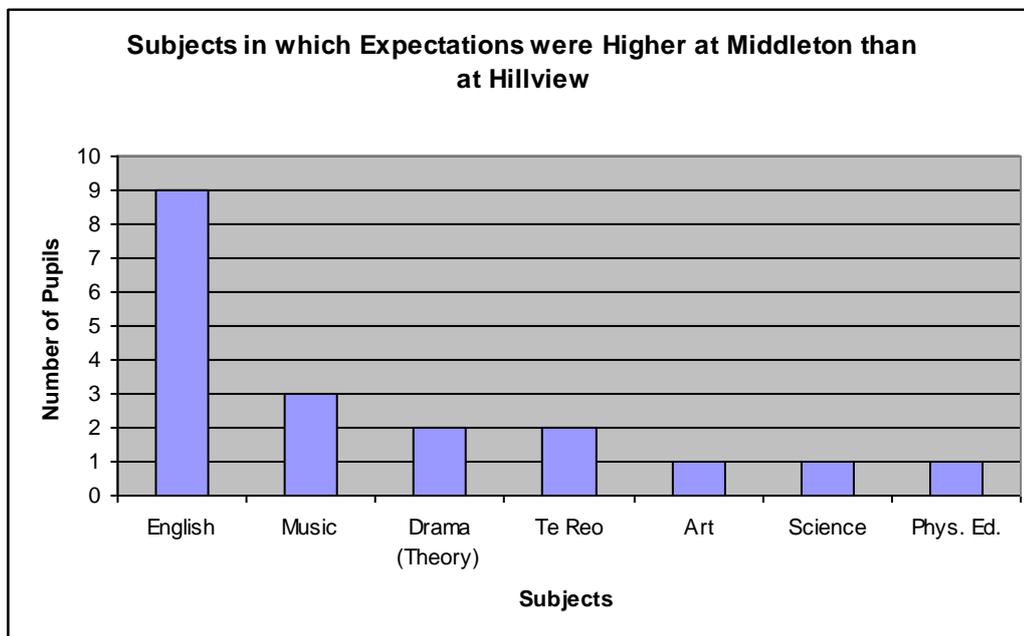


Only one student found it difficult establishing a network of friends amongst the Middleton pupils but she has remained a part of a friendship group of ex-Hillview pupils. It is interesting that there were more students amongst the Year 8 graduate group that found it not easy to establish friendships at Middleton than there was amongst the Year 10 graduate group. Also the fact that the percentage that had no difficulty was higher for the Year 10 graduate group shows that making the transition later is advantageous in the area of forming friendships.

3. What subject areas did you find straightforward in your adjustment to Middleton?

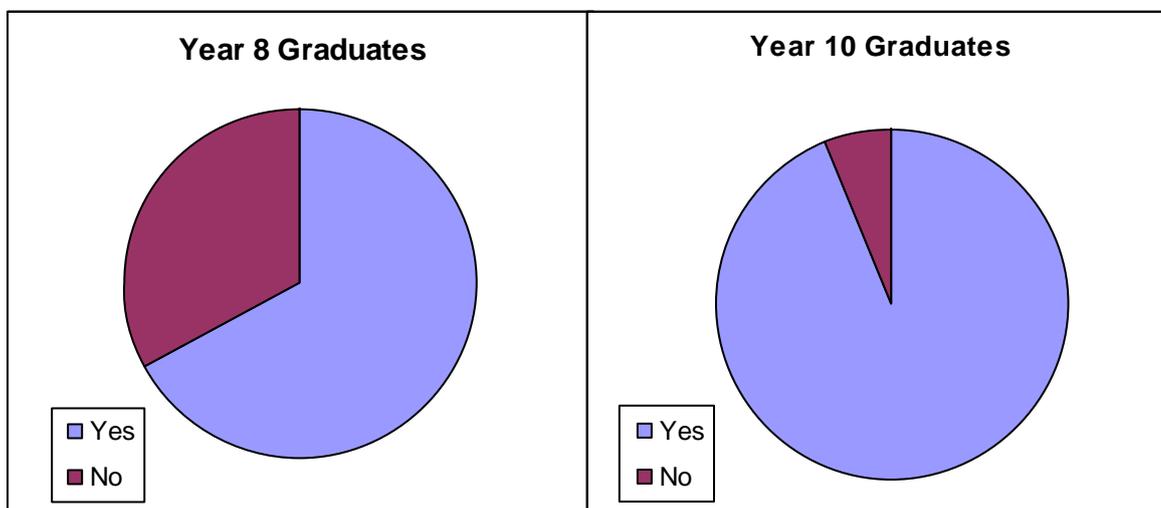


4. In which subject areas did you find the expectations of Middleton higher than that which was expected at Hillview?



Earlier this year we became aware that there was a problem with Hillview students making the transition to Middleton in English and the interviews confirmed this. In Music, Drama and Te Reo, it is more the fact that Hillview pupils don't spend as much time studying each of these disciplines because they cover a broader range of subjects during their Years 9 and 10 schooling.

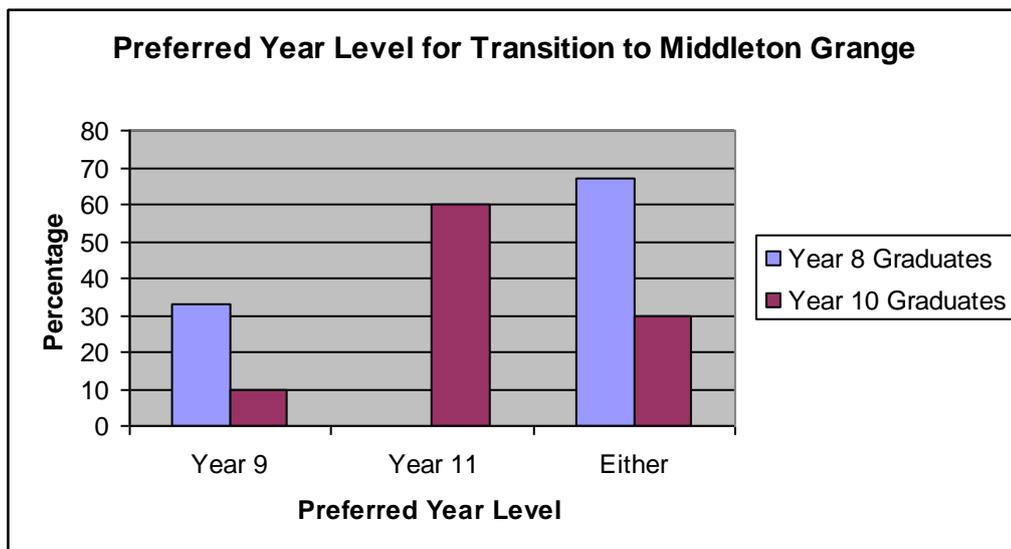
5. Did you find any differences between the staff of Middleton Grange and the staff of Hillview?



There is a marked difference between the two groups in regards to this question. There are three factors that appear to influence this area:-

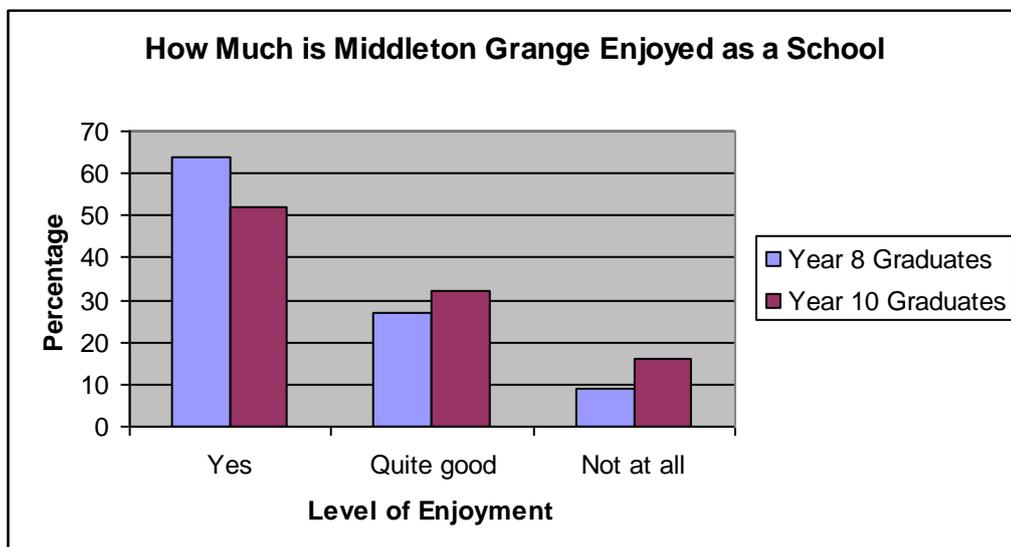
- Teaching personnel
- Size of schools
- Philosophy of schools (the “grace and mercy” impact at Hillview which has led us to no longer run detentions and not to have punishments)

6. At which Year level do you think it would be best to transfer from Hillview to Middleton?



It is interesting that the Year 10 graduate group were much stronger in the view that their transition time was the best and there weren't nearly as many who thought either transition point would suffice. Those who opted for either tended to believe that it would depend upon the individual to what would be the best transition time.

7. Do you enjoy attending Middleton Grange?



The Year 8 graduation group enjoy Middleton Grange as a school a little more than the Year 10 group. As this survey was undertaken half way through the Year 10 graduate group's three years at Middleton, this might change by their last year.

8. Are there any subjects Hillview doesn't offer that you think would be beneficial if they were offered?

Photography, Electronics and Languages (other than Te Reo Maori and French).

D. School Visits

In 2005 I was part of a group that had University management lecturer share with us about Strategic Planning. He spoke to us about the "engine room" of an organisation and it is this that provides the thrust and energy for a school. He shared that the Vision or Mission Statement is at the heart of the "engine room" for a healthy and vibrant organisation. During my school visits I asked principals what are the things that energise their schools and motivate their school community. I asked each principal what they are doing which may be different to what is happening elsewhere or possibly are taking to a higher level. I asked for information about any innovative programmes that help provide purpose and thrust for their schools.

School Visit 1

This community based school has reflective teachers and all in their community are learners. There are shared beliefs and values between Board, staff and parents. Their school motto is "**Seeking the RIGHT Pathways**" which has a considerable impact upon the school as seen later. Up until recently they had too many values so they adopted a particular value for each term.

Term 1 - **Respect**
Term 2 - **Interdependence**
Term 3 - **Good Manners, Great Fun**
Term 4 - **Honesty and
Trying my Best**

Overarching the whole year is "Doing your best".

The most exciting thing happening at this school is their "**Seeking the RIGHT Pathways Programme**". A couple of years ago they decided that some homework had little purpose so they decided that they would only set homework in the following areas:-

- Basic facts revision
- Reading
- Spelling

At the beginning of 2006 they realised the high achieving girls wanted more so they put in place their pathways programme. It has similarities to the 'Duke of Edinburgh Award' and has five areas that students are asked to complete with two activities for each area to be completed during the year. The pupils can undertake four different levels – Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum. The idea is that Bronze is undertaken during Year 5, Silver in Year 6 and so on leaving Platinum being able to be undertaken only in Year 8. The five areas, with an example for each, are as follows:-

- **Giving** - Give of your time: Visit an elderly person twice in a term (Bronze) or four times over two terms (Gold)

- **Academic Excellence** – Be a reporter: Report an event in writing and present to your class (Bronze) or present it in the newsletter (Gold)
- **Excellence in the Arts** – Participate in the school choir (Bronze) or create a movie that compares an aspect of Canterbury to some other region (Gold)
- **Physical Challenges and the Outdoors** – Explore the outdoors: With a family member or family friend tramp to the top of one local mountain (Bronze) or complete an overnight tramp (Gold)
- **Service in School and the Community** – Improve your skills: Become a sports shed monitor (Bronze) or continue as a librarian and help train others (Gold)

Completing at least ten tasks, with two from each area, enables the pupils to be awarded the colour award equivalent to the level of tasks undertaken. While at the school I had the opportunity to talk with six pupils who have chosen to work towards an award for this year. Not one of them has chosen to do the bare minimum of ten tasks. Most were doing from 12-15 tasks but one of the children has chosen to undertake 20 in all.

It is not compulsory and in 2006 it was mostly girls that chose to undertake the “Seeking the RIGHT Pathways” awards programme but this year many of the boys have also opted to undertake the programme. The children I spoke to about the programme were most enthusiastic and were all very proud to show me their folders which contain the work that they have undertaken.

Two of the teachers are available for an hour on a Friday afternoon to assist groups of children who are having similar problems with activities they are undertaking.

I was so impressed with what I saw that I hope that I can persuade the staff at our school to develop something similar to this model but also unique for our own school and its culture.

School Visit 2

1. This school has a high number of international students which enables the school to generate 3.6 F.T.T.E. of extra staffing which assists in lowering the class sizes, which range from 23 to 30 depending on the age of the class.
2. It has one contributing school which contributes approximately 40 pupils each year. Approximately 70% of the school choose to come to the school – pupils are therefore enthusiastic and want to be at school. In chatting with children as I visited classrooms I discovered this is definitely the case. Two boys I spoke with chose to come past a school with a glowing reputation because they believe that this school provides a more caring environment which isn't so success orientated and that there will be more opportunities for them personally at this school.

3. The school has a philosophy that if children are happy at school and succeeding then there won't be as many behaviour problems. Children are respected by their teachers, are expected to respect others and come to school to have fun.

The school fosters the John F. Kennedy Approach – What can we do for the school?

4. Blues System of Awards - these are awarded for academic, sport and cultural achievement:-

- In academic for instance if a pupil achieves an excellence in an Australasian competition or represents the school in Cantamaths this would make them eligible for a Blues award.
- In sport if their school team finishes in the top three for Canterbury in an A Grade event or if they represent Canterbury in a sport then they would qualify for a Blue.
- For cultural achieving a Grade 4 in Music Theory, Grade 5 in Ballet or being selected for the school's special choir or orchestra would qualify them for the award.
- If they achieve a Blue in one of the above disciplines on two different occasions then they are awarded a bar.
- If pupils are awarded a Blue in all three disciplines then they are awarded an All Rounder Elite award.
- The school holds a Blues Assembly to which parents are invited. Photos are taken for each pupil as they receive their awards and afternoon tea is provided as part of the function.

School Visit 3

1. **The Appraisal System** is at the heart of this school. Each teacher develops a Self Negotiated Action Plan (SNAP) in consultation with the principal. This involves a mini research paper involving the following:-

- Professional reading
- Theory to practise model
- Reporting back to SNAP group
- Discussions with appraiser

An example of a SNAG being undertaken by a staff member is "What's happening with the education of boys in this class".

The use of SNAG means that teachers have ownership of their appraisal and there is a sense of community around sharing the findings of their Professional Learning.

2. **Building Leadership Capability** in the school has also energised the school:-

- Building levels of leadership through the school
- Teams of 3-5 teachers are released from their classrooms for a day to work together as planning teams – this team plans the school-wide unit
- This enables the principal to concentrate on learning, the appraisal system, visiting classrooms to observe and meeting with individual teachers
- There are two syndicate areas in the school and these are divided into five modules for planning:-

- (i) Years 0/1
- (ii) Year 2
- (iii) Year 3
- (iv) Year 4
- (v) Year 5/6

3. **The system of attestation** provides thrust for the school

- Senior teachers visit individual teachers
- Teachers visit each other
- Teachers are assessed against their SNAG goals

4. **The Four Wave Programme** – this is an initiative that the school has introduced to assist with literacy. The goal of this is to assist those pupils having difficulties with reading throughout the school.

- Wave 1: Good new entrant teaching of reading
- Wave 2: Good reading recovery – the school has a number of teachers trained in reading recovery and continues to assist with the training of more
- Wave 3: Good “reading recovery” type teaching for Year 3 pupils who didn’t qualify for Reading Recovery
- Wave 4: Trained reading recovery teachers assisting with Years 4-6 pupils needing extra assistance

5. **Gifted and Talented Programme** – this kicks in at Year 2/3 for those who are truly gifted

School Visit 4

This school places an emphasis on **relationships** and make an investment in ensuring that the pupils of their school relate well with one another. To assist with this they place an emphasis on the following:-

- promotion of their senior pupils by provision of leadership responsibilities
- peer support programme
- leadership of house groups
- leadership through the School Council

They have pupils in Years 5 and 6 determining that they **wish to become leaders** so they start working towards that goal.

The principal recognises that the **school's staff is their greatest resource** so fostering collegiality and an excellent working environment is one of the principal's main tasks. When interviewing staff they appoint only teachers who they would be happy to teach their own children.

Emphasis on Values – There is a daily programme where the values which the school has adopted are shared with the children. They have a visitor come to their weekly assembly to take a five minute segment on values.

School Visit 5

This is a large intermediate school with 12 classes at each year level. Of the 12 classes, three are accelerated classes and either one or two are inquiry learning based classrooms. The home room teacher generally takes the class for Language/Reading, Social Studies, Health and Physical Education. I was able to observe one of the accelerated classes in action:-

1. Accelerated Units

(i) Creative Thinking Activity

- they were involved in a creative thinking activity "Think-tank" for which there are 100 different ideas which are presented on cards for the pupils to work with in small groups or individually
- they are working on this for one term involving one and a half hours per week
- one group I observed were totally engrossed in their activity which involves them in inventing a totally new ice-cream flavour. They have actually invented 10 new flavours and they chose the best which they took to an ice-cream specialist business. The business has been so impressed with it that they have asked the group of boys to design packaging and email the cover designs to their head office.

- each activity has a break-even cost and the groups or individuals negotiate with the teacher to set the amount they will be “paid” for the activity they are involved in. The amount the teacher offers depends on the quality of argument put forward and the evidence of effort that is being made. There is a lot of competition between the groups as they each want to make the biggest “profit” during the course of the term

(ii) Stock Market Activity

(iii) Career Options Unit

- Early in the year the pupils in the accelerated and inquiry classes write down their career option choices and then during Term 1 they have the opportunity to partake in an afternoon visit to a place where they get an opportunity to learn more about their choice. e.g. Orana Park, Fashion Design business, Radio Station (media) or a Drama Studio

During Term 2 they have two afternoons devoted to this. E.g. A group of students had two forensic scientists come and talk about their careers. Another group interested in animation visited E-Time.

School Visit 6

1. This school majors on **making a difference for children’s learning**:-

- Children take ownership for learning
- Time is spent with the children on goal-setting which is done individually

2. The school has developed their own **key competencies** which are used by the children when they are setting their goals:-

- Thinker
- Dream-maker
- Communicator
- Team player

These four build towards a fifth which is sparkle (not measurable). The school desires the children to have the sparkle in regards to their learning.

4. The school places an **emphasis on communication** and they endeavour to assist students to speak confidently to an audience

- Early in Term 3 the parents come into the school for a student led conference
- Four families are given a 30 minute segment during which each child show their parents their classroom and their work
- Parents talk with their child and the teacher is only involved if the child can’t answer one of their questions

5. When focussing on how to make a **difference in the world** they focus on skills rather than knowledge. Differences are expected and celebrated.
6. **Leadership is developed** and students desire to serve as leaders. They have three classes that are able to apply to serve as peer mediators and this past year 70 out of 90 pupils applied to participate.
7. The school has had a **major focus on the inquiry approach** for five years. It started because there was a group of teachers who were passionate about it. Teachers present ideas and open doors for pupils to go out and investigate.

School Visit 7

Some of the areas that are energising this school are:-

International Students' Programme – They have set up an excellent programme which provides excellent educational support for the pupils within the school as well as giving the children plenty of opportunities for cultural visits outside the school enabling them to get to know more about the city, province and country they have chosen to live in. The approximate \$200,000 the international students generate for the school has enabled the school to have their SENCO released from any classroom teaching duties.

ESOL Programme – Because of the above students the SENCO has been able to set up an outstanding programme in this area. The provision of education for the international students is held in such high regard that they are turning away two or three prospective students each week.

Spelling Programme – The school has adopted a spelling programme devised by Joy Cowley and this has had a significant impact upon the students. They have had Joy visit their school on a number of occasions to undertake professional development with their staff. They strongly recommend this spelling programme.

Education of Parents of Pre-schoolers – The school realised relatively recently that their five year old intake weren't coming to school with the skill set that children of previous years had possessed when they entered school so they are providing education for parents of pre-schoolers who intend to send their children to their school to help prepare the children for school.

Sports' Academy – The teacher in charge of the Sports' Academy is released one day each week although they would recommend that releasing the person for four afternoons per week, which was done previously, is a much better system. The academy is for Years 5 and 6 pupils and they attend for an hour each week to learn about sports medicine, designing fitness programmes, undertaking fitness programmes (beep test) and to hear guest speakers (well-known sportspeople).

- They run a remedial programme with a group of 20 (max) less confident pupils from each year group from Years 3-6 having a 30 minute session.
- They have one very special inter-school sports challenge with a neighbouring school to help retain the culture of the past generation – speeches are made by the captains and afternoon tea is served.

- The PAL programme is undertaken by 25 student leaders who run sessions at interval and lunchtime for pupils throughout the school. The leaders are provided with a uniform – a polo shirt, a jacket, a beanie and a whistle. Education is provided for the leaders as they are undertaking a teacher's roll.

Rock and Water Programme – this is self-esteem programme for low esteem children, bullies and those who have been bullied. They are taught to recognise when they should be water and let things flow over them and when they should be a rock and stand strong. It is an overseas programme which they strongly recommend.

School Visit 8

This Christian school is situated in Australia and at present caters for Years 0-8 pupils but from next year they are extending into the secondary level and by 2012 will a Years 0-13 school. They have class sizes of 25 for the first three years and then 28 after that. There are two classes at each year level and each pair of classes has a teacher aide to share between them. This school has approximately 410 pupils and it was very noticeable that it is a warm, welcoming and communal type school. I observed a number of parents assisting at the school during my visit. The pupils relate excellently with each other and children of different age groups regularly playing together.

The school has a theme for fundraising each term and the children can make gifts towards their cause and can fundraise as individuals, groups and classes.

The school has a pod of 28 laptops that move from class to class. They have seven eskies which they have lined with foam and each is used to transport four laptops. Two children have no problems carrying an eskie. This makes it very easy to move the pod up and down stairs.

This school is owned by a Church so the synergies between the Church, who worship on the same site, and the school are great. In South Australia where their church is very strong their schools only educate children from their own Church families but in Queensland where the Church isn't so strong many of the children come from families outside of their Church. The Church congregation use the school facilities for their Church services, adult education and youth courses and programmes. The church provides a pastor to relate with the school and its students.

The school has a beautiful mural depicting Australian flora and fauna at the school entrance which was produced by their last year's Year 8 pupils, with the guidance of a parent. The school motto is incorporated into the mural.

I observed a Year 3 class, equivalent in age to Years 2/3 New Zealand children as they were undertaking an integrated unit. The class was working on a research project which will take the whole term and were mostly working independently. The standard of written language being produced by the children was very high and I think it was better than what we'd expect from this age group in New Zealand.

School Visit 9

This was a large Queensland Christian school with a roll of approximately 1500 which starts with "Prep World". The first intake is 4½ to 5½ year olds who spend a kindergarten type year before moving into Year 1.

They have a small classroom where their international students spend their first six months in a preparation programme before they are integrated into mainstream classes. This gave me the idea of trying a similar programme with 8-10 pupils with learning difficulties – a semester spent with a suitably qualified teacher concentrating on a reading/language and mathematics programme for a semester might bring more change than daily 20 minute sessions.

This school operates a hire fee for textbooks which means school funding can be used for other purposes and ensures the textbooks are looked after better as pupils take more ownership of them.

They have a very large staff area where every teacher has their own office area which is divided off by desks and book shelves (this appears normal for Australian schools). They find this a great way of unifying the staff and encouraging collegiality. I could see this would assist greatly in being able to quickly locate any fellow staff members you needed to see.

The school had **four areas** that provided a lecture type facility:-

- Chapel (seats 150)
- Science (seats 150)
- Library (seats 50)
- Integrated Technology – Science and Maths (seats 150)

The **senior management team** for the senior school consisted of:

Head of Senior School assisted by:-

- **Director of Administration** – Responsible for Timetables, Duties, Relief Staff, Absences etc.
- **Director of Studies** – Liaises with Heads of Departments and Government Departments etc.
- **Director of Student Care** – Liaises with the Heads of each Year Level

School Visit 10

This was another large Queensland Christian school with approximately 1500 pupils. All their Years 1-6 classes have interactive whiteboards which were being well-used in the classrooms we visited. From Years 7-13 half the classrooms have been issued with one. All their Years 1-6 teachers are released during technology, music and physical education periods and their classes are taken by specialist teachers but teachers take their own classes for ICT as they want all their teachers to be user-friendly with computers and not be dependent upon a specialist teaching the skills the students require. There is a master switch in the laboratory so that all computers can be turned on and off with the flick of the switch. All Years 1-6 classes have access to the computer laboratory for one period each week. Each classroom has four computers for use by the children.

As in all the Queensland schools I visited they have a 1.25 ratio for the Prep-Year 2 classes but each teacher has a teacher aide to assist them in their classrooms. The quality of the teacher aides I saw was excellent and it appears they are paid around \$18 per hour.

The school has an outstanding music programme:-

- Every Year 3 pupil learns the recorder during that year
- During Year 4 every pupil learns a stringed instrument, principally the violin
- The students during Year 5 learn the keyboard
- In Year 6 every student learns an instrument of their choice
- During Year 7 learning an instrument becomes optional but approximately 90% continue to learn an instrument

From Year 6 onwards the classroom music lesson is used for the learning of an instrument. Itinerant teachers are hired to take groups of student from each class during these times. Lessons are therefore happening throughout the school on a daily basis. From Year 9 onwards about 60-70% of students continue to learn an instrument. The school has its own high-tech recording studio.

The school also runs an after-school dance academy which caters for approximately 160 students.

School Visit 11

This school is located on the Sunshine Coast and is sited on a beautiful site with outstanding facilities. The school has a fantastic amphitheatre with tiered seating which has been constructed on one of the numerous hills on their school site. The Prep-Grade 12 school has a roll of 900.

Special Needs is an area that this school does very well. Something they have done very successfully is to divide a class which has a number of pupils with learning needs into two smaller groups for a period of time. The class teacher takes the more able group and one of the Special Needs staff members the less able group. After about a term the bottom group then gets split into two with each group being taken by a Special Needs teacher.

In the 5th Grade area of the school they have a married couple who team teach the more than 50 children they have at this age group. At times during the week the children separate into a girls' group taken by the female teacher and a boys' group taken by the male teacher. The boys' group are always given the reward of a game or free play at the end of their period if they work well and achieve the goals for the lesson.

The school reaches out to their surrounding community as much as possible and two of the things they have done this year are:-

- Grandparents Day – they are invited in for the day with includes performances by classes in the auditorium, a provided morning or afternoon tea and visits to the classrooms.
- Rest Home Visitors – these people are bussed into the school at times like Easter, Anzac Day and Christmas when the children will deliver a performance relating to the appropriate celebration.

Things that energise this school and provide the passion and thrust include the following:-

A Caring Staff – the teamwork within this school was evident. The friendliness and camaraderie between staff was evident in the four hours I spent at the school. The staff meet together for 15 minutes each morning at 8.00am to pray following the following timetable:-

- Monday – a teacher shares an inspiring message
- Tuesday - they pray for classes
- Wednesday – meet with the staff of the Proprietor Church
- Thursday – Praise and Worship of God
- Friday – Thanksgiving

On Monday and Tuesday they meet separately as Secondary and Primary groups but for the rest of the week it is the whole staff that meets together.

The Role of the Alumni – this school which has been established for 20 years has at least ten people working at the school whom used to attend the school. Two that I met were foundation students of the school. Some of these are teachers and others are employed as ancillary staff. Alumni also return to the school to assist in different ways including taking Chapel with the students.

Performing Arts – the school has excellent facilities including a large dance studio and a very large Drama/Band facility. As well as the outdoor amphitheatre which can be used for performances they also have an outstanding auditorium on their site which can seat 1500 people which the Proprietors of the school built 15 years ago to hold their church services in. Their pupils regularly win awards in the Performance Arts competitions.

Provision of a Safe and Nurturing School Culture – the school has endeavoured to foster an environment of grace rather than be a legalistic and judgemental place. The teachers have been encouraged to be very relational with their pupils but they have found that student behaviour could be improved and the pupils' work ethic could be better.

School Visit 12

This would have to be the most interesting and challenging school visit I have ever undertaken. For the last two weeks of my sabbatical my wife and I travelled to the Middle-East to spend time with our son and daughter-in-law who have been living in Doha, which is the country of Qatar, for the past 18 months. My daughter is employed by Multi Serve as an educational consultant for a school in Doha. I was going to visit her school for a day but because it was approaching the end of Ramadan all the schools in Doha had taken a ten day holiday so I missed out. Instead of this school visit a Kenyan one was scheduled for us near to the Masai Marra which we visited in order to go on Safari.

The school we visited was Ngdswani Primary School which has only been established for two years. It is a school with 38 pupils, at present, and two teachers – one trained and one untrained. The school receives no government funding and each family that sends their children to the school pay a small amount each month which goes toward making a minimal payment to each teacher.

The school serves a Masai community that were once a nomadic community, as was normal for the Masai people, but when the National Parks were established to conserve the animal and bird life of the Kenyan savannah the people were dispossessed of much of their land and subsequently established permanent communities and were forced to forsake their nomadic existence. For the previous generation only a very small number of the Masai received an education. The trained teacher and the chairperson of the school committee were two that were fortunate to receive an education. The teacher because she has a loving mother who believed in the value of education so she ensured all her children went to school. The Chairperson because his father didn't like him and wanted to punish him so he was forced to go to school. It is because of the vision and energy of these two people that the school we visited exists.

The school has two classrooms. One was built by skilled labourers so is of a much better standard than the other, which was built by the men of this community. Both classrooms have iron roofs and mud block walls. The best one has four windows but the other has no window but lots of gaps which provide no shortage of ventilation. Both rooms have a dirt floor and as there is no electricity in the village or running water you can imagine conditions are very primitive. The school has no playing fields and no playground apparatus for the children to play on.

The trained teacher received her qualification at the end of 2006 and at present she is working towards a degree in Early Childhood teaching. When she finishes that at the end of 2008 she plans to undertake a course on Community Development. She was brought up in a community about 40km from the one she lives in now but she is totally committed to the Ngdswani School and intends to stay there permanently.

School starts at 7.30am and they have prayers until 8.00am. The education system in Kenya has been hugely influenced by the missionaries who came to the country during the British colonial rule and established schools. They have 30 minutes for lunch and then continue until 4.00pm in the afternoon. The children come from a wide area with some travelling 18 kilometres to school. Those children stay overnight with the teacher and only go home every few days.

The school has next to no resources. They do have a few Kenyan Social Studies resource books the children can use. The children don't even have paper and pencils at this stage so all learning is done aurally. The children sit at wooden desks which have the seating form attached to the desk – the type found in New Zealand schools up until approximately the time of the Second World War.

There are just over 3000 people in this community and approximately 600 children are of school age. So the 38 attending school are only the tip of the iceberg. It has taken a lot of persuasion by the teacher and the School Committee chairperson to get this number to attend school. They are hopeful that in time all the children of their community will attend their school.

The Future for this Community and its School

We saw that this community has three major needs:-

- Running water – to sink a well and provide a hand-pump would only cost \$NZ3000.
- More classrooms – for the school to grow they desperately need more classrooms. To build one to the same standard as the better of the two they already have would only cost \$NZ7000.
- The adults need to be taught that their custom of having animals and poultry living in a room attached to their very small homes is causing many health problems for their children. Approximately 50% of the children we saw had varying degrees of eye infections.

The Challenge

Since returning from Kenya I have noticed, when cycling to and from school, houses that prior to our trip I thought were ready to be demolished to make way for urban renewal. Now I look at them and think they would be mansions in Kenya. I have found that I can't return to school and forget about the children of the Masai community we had the privilege to visit. They are part of our world and as this people struggle to come to terms with living in the 21st century I have been challenged to do what I can to help the next generation of the Masai people to have opportunities that were not possible for most of their parents.

Within our school community and the wider community I hope to be able to raise \$10,000 which would enable another classroom to be built as well as the provision of a well and pump to provide running water for the people. I also would like to return to this community regularly to assist the teachers with their professional development and to take a travel bag of educational resources with me each time.

E. Common Characteristics of Outstanding Teachers

1. Relational

- finds time for all students in the class
- when interchange occurs or teachers are awaiting for other children to arrive for the start of a lesson the teacher uses the time to talk to pupils about what they are doing outside of school e.g. weekend sports and activities
- when classes are on-task, teachers use the time to have interviews with children regarding personal goals and learning
- ask about the children's achievements and accomplishments outside of school at opportune times during the school day
- teachers look out for positive behaviours and commend pupils who may have exhibited a negative behaviour earlier when they display the appropriate positive behaviour

2. Classroom Climate

- pupils are generally on-task and engaged in their learning
- teachers give all children an opportunity to answer questions or make comments and are pro-active in encouraging the less confident children to participate
- teachers don't have to waste time reminding their pupils of the classroom standards and expectations as they are firmly embedded in the culture of the class

3. Classroom Management

- transitions from one activity to another are done smoothly with minimum loss of time and very little noise
- teachers have own personal prompts to get the attention of the class and don't have to raise their voices
- when working with a group use any opportunity to scan the rest of the class to ensure they are engaged in their learning activity
- the daily timetable is on the whiteboard so there are no surprises for the pupils

4. Teacher Qualities

- they are enthusiastic and passionate
- have extremely high standards behaviourally and academically
- encourage and develop independent learning
- have excellent planning and tend to err on the side of too much documentation

5. Teaching Style

- learning intentions are evident in their classrooms and are shared with the children
- allow children to call out answers simultaneously so as to encourage maximum participation
- provide positive affirmation when children contribute during discussions
- conduct fast-paced lessons with the only down-time being when they change from one activity to another
- have strong conclusions to lessons when a few key questions are asked that help summarise what has been learnt during the lesson
- are not the centre of attention within their classrooms
- refer back to teaching points from previous lessons and provide further practise
- many develop the "Success Criteria" with their class for the learning activity being undertaken
- precision teaching is often evident
- extend the class's vocabulary and knowledge through every possible opportunity
- teachers model good practise
- teachers model learning and provide scaffolding
- make provision for all learning styles

6. Expectations of Students

- children's bookwork is generally well set out and is checked regularly by the teacher
- tend to have class and individual goals for the different curriculum areas
- pupils are on-task when working independently
- the development of enthusiastic students who love to contribute and participate

7. Classroom Environment

- have displays of high quality work on walls of classrooms to inspire others
- wall displays celebrate learning in a number of curriculum areas