

SABBATICAL REPORT

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To investigate how other similar inner-city schools make use of the city environment to enhance learning.

I am at a decile 9 Wellington inner city school of 240 students on an extremely tight site situated right beside Parliament. The students who come to Sacred Heart travel from all suburbs of Wellington, Lower Hutt and Porirua. These students travel by train, bus and family car to get to Sacred Heart. Less than 10% of our students come from the Thorndon/Wadestown area. This makes the school re-think what community is as most New Zealand primary schools are community based and often have a school zone.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Christchurch and Auckland Principals I visited. They gave me far more information on a wider range of topics and issues than what I first went in with. The willingness to share good practice was evident from all those visited.

The difference with all the schools visited was that they were all community based in a suburb of Christchurch and Auckland from where they drew their students.

All schools visited were working with their communities, councils and businesses to provide learning experiences. Two issues arose in all schools and we in Wellington experience the same problems.

- (1) Having personnel to run or rather to continue a programme/enterprise that's been offered;
- (2) Having the finance to be able to go/continue with what is being offered.

The cities of Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland offer a lot through museums, art galleries, councils and special shows, all of which offer valuable teaching and learning.

How much do you do?
What is the value of each?
Can we afford it?

These are questions being asked in all centres.

I was shown examples of two programmes offered to schools in Christchurch, one by the local DHB which had good personnel working with the children from the school council who organised questionnaires for parents and children on topics related to safety and keeping healthy. The school benefitted with families being involved in follow-on activities such as sport, keeping fit and conversations around healthy foods.

The big question for the school regarding this was: would this programme be able to stand on its own or continue without the person from the DHB? Ways were being looked at to do this because it was seen as really worthwhile in their school. The other programme relating to sport was also going well, with coaches, referees and transport assistance. If this assistance went so would the programme.

The opinion here was that while it was being offered and operating, take it. The schools visited in Auckland were also of this opinion – don't turn anything down, you never know what might develop.

An Auckland Principal was a member of the local Business Association which has had some significant spin offs, all being positive and worthwhile for the school. This was really helpful in making the businesses know the school was there.

While my sabbatical focus was on using the local businesses and council by inner city schools, I got a lot from just visiting other schools and talking to principals.

I also got ideas on how some schools use their facilities and grounds to enhance their local curriculum and looked with envy at the size of some inner city school sites.

IN CONCLUSION

All schools visited are trying to make use of the wider community and incorporating it into their local curriculum.

Finance and personnel are barriers but they are not insurmountable.

Having and making that connection has brought benefits to these schools, particularly in receiving resources both material and personnel.

The programmes I saw in place engaged the children and added to the school curriculum.