

Sabbatical Report:

I would like to thank the Karamea Area School Board of Trustees for the opportunity to undertake a sabbatical to explore staffing models within Area Schools and to better understand how the Collective Employment Agreement is enabled.

My thanks to Twizel Area School, Maniototo Area School, Roxburgh Area School, Lawrence Area School, Akaroa Area School, Amuri Area School, Hurunui Area School, and members schools of TOSI Kāhui Ako.

This report is not a research based report. It is a report on observations and considerations that may generate further discussions around how the Collective Agreements can better enable schools to meet the needs of learners.

Area Schools provide a model where students can remain in their local area for formal schooling from Y1 to Y15. Traditionally Area Schools provided for students in remote rural locations, however as the demographic changes have been influenced by the employment workforce, schools too have reflected these changes. In some areas, the employment opportunities have increased, as well as other competing factors, and as such we now have some large Area Schools in excess of 500 students. In some rural areas where the traditional farming environment has changed, these changes have impacted on the local schools and there has been a decline or limited growth in the student roll.

The challenges are also around the wide breadth of the curriculum and availability of teachers to support the learners. As such, many schools are seeking innovative ways to meet the educational demands of the sector. This is requiring a new mindset around what education is and what is important for learners. Introducing more and more content specific subjects is, in my opinion, creating another level of challenge that may not be focussing on the skill sets that young people require. The challenge around the curriculum content was not a focus in my report, however, it is fundamental to the schooling environment and a key link to how the Collective Agreements support school leaders and teachers to meet the needs of students.

Primary classes in all of the Area Schools visited were run as mini-schools and reflected the flexibility and personalised learning that is inherent in the primary years. The main challenges for the Area Schools was within the Secondary curriculum delivery with restraints around student numbers, specialist teachers, the scope of the curriculum and the Collective Agreement.

The following Policy document from one school has descriptors within their policy that I felt highlighted many of the challenges faced in the schools I visited.

Policy Statement:

To maintain viability, the school must offer a sound and diverse curriculum. While it cannot compete directly with that of larger schools we need to offer sufficient range for students to proceed to good futures. NetNZ, Te Kura and Core Competency programmes enhance that choice.

*Widely varying class sizes, limited numbers of specialist teachers and differing timetable arrangements for Y1-6 and Y7-13 teachers make it **impossible** to provide a “one-size-fits-all” policy.*

From time to time or when necessary, teachers may offer, or be asked to teach at levels or in subject areas in which they were not originally employed to teach.

It is not always easy to comply with the terms and conditions of the Collective Agreement. The Board’s position is that less time is required for planning and preparation (non-contacts) where classes are small or very small. Average and/or very small class sizes should be taken into account when considering workload of teachers in Y7-13 classes.

Classes for very small students <4 students are mostly taught through NetNZ. Teachers may have supervision of a senior class assigned in the SLC so that other students on independent study maintain engagement and progress.

The person responsible for relief will endeavour to provide time-in-lieu for teachers who cover for colleagues when no reliever is available. This is not always practical or possible and should not be seen as entitlement.

The policy above highlights the need for a **flexible** arrangement for learning.

Time:

Area Schools are exploring how the use of “time” can influence the programmes of learning. The Collective Agreement provides schools with challenges around time - contact and non-contact.

There are a range of timetables being explored to enhance the learning programmes for students within the resources that schools can provide. Block timetables within the school day are used in a few schools. This moves from the more traditional 50 minute periods and requires specialist teachers to teach in a different way. Some of these innovative timetables include:

1. 3 x 100 minute periods for one school
2. 2 hour - 90 mins - 90 mins for another school. These are known as learning blocks (LB1-LB2-LB3).
3. One school uses a 5 period school day however these periods are joined as blocks, for example: Period 2-3-4-5 are blocked on a Monday, Period 2-3 and 4-5 are blocked on a Tuesday, Period 1-2 and 3-4 are blocked on Wednesday, with Thursday and Friday both having the same blocks as Monday.
4. One school is implementing 5 week block courses where students select their courses and they participate for 5 weeks with a higher number of contact times. For these students an individual

learning plan is developed and there is a high level of expectation around accountability for student attendance and engagement.

Curriculum Delivery

Small Area Schools cannot compete with the large secondary schools so the model of learning in these schools is different with some similarities. There is a high level of alternative programming options for a higher percentage of students. The online learning programmes are more dominant along with accessing Trades courses. Class numbers are significantly lower and comprise of multi-level learners within the class. Teachers are required to teach more than one subject and to supervise study periods during non-contact teaching periods.

NCEA Re-evaluation

Some schools are also considering moving away from NCEA as the main curriculum programme as it doesn't suit all learners and in a small school the workload on staff can at times be disproportionate to the outcomes being achieved. This is particularly around level one NCEA.

There are some exciting models for curriculum implementation being explored for the Secondary students. In one school, the English class had a content focus on Forensics - however Science was not being assessed. Some subjects were not assessed at all. This supported learners and teachers to deliver programmes where there was more scope for risk taking, problem solving and team work in an environment where the experimentation of learning and transformation were valued. Teachers were passionate about the process of learning and possible outcomes and were not being constrained by time bound pressures and unit standard compliance. One model permitted students to select their course by interest rather than selecting "Year group" curriculum programmes. A Year 9 student may be working alongside a Y12-13 student in an area they are excited about - and their learning is supported by a teacher who also works alongside the students.

Staffing:

Adequately staffing the schools provides ongoing challenges. It was interesting to note that in at least 2 schools, they were being well supported by part-time teachers who were semi-retired. These teachers did not want full-time work and schools were able to utilise the specialist skills of these teachers. This enabled those schools to meet the curriculum programmes. A FTTE of 1.00 was able to be used to employ 3 part-time teachers with a range of specialist skills. These teachers lived locally and had long associations with their respective schools. Both schools identified this as a risk area as in the next few years their "pool" of available specialists will diminish.

It is difficult to employ specialist teachers who have a range of subject expertise. In a small area school, this is a skill set that is vital for the learning environment. The policy above mentions that staff may be required to teach at levels or subjects that they were not initially employed to teach. This may come about because of a change in cohort learning needs and/or interests. The Collective Agreement 2.13 Surplus

Staffing Provisions states that “*Where, by reason of a reorganisation of, or change of class.....shall be determined in accordance with the provisions set out in this part...*”. On challenge, it may be fair to say that even if an employment letter states that an employee may be required to teach at a level or subject that they were not initially employed for, the Collective may interpret the need for a class changes as a Surplus Staffing situation (and this has been challenged by PPTA in the past) so this can limit the school’s ability to have a flexible approach. Where a greater degree of flexibility is required, a discussion may be considered around how the employment of teachers can be implemented to support the learning needs of the students - more in line with how a primary teacher is viewed by the Primary Teachers’ Collective.

I would like to draw attention to section 3.10 (Units) of the **Primary Teachers’ Collective Agreement**.

Section **3.10.6** states:

*In schools where the total of entitlement and attached staffing is 21 FTTEs or less, Boards may **designate** no more than two teachers, holding permanent units, “deputy principal” or “assistant principal”. Where the total of entitlement and attached staffing exceeds 21 FTTEs, Boards may designate no more than three teachers, holding permanent units, “deputy principal” or “assistant principal”.*

Section **3.10.7** states:

*Subject to clause 3.10.6, teachers who have been **designated** by the Board “deputy principal” or “assistant principal” shall be paid Q3 maximum on the base scale plus any units, of whatever type, allocated to them. Other teachers who have been allocated units shall be paid at their current step on the base scale plus any units of whatever type allocated to them. Teachers **designated** by the Board “deputy principal” or “assistant principal” and who meet the criteria for Q3+, Q4 or Q5 (as defined in 3.3) shall be paid at Q3+ maximum plus any units of whatever type allocated to them.*

It is difficult to get staff to relocate to a small rural area school and this clause in the Primary Contract disadvantages an Area School to recruit an upcoming leader as the Area School Teachers’ Collective Agreement does not permit the Board to have the ability to **designate a position deputy principal or assistant principal**. For example a teacher who has completed 3 years teaching with a Q3 qualification is appointed to a **designated position of Deputy Principal in a primary school** with one permanent unit. Currently their salary would be \$71891 plus \$4000 for the unit (Total: \$75891). However, if that same teacher was appointed at an Area School as the Deputy Principal their salary would be \$60,700 plus \$4000 unit (Total: \$64700). This is a difference of \$11,191.

Principal Workload

My observation of the complexities of a small area school principal is that the Collective Agreement does not provide enough recognition of the roles and tasks required to manage and lead the two educational sectors (primary and secondary). Small area schools have limited staffing to delegate the myriad of roles and tasks required eg SENCO work across the school, career’s, NCEA. There are challenges around providing support for beginning teachers, appraisals and mentoring, SCT support and keeping not only up to date with changes in both sectors but also managing the complexities of the demands required of the

sector in general (H&S, property, financial). Having both sectors brings a wider set of compliances to manage (science- technology etc).

A discussion may be considered around the remuneration tables as the U1-U2 grades may not adequately reflect the principal's role. The base salary for a H3+ teacher of \$73650 plus units and additional allowances (Isolation, ASPTSA, tutor teacher, etc) can significantly reduce the relativity between the principal and a teacher. There may be an opportunity to consider a single base rate from a roll size of 1-150 with the relativities being evident through staff based salary components.

Summary:

It was a pleasure to meet principals and staff who were deeply passionate about student learning within the Area School environment. There are exciting innovations being developed through changing demands and needs. These changes highlight the need for a flexible, transformative approach to education.

The Collective Agreement does provide a level of challenge within an Area School as the “**one-size-fits-all**” does not always meet the needs of the a small area school. There is a lot of **good will** happening in schools between teachers and management. However, employment law will always base a decision on the Collective Agreement. If schools are to be innovative and transformative then there may be an opportunity for discussions around the Collective Agreement so that the CEA is an enabler for learning.

Going forward, in the discussions around how the Collective Agreement may support small area schools the following aspects are suggestions for consideration:

- Principal remuneration
- Staffing restraints around contact and non-contact times between primary and secondary
- Relativities of remuneration
- Staffing restraints around teachers working at levels or subjects in which they were not initially employed
- Flexible employment structures to enable learning
- Flexible employment hours

References:

Area School Principals' Collective Agreement

Primary Principals' Collective Agreement

Secondary Principals' Collective Agreement

Primary Teachers' (including Deputy and Assistant Principal's and other unit holders) Collective Agreement

Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement

Area School Teachers' Collective Agreement

Once again I would like to thank the Board of Karamea Area School for their support and I hope that this report can support further discussions.