

Sabbatical Report

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Sabbatical aims:

In line with one of the intermediate objectives of the Ministry of Education's Four-Year Plan to provide "better, more relevant education pathways through the education system and beyond into the workplace and society" the aim of my sabbatical was to investigate how Ruru Specialist School can work collaboratively with Southland Institute of Technology (SIT) to achieve this.

There were three aims to my sabbatical:

1. Conduct an enquiry into the current tertiary pathway options available for students 16+ years of age who have supported learning needs in Southland.
2. To investigate how Ruru Specialist School can engage better with providers to expand the range of options for students who have supported learning needs.
3. To investigate opportunities available elsewhere in New Zealand and Australia.

AIM 1: Services within Southland

In line with the aims of this sabbatical I conducted an enquiry into the current tertiary pathway options available for students 16+ years of age who have supported learning needs available in the Southland area. Below is a summary of these options:

1. *Southland Institute of Technology (SIT)*

SIT is the preferred provider for those residing within Southland interested in pursuing a tertiary qualification. It is a government accredited tertiary provider of NZQA programmes at certificate, diploma, bachelor's degree, postgraduate and masters level. SIT provides the country's only zero fees scheme whereby they cover the cost of all tuition fees for the duration of the students' length of study. SIT announced an accommodation bursary for students eligible for the Government's Fees Free policy that came into effect on 01 January 2018.

Eligibility criteria for the Mayor Tim Shadbolt Accommodation Bursaries for Invercargill will reflect that of the Government's Fees Free policy. Eligible students can apply for free shared accommodation at SIT's apartments in Invercargill for the academic year (40 weeks' maximum). Alternatively, eligible students at the Invercargill campus can opt to receive a \$100/week accommodation bursary supplement regardless of whether they live at home or in rental accommodation. Again, this is offered for the academic year, for up to 40 weeks' maximum.

SIT have campuses in Invercargill, Queenstown, Christchurch, Gore and Auckland.

Current programmes offered:

- At the Gore campus there is a supported/directed-learning programme, which has been available for several years. The funding for this renews every two years. The two-year cycle concludes at the end of 2018 and it appears unlikely that it will be renewed. The funding is contestable in a very competitive tertiary market. TEC determines the funding and where it is directed.

Not currently offered:

- In 2016 the New Zealand Certificate in Foundation Skills – Level 1 was first introduced. This was an open qualification developed by SIT. The qualification precedes a Level 2 course within the same domain. This qualification was implemented in conjunction with Ruru Specialist School. This initiative was not financially lucrative but provided students with a foundation in café culture. There is potential for this certificate to be offered again soon.

I, along with Deputy Principal Mrs Hera Fisher, had the opportunity to meet with the Programme Operations Manager at SIT, Russell Finlay, who is interested in exploring pathway options for students with learning support needs at SIT.

We discussed the need for bridging programmes that sit between Ruru Specialist School's (SIT TEC (Tertiary Education Centre) Programme and The Waikiwi Vocational Programme) and attendance at tertiary providers and/or employment opportunities. Programmes that help students with not only mild intellectual disabilities, but students with high and very high needs to develop skills necessary to confidently and successfully attend courses and/or work programmes. This is something we work on at Ruru Specialist School through our transition programmes which begin when students are 14 years of age. Our learners need more time to develop and to learn more skills, however, we have a high proportion of students who begin with us when they have nearly completed high school (16-18 years). This limits students' ability to embed necessary skills and so it is clear to us that there is an opportunity for a bridging programme to be offered at SIT to support these students.

Mr Finlay did express a concern with providing courses specifically designed for students with learning support needs in terms of the cost (financial, resources, staffing etc) of running specialised programmes. The opportunity to implement Level 1 and 2 programmes relies on contestable funding which must be applied for biennially and there is no guarantee of acceptance. However, there is an opportunity to discuss how these costs can be minimised. There is also support from the CEO of SIT, Penny Simmonds. We at Ruru Specialist School look forward to a further partnership with SIT.

2. *Te Wānanga o Aotearoa*

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa (TWOA) is one of New Zealand's largest tertiary education providers offering a comprehensive range of certificate to degree level qualifications. They operate from over 80 locations throughout the country and welcome students of all ethnicities and backgrounds. TWOA are guided by Māori principles and values.

TWoA offer a Māori and Pacifika foundation course and the local freezing works offered a programme that taught skills specifically for employment in that industry.

3. YMCA

YMCA New Zealand is a Registered Private Training Establishment that delivers Tertiary Education Commission funded education programmes through its regional YMCA's, including Invercargill. The TEC guarantees fees-free for youth (16-19) who are not currently engaged in education to re-engage with education in a tertiary, rather than a school-based setting. YMCA Invercargill delivers programmes under sub-contracted agreement with the National Council of YMCA's of New Zealand (NZQA Registered PTE). They are focussed on improving transitions between school, tertiary education and work. This is about increasing overall achievement and reducing the overall number of young people not in employment, education or training. YMCA is contracted through the Ministry of Social Development to provide support and mentoring for young people.

Current programmes offered:

- *Y-Forward* – offers help with financial literacy, C.V design, and gaining skills for further tertiary education. It is suitable for learners 16 years or older with the aim to improve literacy and numeracy skills. It is a free short course (between 5-20 hours per week), open to anyone aged 16-65 who finds reading, writing and basic maths challenging.
- *Y-Auto* – offers an opportunity for those interested in an automotive career. The course includes: automotive electrical and electronics, engineering (measurement), engineering core skills, mechanical assembly, motor industry (introductory skills), occupational health and safety practice, and literacy and numeracy. The course is open to 16-19 year olds.
- *Y-Engage* – offers social and co-operative skills to self-management and legal studies and helps open career pathways for students while they gain NCEA Level 1 and 2. The course includes: early childhood (educational theory and practice), interpersonal communication, legal studies, recreation and sport (core skills), social and cooperative skills, first aid, and literacy and numeracy. The course is open to 16-19 year olds.
- *Y-Rural* – offers those interested in a career in agriculture and helps students gain NCEA Level 2 and a Vocational Pathway Award in Primary Industries. The course includes: agriculture vehicles and machinery, sheep farming, farming skills, general agriculture, and plant, pest, weed and disease control. The course is open to 16-19 year olds.

4. Front-Line

Front-Line is leading education provider that offers a variety of programmes and services. They have campuses in both Invercargill and Greymouth. They are also willing to design programmes that are needs specific.

Current programmes offered:

- Youth (16-19) NCEA, Level 1, 2 and 3 with Vocational Pathways in Business Administration, Computing, Hospitality and Retail (free for all students).
- Training for work programmes (free for those ages 18 years or older).
- Individual Employment Placement Services (free for those ages 18 years or older).
- Corporate training in a variety of areas.

- Support programmes for individuals entering the workforce (free for those ages 18 years or older).
- Distinctive standards – unit standards available to purchase.
- Administration support.
- Licence Controller Qualification.

5. *Community College*

Community Colleges New Zealand is a charitable training establishment that provides practical training courses to people aged 16 years and over. They have six colleges across the South Island: Nelson, Marlborough, North Canterbury, South Canterbury, Dunedin and Southland. They offer courses that gain NZQA unit standards, enable students to work towards NCEA and attain a recognised New Zealand qualification. These courses are free for 16-19 year olds and they also offer free youth mentoring for 16-17 year olds.

Current programmes offered:

- Youth Course: Challenge NCEA 1.
- Youth Course: Achieve.
- Youth Course: Hairdressing – Level 3.
- Youth Course: Hospitality – Level 2.
- Youth Course: Sport – Level 2.
- Youth Service: A free Job Connection Programme (12 wks) is designed to assist Work & Income referred clients into employment.

6. *Kai Tech*

Kai Tech is a registered Māori provider accredited by NZQA, although it is open to students of all ethnicities. They offer unit standards in Seafood, Business Administration, Core Generic, Humanities, Māori, Sciences and Service Sector fields. The only course currently offered by Kai Tech is called *Training for Work – Joblink* and is funded through the Ministry of Social Development's Training for Work programme.

Kai Tech has effective support mechanisms to assist students. They have small class sizes that provide an opportunity for one-to-one learning experiences. This would be an ideal situation for our students.

7. *Southern Literacy – Literacy Aotearoa*

Literacy Aotearoa is a national organisation of adult literacy established to develop, promote and deliver accessible, quality literacy services designed to ensure people are critically literate and able to realise their full social, cultural and economic potential. They offer private, one-to-one or small group tutoring from trained tutors using methods that work as well as home-based learning options. All courses offered are free.

Current programmes offered:

- Computing for your future.
- Learner Driver Licence Theory.
- Workplace Literacy.

- Beginning computing.
- Advanced computing.
- Focus on the future.
- Get to know your tablet.

8. *Family works, Presbyterian Support Southland*

Family Works is an approved Child and Family Support Service and Community Service. Services are free, confidential and available to children, young people (up to 17 years of age) and their families.

Family works are closely connected with the Ministry of Development and are well connected both locally and nationally.

Family Works is a charitable trust working on behalf of the community. Many of the services rely on community support which comes through via, donations, volunteering and bequests. Family Works Southland have recently developed a transition support resource- *Get Ready; Transitioning to Independence* through the support of the Tindall Foundation and extensive collaboration with young people, family/whanau and professionals. The resource in the form of a work book was developed to 'help you understand what's important to your success and identify where you need support and where to get support'. The resulting roadmap to independence incorporates a life skills journey which is covers the following - Identity, Education, Job and Career, Finances, Housing, Relationships, Life skills, Self-care/Health, Transportation, Community Culture and Social Life.

This resource is available via the website www.familyworkssld.nz

AIM 2: Opportunities for Engagement

There are several tertiary learning options available within Southland for our students to enrol in once their time with us has finished. There is a significant concern in that there are very few courses that can provide the targeted specialised learning support our students' needs. However, there are pathways that we can pursue to make this transition easier for all concerned:

- An opportunity to engage with providers to expand the range of options for these students.
- Our staff can actively engage with the tertiary training providers themselves and become more versed in the curriculum of their courses to better equip our students with the necessary skills to succeed.
- We may be able to offer ongoing professional learning opportunities for these tertiary training providers, so they understand better the learning support needs of our students.
- An opportunity to work with WINZ to discover what skills these transitioning students are lacking and work better in our school and with tertiary education providers to ensure we equip these students with these skills.

We need to engage in face to face conversations, build on-going and mutually beneficial relationships with these providers, and encourage the appointment of specialist staff to work specifically with these students.

AIM 3: Opportunities in New Zealand and Australia

New Zealand

There are several transition and tertiary options for students once they leave school nationally. The following is a compiled bibliographic list of some of these options:

NZQA Educational options. Online. Available. <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/index.do>

New Zealand Disability Support Network & Ministry of Education. (2014). What's Next? Transition options for school leavers – Transition options in the Waikato region. Online. Available. https://www.nzdsn.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Whats_Next_Waikato_2014_v2.pdf

Ministry of Education (2011). *National Transition Guidelines for specialist educators, schools and parents-Guidelines for transitioning students with special needs from school to adult life*. Online. Available. <http://www.education.govt.nz/school/student-support/special-education/national-transition-guidelines-for-students-with-special-education-needs/national-transition-guidelines-for-specialist-educators-schools-and-parents/>

IDEA Services. *Leaving School and Transition Planning*. Online. Available. https://ihc.org.nz/sites/default/files/documents/10.%20IHC%20Transition%20brochure_0.pdf

CCS Disability Action 2018. *Support Advocacy Information*. Online. Available. <https://www.ccsdisabilityaction.org.nz/>

Australia

As part of this sabbatical I attended the 2018 Australian Special Education Principals Association National Conference, 'Turning Tides. Inspiring Minds'.

Two of my Specialist School Principal colleagues and I were fortunate to arrange a meeting with Fiona Forbes (Present BOT Chairperson of ASEPA and President of the International Confederation of Principals and past National President of ASEPA). We discussed the tertiary provisions and options in Australia. Fiona indicated that Australia were yet to embrace tertiary options for young people with Learning support needs, as we in New Zealand had. She is very aware that this field required focus.

I also spoke, in length, with Sir Barry Carpenter regarding tertiary options in the UK. He agrees that this concept has opened many opportunities for young people with learning needs- an excellent example being his own daughter.

A key note speaker of interest and relevance at this Conference was (Neurophysiologist) Dr Julia Pitcher (Lloyd Cox Senior Research Fellow) and co- director of the Neuromotor Plasticity and Development research group at the Robinson Research Institute. Dr Pitcher has

researched (among many other areas) the use and development of non-invasive brain stimulation to assess cortical development in children and adolescents. This study was of interest as it presented supporting strategies for adolescents in transition along with how to improve outcomes in learning and memory abilities. Skills that will support success in transition and life beyond school.

Southland can be proud of the opportunities we are currently able to provide for our young people. There is work to be done but we have a strong foundation. By working collaboratively and cooperatively these services/providers will develop and grow so that young people and their family/whānau will have lives beyond school which are meaningful, successful and fulfilled.