

Newtown School Board of Trustees

Meeting Minutes



Mon 21 Feb 2022, 6.30pm
Waitangi and Zoom

Present: Gregor Peterson, Haidee Westwater (Zoom), Jess Gorman (chair), Joe Winkels (arrived 7.00pm), Justine Henderson (left 7.40pm), Linda Martelletti, Nick Booth, Nicki Read, Steve Kerr (minutes), Yadana Saw.

1. Karakia timatanga

2. Conflicts

No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. Previous minutes

The chair moved that the minutes of the December meeting be approved as true and accurate. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

4. Action items

074	Provide feedback on Let's Get Wellington Moving submission	All	Close. Nick made the submission. He will meet with LGWM soon, the key focus is the bike lane.
073	Provide feedback on draft budget	All	Close. The updated budget is in the folder and on agenda.
072	Work with Ngāti Kotahitanga whānau on approach to engagement between whānau and board for 2022	Joe and Jess	Carry forward
071	Review Māori achievement policy	Joe and Jess	Carry forward
062	Sign up to NZSTA internal governance evaluation tool	Haidee	Carry forward. Board agreed to use the Hau Tu tool. ACTION - Chair to add item to agenda for future meeting: Hau Tu governance

			evaluation tool (timing, resourcing, etc)
059	Develop position description for Ngāti Kotahitanga representative	Nick, Jess	Close. The new position description is in the shared folder. Nick has also prepared a draft approach, suggesting we develop a policy together with Ngāti Kotahitanga to ensure future boards have Ngāti Kotahitanga representation.
010	Yadana to develop an overall strategy/vision for artwork commissioned for the school, including conservation and restoration of existing works.	Yadana	Yadana is working with Julia Harris and Eve Armstrong. She will come back to a future meeting with a plan. Close action. ACTION - Yadana to bring this plan for conservation and restoration of artwork to future board meeting

5. Proposed meeting dates

Jess showed the board the proposed dates. She suggested that there be no meeting in April as the logical dates would fall in the school holidays. The board agreed to keep the possibility of an April meeting just in case, because there may be issues around a possible future Omicron outbreak that need to be discussed at that time. This could be held by Zoom if necessary.

6. Principal's report

Nicki thanked all the board members for their support so far. She acknowledged that this was her first BOT meeting as tumuaki and that she will refine the way that she reports as the year goes on.

Nicki said that staff have been stunning so far this year. We've just gotten back, and we've had to adjust to new restrictions, teaching in masks, and so on. Teachers and support staff are working incredibly hard to make it work.

Covid has dominated the conversation. Nicki said that she had erred on the side of less communications rather than more so far, because there is a lot of information circulating around already. However, a flowchart pack is ready to go out to whānau which she would like board feedback on tonight.

In terms of professional development for teachers, the school has three main focuses this year: continuous bicultural practice; teacher excellence with a focus on writing; and collaborative effectiveness with a focus on universal design for learning (UDL) within an innovative learning environment (ILE).

Five new teachers have started this year. Proper induction can be a long process. We've focused so far on building out team culture and trust. We've already had some great staff only days, including one with Janelle and Ihaia.

Leadership of the Kahui Ako is changing this year. This will affect our school, and there will be a period of transition.

Nicki said the school is finishing off its restorative justice project from last year with Cath Forster from Waikato University. Cath is amazing. She has been working with different groups within the staff team as well as a whole staff team to ensure the practice gets embedded.

- **ACTION - Nicki to invite Cath Forster in to speak to the board on the principles of restorative justice**

Nicki said she had had a productive meeting with the Resource Teachers Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) Service and the Ministry of Education. She said that more kōrero is required to ensure that RTLB understands our needs and how we can access support.

The new hall kitchen is well under way and is due to be ready in March. The builders are on site working on Old Tui. There have been delays due to material shortages, work is due to be completed in June.

The pool has been painted and has water in it. However, the vacuum outlet has been concreted over in error. That is being resolved by the project manager.

Nicki said that she and Nick had made minor changes to the draft 2022 budget that the board saw in December. It looks like a deficit budget but we've got WCC and pool money yet to come in and the budget includes subscriptions that we may not spend. So it's likely that we won't end up in deficit at year end. MOE Education Services is comfortable with the budget.

- **MOVED - that the board approve the Newtown School budget for the year ending 31 Dec 2022
Motion seconded and passed unanimously**

Nick thanked Nicki for the report.

Joe asked whether any thought had been given to welcoming you as the new principal. Nicki said it had been spoken about, during planning for the mihi whakatau. In the end we decided I didn't need to be welcomed because I'm already here. Having said that, I have felt very supported and welcomed in the new role so far.

Nicki said she would like to discuss the issue of on-site tutoring. Jess declared a conflict and recused herself from the conversation.

Nicki said that last year the number of kids getting tutoring increased from two to eight. Communication with the school from the tutoring companies was not always clear. Mark sought advice from the Ministry, who advised that tutoring should be outside school hours if the subject of the tutoring is part of core school business. We agreed that position as a board in December.

Nicki said that subsequently she had met with tutors to build relationships and to tell them about the Ministry advice. A few things came out of the conversation, which was very amicable and positive. School has asked for a koha from the tutors. One provider has offered a koha and will continue onsite. The other has opted not to offer koha this term, and will tutor offsite.

We also agreed on the need to keep talking about any patterns of need the tutors observe, how many students they are working with, etc. Nicki let them know that school will not be promoting their services, that we are concerned with equity of access to extra tutoring.

Nicki has talked to all the parents of the children who are being tutored. There was a mixed response, but most understood our reasons. Some or all of the students fall into the moderate needs category and we recognise that that group is not well looked after by the education system. We don't want to put up barriers to parents getting help. We just need to navigate these issues. It's taken some time but it feels like it's a constructive place.

Haidee said she really likes the approach that Nicki has taken, of taking on board feedback and finding middle ground. I agree that communication is really key. The board can discuss the principles involved but ultimately it's an operational issue.

Nick said it sounded good to him too, the last thing we want is for kids not to get the support they need.

Nicki said she had tweaked the annual plan, taking out a whole lot of things that are really business as usual so we can focus on the areas which really need focus. It's a living document.

7. Covid measures

Nicki said there were two documents in the shared folder. One is the school's safety plan regardless of Covid, and the other is our Covid plan, which is getting updated all the time as the rules evolve. Please review these documents. We may get to the point that we have significant absences of staff and kids. We may have to close the school, and that would be a board decision.

Haidee said that the school has a vulnerability around admin and the leadership team covering for one another. Nicki said Julie has trained us on taking roll and attendance. We're doing a lot of social distancing and staggered breaks. We haven't shut down the staffroom, but staff are aware not to all go in at once, a lot of teachers are staying together in teams. Tūi is kept separate because they have much more contact with new parents.

Haidee asked whether there are any other spaces that could be used for staff breaks. Nicki said she is looking at possible additional spaces. Nick said that now would be a good time for school to send out some Covid comms, people are starting to ask.

8. Delegations review

Jess said that the Ministry recommends that schools review their delegation policies in light of Covid. For example, it would be good to have a deputy chair. Other board members may have roles that we may need to switch. We should all have an 'understudy' including a backup staff rep, Ngāti Kotahitanga rep, and minute taker.

- **ACTION - Jess to create draft delegations table**
- **ACTION - Nick to find out what particular delegation issues there may be around finance**

9. Board work plan

Jess tabled a draft work plan with key milestones for all board portfolios. She suggested the board keep it under review and use it to track and plan key bits of work.

- **ACTION - All members to populate board work plan**

10. Elections and community engagement

Jess said that board elections had been postponed until September. Last year, as a board we discussed the idea of moving to a staggered cycle, so that next election half the BOT members would stay for an 18 month term instead of a 3 year term. Jess had recently spoken to NZSTA about this. They recommended thinking about this very carefully, as some schools try this, then switch back.

The downsides to moving to a staggered election cycle are that it means you have a lot of elections for parents and admin for school, and that it takes time for the board to develop good working relationships every 18 months. Jess said she was not not so sure about changing to a staggered cycle. She asked other board members for their views.

Haidee responded to the NZSTA by pointing out that it's equally true that if a board dynamic is not good, then it could be good to have fresh blood come in more often.

Yadana said that sometimes old board members are willing to stay on as co-optees. That could mitigate the effect of having fresh board members all at once, which we were concerned about when we were considering moving to a staggered cycle.

Nick said that if we had a more organized work plan, that would also mitigate the handover effect. That would be useful whatever the election cycle.

Nicki said that it's unusual for an entire board to come in all at once like last time. It doesn't happen often. And in any case it didn't seem to affect the effectiveness of this board.

Yadana said that we should look at parent engagement anyway, as that's where new parents come from. We should ramp that up in the run-up to elections.

Jess asked for a show of hands on staggering elections. Most members preferred to stick with the current three yearly election cycle and not staggering.

Jess asked what else the board could do on elections and community involvement. The hub won't be ready until June.

Nicki said that in previous schools, the board has sent out regular comms, for example in the newsletter or each term. Jess said that's a good idea.

- **ACTION - Yadana to decide frequency of board comms and draft the emails. First edition to include a call out for someone to sit on board until election.**

Nicki suggested setting aside some meeting time for sessions with the wider school community on a particular strategic topic that parents might be interested in.

Gregor said it would be good to have less formal sessions, where parents could discuss a topic and anyone could contribute, without the normal agenda and all the business that the board has to go through.

11. Written reports

Joe said there were no policies for review this month. He and Jess met last year and talked about professional development for board members around Te Tiriti. Joe has looked at a couple of providers and is keen to talk to more.

- **ACTION - Joe to talk to Janelle about what might be useful for the board in terms of Te Tiri training**

Linda said she is still working out her new role, but it will come with experience.

Nick said there are two finance reports in the folder, for December 2021 and January 2022. We are tracking well. We had a deficit of \$60,399 against income for December. Our income against budgeted expenditure for the year to date showed a \$439,082 surplus. Our grant was paid in January so we had a surplus of \$79,570 for the month. He said that he will set up a regular finance meeting with Nicki.

Haidee said she had nothing to report. Covid was the main focus of the recent meeting with Leanne and Nicki. There'll be further meetings.

Yadana said property had already been dealt with by Nicki.

12. Karakia whakamutunga

The main meeting closed at 8.25 pm.

Public-excluded discussion

At 8.30pm the board met to discuss special sick leave for a staff member. The discussion was held 'in committee' (that is, the public were excluded) to protect the personal privacy of the individuals involved. The board came out of committee at 8.45pm.

Dates of future meetings

Monday 28 March 2022

April (TBC)

Monday 23 May 2022

Monday 20 June 2022

Monday 25 July 2022

Tuesday 23 August 2022

Monday 19 September 2022

Monday 17 October 2022

Monday 21 November 2022

Monday 12 or 19 December 2022