

Newtown School Board of Trustees

Meeting Minutes



Thursday 27 July 2023, 7.15pm
Library and Zoom

Board members: Fatima Amin Sheikh, Nicki Read, Yadana Saw, Shannyn Edmonds, Naomi Taylor, Jess Gorman (chair), Joe Winkels, Nick Booth, Trey Tanuvasa.

Also present: Steve Kerr (minutes), Faiza Abukar (parent), Leanne Whitfield (kaiako/teacher).

1. Karakia timatanga

Jess welcomed Trey and congratulated her on her election. There was a round of whakawhanaungatanga.

2. Mid year achievement review (behind the data)

Nicki and Leanne gave a presentation to follow up on the one at the last meeting. Nicki said that they were trying to focus on some of the richer dimensions that go beyond what is in the achievement data. She said that the questions the board asked at the last meeting were absolutely the right ones. There were some good gritty questions, but that the board is supportive - that is the board's role.

Nicki began by emphasising how confident she is in the strength of teaching staff as practitioners. They are a very committed hard working crew, with a range of experience and strengths. Leanne said that the staff take a very collaborative approach to their practice, and that professional development planned for term 3 include bicultural practice, collaboration, structured literacy, and giving peer observations.

Leanne talked about the process for identifying which children need additional support. She said there are ongoing daily discussions between teachers about programme design and how to support learners. Formal assessment activity takes place throughout the year. Working with targeted programmes for particular kids happens on a daily basis. She said a number of programmes are running this year for literacy, numeracy, behavioural skills, English language learners, and so on.

Nicki said that each whānau class has one teacher who is the learning support lead. Sarah Divers is the Learning and Inclusion Support Coordinator (LISCO) for the school

and she leads those whānau leads. They are responsible for disseminating decisions about learning support issues.

Nicki described some of the ways that the school communicates with parents about achievement, including hui and conversations, learner records, emails, informal discussions, hui organised as a result of parents raising concerns, etc.

Leanne spoke about the impact of the structured literacy professional development programme. She said this is now the main approach to early teaching reading and writing. Some older kids who need extra support also use the approach. Ngāti Kotahitanga kaiako have begun the Hanganga Reo Matatini course. She said the data doesn't show it having a noticeable impact yet, but it might take more time.

Trey asked when structured literacy teaching began at Newtown School. Nicki said some teachers have been using phonics for a long time, but we started working with Helen and using it for all staff in the middle of last year.

Leanne said that English language learners are a big part of the school. She said that 36% of students (127 students) speak another language at home and 58 students are funded for ESOL support by the Ministry of Education.

Naomi asked how does the Ministry decide which English language learners get funded? Leanne said it varies depending on whether you are a refugee, born out of NZ, or born in NZ. The funding is only for a limited number of terms: 20 for refugee or migrant students and 12 for NZ born students. She said that the school has to fill in a rubric for each student to identify what funding is available. She said that school continues to support kids with English when the funding has run out. Nicki said that teachers have to be very creative and know the system to maximise the support they can get from the system for tamariki.

Naomi asked what support is available for Ngāti Kotahitanga students moving to high school for whom English is a second language? Nicki said there isn't support but schools have to get creative with the buckets of funding that are available.

Leanne said that English language learning takes a long time. It takes 6 to 12 months for kids to learn basic social communication skills, then cognitive academic language proficiency takes 5 to 7 years. She said that although it takes time, it is very important to provide support for the continuing use of heritage/first languages, because often, kids can process more deeply in this language, until they become fully bi/multilingual. This is done through First Language Hui, and employment of multilingual staff.

Leanne spoke about the transition from level 2 to level 3 of the curriculum. She said this is a very big step, not just learning to read and write, but writing and reading to learn.

Kids need to work on multiple writing projects at once, do writing over several days, construct longer pieces with paragraphs and a variety of sentence structures.

Faiza asked how English language learners might know if their kids have dyslexia. She said that many parents don't know about dyslexia. Leanne said that's a really important point, it can be really hard to tell if an English learner has dyslexia. Leanne said that teachers aren't trained to identify dyslexia, and there is no public funding to identify dyslexia. It's a huge challenge.

Nicki spoke about what it means for a child to be ready to go to intermediate. She asked the board members to offer ideas about what they think a child needs to have to be ready. Board members' answers included: confidence, having their own voice, knowing their own super power, responsibility and self management, self regulation, self assurance. Nicki added: Strong roots/resilience, strong cultural identity, ability to relate well to others.

Nicki showed the year 6 'matched' data, which is the data for the cohort of kids who have been at school since year 1. Some year 6 kids are still at curriculum levels 1 or 2. Seven kids are in that category for reading, writing, and maths. She spoke about some of the support they have received and that the school has sought, and some of the barriers to achievement for those kids, such as repeated absence. She showed that some students who are achieving at a low curriculum level in a given year can make impressive progress.

Fatima and Trey said that for students who have been progressing but are still below the expected level, the transition conversation with the intermediate school will be key.

3. Kaitiakitanga and placemaking at our kura

Yadana said that at the moment, all the knowledge about the art and whakairo at school that we have is not written down. Also, Craig and Tania have been regreening the school, but what if there aren't parents who know about gardening in future? She said that rather than just having an arts strategy, the school needed a more purposeful approach to creating and looking after our space.

Naomi said that as part of our broader Te Tiriti journey, we should think about how we can whakamana te tangata whenua as we do this.

Naomi and Yadana invited the board to break into groups to share their thoughts and vision for the physical space. What things do you notice now? What things would you expect to see if you came to the school in future for your moko's powhiri? When new whānau arrive at school, what would make them feel safe and welcome? The groups reported back to Yadana.

Naomi asked board members to share what they think of when they think about the word 'kaitiaki', and who are the kaitiaki of Newtown School? Who would mana whenua say are the kaitiaki of Newtown School?

Yadana said that the next steps for the place-making kaitiakitanga strategy need to proceed alongside our Te Tiriti strategy.

- **ACTION - Yadana and Naomi develop a statement about placemaking for the school and report back to future hui**

4. Tumuaki report

Nicki said due to time the report can be taken as read. She said Rhys and Holly are doing an amazing job organising school sports. She said Arohanui strings is going well, 27 kids are doing this after school now.

Nicki said 17 of our teachers are in organised learning of te reo. She said it would be nice for the board to acknowledge this. It is phenomenal to have so many kaiako from our school learning te reo

- **MOVED - the board acknowledges and expresses its appreciation for the all the kaiako who are learning te reo**

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Nicki said that transition conversations with SWIS had begun, including how they look after kids coming from Māori medium schools

She said there had been lots of discussions about the bike track and the sand pit, so the work on the kaitiakitanga strategy is very timely.

She said that conversations with Easy Swim to use the pool are ongoing.

- **MOVED - the board approved in principle supports us going forward with a third party occupancy for use of the pool for swimming lessons**

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

5. Chairperson updates

Jess said that the election had taken place and congratulated Trey again on joining the board.

Jess said that sadly Mitzi has resigned from the board for family reasons. Jess said that it had been great having Mitzi on the board and that we will really miss her and her contributions.

Jess said that we had been talking about the co-chair model. Newton School in Auckland is looking at this. She said we have been waiting to see how they proceed, but there have been delays. She suggested that we should just move forward with it and not wait to see what Newton School does.

Jess asked the board whether they thought it should just progress with the plan to move to co-chairs, or whether we should check in with the school community first. She thought that we already had a mandate as a board to take steps to further progress the school's te Tiriti relationship.

Nick said he agreed we don't need to wait for Newton School. He said the board would need to talk to the school community though, so they are informed. This would be best when we have a clear idea about how it would work.

Nicki said we should give members of the school community who are curious should have the opportunity to to ask questions.

Jess suggested that she do a board update in the next school newsletter, introducing Trey as a new board member and explaining what the process is.

- **ACTION - Jess to draft a piece for the school newsletter which covers the move to co-chair**

6. Living wage discussion

Yadana explained that the Living Wage is calculated to ensure that workers can live with dignity. For schools, the Living Wage pledge says that we will ask the Ministry of Education for additional funding so that we can pay all our people the Living Wage.

Nicki said what about our caretaker who is under contract, or swimming teachers? Yadana explained that the pledge is only that we would try to seek funding to pay Living Wage, not to become an accredited Living Wage employer.

- **MOVED - the board supports the pledge, subject to minor tweaks to wording (remove reference to canteen staff, etc)**

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

7. Portfolio reports

Policies - Nick said that there are a number of policies that are up for review this term. He thanked Leanne for her help with the Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC) review last term.

Health and safety - Nick said nothing had happened since the last meeting. He said he heard that had recently been a change to the Act that we may need to be aware of.

- **ACTION - Nick to check whether the recent legislative change relating to health and safety is relevant to school**

Ngāti Kotahitanga expansion - Naomi said that the subgroup had met with mana whenua, and had sent out comms to the school community. She said the subgroup is working on the job ad for the kaiako and the school website is being looked at.

Te Tiriti - Joe said there is a draft of the Tiriti strategy in the shared drive. He said he would seek feedback soon.

Finance - Jess said the May finance report is in the drive.

8. Previous minutes

Jess asked the members to accept the minutes for June as true and correct. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Then Jess deferred the open action items to be reviewed at the next meeting.

9. Closing karakia

Meeting closed 9.56 pm

Future meetings

- Monday 14 August 2023
- Monday 11 September 2023
- Monday 16 October 2023
- Monday 13 November 2023
- Monday 11 December 2023