

Newtown School Board of Trustees

Meeting minutes

Wednesday 27 November 2019, 6.30 pm, school staffroom



Present: Jess Gorman, Nick Booth, Haidee Westwater, Amelia Handscomb, Yadana Saw, Victoria Esson, Louise Conwell, Mark Brown, Nicki Read, Debbie Purves (items 1 - 4) and Jo Gould (minutes).

Apologies: none.

1. Karakia

2. Previous Minutes

The minutes from the Board meeting held on 23 October 2019 were approved and the action items discussed.

3. Conflicts of interest

None declared.

4. Staff spotlight - *Time to Thrive* programme

Debbie presented her reflections on the Time to Thrive programme that has been operating at Newtown School during 2019. Debbie observed that the programme had involved significant staffing, community and student investment over the course of the year. A key purpose of the programme was to enable students to become active participants in their learning. Topic ideas came from staff and students, covering a wide range of areas and involving experts from the community. Students explored critical and creative thinking, social skills, project design, product design, problem solving, and much more, with positive outcomes. Over 300 children were involved.

The challenges going forward for Time to Thrive include finding authentic opportunities to meet the wider needs of students, increasing the level of student agency, human resourcing, managing programming and timetabling, communicating the programme to families, and utilising the passions and skills of the school and wider community. Board members were interested in how children were selected for the various opportunities (some nominated by teachers, some self-selected), how equity in terms of participation can be ensured, and how the impact or outcomes of the programme can be measured.

The Board thanked Debbie for the energy and work she had put into the programme to help make it such a success.

Principal's report

Mark tabled his report. Items discussed included:

- Staff wellbeing - it's been a busy time for staff, with teachers tracking and moderating student progress using PaCT and writing reports. A review of the content, style and purpose of reports to parents has been completed, with some fine tuning of the structure of the reports which will go home in week 9. Teacher appraisal conversations have been held. A number of staff have taken time off work over the last few weeks due to sickness, family-related issues, care of others and bereavements. Mark commented that staff members had participated in the Wellbeing@School survey. The school had been working with the New Zealand Council of Educational Research to analyse the results.
- Parent consultation on the health curriculum - while there was a small turnout to the consultation session, Mark indicated that the input from those that attended was high quality. One parent had shared some useful resources, which Mark had included in his written report to the Board.
- Staff news - the school has been successful in securing additional funding for reading recovery teachers - Ann will continue next year, with Frances taking over from Annabel as she moves to

Pohutukawa. Diana (currently on parental leave) has resigned as she is moving with her family to Hamilton.

- School donation scheme - as a result of the school opting in to the new donation scheme, there is additional funding available to invest in core learning. Mark shared with the Board the initial budget, covering a range of EOTC activities (including Year 6 camp), supporting Te Ao Māori programmes across the school, *Time to Thrive*, cultural experiences, music, languages, tutors, social skills training and emotional awareness programmes.

5. Strategic Plan

Amelia provided an analysis of the feedback received in response to a short online survey that invited parents and caregivers to comment on what they most valued about Newtown School, how the school could be even better, and their hopes for the future of the school. Around 47 responses had been received, in addition to feedback collated from Ngati Kotahitanga whānau. Student feedback had also been sought, largely through posters located outside the school disco.

From the responses received, the most valued aspect of the school was the teachers, followed by the diverse and positive school community, the school values, student wellbeing and the new school building.

Responses for how Newtown School could be even better focused on improved communication and reporting, having more of an academic focus, enhancing biculturalism and multiculturalism in authentic ways, and more arts. A small number of comments called out better management of certain negative student behaviours.

Feedback on the hopes for the future of the school largely reflected the responses received to the other two questions.

The Board discussed amendments to the Strategic Plan in light of the feedback received.

ACTION: Jess to circulate the draft Strategic Plan for final comments/amendments, with a view to approving the plan via email before the end of the year.

ACTION: Mark and Nicki to circulate aggregated PaCT student achievement data, target groups for acceleration and the 2020 annual report.

6. Community engagement

Nick had circulated a report on the whānau engagement workshop on communication between the school and parents/caregivers. The workshop was run by Tom Hovey with a group of invited parents from across the school community. Data collected from the workshop had been analysed, with themes and areas for future focus identified.

In summary, parents and caregivers really value face to face time with teachers, they want meaningful school reports so they know how their children are getting on and how they can support their children, they want better “learning conversations” that balance time with and without children present, and they want clear, simple, and timely communications covering things like how the school ‘system’ works, and what’s coming up that they need to know about.

In terms of next steps, a survey is planned to test the workshop findings and plans with a broader audience. A draft communication channel strategy will be developed to inform where the various types of information that flow between school and home are shared.

7. Staff report

Louise provided an update from across the whānau groups about their Inquiry focus for Term 4, which has been on survival. The various whānau have taken different approaches, for example, pōhutukawa have been looking at survival of culture, survival in nature, the science of survival and survival of the brain. Tui has gone on lots of trips connected with their focus on the survival of living things. Harakeke has been looking at physical survival, and Ngati Kotahitanga has been unpacking what Māori culture needs to survive. Waitangi has been exploring bush survival and water survival, and has been undertaking a unit on health and sexuality, and planning for camp next year.

8. Policy

Amelia updated the Board on progress with School Docs, the online service that the school will use for its policies and procedures. Trish is going to provide some information which will enable a test website to be developed by the end of the year.

The Board approved changes to the finance and property policy that Amelia had circulated prior to the meeting. These included:

- removing reference to the actual schedule of delegations (as this will be covered in School Docs)
- confirming that the draft budget is to be presented annually in November, and that Mark and Victoria are the financial control sub-committee
- adding a payroll and leave policy. Victoria noted that the previous Board had approved specific policy wording around approval of partner's leave to support a staff member to spend time with their family following the birth of a child. **ACTION: Jo to circulate the wording of this policy.**
- adding "sustainability" to the criteria to be considered when assets are acquired
- formalising the current practice on the use of the school outside of hours, where office staff can book this after considering the value of the activity to the school community. Any group using the school outside of hours needs to participate in a health and safety meeting.
- noting that there is currently no policy statement or guidelines on fundraising, but that there is a School Docs template covering this that can be used as the need arises. Amelia will come back to the Board on this in due course.

9. Property

Ten Year Property Plan

Yadana provided an overview of the detailed Ten Year Property Plan, a copy of which is in the November 2019 Board meeting folder. Money is allocated over the ten year period, but the school is likely to front load spending where possible to get the best value from the available funding.

The Board discussed a possible upgrade of the existing Ngati Kotahitanga carvings, which is not covered in the Ten Year Plan. The condition of the carvings needs to be assessed before a plan for refurbishment/repainting can be developed. The school might be able to obtain grant funding for this work. Victoria mentioned that she knows someone who could provide advice about assessing what work needs to be done.

Action: Victoria to approach Dean for advice about assessing the condition of the carvings.

Swimming pool

Yadana updated the Board about a meeting with Mark Scrimshaw, the Project Manager on the pool upgrade. There has been some good news about the pre-consent application process. An accessibility

waiver is likely, with the result that the parts of the project aimed at improving accessibility to the pool (likely to cost around \$47,000) can be included in the later stages. The first stage will focus on earthquake and fire improvements, with stages 2 and 3 aimed at accessibility and improving the ventilation to extend the life of the building. Mark Scrimshaw needs to come back with a revised staged plan, then an implementation plan can be developed, at which point the Council can release some of the funding. The project should be ready to go out to tender in the first quarter of 2020. The pool itself will stay “in tact”, and will hopefully be usable again in Term 3.

10. Finance

Victoria tabled her report, covering the financial results for October 2019. Overall there was a small surplus for the month against the projected budget.

With 83% of the calendar year gone, the salary allocation is tracking at 88% of the budget. The November financials will include the costs of the relieving staff, to cover the various staff who have been on leave this month. Depreciation is also sitting a little higher than the budgeted amount. The overall budgeted income against expenditure is currently delivering a positive variance due to some underspending. The school is tracking to end the year with a small surplus.

The FANS balance remains the same as the start of the year. Some of this will go towards additional kapa haka uniforms.

The draft budget for next year is in the November Board meeting folder. Victoria pointed out that there is greater accuracy around coding the various line items in the budget, as old and duplicate codes had been removed. Victoria signalled that there might be additional costs associated with the negotiation of the new collective contract for support staff.

ACTION: Board members are encouraged to have a look at the draft budget, and send any questions to Mark and Victoria, with the view to approving the budget for next year.

Staff Christmas party – the Board agreed in principle to contribute a koha to the staff Christmas party. Victoria and Mark will work out a reasonable amount. The Board will also cover the costs of an end-of-year morning tea for the staff.

11. Health and Safety

Haidee and Mark updated the Board about some health and safety issues, including:

- The roller door is now closed and locked when cleaner leaves at around 9.30 pm. Mark will arrange for a spare key for the roller door in case the caretaker is not around to open it again in the mornings.
- The school will arrange a meeting in the new year for groups that are using the school, to discuss health and safety.
- The pile of wood on the deck will be removed over the holiday period.

12. Future meeting dates

Jess will circulate possible dates for the December meeting/end of year dinner, plus dates for 2020.

