

Newtown School Board of Trustees

Meeting Minutes



Tuesday 22 August 2023, 7.00pm
Library and Zoom

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

Also present: Steve Kerr (minutes), Leanne Whitfield (kaiako/teacher), Mark Brown (former tumuaki and beekeeper, until 7.35pm), Tania Austin (parent and beekeeper, until 7.35pm)

Apologies: Shannyn Edmonds, Naomi Taylor

1. Karakia timatanga

Jess welcomed everyone and said that the board had just come out of committee discussing Nicki's appraisal. She then handed over to Mark Brown.

2. Bees at Newtown School

Mark said it was great to be back at Newtown School. He said that from the Ministry of Education's point of view Newtown School is seen as leading the way in things like te reo Māori and Te Tiriti.

He said that some schools like to keep bees as an activity, like Garden to Table or other conservation initiatives. He said kids love the experience of getting close to bees, seeing how a colony works, holding a frame and looking up close to the bees. He said that when bees are well managed, they don't swarm and fly off. Bees are most active in January, during the school holidays. Bees have a flight path, so you can control where they fly with a fence. Most of the time, bees will be foraging in the town belt, they won't be in the school.

He said that anyone who handles bees needs to be well suited. There are safety precautions and gear. You don't open the hive in poor weather, only in sunshine. It would be voluntary for kids to work with the bees and kids would work in small groups of 8 to 10 kids, from year 5 and above.

Mark said the school would need a proper qualified beekeeper who has done a proper course and qualification. The bees need to be registered. The school would need first aid kits and epipen. It would be good to pilot first and see how the kids and the community like it. Mark said his dream was that every child gets a small jar of honey to take home.

Mark said that the school would need a budget for the suits and gear, and that he would underwrite the costs in case it didn't work out. He said bees can be revenue neutral because the polytech might pay to use the hives to run its courses.

Tania said she'd started putting a budget together. Once set up costs have been met, the ongoing running costs are not high. She said that local resident Basil is keen to help.

Mark said he suggested that school take a small leap of faith and trial it. Start small and do it properly, so that it goes well and gets support from the community.

Nicki asked whether there had been problems with vandalism at other schools that keep bees? Mark said that generally speaking at high schools they put some fencing around it. He said that the hives don't generally fall over, someone would have to do it deliberately.

Nicki asked what was the best time of year to set it up? Mark said that October is a good time, because bees are active from September to March.

Leanne asked whether the school would have to inform the wider community. Mark said no, not necessarily, the bylaws say you're entitled to have up to a maximum of four hives. He said there are a lot of beehives in Newtown.

Nicki said the school community would want to be told. They will have questions, what happens if my child gets stung, how do I know if my child is allergic, etc.

Jess said we should think about this from a Tiriti lens, thinking about the use of land, etc.

Jess said it's a very exciting proposal. She thanked Mark for coming to talk about it. She said the school would need to think about it and make sure we take the right step.

- **ACTION - Nicki, Joe, Yadana to form a subcommittee to consider the bee proposal**

3. Replacement of chairperson

Nicki said it was Jess's last meeting as chair. She said she wanted to acknowledge Jess's support in the chair role, she said she had been privileged to have Jess in her crew. She thanked Jess personally and on behalf of the board.

Mark also thanked Jess. He said Jess was calm, thoughtful, and she had given up her family time for the benefit of this community. He said that others recognise that Newtown is a leading school and that Jess was part of that.

Jess said she felt overwhelmed and really thankful. She said from the beginning the board had been full of like minded people who share the same values. It had been through a lot together through COVID and letting Mark go. She said the entire board were new members at the beginning. She said she was very proud of how the board has done its role.

Jess said that the board had spoken before about moving to a co-chair model. She said chairing is a great role and there is a lot of support from the board. She said Nicki is great to work with. She asked members to share their views.

Joe said he liked the idea of throwing ourselves into working out how a co-chair set up would work. He said the Māori members of the board would like to discuss among ourselves about who would be best to fill the co-chair role. In terms of the other position, I'd be guided by what the collective thinks

Yadana said that the idea of a Māori caucus was a great idea. She said it would be great to start that with a co-chair. She asked whether the board needed to appoint an interim chair tonight? Jess said yes. Yadana said she wouldn't put name forward as she only had one term to go. She said she thought Jess had done a great job. Not just on the day to day stuff, but also taking us through COVID, etc. You've helped us to navigate our statutory obligations and done it in a really thoughtful way. Thanks for setting that example.

Trey said she supported the idea of the co-chair. She said it was really important to acknowledge Te Tiriti here. Trey asked how we would engage Te Atiawa? Joe said that we would engage with Te Atiawa in the process. Trey said she would support whoever puts their name forward. She thanked Jess. She said she'd only just come on board but she could sense Jess's loyalty, aroha and commitment.

Fatima thanked Jess for guiding the board. She said she had learned a lot by watching you.

Nick thanked Jess and said it had been an epic commitment for 4 or 5 years now. He said Jess had been kind and fair, and had gotten us through some difficult times. He said she had made it look easy. Nick said he totally supported the co-chair model. He said he would be interested in the tauwiwi co-chair role.

Leanne said she was just here as an observer, but she thanked Jess for everything she'd done.

Yadana nominated Nick as interim chair. Jess seconded.

- **MOTION to appoint Nick as interim chair was passed unanimously.**

Nicki asked how it usually works with appointing co-chairs? Yadana said that usually the tauwi chair is elected first, then the Māori caucus puts forward a member, then the whole board approves both co-chairs together.

Nick said it was important to have an interim person in the role to support Nicki.

Yadana said we should document the process for the future, so that there is a record for the future and for other schools. It should be written into the policies.

- **ACTION - Māori caucus will report back to next meeting with the co-chair**
- **ACTION - Naomi and Jess to develop and document the process for co-chairing, including how this works together with the Ngāti Kotahitanga co-option model**

Trey asked if the Maori representative was a representative of mana whenua. Joe said not necessarily, it would be a Māori representative from among the board members. They could be a co-opted or an elected member. He said under the co-option model there should always be at least two Ngāti Kotahitanga co-opted representatives on the board.

4. Tumuaki report

Leanne said great staff had had a great teacher only day focusing on literacy. She said staff had done a lot of work with Helen Walls in the last couple of years and wanted to bring it all together and update the Literacy Essence Statement.

She said that Venise had told staff the story of Tane and talked about what staff and ākonga can learn from that. It is one of the Te Atiawa pū kōrero. Leanne said that Venise brought out the layers of meaning in the story, the baskets of knowledge. She said that staff represented on other elements of literacy such as English language learners, oral language, dyslexia, etc

Nicki said she highly recommended the Dr Chris Bowden presentation on resilience. She encouraged board members to take a look at the slides.

Leanne said that school is continuing on with the professional growth cycle for teachers. She said the school had recently done a peer observation to help develop practices towards bicultural goals and so on. She said it is a really valued process for our staff, they get so much out of it.

Trey asked how the peer observations were recorded? Leanne said the observer focuses on what the kaiako does, not on the kids - they focus on the particular goals the kaiako is trying. Trey said that the teachers will be on their best behaviour because they're being observed. Leanne said that the role of the observer is to help the kaiako reflect on their own role and goals, not to be the judge. Trey said that's awesome, it's nice to hear the thought process behind the wellbeing of the teachers. She said you guys do an amazing job.

Nicki said pathway conversations happen tomorrow, so staff can tell us about their plans for 2024.

Nicki said the mosaics are looking pretty amazing. They've done all the designs and are now attaching those to the large posts. She said she has been talking to people about where the mosaic pou will go. She said it is helpful to have done the work on Te Whakamana / Placemaking strategy to give it a test run.

Nicki said that Easy Swim are on board now, it's just a case of sorting out the logistics. They're looking to do one afternoon per week for the community, and we'll use this term to work out the details. The big issue is sorting out car parking. It's a sticky point and we have to work through that. We don't want people using the school grounds to park their cars if we can help it.

Nicki showed the board Te Whakamana o Te Kura o Ngā Puna Waiora / Newtown School Space and Placemaking Strategy. Nicki said the strategy starts at a high level and is also quite practical. She said the school had used it with the mosaics to test drive it. Yadana said that in future we'll use it for the bike track and the bees proposal. Yadana said we were lucky to have whaea Maraea with us and she came up with the name Te Whakamana.

Trey asked what the relationship is like with Te Atiawa at the moment. Nicki said we have whānau from Te Atiawa. Through the Kahui Ako, we have a relationship through the steering group, that's a quite rich connection. Nicki said it had been four or five years building up the relationship.

5. Strategic plan

Nicki took the board through the new guidance form NZSTA on how to develop a strategic plan.

She said the process should involve the school community. That means we need to understand who is in our community. She asked the board, how do we find out from our community and from families what's working, what motivates and inspires your child? We could send out a survey but that's not a good way to reach everyone.

Yadana said it's important to go to where the community is. Sometimes if people say nothing it means that everything's okay, but we can't assume that. Where do people gather? Pickup and drop off time? Whānau BBQ?

Jess said what about using whakamohio days, and having a place where people could put up a note about what they'd like to see in the school? Parents are in the space then anyway.

Fatima said that when you're coming in with the school application, that's a good time. It's good to do it face to face. It helps create an idea of boundaries. There are sometimes misunderstandings between the parents and the school. Fatima said that parents are happy to talk to her about what they think about the school, how their kids are finding it and so on.

Trey said that with a Pasifika hat on, the night for Samoan whānau that started with Samoan language week worked well. That meant we got Samoan whānau together. She said she had tried to get whānau again since then, doing a night with food. She had called around the whānau. She said she would like to put on a cultural festival, in the evening, with staff involvement, to get whānau in again, especially the ones that don't usually come in. Picking up the phone is the way to do it sometimes.

Trey said we could ask them what values are important to you at the moment. Identity is always important. How can we put something in place that makes your child recognize they are important. Keep it simple. Let them know they can get involved.

Nick said he wondered if there was a way to activate student voice for this, we could use the kids to collect information from their parents. Yadana said we could also grab parents when they are helping on trips and so on, that's a time when as a parent you're most engaged with learning. Joe said he liked the idea of incentivising kids to do homework, to take home three or four questions, with a prize draw.

Nick said it is the board's responsibility to do this, but we have to do it through the staff.

6. Te Tiriti Strategy

Joe said that he and Naomi had progressed the strategy. He explained that the whakapapa of the strategy started back in 2021 or 2022 with discussions about how the board could become more responsive to its duties under Te Tiriti. That led to bringing in Nathan Riki to run some workshops. And those workshops lead to the idea of developing a strategy to demonstrate how we embody Te Tiriti in the way we operate.

Joe read out the 'why statement' of the strategy: 'Our responsibility is that all learners equitably achieve and succeed as tangata whenua and tangata tiriti. We recognise and

respect the rangatiratanga of Māori. Through partnership we will re-indigenise and decolonise the educational experience.'

Joe said that he and Naomi had tried to focus the strategy on three areas, to keep it achievable. For each of these, the strategy sets out the aspiration statement, the actions for the board, the school, and the wider community.

Joe thanked everyone for all their contributions and thoughts through the workshops and conversations. He said in terms of next steps, we want to make sure it lands well. He said that he and Naomi would engage with the school's senior leadership and kaimahi Māori, and check back in with Nathan.

Nicki said one of the things to think about is that some whānau come to us with very little knowledge about this. She said we start that in the enrollment conversation, but sometimes there is a huge gap in recognition and understanding. Nicki said she would appreciate some support for that.

Yadana said that having this strategy will mean that while you might be the person who initially leads those engagements, you're not totally responsible for that. Joe said that there may be a gap for someone like Nathan to reach out to all the nations represented at Newtown School to explain the importance of Te Tiriti in the right language.

Jess said a long time ago the parent body had the idea of having a 'buddy' for new families. Trey said she thought that could help, or for kids to take a lead in helping new families understand. Fatima said what the kids in Te Kakano learn is really good. Joe said that idea is good, there have been similar conversations within Ngāti Kotahitanga, of having a tuakana-teina system to help new whānau learn about how Ngāti Kotahitanga works, the obligation to attend whānau hui etc. This would take some of the responsibility off Whaea Maraea.

Joe asked the board members to complete the feedback form.

- **ACTION - all board members to complete feedback on the Tiriti strategy**

Trey said the strategy was awesome work. She wished it was there when she was at school. Every educator needs to be open to this. All learners will walk away with some much cultural understanding, no matter where they're from.

7. Portfolio reports

Policies - Nick said that there are quite a lot of policies up for review at the moment, there is learning support, achievement, etc. He said there's an email that's going out to the community soon to consult, there are some big issues there.

- **ACTION - Nick to allocate policies for review between all members to review before end of term**

Health and safety - Nick said there had been a meeting. The school is planning to have a reverse evacuation.

Finance - Jess referred to Nicki's summary in her report. There was nothing unusual.

8. Previous minutes

Approved as true and correct.

#	Action	Assigned to	Raised
147	Check whether the recent legislative change relating to health and safety is relevant to school	Nick	Carry forward
146	Draft a piece for the school newsletter which covers the move to co-chair	Jess	Carry forward- Combine with action 123
145	Develop a statement about placemaking for the school and report back to future hui	Yadana and Naomi	Close - done
144	Consider options to provide additional resource to year 6 (e.g. in writing)	Nicki	Close - Nicki will cover in future staffing conversation
143	Put mid year achievement on next meeting agenda	Jess	Close - done
142	Add to a future agenda (probably July) item on boards role as kaitiaki of school, placemaking, etc	Jess	Close - done
141	Meet to coordinate quiz night and coin trail	Jess, Mitzi, Naomi	Carry forward - change to consider other fundraising options at future meeting
139	invite Mark Brown to present to future board meeting on bees	Nicki	Close - done
132	Review school calendar and look at scheduling plan emergency management workshop for next term	Nicki and Joe	Close - to be combined with reverse evacuation
130	Share written report on themes from staff exit interviews with board members	Nicki	Close - done
129	Work on signage and a place for welcoming manuhiri, etc	Naomi and Nicki	Close - done
127	Research ways to acknowledge Whaea Maraea's hard mahi to make the noho marae a success - suggest to Kahui Ako that they celebrate the	Nicki	Close - done

	achievement		
123	Work on co-chair issue	Naomi and Jess	Close - combined with 146
122	Meet to talk about the school website and comms channels	Nicki and Mitzi	Close - done
119	Share written report on ILE review with board members	Leanne and Nicki	Closed - done
106	Start a google doc for board members to collaborate on an induction document	Jess	Closed - done

9. Agenda items for future meetings

- Reassign portfolios following the new chairperson agreement.
- Trey asked what the expectation is in terms of prayer. She said she was made to feel uncomfortable when she wanted a child to say a prayer as part of Samoan language week? She said she was not attacking the teacher, but it made me wonder what the school's position was.

10. Closing karakia

Meeting closed 9.53 pm

Future meetings

- Monday 18 September 2023
- Monday 16 October 2023
- Monday 13 November 2023
- Monday 11 December 2023