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PRESIDENT'S NEWSLETTER

MAY 2014

Tēnā koutou katoa

Greetings to you all

I trust that the second term has commenced well for you all and that you have all been able to have your annual accounts audited without too many issues. I do understand that many schools are not signing the payroll report due to noted overstatements. This has been a shared view among schools both this year and last, courtesy of Novopay. In order to satisfy the legal requirements, the Ministry have added a certification that they are allowing schools to sign instead of the payroll report. This allows schools to disclose any errors that they believe there to be in their reports and provide some comfort over their obligations to sign off.

SPECIAL EDUCATION NETWORK REVIEW IN GREATER CHRISTCHURCH

Minister Parata has recently released the Education Report for consultation with the schools and the wider community. The consultation is on where the three Christchurch schools could be co-located and where satellites are being located. The consultation is not about reviewing whether special schools are needed in the network or any other aspects of their operation. The timeframe for consultation is very short. Each school has been allocated a facilitator of their choice who facilitates each school's community engagement and after synthesis of all workshops and surveys, will provide the board with a draft report for its consideration. This is due to the Ministry of Education by 18th June and is to be with Minister Parata by 30 June.

The Minister has made it clear that if any board decides after consulting its community they do not wish to co locate on a new site, it will not go ahead.

I had the privilege of meeting with Minister Parata prior to the draft report being released and discussed my views and concerns with the developing plan. Following this meeting, the Minister asked her Ministry to review the report it had prepared for her about the plan to ensure the matters raised by me were appropriately addressed. This has improved options for the schools that were not a consideration in the initial draft report.

The Ministry of Education have developed an on line survey, albeit of questionable quality that may not provide valid data. The survey will be accessible to the wider community on line at <http://shapingeducation.govt.nz/read-more-2/special-education-the-future-shape-of-the-special-schools-network-in-greater-christchurch> . I would encourage you to have your say particularly in the comment section at the end of the survey.

Each school is developing an on line survey specific to its own community. Appendix 6 in the report suggested a base school of 16 students. This is now void as the size of the base school will depend on the number of satellites a school board decides to have in its region. In my discussions with the Minister I made it very clear that the most successful co-located schools are fully independent with their own governance and management structure. Minister Parata agreed without hesitation that any co located school should not be integrated into the host school or governed and managed by that school. Each school will remain fully independent.

In principle the idea of a co-located school with a host school board and principal who share the same vision for opportunities, has merit however, this aside, it is very hard for school boards and its community to make a decision on co location when all the facts are unclear, in particular the forecast of a total cost being \$14,128,000 including base schools and satellites. In some ways, we are 'boxing blind'.

MEDIA RELEASE: Proposal for the future shape of the greater Christchurch Special Schools Network.

The government's proposal supports the Special Education Principals Association's (SEPA NZ) advocacy for the right of parents with children who have Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND), to have their ORS verified child attend a special school or an attached satellite if this best meets their child's needs.

SEPA NZ President Graeme Daniel said "the proposals in the report provide a unique opportunity for the three special schools in Christchurch to consider their future ".

The consultation is to consider if the special schools may co- locate independently alongside a mainstream school and to consider the satellite provision across greater Christchurch.

"The core business of these schools will ensure that families who have children with significant needs are not alienated from learning" Daniel said.

"In spite of the on-going rhetoric from the Inclusive Education Action Group (IEAG) and other NGOs who seek the closure of special schools, this consultation is not about reviewing whether special schools are needed in the network or any other aspects of their operation. These NGOs do not speak for all parents who have a child with special education needs and disability." Daniel said.

For too long the inclusion debate has focused on whether children with learning disabilities should be educated in mainstream schools or special schools and units rather than the quality of education and support they receive.

"SEPA NZ believes that inclusion is about the common enterprise of learning rather than where a student learns. Parents have the right to choose from the full continuum of educational settings including a special

school or attached satellite unit. Parents need to be given the opportunity to make informed choices without overt or subtle bias toward one particular educational setting and without an emphasis on a crude interpretation of inclusion” Daniel said.

Ends

SESTA ADVISORY

I met with Minister Kaye late last term to discuss the recommendations that were in the final report. This week, on Thursday 29th May, the Minister will be releasing the report along with the recommendations that she supports. I will attend this release along with some other members of the advisory.

INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT ON THE TEACHING PROFESSION

All members of the Minister’s Cross Sector Forum were invited to attend this summit on the 28th & 29th March in Wellington as observers. It was indeed an impressive summit and in particular, Minister Parata represented New Zealand in a way that was impressive, very well informed and in her presentation on the state of New Zealand’s Education System referred to the importance and value of our sector.

NZPF MOOT

I attended this moot in Wellington on 4th April. Concerns from 2013 included: Novopay, Teachers Council Review, Special Charter Schools, PLD Provision, Statutory Interventions, Property Issues, Relationships with the Ministry of Education. A primary area of discussion was the *Investing for Educational Success* Policy. The attenders were addressed by Hon Hekia Parata, Peter Hughes, Peter Witana, Enosa Auva’a, Phil O’Reilly, Cathy Wylie and education spokespersons from each of the main political parties.

INVESTING FOR EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

Graham Stoop is intending to meet with your executive late next month to discuss the policy. It appears that the shape of this policy is more flexible than may be realised. There may be opportunities for our sector to develop a range of opportunities through this resource including offering opportunities for PLD to our schools that access our Outreach Services.

TASKFORCE ON REGULATIONS AFFECTING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE.

A representative group met with the task force in early April to offer views on regulations that affect our sector. This included: student achievement, National Standards, the NEG’s, NCEA, Boards of Trustees, Planning & Reporting requirements, QSSP Reviews – a focus on outcomes, not process, should ERO undertake this role for all fundholding schools and the Ministry of Education, (who as a provider should not be evaluating its own service), the Outreach Service? Staffing in special schools, collaboration between schools and personnel practice was also discussed.

EXECUTIVE MEETING APRIL 10TH 2014

The executive met with Peter Hughes and discussed: The secretary's view on the role of special schools, IES, and SWIS – Brian Coffey has been asked to investigate why special schools cannot access SWIS, and the new structure of the Ministry.

The executive's agenda included: Novopay, Network for Learning – opportunities for our sector presented by Geoff Scrimgeour, the Christchurch Network Review, The Minister's Cross Sector Forum – The Minister has suggested to the president that one forum is dedicated to special education, IECBP, Fundholding, SESTA Review, ClickSpecial ED, and the adoption of a mantra for SEPAnz '*It's not where, it's how*'. This will be placed on our letterhead with a Māori translation.

OUTREACH SERVICE

James Le Marquand, Judith Nell and I will meet with National Office personnel early June to raise issues in regard to the Outreach Service. These include: Principal Remuneration, Lack of Parity with RTLB Resourcing, A restricted Secondary Service, Therapy Delivery, the IES Policy, Property Considerations, Training & Development, Staffing Transfer and Budget and Expenditure.

INCLUSION: A SEPANZ PERSPECTIVE

Success for All, five out of five students achieve is aspirational. With the goal of having all schools include all learners, this will, in the longer term, give parent's authentic choice.

The misconception that inclusion refers to a place and not a process is very pervasive. The current view of many in New Zealand is restricted to the concept of an inclusive school as a place where everyone belongs is accepted and where special education needs students are supported and cared for by their peers and other members of the school community. This is a utopian view, where there are no references to the processes and learning environments needed to achieve authentic educational outcomes for five out of five students. *It's not where, it's how.*

Warnock (2005) alluded to when referring to inclusion '*that to persist will be foolish...the idea of inclusiveness springs from the heart in the right place*'. Baroness Warnock describes the implementation of the philosophy of inclusion in the United Kingdom following the Warnock Report in the 1970's and the consequent moving of students out of (special) schools as a '*disastrous legacy*'.

Inclusion is not about 'one size fits all. Under the Human Rights Act some believe that a student with special education needs and disability should only have one choice – their local school. This is championed by the Inclusive Education Action Group (IEAG), IHC, CCS Disability Action and the Down Syndrome Association however; these NGOs do not represent all families who have children with SEND.

Rights: To segregate children for any reason is considered by inclusion protagonists to be a denial of their human rights. We need to consider human rights and moral rights. Just because a person has a human right to a certain option, it doesn't necessarily mean that it is morally the right thing

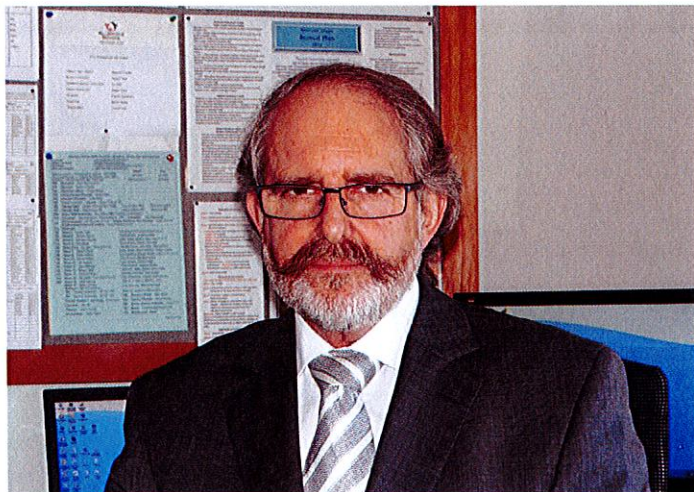
to do. *Although their human rights allow a child to be educated alongside their mainstream peers, for some of them this may not morally be the right thing to do* (Thomson 1990)

Rights: as well as their right to be included, children also have a right to learn in an appropriate environment suited to their needs. For SEN students, although their human rights allow children with SEN to be educated alongside their mainstream peers, for some of them this may not morally be the right or best option. That is, as Warnock states, *"the right to an appropriate education that meets the students particular needs is more important than the right to be educated alongside their mainstream peers. It is their right to learn that we must defend."* (Terzi 2010)

SEPA^{nz} believes that all schools, both specialist and mainstream should be accountable for the learning outcomes of all students enrolled in them. Expectations must be high coupled with the belief that all students are learners.

SEPA^{nz} believes that not all learners are necessarily best served in mainstream schools. Inclusive schools value the learning of all students, Special schools are schools, not institutions; they are inclusive in their nature. These schools understand that improved learning outcomes through the provision of a bespoke curriculum will prepare students for inclusion into society.

SEPA^{nz} believes that inclusion is about the common enterprise of learning rather than where a student learns. Parents have the right to choose for their child who has a special learning need, the full continuum of educational settings including a special school or attached satellite. Parents need to be given an opportunity to make informed choices without any overt or subtle bias toward one particular educational setting without an emphasis on a crude interpretation of inclusion.



Ngā mihi nui

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of loops and strokes, positioned above the printed name.

Graeme H Daniel