



# WADESTOWN SCHOOL

## 2008 – 2010 Strategic Plan

### *Learning to Live – Living to Learn*

The content of this Strategic Plan is based on the requirements of the new New Zealand Curriculum (2008), and specifically refer to the “Key Competencies” component of the draft framework. These require the teaching of intrinsic and important attitudes, beliefs and knowledge, which are intertwined through all curriculum areas in a variety of complex ways. They are designed to support children to become lifelong learners and as integral contributors to their communities.

The New Zealand Curriculum framework includes five overarching (and interconnected) key competencies.

#### Key competency groups

- 1 Thinking (critically, creatively, logically)
- 2 Relating to others.
- 3 Managing self.
- 4 Making meaning (multi-literacies and making meaning using movement, symbols and technologies).
- 5 Participating and Contributing

NB. This Strategic Plan emphasises areas of particular school development identified as requiring an intensive focus. The school must also comply with all legislation, including the balanced delivery of all aspects of the new New Zealand Curriculum (2008).

## 2008 – 2010 Strategic Plan

### 1. CURRICULA INITIATIVES

#### Thinking Skills

*Children will understand, select, apply, adapt and evaluate skills for thinking that will enhance their personal learning effectiveness*

#### Writing

*Children will develop an intrinsic love for writing*

#### Listening / Speaking

*Children will comprehend what is said and express their own ideas, feelings and thoughts clearly and appropriately, in a range of formal and informal situations*

.....computer studies.....

*Children will use computers to improve learning*

.....boys achievement.....

*Children will understand that boys may learn in a different way to girls, and that teaching practices which acknowledge these differences will improve boys learning opportunities*

### 2. CO-CURRICULA INITIATIVES

*(Each of these becomes an integrated rather than distinct focus).*

#### Social and personal values programmes

*Children will understand and value the nature and importance of personal and interpersonal qualities and skills when interacting in social and work situations*

#### Environmental awareness programmes

*Children will appreciate, develop and care for their local, national and international environments through an understanding of the physical characteristics of sustainable communities.*

### 3. RESOURCE INITIATIVES

*(strategic funding and expenditure areas)*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After School Care</li> <li>• International Students</li> <li>• Parent donations</li> <li>• Fundraising</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small class sizes</li> <li>• Classroom refurbishment</li> <li>• Furniture replacement</li> <li>• ICT resourcing</li> <li>• Environment projects</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

The **Curricula Initiatives** take priority over the others, and include a main focus on Thinking Skills. Lesser areas of Writing and Listening / Speaking take precedence over Computer Studies and Boys Achievement. These were the main priorities identified in the 2007 Community Survey. Curricula initiatives require a specific school and staff development strategy, which will be articulated in annual Charter goals.

The **Co-curricula Initiatives** have been derived from a combination of community interests, as reflected in the 2007 Community Survey and various government, local community and staff priorities. They include “Personal and social values programmes” and “Environmental awareness programmes”. These programmes are integrated into school wide planning rather than isolated as specific school and staff development initiatives.

The **Resource Initiatives** recognise the need to develop our existing key income and expenditure projects. It is important that these remain of strategic importance to the school, and will provide a priority focus during annual budget considerations. There is no funding available for capital works projects during the term of this plan. Identifying these areas ensures the sustainability of the programmes.

*NB The adoption of a 3 year Strategic Plan, rather than the usual 5 year plan, reflects the Boards intention to provide the new Principal with transitional guidance over the medium term only.*

## **CURRICULA INITIATIVES**

### **Thinking Skills - The rationale**

Providing children with instruction in thinking skills is important for several reasons:

- These skills are necessary for people to have in our rapidly changing, technologically oriented world.
- Children, in general, do not have well-developed thinking skills.
- Although many people once believed that we are born either with or without creative and critical thinking abilities, research has shown that these skills are teachable and learn-able.

Instruction in thinking skills promotes intellectual growth and fosters academic achievement gains.

Research supports providing instruction in a variety of specific creative and critical thinking skills, study techniques, and metacognitive skills.

Instructional approaches found to promote thinking skill development include redirection, probing, and reinforcement; asking higher-order questions during classroom discussions, and lengthening wait-time during classroom questioning.

Computer-assisted instruction assists thinking skills and is positively related to intellectual growth and achievement gains.

Many commercially available thinking skills instructional programmes have been shown to bring about improvements in students' performance on intelligence and achievement tests.

Training teachers to teach thinking skills is associated with student achievement gains.

In addition to program content, classroom practices, and teacher training, the success of thinking skills instruction is also dependent upon other factors, such as administrative support and appropriate match between the students and the instructional approach selected.

Neither infused thinking skills instruction nor separate curricula are inherently superior to the other; both can lead to improved student performance, and elements of both are often used together, with beneficial results.

Children's performance has been shown to improve as a result of both direct teaching and inferential learning of thinking skills. Again, some programmes have successfully combined these approaches.

Because thinking skills instruction requires large amounts of time in order to be effective, administrative support and schoolwide commitment are necessary for programme success.

It is especially important to establish and maintain a positive, stimulating, encouraging classroom climate for thinking skills instruction, so that students will feel free to experiment with new ideas and approaches.

In both school settings and in the world outside of school, it is crucial for people to have skills in questioning, analysing, comparing, contrasting, and evaluating so that they will not become reliant on being told what to think and do. Applying the findings from the thinking skills research will assist our school to improve children's learning.

### **Writing – The rationale**

Continuing to provide children with instruction in Writing is important for several reasons, but essentially derives from a need identified over a number of years in our school.

In June of 2006 the analysis of the writing results prompted the following conclusion:

*“These results show that our children are not performing at levels commensurate with expectations for a school of our type. In the Year 4 and 8 classes the results are particularly concerning with over half our children functioning at levels well below expectations. This is also the case to a lesser extent for children in Year 6 and 7.”*

In 2007 it was clear that the results evident in children's writing achievements were not as concerning as they had been in previous years. The children in Years 1-4 and Years 6 and 7 were writing at levels commensurate with expectations, or in some cases, exceeding expectations. Children in Years 5 and 8 remained slightly below national expectations. Although this was a significant improvement on the results of 2006 it was not good enough for the school to have confidence that the ability most children had to write equated with their levels of achievement in other curriculum areas (eg. Maths and Reading). Most significant in our recent results was the discrepancy in abilities between girls and boys. At all levels of the school, girls outperformed boys in writing.

The Strategic Plan of 2003 – 2007 required that: “90 % of all children are writing at levels at least commensurate with national norms and expectations”. In 2007 the school's aim was specifically to “Raise the level of student achievement in writing in all years, such that at least 75 % of each cohort was achieving above the national mean”.

Although progress in children's writing was certainly evident over the period of the previous Strategic Plan, the school cannot claim that we had met, or was close to meeting, this goal. It was clear that the school needed to continue to implement programmes to improve children's skills and attitudes towards writing.

### **Listening / Speaking – The rationale**

Oral language is the greatest way we express ourselves and is the basis of all communication - it is fundamental to literacy.

Through listening and speaking children learn about themselves and about their world. Learning to express their thoughts, ideas and feelings, and being able to respond to the communications of others, enables children to participate in society successfully.

Oral language development in our school does not mean teaching children to speak and listen so much as providing them with the skills and opportunities to communicate and respond more effectively. Speaking and listening involves thinking, knowledge and skills. Effective communication is developed through practice and training.

While oral language acquisition is a natural process this does not mean that all children will automatically acquire effective communication skills. Attention and constant practice are necessary for optimum development in communication. There is no doubt that there is plenty of oral language used in the classroom, however much of that "talking" is done by the teacher rather than by children. Research in recent years suggests that there has been a steady decline in the use of oral language in the classroom.

There is a clear relationship between oral language development and the development of thinking abilities. There is no doubt that as children develop oral communication skills, their critical thinking and reasoning abilities are developed along the way.

Oral language is a very important link in the process of students' learning and thinking development. It provides a foundation for the development of other language skills. As children talk about themselves and their experiences, and listen to the contribution of others, they are learning to organise their thinking and to focus their ideas. Throughout life, oral language skills remain essential for the communication of ideas and intelligent conversation.

One of the most effective ways to facilitate the learning of oral language is to take into account the background and everyday life experiences of the children. Once children's prior knowledge and facility with oral language is determined, the classroom programme can be planned to develop necessary skills on the developmental continuum. From this starting point the techniques and skills which are taught in the classroom programme need to be further extended and used across the whole curriculum.

Although the oral language programme is delivered at the classroom level, the procedures for the development of language skills needs to pervade planning across the whole school.

*In the school's 2007 community survey on the future needs for curriculum development 71% of respondents viewed listening comprehension as a high priority.*

### **Computer studies – The rationale**

Research from schools show that children derive significant educational benefits from interacting with computers.

These include:

- Specific educational improvements in the areas of language development, problem solving skills and social skills.
- New learning skill development while children are involved in research exercises, and word and data processing assignments.
- High levels of interest are generated when using computers. They are a motivating influence for both boys and girls learning.
- Individual learning needs across a wide range of abilities can be catered for through the use of computers
- Computers have the flexibility to support a wide variety of educational applications and curriculum integration.

The implications for the use of computers in our school raises many questions about funding, class organisation, teacher training, timetabling, teaching methodologies, and hardware and software selection. The determination of a path of future travel needs to be carefully determined and articulated.

### **Boys achievement – The rationale**

Boys' underachievement has become a topical issue in recent years. In response, a number of New Zealand primary schools have created boys' projects to seek to lift their standard of achievement in wide variety of academic subjects. These have encompassed a range of interventions designed specifically to address the disparity between boys' and girls achievement by re-culturing the school to make it a more positive and motivating environment for boys. These projects have sought to identify and implement elements of school culture that support boys' learning.

Research reveals contrasting and conflicting theoretical perspectives contributing to the debate around boys' achievement. From one perspective it is accepted that boys and girls are different and schools are expected to accommodate these differences. The alternative perspective suggests that differences between girls and boys should not be viewed as inevitable and that for boys, schools should work to change undesirable attitudes and behaviours if boys learning is to be adequately addressed.

The research reveals that boys' underachievement is indeed a complex issue that is unlikely to be solved by short-term interventions or strategies. The research concludes that educational outcomes for boys will be positively affected by a school culture that fosters strong relationships, a focus on learning, and an understanding of how beliefs and attitudes about gender are influential on learning.

## **CO-CURRICULA INITIATIVES**

### **Personal and social values programmes – The rationale**

Personal and social values programmes have strong links to the NZ Curriculum's Key Competencies of managing self, relating to others, participating and contributing, thinking, using language, symbols, and texts. They also apply to Values in the new curriculum, including respect, integrity, innovation, inquiry and curiosity, and excellence. The Social Inquiry aspect and the Identity, Culture and Organisation strand of the Social Sciences curriculum are also covered along with the Relationships with other People strand from Health and Physical Education. Changes in society and in the behaviour of children are causing some schools to look more closely at ways of building positive, caring and respectful school environments. As a result schools are implementing programmes to address what they have identified as concerns or issues within their school community.

Specifically these programmes relate to knowledge, values, attitudes and abilities which contribute to the development of a child's sound moral character, an effective learning disposition, a sense of community, and competence in responding to the personal, social and cultural aspects of life.

A personal and social values programme incorporates aspects of the following:

- emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment, self confidence
- self control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, innovativeness
- achievement drive, commitment, initiative, optimism
- empathy, service orientation, development of others

### **Environmental awareness programmes – The rationale**

In response to growing national and international awareness of the importance of the environment, the New Zealand Government has initiated a national strategy for environmental education, where it is viewed as a lifelong process with a strong implication for the area of teaching and learning.

Environmental awareness programmes enable children develop skills, understanding, knowledge and confidence through planning, designing and creating a sustainable school and community environment. These values have become a key component of the National Curriculum.

Such programmes will include:

- enhancing the school environment;
- conserving energy;
- establishing environmentally friendly practices;
- preserving local ecosystems and historical landmarks;
- reducing solid waste and litter.

#### **TIMELINE OF DEVELOPMENT**

<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Thinking Skills		
Writing		Listening / Speaking
Computer studies		
Boys achievement		
Social and personal values programmes		
Environmental awareness programmes		