



Wadestown School

Board of Trustees

Sally Barrett
Carolyn Coldstream
Julie Gerrard
Hamish Leslie
Kim Meredith
Jo Moyer
Neil Paviour-Smith

News from the Board – December 2011

The Board of Trustees wishes to update the parent community on a range of matters at the end of what has been a busy but positive year of progress for the school.

School Leadership

During the second half of the year, Sally Barrett took up her role as Principal and Robyn Grover subsequently was appointed as Deputy Principal. Trustees are very pleased with the progress that is being made under this new leadership and wish to acknowledge through this newsletter our gratitude for their efforts, including the positive engagement with the parent community and the children.

The school leadership team has a complete dedication to the quality of teaching and learning that occurs in the classrooms. There are many distractions to the core curriculum nowadays, including many opportunities for children to be outside the classroom. Yet parents consistently regard literacy and numeracy as (understandably) the absolute priority. Trustees are fully supportive of the Principal's prioritisation of these core areas of teaching and learning, and the objective of consistent practices throughout the entire school.

Literacy Professional Development Program

An example of the Board's support of prioritising the core curriculum is the decision reached to replace current teacher professional development (external off-site individual courses and seminars) with a two year school-wide program targeting literacy excellence.

We see significant benefits to the school. The program is comprehensive and will ensure consistency school-wide in literacy teaching and assessment.

School Budget

The Board and Principal continue to very carefully manage the school's tightening financial position. Unlike prior years, there is no budgeted international student revenue for next year and no real increase in Ministry operational grants. As a result there is less revenue for the school than this year.

Certain areas of spending in the school need to be funded by the Board out of money left over from the Ministry operational grants (ie once power, cleaning, etc - the essentials - have been paid for) and from parent donations.

Items of discretionary spending in the school include the library position, an appropriate reading recovery program, additional teacher aides for learning support, ICT, classroom release time for teachers, professional development etc. These are examples of areas of spending that are not a "given" – ie there is no dedicated Ministry funding for these.

In considering the draft budget for 2012, trustees have considered the priorities for the school, especially in light of the comments made in the two sections above and the reduced revenues available. Funding available for additional staffing (previously supporting/covering areas such as learning support, external activities, gifted and talented program) has been reduced in order to maintain what are regarded as other essential priorities.

This does not mean those areas of interest are removed from the school. They continue to be the domain of the classroom teachers and will therefore be more classroom-based than previously.

Donations

The budget section above describes the school's very tight financial state and the forcing of priorities. Parent donations are essential for the ability of the school to maintain highly valued areas, some of which are listed above.

Having considered a draft budget for the 2012 year the Board has resolved to maintain requested donation levels at the same level as 2011.

We are mindful that household budgets are tight and that requested donations are relatively high. This is simply a result of the level of funding that a decile 10 school receives (less per student than all other decile schools). It is more important than it has been for many years that the school continues to receive a high level of support from the parent community for donation income.

Please note the school's budget is barely at breakeven - your donations are not being put away into things like a building fund or for future programs. And all spending in the school is analysed for effectiveness - two examples of the effectiveness of spending are discussed in the next two sections below.

Please also note that requested donation levels have not been increased for several years and, without your positive response to the donation request, many of the programs and initiatives described above would not be possible.

The Board respectfully requests that all parents respond generously to the request for donations in the New Year.

Reading Recovery Program

The school receives highly inadequate Ministry funding for our reading recovery teaching position (the equivalent of one child in the program). This year the Board budgeted for significantly more funding (ie for the equivalent of eight children) to be allocated to reading recovery to meet the need for additional resource and to avoid waiting-lists.

The Board reviews the effectiveness of the reading recovery program annually. Eight children were taken into the program during 2011. During term four all children who have completed the reading recovery program in the past three years are monitored. 17 children were eligible for term four monitoring and of these, 16 are now reading at or above their chronological age, which confirms the effectiveness of the school's reading recovery program.

The Board considers the Ministry funding to be entirely unacceptable and is budgeting for a continuation of the program at similar levels to the current year.

Library

For those who may be new to the school, one of the difficult decisions the Board made three years ago was the disestablishment of the librarian position following a plunge in income from the international student program. The librarian position is not a Ministry funded position. It needs to be funded from the school's operational grants and parent donations.

Last year the librarian position was re-established as a permanent position following a change in spending priorities.

The Board regards the two libraries in the school as a highly valuable resource. In reviewing the effectiveness of this spending recently, the Board noted ongoing improvements in the library that have been achieved. We hope to see even more integration of this resource into teaching programs and expect the library resource to be an essential component of the literacy program described earlier.

The Board is optimistic that in response to this positive commitment to the library, parents and children will assist with a search for overdue library books and return these to the school please!

School Reports

This week your child will receive their school report which will comment on their progress. The reports include required reporting on achievement relative to national standards.

A reminder that your child's teacher should be contacted if you have any questions arising from these reports or should you seek clarification on areas for progress for your child.

National Standards Reporting

The Board reviewed school-wide student achievement data recently and is pleased to report to parents the results. These demonstrate very good levels of achievement in the school on an overall basis:

Vs National Standards	Maths		Reading		Writing	
	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010
Above	134	136	208	208	83	102
At/Towards	167	170	101	105	221	202
Below	29	13	21	12	26	20
At/Above	91%	96%	94%	96%	92%	94%
Below	9%	4%	6%	4%	8%	6%

Please note:

- year on year results are not comparable due to the different mix of children but are provided for transparency
- "Towards" is used for year 1 child assessment and does not signal underachievement
- despite strong achievement school-wide, trustees continue to enquire of the Principal what is being done to address those children below standard and how to lift more children overall into achieving above national standards
- items described earlier in this newsletter, such as the reading recovery program, library resource and literacy professional development program, are all examples of how trustees are reflecting these priorities to lift achievement in core areas

Classroom Organisation 2012

The Principal's newsletter last Friday outlined the classroom organisation for 2012 including the staffing for these classes and the return to a three team leadership structure.

Later in this newsletter, details of classroom redevelopment being undertaken next year at the main school are summarised. This will mean that every available classroom at the main school will be utilised for most of the first half of 2012. Class sizes will be in line with Ministry guidelines and teacher funding.

Notification of your child's allocation to his/her class for 2012 will be provided with the school reports. The Board requests that the points made above, and the careful and professional judgement of school management and teachers, are considered when you receive notification of your child's placement for 2012, and that requests for change are not pursued.

New Classrooms

We are delighted with the addition of the two new classrooms in the school. These are high quality new facilities which will be well utilised into the future. The additional classroom at the side school will enable children to stay longer at the side school than would otherwise be the case although this

will always be subject to roll growth. The school is anticipating a very strong influx of new entrants to the school based on forward indications.

Classroom Redevelopment – Main School

Each five years the Ministry provides capital funds for the Board to utilise on existing classrooms.

The Board has previously communicated that modernisation of the main school is the highest priority with regard to property plans. Having taken into account the Ministry's prescribed requirements around seismic conditioning and modern learning environments, the Board has resolved to redevelop the three classroom block at the top of the main school (currently occupied by senior students) as a priority and, following that, the two classrooms at the bottom of the main school next to the new classroom.

The intent is to strip back these classrooms as much as possible, renovating the rooms, adding new joinery, adding breakout rooms, upgrading the toilets and bringing the classes up to the seismic standard required.

In a further five years time, the priority will be to upgrade the main block of classes at the main school. Upon completion of this, it will mean that most of the school's classrooms on both sites will have been significantly upgraded.

The Board has every desire to have the classrooms identified redeveloped as soon as possible, ie before winter and growth in the school's roll across the year. Plans are being finalised. We expect work to commence during term one but we are subject to potential delays in obtaining Ministry sign-off (as was our experience this year).



Wadestown School PTA

The school is fortunate to have a fantastic PTA. As an example, last year's House & Garden Walk raised over \$50,000 for the school (about what Thorndon School raises from the Thorndon Fair).

Not only do our children all benefit from the funds raised through the PTA, they help to organise many vital functions for the school that would otherwise fall on teachers and school management to attend to. The PTA also provides a much-needed opportunity for parents to socialise through an area of common interest.

The Board thanks the PTA, especially its Committee members and its Co-Chairs Lucy Trevelyan and Carolyn Coldstream, for their work and fundraising in 2011. It is greatly appreciated by all.

Use of PTA Funds Raised: ICT Upgrade

Trustees recently received confirmation of a donation of \$67,000 from the PTA (a large chunk of which was raised from the House & Garden Walk). This donation was on top of funds already donated and which helped supply materials for the two working bees.

A commitment was made to purchase interactive whiteboards with funds raised from the House & Garden Walk. The purchase of these was deferred when we received notification of the two new classrooms and subsequently when we considered the likely use of funds for classroom redevelopment about to commence. This was to ensure a coordinated and appropriate placement of the items.

Furthermore, during the year the Board undertook a review of ICT in the school as we have not been happy with the level and state of ICT in the school (which has been a reflection of resources available and spending priorities in earlier years).

The Board has resolved as part of the 2012 budget process to significantly increase the commitment to ICT in the school.

To do this, all of the PTA donated funds have been earmarked for acquisition of ICT equipment for the school. The cost of maintaining, supporting and depreciating the equipment has been provided for in the school's budget. This extra funding has been provided by the savings described earlier in this newsletter. The Board has been careful in its budgeting to ensure that the ICT upgrade is sustainable and not a one-off gain that is dependant on large future PTA donations.

The donated funds therefore are being applied as follows:

1. Depending on year group, each class will have between 2-4 dedicated class computers/laptops. The school will be acquiring 20 new computers in the coming year, most of them immediately.
2. We have committed to immediately acquiring a set of 20 laptops for use school-wide on a booked basis. This will provide nearly 1:1 resourcing for most classes when in use.
3. The school will be acquiring 4 interactive whiteboards immediately and installing these over the holiday break, plus another 4 interactive whiteboards in the New Year to be installed once the top block is redeveloped.
4. The cost of upgrading the school's wireless capability is being met and further funds have been budgeted to upgrade the network, re-house servers and provide additional IT support.

Trustees are delighted to be able to make these commitments supported by the donated funds. The upgrading of classes underway and the expanded ICT commitment both provide much-needed enhanced facilities for teachers and children.

Playgrounds, Play Equipment, Playing Fields

Recently the Board sought feedback from the parent community on the potential for the main school playing field to be upgraded (working with the tennis club and funded by community trust funds) into an all-weather surface suitable for tennis and many other sports. Thank you to those parents who provided their thoughts. The feedback from teachers was also highly instructive.

Trustees have decided that there are various issues that need to be explored more fully before any decision could potentially be made. On balance there is merit in continuing to work with the tennis club to keep the option of a potential redevelopment of the field alive. Trustees are of the view that a grassed surface in the school grounds is needed. Matters being reviewed include whether the all-weather surface could be located elsewhere, the different types of surfacing available, whether the main playing field drainage can be upgraded effectively and if so the cost and ongoing maintenance demands.

Play equipment gets mixed use. A summary of what equipment should be enhanced and what eliminated is to be prepared. If deemed a priority, then any changes/upgrades to equipment will be considered but would require funding from donations, most likely from PTA fundraising.

Board of Trustees

Recently staff elected Kim Meredith as the staff representative on the Board of Trustees (filling the vacancy caused by Sally Barrett becoming Principal). We welcome Kim to the Board.

Angela Ryan has kindly volunteered to become Board Secretary replacing Bridget Hargreaves who has performed the role very well for the past three years and for which Trustees are very grateful.

I would like to thank my fellow trustees for their efforts and support over what has been a very busy year for the Board.

School Staff

On behalf of the Board, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the school's staff through 2011.

There has been further change over this year especially in school leadership and the resultant changes to priorities. Trustees acknowledge this and recognise the dedication of staff to student achievement. Trustees also wish long-serving staff members Bev Truscott and Lynne Dunn well with their new endeavours.

Season's Greetings

This has been a long newsletter but there has been much to report on as there is a lot going on in the school. The school is in a great position as reflected in the student achievement data and the various developments described in this newsletter.

Thank you to all of you who have volunteered your time and efforts to assist in the school during the year. It is very much appreciated.

I wish everyone all the very best for the holiday season. We look forward to seeing your children again in 2012.

Kind regards



Neil Paviour-Smith
Board Chairman