



President's Comment 13

13th May 2010

Dear Colleagues

Health and Safety Guidelines: A Money Trap For Schools!

We are fast arriving at the position in New Zealand schools where the 'unfortunate accident' will become extinct. It is now nearly always determined to be somebody's fault, usually the schools, for which they must be investigated, censured, fined and required to engage a consultant at their own expense. The consultant in turn writes a lengthy report with a long list of recommendations, which must be implemented once again, at the school's expense.

The problem appears to be that the Ministry of Education provide vague guidelines on Health and Safety, on the premise that self-managing schools should work out the detail themselves. Schools do their best to interpret them and codify them into policy/practice.

The Department of Labour, Contractors and Health and Safety Consultants however continue to ratchet up compliance costs for schools by claiming specific measures need to be taken to comply with MOE guidelines and legislation.

It is now time, I believe, for the Ministry of Education to seize the initiative and enter into dialogue with the Department of Labour to spell out in more detail what is actually required of schools, including in the area of EOTC. It would be interesting to know if the MOE has data on the increasing cost of 'compliance matters' for schools over the last ten years!

If there are any additional compliance costs, these should be mirrored dollar for dollar in our Operations Grant. Our responsibility to 'take all practicable steps' to ensure the safety of staff and students in our schools is one we take seriously. It must be noted however, that for every education dollar we spend on compliance costs, it is one less we can spend on teaching and learning. In a time of fiscal restraint, every effort should be made to reduce unnecessary compliance expenditure. Perhaps a line-by-line review of compliance costs should be undertaken to separate out what is necessary for Health and Safety as opposed to desirable.

The issues above have been directly raised with the Minister of Education, Anne Tolley, and the Secretary of Education, Karen Sewell. I have received submissions on this topic from Kate Shevland of Orewa College and Madeline Gunn, from Epsom Girls Grammar. If you wish to give me other examples in your own schools, send them through to Ros Robson (SPANZ Secretariat) and I will collate them for the Ministry of Education. By way of example, at John Paul College we spent \$2,800 on Electrical Appliance Safety Testing this year.

Previous Comments

Comment 12 - 06.05.10

Initial Teacher Education (ITE), Trade Academics, Principalship Growing a Thick Skin, PA Conference.

Comment 11 - 29.04.10

Violent Crime & School Bullying, Review of University Entrance, Sound Advice from a Judge, Working Voice & STA, School Balls.

Comment 10 - 22.04.10

Mangatepopo Gorge Tragedy Coroners Report, Technology Curriculum, National Standards, SPANZ Union .

Comment 9 - 31.03.10

BOT Elections, Jurisdiction over Students After Hours, Monster Parents.

Comment 8 - 25.03.10

New SPANZ Executive, SPANZ Union, NZ Teachers Council Registration Fee Increase.

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Aspiring Principals Programme: Adjusting The Pendulum!

There is no doubt that the Aspiring Principals' Programmes sponsored by the Ministry of Education are generally excellent preparation for principalship. In particular, the strong emphasis on Principals being leaders of learning deserves primacy. After all the core business of schools is quality teaching and learning.

Seasoned Principals know however, that failure to develop knowledge and skill in the following critical areas of the job can be their undoing:

- Managing relationships and the competing demands of Boards, parents and other stakeholders in the school
- Managing staff performance, including dealing with competency and serious misconduct issues
- Oversight of financial systems, including annual budgets, property, donations, marketing
- Student discipline, including stand-downs, suspensions, complaints to the Ombudsman, local media etc
- Health and Safety, including EOTC, crisis and hazard management.

It is simplistic to say the above matters can be dealt with by way of delegation or getting expert advice. Ultimately, if they go wrong, the Principal will be held to account. The appointment of Limited Statutory Managers and Commissioners is seldom over curriculum delivery. Antidotal evidence suggests some newly appointed Principals have fallen over because they had not appreciated or been adequately prepared to manage these critical issues.

It is time to swing the pendulum back to considering the leadership demands of managing relationships, resources and conflict within school communities. These areas do not have the same gloss as a 'leader of learning' but they are fundamental to effective principalship. Aspiring Principals may pay a high price if they are not well prepared for them.

SPANZ Symposium 2011, Napier, Sunday 3rd April – Wednesday 6th April

On the back of our highly successful symposium in Queenstown, please book the above dates into your calendar for next year.

We are already sourcing for you, a high quality group of international and national speakers.

We look forward to seeing you in the art-deco capital of New Zealand for a wonderful, professionally and personally rewarding experience.

Something to think about:

*If things are not all right in the classroom, they will not be all right anywhere
Never pass a student without thinking about them.*

*Sir James Darling (1899-1995)
Headmaster Geelong Grammar School 1930-1961*

Kind Regards



Patrick Walsh
President

