



SPANZ

SECONDARY PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND INC.

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President
Peter Gall
Papatoetoe High School

Thursday, 8 November 2007

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Dear Colleagues

I have received several calls and messages relating to the newly ratified *Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement* and the issue of what 'reasonable endeavour' means and how, as Principals, we are expected to manage the issue at the start of next year. In response to a letter I sent to both the Minister and Secretary for Education, Rob McIntosh (Acting Secretary for Education) wrote:

"The new collective agreement contains a provision on class size which would require schools to include in their timetabling policy, that they would make 'reasonable endeavour' to achieve an average class size of no more than 26 students for each teacher who has more than one class. Ministry data shows that, even after taking account of the five hours of non-contact requirements for full time teachers, schools are resourced to achieve this.

The requirement to make reasonable endeavour will not require schools to employ additional staff or bear additional cost. It means that the school has to genuinely try to achieve the objectives on class size and non-contact time. Each school's timetabling policy should currently provide a process for those situations where, for genuine reason, it is not possible to provide non-contact time. This should now be extended to include processes where the school is unable, after reasonable endeavour, to limit the average class size for the teacher to 26 students.

"The collective agreement also contains provision for non-contact time for holders of units. This will require schools to endeavour to provide one hour non-contact for each permanent unit held above three units. For holders of one to three units there is currently a requirement to provide one hour for each unit. Once again, the requirement is to endeavour to provide the additional non-contact time and it is not an entitlement."

The Ministry view that schools are resourced sufficiently to meet the new agreement requirements is worthy of some debate. If we are to fully embrace the Ministry's philosophy of "presence, engagement, achievement", provide a suitable range of subject choices in the senior school and ensure that we are personalising learning for all students, then surely this comes at a cost.

We will, of course, make a 'reasonable endeavour' and genuinely try to meet the maximum average class size requirement of 26 but this will be achievable only by raising the minimum class threshold that individual schools determine. This in turn will lead to some subjects being under threat in many schools. Principals will be left to face this dilemma with little support or sympathy from the Ministry judging by their response to date.

Development of the timetable policy is a key aspect of the settlement and some points worthy of mentioning in relation to policy development based on personal experience and advice received over the years are:

- School policies are first and foremost the responsibility of the Board – they will of course consult with concerned parties and often delegate the writing of the policy to the Principal.
- Policies should be about governance and should exclude procedures (management) as much as possible.
- The collective agreement does not mention setting of maximum class sizes in any subject area.

Obviously the Executive will be taking the opportunity to discuss our concerns over the implementation of the new collective agreement from the perspective of principals, especially in relation to associated resourcing issues. We would welcome ongoing feedback from you on this issue and in particular any evidence that you could provide that highlights difficulties you will face in terms of meeting the new requirements.

Best wishes for the senior school prizegiving round which gets under way this week.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Gall". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'P' and 'G'.

Peter Gall
President