



# SPANZ

SECONDARY PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND INC.

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**President**  
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## President's Comment 6 2007

Schools are transforming. In many schools that transformation is being reflected in the culture of the schools. I use the term 'culture' in an organisational sense. Students are being empowered. Learning is to be valued for learning's sake. More and more we are asking students to step up and take responsibility for managing themselves: to be self-determined, to be self-motivated, to be a self-learner. 'Self' is the most important relationship skill they have to develop. Today a teacher relies much more on the power of influence than the power of authority used by yesterday's teachers.

In the twentieth century school, teacher-student relationships were based on the factory-line approach to learning. It was not unusual to hear staffroom language such as *"Let's get the troops organised"*.

Today we are trying to develop school cultures which are much more supportive and rely on building positive relationships between the teacher, the student and the parent.

The research is clear about the important role a student's family has in improving achievement. Schools are looking for new ways to engage families in the learning of their children. For example, last year I heralded Avondale College's "Family Connections" as an excellent example of the new and exciting ways in which schools were attempting to involve families, particularly parents, in the learning of their children.

As a consequence of this, I sometimes find the efforts of certain aspects of the media, particularly talk-back radio and tabloid press, somewhat unhelpful. More often than not they look to alienate schools from parents at the very time when we want to form a partnership with them. Indeed, talk-back radio and Tomorrow's Schools were launched simultaneously at the beginning of the last decade. Every individual person who has had a bad experience at school now gets the opportunity to sensationalise and exaggerate that experience. With the public assumption of 'Because I heard it on the radio it must be true'. The exception is now a wide-spread problem.

In my own experience, the majority of teachers are highly professional; much more so than when I began my career. They are dedicated to meeting the needs of their students. Yet their professionalism is being undermined and underplayed at the very time that we need partnerships between home and school to maximise learning for our students, and at the very time that we want our best school leaders to choose teaching as their career pathway.

- If you have some innovative and exciting ways that involve parents in the learning of their children, please provide information of same by reply mail, if you are prepared to share it with other principals.

- **A REMINDER – SPANZ AGM** and Gala Dinner at the end of the month at the Crowne Plaza Auckland. Todd Whittaker, the top key-note speaker at the ICP Conference, is our after-dinner speaker. Todd will tell you what great principals do differently. The AGM could be watershed time in terms of the resolution that has been foreshadowed in previous correspondence.

Graham Young  
**President**