



SPANZ

SECONDARY PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND INC.

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President
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Dear Colleague

Reflections

Many of you will have had or are about to have your senior prize giving events. These are celebratory events and it is appropriate that we do spend as much energy and enthusiasm as we possibly can on positive aspects of our own school at this time of the year.

Our schools, teachers and students, have gone through a generation of change since the advent of Tomorrow's Schools in 1989. The school environment has been shaken up. The major changes and reorientation of our education system over the past 20 years have been greater and wider ranging than generally appreciated. The authors of a 2000 Brookings Institute Publication, Fisher and Ladd, summed it up like this ... *"rarely has any country engaged in such a sustained and far-reaching overhaul of its education systems"*.

Our schools are transforming. The transformation, in a nutshell, is from teaching to learning. In spite of much of the heat and many of the debates our schools are managing that transformation extraordinarily well. We should feel proud of our endeavours. I don't however get that image from the media. Why are we led to believe that there is a problem with our schools and those who work and play in them, particularly as I don't feel that way with respect to my own children, or my friends' children or my neighbours' children. There is a small minority that let us down from time to time – but more often than not that is because some parents don't accept the responsibility that goes with being a parent. In my view, the reality is that for the majority this is the greatest generation of young people our nation has ever produced. They have lived their childhood through an era which is infinitely more complex than the one you or I had. Yet today's school leaver can run faster, think quicker, manage themselves better, are more worldly, can have mature conversations, relate better to me than I ever could relate to my parents and teachers, and feel equally comfortable mixing, integrating and socialising with those who are younger or older than themselves. They are more aware of those who are different, who have disabilities or special needs and accommodate those special needs in a mater-of-fact way.

The time is right to tell New Zealand and the rest of the world how great our young people are and how great our schools are. I feel privileged to have this job and to work in such a fantastic environment.

Graham Young
President
Secondary Principals' Association of New Zealand