



SPANZ

SECONDARY PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND INC.

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President - Graham Young
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You will be aware of SchoolSMART. It is a tool that can be used to help review your school's progress and to make decisions. It provides a general profile of your school along with details and comparisons with national data. The comparative data is often with similar schools. Currently the data can only be accessed by the principal with password access, although the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office also have password access. It includes such things as benchmark indicators for academic achievement, school leaver qualifications, teacher turn-over, ethnicity composition of roll, financial position and comparative data, property funding, expulsions, suspensions and stand-down rates, etc.

Whilst this data is intended to be used for constructive purposes in terms of making assessments about where our schools are today, and where we want them to be tomorrow, the Education Review Office has shown an interest in it and has a desire to be able to use the information as part of their standard audit procedures. Further, I suspect that the information is also used when giving consideration to the need for statutory intervention. In recent times opposition parties in government, and in particular the Hon. Bill English, have been showing an interest in the SchoolSMART website. The thrust of Bill English's comments has been around the right of parents having access to this information.

SPANZ has been asked to declare its position on this issue. On the one hand, as a professional organisation, we believe in openness, inclusiveness and the rights of local communities to be involved in decision-making about schools. On the other hand much of this information is very sensitive and read blandly, without the professional participating in interpreting the information, inaccurate conclusions can be drawn ... (i.e. "*lies, damned lies and statistics*") The government's position is that parents who want access to information can approach the school and the school can then release it in the right context.

This issue will be debated at our next Executive Meeting in an attempt to formulate a policy position. I would appreciate individual principal members informing this debate by completing the attached questionnaire and returning it by next Monday 19th June.

"Rank Your Teacher.Com"

In last week's comment I said ... *Because learning and knowledge can be acquired by anyone, anywhere, the need to teach wisdom, integrity and values increases dramatically. That is to say, one can acquire knowledge easily and readily for either good or evil purposes. Schools therefore assume a greater responsibility role in terms of citizenship and using new-founded knowledge for positive purposes. Text-bullying and teen-web-sites which are used to abuse fellow students, and in some cases teachers, fraud through internet banking and designing a terrorist bomb off the internet, are all examples of how instant knowledge via the internet can be used for inappropriate reasons. It is as a consequence of this that schools must 'up the ante' on using knowledge for wise and purposeful actions, always with the greater good of all in mind.* Since making that comment the bebo website and the 'rank your teacher' website have been given some prominence in the media.

We will not successfully manage text bullying or internet bullying by banning cell phones and the internet. It is only by emphasising positive citizenship that such issues will dissipate. That comment notwithstanding I would encourage all principals to follow the lead that has been given by some schools in blocking access to these sites from school-based computers. I may well elaborate on this topic in a future president's comment.

RTLb – Sector Reference Group

Also attached is a Secondary Questionnaire and Recommendations from the Project Team. Paul Daley has asked for feedback and comment on these documents. principal@sanctamaria.school.nz

Graham Young
President