



## SECONDARY PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND INC

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

#### *Family Connections*

I have been surprised and, to a degree, disappointed with one of the minority views on Avondale College's recent announcements re "Family Connections". The research is very clear. There are two overwhelming influences in the learning of our children. The first is the role of the parent and the extended family. It is where the child has its first experiences in learning and where the foundations for language and literacy are formulated. It is where the child first starts to develop dreams and aspirations. The second is the role of the teacher and the relationship the teacher forms with the child.

Up until now we have concentrated our efforts on improving teaching and improving the systems which support teaching, whilst only skirting around the edges of the parent's role in their child's learning. "Family Connections" provides Avondale College parents an opportunity of becoming involved in the learning of their children and in connecting with their children's school. My view of "Family Connections" is that it is a positive model of partnership between home, school and child. To those who put a negative spin on it – 'big brother is watching' – and narrow its value down to mere surveillance, are at risk of viewing school/parent relationships negatively.

We live in an open society that demands high trust and high accountability. Parents are entitled to any information you have on their child. Why should they wait three months for a ten minute interview, particularly when it 'happened today'? Technology offers parents the opportunity to get it when it happens. Most schools are already doing some of this: reports on-line web pages, with newsletters etc, but no school has gone quite as far as Avondale College. They are to be congratulated on the lead they have given us.

"Family Connections" didn't come into being over-night; it would have been a year or more in the making. We have the software but we need to be timely about how and when we follow the lead Avondale College has given us. Brent Lewis has shown a willingness to share with us and I am hopeful we can get him involved in this year's round of Principals' Training Seminars.

***Graham Young***  
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