

THORNDON SCHOOL - CHAIRPERSONS REPORT 2008

Kia ora Koutou

In the 5 or so years that I've been a school Board member I've seen challenges and changes that reflect our positive dynamic growth as a successful learning centre. The Board I'm part of now operates differently from the one I first joined, and it's predominate composition of professional women makes it a highly capable and well informed governance unit.

I must start by thanking the teaching and management team at Thorndon – they are the engine room of the school and I know that there have been some testing times during the year. The end of the first term was an example, when the team had to adapt and regroup with the unexpected departure of two staff members.

The fruits of their effort and the effort of our kids with the support of their parents are reflected in the all important outcome of “student achievement”. Our standardised testing regime revealed that from Term 1 to Term 4, achievement levels, which were already high, grew significantly and are generally well above the national averages in all cohorts in both the numeracy and literacy areas.

As a Maori parent I am particularly pleased that our Maori students are performing as well as their non-Maori counterparts, a feature of our success that's not typical throughout the country

In 2008, we were reviewed again as part of ERO's review cycle. I'm pleased to say that although we were pulled up on some relatively minor management compliance matters, the important aspects of our ERO report relating to learning outcomes for our kids, were very positive.

I'm not sure what other parents think, but I believe Thorndon School has a culture that sets our kids apart from others. I think the diversity of our community, the attitude and personality of our staff, and the types of things our kids learn and the ways they are encouraged to learn them contribute to this. Most encouraging is that I think we achieve our vision as articulated in our school charter “to develop independent and caring thinkers and learners”.

Some of the inspiring achievements for Thorndon School in 2008 are as follows:

- Set-up of blogs so that our kids could publish their thoughts online;
- Took the school's art out into the community for our Art Week.
- Held a wonderful Art exhibition at Wholly Bagels
- Produced movies and published them on You Tube
- Participated:
 - In a national Radio Script Writing Competition gaining second place.
 - In the National Young Designers Competition taking first place in the Architecture section and reaching the finals of the Cultural Fashion section.
 - In the Wellington Regional Science Fair with 2 awards
 - In the BP Technology Challenge taking third place in the Junior Section.
- Completed the full requirements for the EnviroSchools bronze award
- Had our Sports Squad address the Wellington Wairarapa Regional Principals Conference
- Produced the Wellington Junior Chess Champion and under 9 champion
- Won the Knoche Cup back from Brooklyn School and were Netball champions in the Northern Region.
- Engaged in an extremely wide ranging and successful extension and enrichment programme.
- Organised a very enjoyable and successful school camp for our senior students.

The quality of our staff is another major factor in our successes with the kids. The external recognition received by some of our core staff team members for their achievements is testament to this. Examples include:

- Alistair being accepted onto a national course for Aspiring Principals and invited to lead a writing course for children in Upper Hutt schools.
- Rebecca being on the management team for a National Arts Course and Krista being a member of the management team for a National Dance Course.

And finally, I couldn't end this report without mentioning the Thorndon Fair. The major event in every year with which we have the most intense love-hate relationship.

We hate it because it takes up so much of our time and energy for months leading up to the first weekend in December every year. It is absolutely gruelling and those at the centre of its organisation - Carleen Needham, Carol Shortis, Jacqui McVie, Carol Weston, Jo Freeman and

Kelly Falconer deserve to be decorated for their unflinching efforts, right down to the 12 hour shifts they do on the day. Likewise, Bill and his team of staff, the parents and the kids who all pitch in to make the Fair a bigger and better event every year.

So that's why we hate it.

We love it because it is a Wellington institution and we are proud to say that we manage the largest street fair in the Country once every year – and after more than 25 years it is our institution. That's why we love it. Oh – and there's the fact that it earned us nearly \$60,000 this year – twice as much as most previous years and a symbol of our success generally – I reckon.

Ngā mihi mō te Kirihimete

Anaru Mill