

**THORNDON SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING  
7 MAY 2025 AT 5.30 PM IN THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE**

**In Attendance**

Etuale Togia (Principal)  
Leah Reid (Staff Representative)  
Melleny Black  
Murray Fox  
Toby Barach  
Chevelle Ataera (online)

The meeting started with a karakia.

Board meeting next week.

Natalie's resignation.

Timely to bring the team together.

Korero around regulations and the Education Training Act.

Important for Board to see how Etuale carries three hats – parent, ERO, Principal.

What is success for your children?

What is equity for your children?

Equity is knowing children's starting places.

Teachers – how are they resources and guided?

Etuale explained how he works on a daily basis.

Asking Board to support us. But how?

Understanding how Etuale works, how the team works.

Understanding of the way Etuale and the team are going to be delivering.

Understanding responsibilities as a Board.

So long as it doesn't compromise us or our kids.

Etuale trying to get away from the generic aspects.

So we don't compromise us as a Thorndon community.

Slide – Education and Training Act. In its purest and finest.

Aspect around (a) every student at the school is able to attain their highest possible standard in educational achievement and (b) the school.

(i) is around our culture.

(ii) surveys around inclusion.

- Principal's visibility.

- Board has to look after Etuale's wellbeing and he looks after everyone at school.

(iii) health and safety.

(c) everything we do is based around our children. Starts with caring and kindness.

(d) the school gives effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi

- focus – one of our priority groups is Maori.

- journey to connect with mana whenua.

To meet the primary objectives the Board must:

(a) have particular regard to the statement of national education and learning priorities (NELPS) which are being disbanded. Going back to NEG and NAGs. This will come in later.

(b)(i) strong initiatives in reading, writing and maths. This year given resources. Next year have to complete. ERO will be checking – very top down. Compliance based.

National assessments – that's fine as long as it doesn't compromise our learning. Best way to tackle is how the government are approaching it.

(d) community of learning.

Just joined kahui ako – confirmation of funding today. Only to find out that it will be disbanded in 2026.

ERO – they will come back.

We are doing things to keep us compliant that has been mandated by the government.

Slide – NZSBA

- Structures that we need to have.

Part A – all ticked off and ready to go.

Part B – presiding member and principal still to evolve.

Melleny asked around governance policies, do we have all the board roles and responsibilities?

Sometimes schooldocs policies don't always align with us.

Is it worthwhile to be with SchoolDocs?

It definitely ticks us so we are compliant.

Eg. Finance committee.

Melleny has concerns that we don't meet all aspects of our policies.

Part C – procedures are stand alone eg. Behaviour management doesn't align with the policy.

Almost a misalignment of policies and procedures.

Etuale has been looking at AI policy. Need alignment.

Ways forward – to workshop some of these areas so it aligns with our procedures.

Part D – delegations around Etuale.

- how delegations work.

- valuable having Graeme McFadyen coming in and talking to the Board and getting information from the Board.

- he knows how to pull that information out.

Thorndon Perspective – how we work

1 – Governance.

2 – Management.

3 – Learning.

Methodology is flipped upside down.

Strategic goals are at the top.

A lot of our actions threat through the strategic goals and plans.

Gives Etuale next steps with students.

Te Taurapa

- has narrative of our school.
- links to job descriptions.
- comes through the voices and aspirations of our students.

Mahi Tahī

- leaders.
- Etuale's role.
- Charlotte's role.
- Team Leader roles.

Next steps to refine this so it is even more specific to our students.

Diversity and equity – next step is for teams to develop their own strategic plans.  
Displayed Tui's plan.

Charlotte – accountability in the SENCO role.

ESOL

Music – it has always been a part of our culture. A lot of our equipment is borrowed. She is bringing knowledge and wisdom – it has finance, property, etc. in there as well.

Systems – governing policies. Hopefully it links it back.

Methodology

May have already seen it as part of Etuale's presentation to his application.

Lot of instability at our school – change has to be done together and with purpose.

Leadership have his methodology.

Important for Etuale to have everything put on the table.

Equitywise, we are in a good place and good space.

Our kawa is around knowing our students.

Teachers develop defaults. We have set up in a way to have these difficult conversations.

Students are in a good space at the moment. Where to next?

Bringing people along. The way they are approached, eg. They did not realise they were moving along with the strategic plan.

Our culture is in a better place now.

How is buy in from teaching staff?

Initial buy in was high.

Spaces that we have.

Teaching in a traditional methodology.

Teams are asking more.

Importance of connections.

Now in a good place where teachers want to be here.  
 Board should use Graeme to do pulse checks on staff.  
 Portfolio discussions – how we best utilise our skills.  
 Do you want community to add skills?  
 What process will we use to get new board member?

Bit disturbed about information on commissioner that was brought up at the last meeting.

Etuale not sure how much you know as a Board.  
 An unofficial complaint was made by Charlotte about Etuale to Natalie.  
 Issue between staff members.  
 Information shared with Etuale. His opinion was shared back to Charlotte.  
 Charlotte rang Etuale unhappy. Moving forward, Charlotte did not want to communicate with Etuale any further.  
 Natalie contacted Etuale regarding a restorative conversation between Etuale and Charlotte.  
 Etuale approached Ministry of Education.  
 Etuale spoke to Natalie but wanted MoE, a lawyer and ERO present. He felt undermined as a Principal.  
 Ministry of Education spoke to Etuale, they had concerns about Charlotte and wanted to appoint a commissioner.  
 Charlotte did not attend Etuale's welcome.  
 Etuale started from scratch. Could see what was wrong with the culture of the school.  
 He didn't feel he could go to the Board as he didn't have any connection with the Board.  
 Never had a restorative.  
 No conversation with Natalie.  
 He did not feel supported at all.  
 Ministry of Education are definitely supportive.  
 Thorndon was always a place he wanted to come back to.  
 He doesn't like to speak about this.  
 No Board members know about this.  
 Etuale felt there was a reneging on the ipads.  
 Etuale was questioning Natalie.  
 Need to think about who the new presiding member should be and understanding the role, and how they connect with Etuale.  
 Poor transparency.  
 Biggest struggle coming in was keeping the mana of this place.  
 Chevelle apologised to Etuale on behalf of the Board and acknowledged his transparency. She feels embarrassed about how things have happened. She thanked him for sharing. Moving forward take it as a lesson learnt. Let the Board know how they can support him.  
 Melleny thought that this conversation has cleared up a lot.

Leah spoke about the complaint she had submitted at the end of 2024, regarding the culture of the school. Her complaint wasn't addressed or acknowledged until

weeks later in February. No one spoke to Leah personally. Natalie and Chevelle did check in on her wellbeing.

How do we create a pathway where there is a clear point where the Board are involved?

We are in a better place now.  
Staff feel they now how to get to whoever they need to speak with.  
Now, we create our way.  
Lesson learnt. But don't let it sit. Use it to make us better.

The type of Board that Etuale needs will question him and support him.  
Next week will appoint a presiding member, and delegations.  
How do we pull the community in?

**Meeting closed with a karakia: 7.04 pm**

**Date for Next Meeting: 14 May 2025**

Signed:  \_\_\_\_\_  
Presiding Member

Date: 14 / 5 / 25