



VICTORIA AVENUE SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Victoria Avenue School
Board of Trustees Newsletter
November 2011

Welcome to the seventh newsletter for 2011 from your Board of Trustees.

The Board met again on 7 November and considered a broad range of matters including changes to the composition of the Board, the ERO report, concerns regarding the use of wifi, the parent survey, our financial position at the end of Term 3 and various property initiatives.

Term 4 is now underway and the Rugby World Cup is safely in the trophy cabinet for the next four years. Phew! Halloween has also been celebrated for another year, with a record turn-out from children and parents at the Halloween fun-night organised by the PTS. There is plenty still to look forward to towards the end of Term 4, including the annual carol service, various events for our Year 6 leavers and prizegiving.

New Board Member

We are delighted to welcome Bob Weston as a new member of the Board. Bob has been selected to fill a casual vacancy for a parent-elected trustee following Garry Scarborough's recent resignation.

Bob owns and manages his own engineering business, Entec Services, and has significant experience in management and general commercial fields. Bob was previously on the Board at Monte Cecilia School where his wife Anna was also a teacher.

Bob and Anna have three sons – Toby in Year 5, Zac in Year 1 and Nick starting school in 2013.

Resignation of Staff-Elected Board Member

Sharon Reynolds has announced her resignation from the Board with effect from the end of the current school year. Sharon has made a strong contribution to the Board in many areas over the past [four?] years, and we have been very fortunate to have had the benefit of her services and expertise. We extend our sincere thanks to Sharon for her contribution.

To replace Sharon as the staff-elected trustee, the Board will be conducting a by-election open to all school staff immediately prior to the start of Term 1 next year. Further details will be provided following the next Board meeting.

ERO Visit

The Board has now received the "unconfirmed" report from Education Review Office (ERO) following its visit at the end of Term 3. The Board has reviewed this report and made some minor comments to ERO.

Of particular note is that ERO has indicated that it expects to undertake its next review of our school in four-to-five years rather than the standard three years. This reflects ERO's findings that our school's curriculum is consistently effective in promoting student learning and all of the following are evident:

- Learners are actively engaged in their learning and are progressing very well;
- Māori learners are actively engaged in their learning and are progressing very well and succeeding as Māori;
- There is a culture of high expectations for students and staff;
- There is a school-wide culture of rigorous critical reflection and ongoing self review which supports improvement;
- Leadership and management are highly reflective, strategic and effective;
- Teaching is highly effective and makes very good use of student achievement information;
- The school has taken all reasonable steps to provide a safe and inclusive environment;
- Governance is highly effective; and
- The school is highly effective in engaging the community in the life of the school.

Less than 10% of schools achieve this extended review period – so well done again to our senior management, teachers and support staff for achieving this excellent result.

The final ERO report will be confirmed later in Term 4 and will be made available on the school's website at that time.

Student Achievement

The Board reviewed the results of the school-wide descriptive writing analysis for Terms 1 and 3. The results showed significant improvement between Term 1 and Term 3 across all year groups. However, the Senior Management Team has highlighted its desire to raise the overall standard of descriptive writing for all students. To achieve this goal, and to help sustain ongoing improvement, writing will be a key curriculum focus and staff professional development area across the school in 2012.

Wifi in Our School

As previously advised, the Board received a letter in August from a parent concerned about the possible health risks associated with the use of wifi in the school. The Board subsequently wrote to the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health to seek their guidance on this matter.

The Board has now received a response from the Minister of Education which includes specific advice from the Ministry of Health. The response notes the following:

- “Wi-Fi does not pose a risk to staff or students in areas where it is used”
- “the Ministry is satisfied that Wi-Fi equipment is safe in schools”

The full response from the Minister of Education is available on the school's website in this edition of the BOT Newsletter. The advice from the Ministry of Health has also been highlighted to all New Zealand schools in the latest edition of the Education Gazette.

<http://www.edgazette.govt.nz/Articles/Article.aspx?ArticleId=8477>

Based on this response, the Board is satisfied that the use of wifi in our school is safe for all students and staff. The Board will continue to monitor any new developments in this area and to promote the safe use of wifi in our school in accordance with guidance from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health.

Financial Update

Andrew Cleland updated the Board on the School's financial performance up to the end of September 2011.

This update indicated that the School was ahead of our budgeted surplus for the first nine months, but is expecting to be slightly behind our budget for the full year. Our cash and investments balance improved to be slightly over \$300,000 and remains at a level consistent with the Board's minimum target level of reserves.

We still have almost \$10,000 of overdue expenses outstanding from parents, mainly relating to stationery, school camps, and other trips and activities. Consistent with our debt collection procedure, long-term debtors have been passed to a debt collection agency.

School contributions continued to be ahead of those achieved at the same time in the previous two years. However, contributions for approximately 26% of the children at school have not yet been paid in full, and no contributions have been paid for approximately 12% of the children at school. We encourage all parents to pay the school contribution if you are able to do so before the end of the school year.

Property Update

Allan Short updated the Board on current property initiatives. Key points to note are:

- The new shade canopy outside Rooms 11-14 is underway and is expected to be completed by the end of November;
- We are seeking quotes for the "Marvellous Makeover Project" developed by our Year 6 students (as outlined in the previous newsletter);
- We are also seeking quotes for two roofing projects (the hall and Rooms 1-6) which we plan to complete over the summer holidays; and
- We are investigating various options for upgrading Rooms 1-7 which will be considered further at our next Board meeting.

The Board is also delighted that Helen Evans will be joining the property sub-committee going forward. Helen is a civil engineer and has made significant contributions to numerous property projects in our community, including at St Aidan's church and the "Marvellous Makeover Project".

Parent Survey

As indicated in the previous newsletter, the Board is conducting an online parent survey again this term. You should have received an email about this already.

The survey is intended to provide all parents with the opportunity to provide feedback on our school and how we can make it even better for our children. The survey results will be used to review school performance and establish objectives for 2012 and beyond. We look forward to your feedback.

Board Dinner

Finally, the Board held a dinner on 11 November to acknowledge the significant contributions made to the school by:

- Garry Scarborough (Board member for six years and significant contributor to all our property projects over this period);
- Sharon Reynolds (Staff representative on the Board for the past four years); and
- Kim Hamilton (PTS Chairperson and Gala Committee Chairperson for the past three years).

Our sincere thanks again to Garry, Sharon and Kim for the significant time, effort and resources they have contributed to our school to make it a better place for all our children.

We hope everyone has an enjoyable Term 4 and is making the most of the increased daylight hours as we head into summer.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Monday 12 December during the final week of Term 4.

Rob Hamilton
Chairperson