

Students making a difference to teacher effectiveness!

Part two of an opinion piece on student input into teacher effectiveness, by Wendy Esera, principal at Newlands Intermediate School, Wellington.

In one area where student enjoyment had been low, with a change of teaching team the following year, this area became very high.

As each end of term approaches, some staff even come to the principal to predict for themselves what they think students will report about their learning programmes from that term.

Staff are being more critically reflective of just how effectively they are delivering learning programmes. In most cases, what staff are predicting is in fact exactly what students are then reporting in their surveys.

At the end of last year (2004), the principal surveyed the eight year eight student councillors due to move on to college. They completed a confidential written survey about reasons for why they either did, or did not enjoy, programmes the school had provided for them over their two years at the school.

The responses were overwhelming. Seven out of the eight students felt that the reason why they did not enjoy a particular learning area was because of the teacher.

Only one student in the group did not make this statement. Instead he made the response, "... if you just hate something like I hate sport, then no matter what anyone does I would hate it anyway."

All eight students went on to say that the reason for why they did enjoy a learning area, came down to the teacher who taught it.

As the end of Term One 2005 approached, students in the school were again surveyed by the principal to see how well they had enjoyed their learning programmes.

The average percentages teachers were gaining had become even higher with six out of the 13 teachers gaining an average enjoyment percentage of 80 per

cent, or better. One teacher gained 100 per cent from one of their classes.

By the July 1st survey, that six teachers had become nine teachers out of 13 gaining 80 per cent or better. Not one but eight teachers also enjoyed seeing at least one class where they had 100 per cent enjoyment/engagement reported by students.

When teachers reflect on the way they are managing learning programmes, and when they work to improve the effectiveness of their teaching, that is exactly what happens.

Surveys carried out in this school over the last two years have shown that "students make a difference to their teacher's learning". When teachers listen to what their students are saying, they get a clear message.

Students know whether they are engaging in their learning programmes, or not. Nobody is a better judge of how successful student

learning is, than students themselves.

Other principals have talked to me about doing this sort of surveying and they have concern with staff feeling threatened.

Teachers who initially may feel this way, soon come to realise that this is not an appraisal threat but a teacher professional development activity. A lot of talking needs to be done.

I made the mistake, after the first survey, of sharing the data with the whole staff about individual curriculum areas. When you were the only teacher teaching that area in the school it was obvious of course, who the teacher was.

This was careless on my part and needless to say, it was the first and last time I reported back to staff like this. The reporting back has become a totally personal one to one thing now. No other teacher knows how well their colleagues are performing with students unless they choose to.

The way that things are reported now to the staff as a whole about the data from each term, is done in a way that anonymity is assured.

The data gathered at Newlands Intermediate School strongly supports the contention that there is a high correlation between improved student achievement and student enjoyment in learning.

Effective teachers are teachers who constantly reflect on their practice in order to more successfully engage every diverse learner that they teach!

Alan Duff's charity is an open book

Books in Homes, the charity inspired by renowned NZ writer Alan Duff, celebrates its 10th birthday this year. It continues to enhance the lives of children and families, with 435 lower decile schools

sponsors to fund their books. Children choose their own books, rather than being allocated them, and take them home to keep. The child's name is inscribed on a label on each book, alongside that

standing.

Peter Johnstone, principal at Camberley School, Hastings, notes that closer ties were formed between community and school and students developed a love of books, hunger to learn, and respect for property, each other and themselves. There were also

(cont'd p6)



Spreading the good words – author Alistair McIntyre at Opunake Primary School.

currently involved and approximately 85,000 children each receiving a minimum of five free books a year.

Each school joins in a financial partnership with their

of the school and the sponsor who has donated it.

The programme was developed with the help of Christine Fernyhough and the results have been out-



BUDGET WISE, DOLLAR RICH

Anton Nadilo and Andrew Lendnal, Exisle, RRP \$24.99

Despite being sub-titled How to get everything you want... and more, this is not a book proffering any get-rich-quick snake oil or claiming to open hitherto undiscovered doors to financial success. It is an approachable and well-organised volume, full of common sense material that is targeted at NZ conditions. The tone is just right, conversational without being too breezy, authoritative without being condescending, with specialised financial jargon kept to a minimum.

Areas covered include household budgeting, credit/debt, investments, insurance, wills, trusts, the new Property (Relationships) Act, and student loans. It includes worksheets which offer an easy way for budgeters to monitor progress. (These can also be downloaded from the website: www.BudgetWiseDollarRich.co.nz/worksheets).

Part of the book's value is the mere fact of it bringing so much information together in a concise form. As the authors point out, getting started on a budget (as in any other venture) is half the battle. Just writing down a statement of one's current financial situation and future hopes and goals can do a tremendous amount to help anyone who feels snared in a tangle of conflicting possibilities.

Wellington-based Anton Nadilo is a successful speaker and financial mentor and a frequent presenter on the Good Morning Show. Andrew Lendnal writes a column for the *NZ Investment Journal* and is the founder of Breakthru Kids, which educates children about money.

THE BRO'TOWN ANNUAL

Random House, RRP \$29.95

Twelve months ago *bro'Town* was launched onto NZ television and now, coinciding with the beginning of the second TV series, Random House have published *The bro'Town Annual*.

As in the show, it is non-PC comic adult animation based on the lives of five teenagers growing up in a mythologised Morningside, a suburb of Auckland. A glossary is provided for anyone unfamiliar with multi-cultural Down-Under humour. Funky illustrations include a fold-out map of the area the teenagers live in and character profiles.

Games, pull-out stickers and a section entitled 'Ever wondered how an episode of bro'Town is made?' all help create a package that is bound to be a hit with teenagers. It should also be of great interest to the growing number of animators in this country. Often funny and not meant to be taken seriously, this light read will make a great present for fans of the show and may even become a collectable.

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