

Elmwood Normal School

Board Talk - August 2018

Dear ENS Community

We are well past the half year mark already and the Board is in the middle of its term of office and continues to work to enhance the learning experience of all the Elmwood children.

As you will be aware at the beginning of 2018 the Government decided that National Standards would no longer be applied by schools. Instead we would use something else to determine how student achievement would be measured, however what that would be wasn't determined. Along with the introduction of the online parent reporting portal, LincEd, setting reporting standards to suit our young learners was a significant focus for both the leadership team and the Board. I would like acknowledge the amount of work and effort that Paul, Jill, and all the staff have put in to this area, with still more to be done.

Another area of focus for everyone this year has been community engagement. After a bit of a lull, it has been good to see assemblies again well supported, not to mention the excellent support for cultural and sporting activities, as well as events such as the Hangi (where offers of support were far more than could be catered for) and Grandparents Day. It was great to see our students excelling as wonderful hosts for the morning, showing their elders how proud they were of their school.

All these things continue to show the terrific support the school receives from the community. School activities remain very busy with the full learning activities and extras such as the orchestra, choir and Kapa Haka. The auditorium is extensively used by both school and the community. Coming events include the Ball on 25 August which I am sure will be well supported (and a big shout out to ENSCA for running this and which again continues to work hard to support the school) and various camps - the parental support is vastly over-subscribed yet again.

Around the physical environment of the school you will have noted some improvements with the paving and landscaping outside room 6a and the new flagpole which has just been erected. Also coming soon is an upgrade of the entrance area off Leinster Road. This brings me nicely to the wider redevelopment of the school environment.

The Board has decided that it is now time to commence the post-earthquake redevelopment of the school. This is a significant process which will impact the school for at least the next 30 years. While we have been living with some parts of the school that are less than ideal given their age and we would have liked to upgrade them sooner, we concluded that they remained workable in the short term and that some other schools needed their work sooner than Elmwood. Also, and importantly, potentially rushing the process might lead to less than desirable outcomes and from what we are hearing, the Ministry and its rebuild contractors have 'learnt from their mistakes', so coming in towards the end of the whole process is not a bad thing. Finally, to know where we were, the Board had to deal with the auditorium, which the Board 80% owns, which had considerable post-quake and leaky building issues.

In any event, the Board has entered the rebuild process, which is likely to take around 3 years. Initially, the school must prepare an 'Educational Brief' whereby we decide what and how learning works at Elmwood (essentially our learning philosophy). Once the Brief is agreed with the Ministry of Education, they appoint a team to plan and design the school. While we will endeavour to think about the rebuild as widely and openly as possible, there are limits as to what we can do and also what we need to do. Obviously the amount of funding is a primary issue, as is the size of our school both in terms of physical size and roll and zone size (the latter in particular impacts the amount of funding available). Not all buildings need replacement (although we are keen to see the old junior block replaced) and some only need minor refurbishment. But how we go about this all comes back to the Educational Brief. I think it's fair to say we want to see a modern and flexible environment, but one that reflects Elmwood's history and core values.

During the Educational Brief process, which will take us into early 2019, it is the intention of the Board to engage with the Elmwood community to learn more fully what their desires are around learning. I encourage you to support this process, with an open mind, so that we get the very best we can for our current and future learners.

Finally, I would like to thank my Board colleagues who have put in a lot of effort recently. As is often the case, it's not always obvious the amount of work people do behind the scenes; things just seem to happen.

Thank you to everyone for their ongoing support of the school and I trust the children are enjoying their learning and fun times with friends at school.

If you have any matters you would like the Board to consider, please feel free to contact us via the School Office.

Have a great rest of term 3 and 2018.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'MHollis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right. The signature is set against a light blue grid background.

Malcolm Hollis
Board Chair