

CHAPTER SIX

Te Kura O Kawepo

... the Natives are, as a rule, childishly anxious for the establishment of schools, rash in entering into engagements for their support, unscrupulous in their attempts to evade such arrangements . . .

Lt-Colonel J H Russell, Inspector of Schools,
to the Native Minister, 1873

We were very lucky in Papakura. In June 2002 when our community left Joycetown, the local marae controlled by one Mormon family, it was set free to establish its own goals. The luck was that in recruiting new people, Hera Marshall to a management role and Aunty Wai Makiri-Mason to our board, the Kotahitanga Community Trust imported a huge amount of expertise in education. Hera had been chair of the Flaxmere College Board of Trustees for a number of years, and Aunty Wai had been involved in supporting student learning at Auckland University of Technology for longer still.

Hera and Wai added a wider dimension to our one-on-one and small-group perspective of teaching and learning. We had experience in tutoring students for the old School Certificate and bursary examinations, and one of us had gained a reputation as able to get a block of wood through bursary (NCEA Level Three) calculus.

We also had experience, through a long association with Hastings Boys' High School, in extending able students. The basis of this was the award of a number of scholarships and bursaries over a ten-year period.

In partnership with very able teachers and a supportive senior staff and board, we led a project called 'Cloning the Huia'. At a scientific level this resulted in the extraction and sequencing of DNA from huia, a species extinct for nearly one hundred years. Scientists led these experiments from Otago and Massey universities, and we remain grateful to Professors Diana Hill and Dave Lambert for their enthusiastic support. Boys from forms three to seven participated in this, and the third formers gained a good grasp of polymerase chain reaction technology, something not touched on in the curriculum until form seven (Year 13) despite its fundamental importance to biotechnology. The science did not happen in isolation, and in 1999 the school hosted an international conference to consider whether the programme which might eventually result in a clone, should even proceed. This conference attracted international media attention and was attended by Ngati Huia.

'Cloning the Huia' generated learning opportunities across a number of curriculum areas, including history and geography where it provided a good way into studying the effects of colonisation on the landscape. In social studies, discussion of the ethics of cloning was supported by a visit from an Auckland University ethicist.

In 2003, as a community, we began to appreciate a number of things, perhaps because we were seeing things through new eyes. Certainly Hera brought skills in listening to the people and in making their voices audible more widely, that as a community we had never experienced before. Some of these realisations were:

- Papakura High School's low expectations of Maori teenagers.
 - The self-fulfilling way in which the racist ideas that Maori are dishonest, violent and abusive led to stand-downs and predetermined board of trustee hearings.
 - The high proportion of young adult Maori who could not read, write or calculate well enough to use these skills in a work situation.
 - The poor educational achievement of the majority of Maori in Papakura schools.
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- The 'take it or leave it' approach of many Papakura schools which meant that many Maori dropped out and became young parents, young criminals, or both.
- The refusal of Papakura schools to accept any responsibility for Maori non-achievement.
- The refusal of Papakura schools to enter into any dialogue with a community such as ours which did not pat them on the back.
- The poor performance of a number of Papakura kohanga reo.

In 2003 we attended the parent-teacher interviews at Papakura High School with one of our young people. This boy, in Year 10 (Form 4), could barely read and write and did not know even his two times tables. Rather than being challenged to catch up, he was being given worksheets that were the kind of thing parents give young kids to keep them occupied in the car during a long journey. The interview was an eye-opener. The teacher was lovely. She was the ideal elderly aunty, and she really did care for the children in her home room. However, her main concern was to keep the kids out of trouble as she had come to believe that it was a waste of time to try to teach her students anything. Docility was the most that could be expected and this was achieved by loosening the reins so that a degree of lateness was tolerated and other rules that applied to the rest of the school were relaxed for the cabbage class.

The years 2002 and 2003 were also the time in which Papakura responded to the Michael Choy murder. Michael Choy was the son of a long-serving local doctor. He was assaulted and killed by a group of seven youths when delivering a pizza. The police responded to Pakeha pressure to reduce youth crime by excluding Maori youth from the central business district. Kids in town were picked up by patrol cars and returned home. The police worked with the truancy service to ensure that kids went to school, whether or not they achieved anything there. The philosophy was that Maori at school were not climbing in working people's windows, and Maori who weren't in the CBD could not tag or shoplift. Police-think is grounded in the observation that although Maori make up only 15 per

cent of the population, they are charged and convicted for 67 per cent of the solved offending. The police see truancy as leading to burglary, and burglars as progressing to violent offending. To them, crime prevention is largely about preventing truancy as this keeps kids off the slippery slope. These were effective short-term solutions from a school-attendance and crime-reduction perspective but they were not supported by any longer-term strategies to provide opportunities for Maori youth.

The foreseeable consequence of this short-term youth oppression without the provision of longer-term opportunities was an increase in the alienation of youth, expressed in a variety of forms including an increase in youth suicide.

By 2004 the Kotahitanga Community Trust had formulated its mission as one of filling in the gaps in our community's infrastructure. Our health services had a recurrent funding stream at last and the trust was able to turn to a much more important issue – raising the average income of Maori families in Papakura. So many things come down to family income: children from higher-income families do better in school; members of higher-income families live longer and are healthier as they age; children from higher-income families are less likely to be taken from their parents by Child, Youth and Family and less likely to come before the Courts. Yet in Papakura, the majority of Maori children live in homes where nobody is in full-time employment.

Nationwide, the Maori unemployment rate has dropped from 26 per cent in 1992 to 8.7 per cent in 2005. This is a dramatic improvement but it still represents one adult Maori in twelve. Moreover, unemployment statistics are misleading. The number unemployed is not the number of people able to work but not working; it is the number of people actively seeking work but unable to find even part-time work. People who have given up looking for work, as well as people who cannot find a full-time job, do not count as unemployed. Nor do the increasing numbers of Maori on the DPB, sickness benefit and invalid's benefit. Table 9 shows the number of people claiming the unemployment, sickness and invalid benefit from 1998–2002. It is extracted from Table 2.1 of Smith (2004).

Table 9: *Numbers receiving unemployment, sickness, invalid and domestic purposes benefits, 1998–2002*

Benefit type	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Unemployment	187,176	166,576	156,831	143,465	141,770
Sickness	34,075	33,116	32,838	34,522	36,513
Invalid's	50,180	51,795	55,971	60,570	62,525
Domestic purposes	114,137	110,653	110,039	109,599	110,087

Our community's approach to raising average Maori household income is two-pronged. More Maori need to be in full-time work and they need to be earning higher incomes. This was a ten-year mission but a beginning was made in 2004.

WINZ had, and continues to have, a very active programme of work-preparation courses, and as long as beneficiaries are on such a course they do not count as unemployed. These courses are generic and often do not meet the requirements of either the unemployed person or the employer. The infrastructure gap here is the existence of jobs that people are prepared to do. The Kotahitanga trust decided it could assist in filling this gap by supporting workers into franchises or by the establishment of training or catalyst franchises, for example, lawn-mowing, where a competent lawn-mower initially had the franchise managed for him or her by the trust, acquired the necessary business skills over time, became truly an independent contractor, purchased his or her own franchise, left the catalyst franchise and a new 'apprentice' franchisee was taken on. During 2004 the trust assisted several of its members into franchises.

The other infrastructure gap that we can do something about over a five- to ten-year time frame is education, from ages three to ninety-three. We hope to encourage parents not currently looking for work to get back in the workforce by assisting our community to provide unit standard-based courses in partnership with a local private training establishment (PTE). In the medium or long term there are a number of options here. The trust could act as a recruitment and tutoring service to a local PTE. Although there is a potential downside from the loss of independence and

the related subordination of our community to the commercial imperatives of the host PTE, this path prevents duplication and fragmentation.

A second option is to purchase a stake in an existing PTE. In theory, this might remove some of the downside risk of being a mere recruitment and tutoring service.

A third course, and the one we originally pursued because it provided us with some insight into what to look for in any existing PTE we might want to form a relationship with, was to apply for registration as a PTE. We knew this application was unlikely to be successful, partly because the NZQA had worked hard from 2001 to reduce the number of Maori PTEs, and partly because we did not wish to take responsibility for the teaching and learning provided by our community. Our interest was in assessment.

In 2004, Kotahitanga Community Trust provided some rooms and some resources, including computers and tutors, so that members of our community could establish their own classes. Te reo, korowai and computing classes resulted.

The real issues in Maori education, though, were not in the area of adult learning or community classes. They were with early childhood education, state schools and teenagers leaving school with no qualifications. State schools, in particular Papakura High School, were the urgent problem in the early months of 2004. Some parents in our community had gone to the trouble of applying for a home schooling exemption for their children to avoid Papakura High School. Although this avoided the harms of attending the school, it did nothing to improve the young person's chances of leaving school with a qualification.

Early in the first Term, one of our boys was stood down from Papakura High School for fighting. One of the teachers, who had also taught the boy's father, told him that his father had amounted to nothing and he would too. At about the same time his cousin, who lived in the same street, hanged herself from the swings in the local park. This young man, in his tenth year of state education, and with government funding of approximately \$5000 going to his school for every one of those ten years, could not add two digits: he could not calculate the sum of nine and

seven. Yet he was not stupid. We were able to teach him addition in less than a day with the aid of a ruler to use as a number line.

By March 2004 Kotahitanga Community Trust found itself with about half a dozen young people turning up at its offices every day for schooling and we began to teach them. The local schools complained to the Ministry of Education that we were operating an unregistered school in breach of the Education Act. The Ministry, accepting Papakura High School's claims at face value, wrote to us saying that we were in breach of the Education Act and that we risked prosecution for operating an unregistered school. Neither then, nor at any time since, have we been able to get a straight answer from the Ministry, concerning a definition of 'school'. The most we get is some version of, 'What you fellas are doing, that's a school,' and in response to the question, 'What makes our operation a school?' comes the reply, 'It must be a school because the local schools who are complaining about you say it is'.

The Ministry assured us that our concerns about Papakura schools were known to it and that it was working with the schools to rectify their problems. The family of our Papakura High student decided to move out of the area. That solved their problems with the school. Other students returned to home schooling or very limited academic progress at state schools.

We remained involved with two students from Kelvin Road School with the principal's permission. One of these was in Year 6 but well behind in literacy and numeracy. The other was a seven-year-old terror. He was a truly delightful little fellow, but his teacher wrote to us:

Since being enrolled in Kelvin Road School, [X] has continued to display disturbing behaviour including intimidation (frequent threats of violence perpetrated upon other children), fights with others, suspected theft and vandalism, and dismissal of authority in general. He habitually denies responsibility for his actions and behaviour, and he shows no remorse. His peers are wary of him to the point of not wanting to associate with him or come to school; his behaviour has lately led to extensive restrictions being placed on his available free time during play and lunch-time.

The teacher's comments are accurate, and she describes a boy with severe conduct disorder and a developing psychopathic personality disorder. We had the opportunity to observe this teacher teaching on a number of occasions and in our view she is an exceptional practitioner. In this case the problem was not located in the boy or the teacher. It was a problem generated by the total school environment.

Our first move, as with our other students of compulsory school age, was to assess his current achievement level against the national curriculum statements. His behaviour was easily modified by providing consistent boundaries, lots of positive reinforcement and praise, and by having a male around to deal with the explosive tantrums which vanished within a couple of weeks and were replaced by periods of quiet sulking and glowering. Within a month these were replaced by a shrug of the shoulders and getting on with it. Although this boy was well behind his age group in literacy, he turned out to be gifted in mathematics and raced ahead conquering addition, subtraction, times tables, factors, multiples, primes, money and reading a clock within a term. He also caught up in reading.

The lesson for us was that we could help students who were keen to learn but not making progress at a state school. Our advantages were our whanau atmosphere, our consistency (where a seven-year-old was just a seven-year-old but had a valued place) and our positive existing links with the boy's family. Unfortunately he was passed on to another family member at the end of the school year when his mother went to jail, and he started at a Mangere school in 2005. Although his behaviour remained easy to manage he was held back to learning at the pace of his class and had forgotten much of what he had learned in 2004 when we caught up with him again.

In 2004 Kotahitanga Community Trust had nominees elected to the boards of both Edmund Hillary and Redhill schools. It was a terrible year for Papakura youth and therefore for the trust. Three more Maori teenagers in Papakura committed suicide and despite the assurances from the Ministry of Education that it was working with Papakura schools

to improve them, the school we had most to do with, Edmund Hillary School, deteriorated in 2004.

A new principal was appointed in April. The new board elected in May was controlled by the new principal, her partner, one of her best friends, one of his friends and the staff rep. There was a five-three split and by mid-2005 all three of the minority faction had resigned.

Table 10: *Notes – Ministry meeting with Edmund Hillary School*

Identified area	Proposed action	Progress/still to do
Board training	Training programme. Action plan in response to ERO report.	[X] has provided training in financial matters. Link with [Y]. Board is making progress with issues raised in ERO report: no action plan presented. To do: Programme for board training negotiated with [Z].
Strategic planning	Charter development.	Extensive community consultation and input. Charter format has been discussed and developed. To do: Annual plan (including targets for 2005 completed by end of term 1). Charter in finalised form.
Assessment information	Assessment plan and timetable. Analysis and use of the data.	Classroom manager being introduced for data management. Maori assessment tools identified. Professional development programme underway. To do: AsTTle testing. Professional development programme. Classroom manager.

Table 10: *Notes – Ministry meeting with Edmund Hillary School (cont'd)*

Identified area	Proposed action	Progress/still to do
Professional development	Literacy development plan.	Developed and presented.
Performance management	Appraiser for senior management team. Performance agreements reflect job descriptions and delegations.	[W] is carrying out appraisal of all SMT using policies and systems already in place. Job descriptions and performance agreements in place.
Scheme development	Curriculum resourcing decisions.	To do: Schemes reflect strategies and annual plans.
Community relationships	Kohanga reo. Pasifika unit.	Discussions with Pasifika community re unit have been held and will continue.

The ERO visit in June 2004 moved the school to an annual review cycle. The Ministry help following this adverse ERO report amounted to three meetings and the Ministry's notes of the third meeting, held on 21 March 2005, are provided in Table 10. The value of this table lies in what it reveals about both the Ministry and the school. The Ministry describes it as 'internal notes concerning review meetings between the board of trustees of Edmund Hillary Primary School, support services and the Ministry'. Yet the board was not involved in this meeting. The principal invited one or two of her friends on the board, but this is not the same thing. By March, with a follow-up ERO visit scheduled for June, no action plan to deal with the issues raised by the ERO had been developed. The 'extensive community consultation' claimed for the charter never took place. The charter was updated by the principal and her friends, and by June had not been presented to the board despite charter development being a board responsibility. The ERO noted in its September 2005 report that the claimed consultation with the Pasifika community had not taken place.

What is most striking about the table, though, is that it totally omits any mention of learning outcomes. By June 2005 Edmund Hillary School

had stopped reporting on school-wide assessment of students, and teacher appraisals had been discontinued. After the ERO visit at that time, the school agreed to have ERO advisors assist over the following twelve months.

At the end of 2004, as part of our planning cycle, our community considered what it was going to do in 2005. We had previously broken the Maori education problem into four areas: early childhood education; primary and secondary education; Maori leaving school without any qualifications; and adult education.

Adult education

By November 2004 it was clear that the computer classes were valuable to those adults (grandmothers) attending them, but the learners' goals were not vocational. People wanted to learn how to surf the net, use email, print, scan and use a word processor. Free courses with these aims already existed in Papakura and the computer classes ceased, although people remained welcome to come in and use the machines. The computer classes had served their purpose as a pilot and could be deferred until either the trust achieved accreditation to assess students or found a suitable accredited partner.

The korowai and te reo classes were valuable in building up the cultural capital of the community and the trust continued to provide rooms and koha to support these.

A new initiative in 2005 had three beneficiaries of the trust, aged twenty-five to thirty, two with School Certificate and one with no formal secondary school qualifications, enrol in Stage One economics extramurally through Massey university. The three formed a study group that met once a week. It is a huge step from nothing to university study, but one of the three students passed semester one macroeconomics with a B- grade, and microeconomics in semester two with a B. The other two students obtained clear passes in coursework but let themselves down with their examination technique. One arrived at the exam after a night's heavy drinking; the other simply did not know the course material as well as she told the others she did. Although Massey University provides a

number of resources for its extramural students, and for its Maori students with limited backgrounds, our three pioneers did not take advantage of these.

Early childhood education

Papakura has five or six kohanga reo. It is fair to say that they are of variable but generally low to very low quality when seen from the perspective of preparing children for achievement in a state school. However, the kohanga reo movement is not about preparing children for mainstream primary schools. It is about language preservation and empowering and supporting whanau. At the beginning of 2004 there was also a playcentre at Redhill, but this closed after money went missing and the parents split into two groups, each of which tried to exclude the other.

Within the trust there was a strong feeling that we should operate a kohanga reo. There was also a substantial body of opinion that we should operate a mainstream early childhood facility with the aim of preparing children for success in a state primary school. Our medium-term aim was to operate two centres, one of each type, but the parents who were prepared to commit to fronting up every day favoured the mainstream option and that is what began in 2005. The parent-led Maori playgroup or puna opened on 1 February 2005 with the approval of the Ministry of Education in temporary premises. The three-year goal is to be a teacher-led licensed and chartered early childhood education centre providing high-quality kaupapa Maori education to enrolled three-, four- and five-year-olds.

The focus of this puna was on preparation for success at a state primary school. The environment was set up with the aim of making learning inevitable. On one level this was easy with posters. At another level the big room was dedicated to learning. It was for big kids only (the three-, four- and five-year-old learners). Of course, from time to time little kids would be in there, but they had to be quiet and well behaved or out they went. The parents tried hard to instil the belief that school is for big kids, and that there are standards of behaviour required from big kids. One

consequence of this hard-nosed approach was a real determination by two-year-old siblings not to miss out, with consequent huge improvements in behaviour and huge strides in learning.

Five essential skills were identified, and the parents always tried to develop these. They were:

- 1 Learners will be accustomed to a routine, and will understand 'It's time for learning' as an instruction requiring them to sit, be quiet and concentrate.
- 2 Learners will be able to play co-operatively. In particular, there will be no verbal abuse and no violence directed at either students or staff.
- 3 Learners will be able to work co-operatively and on-task as a group.
- 4 Learners will be able to work independently
- 5 Learners will take pride in their work and in their achievements

Achievement objectives were also developed and are recorded in Table 11. The expectation was that children leaving the puna to commence primary school would have mastered these. The parents found the achievement objectives very useful as an aid to focus their teaching. At the same time, the puna was committed to delivering *Te Whariki*, the national curriculum for early childhood education published in 1996. *Te Whariki* is a very different document from our achievement objectives. It is process- rather than outcome-centred and takes a bit of getting used to. Our parents were prepared to deliver *Te Whariki* alongside the achievement objectives, despite the soft nature of its goals. (How, for example, do you measure whether 'emotional well-being is nurtured'?)

We were not that surprised to learn that the Ministry of Education was unimpressed with our goal of teaching our children. The Ministry's view was that the children should be assembled so as to play under their parents' supervision. Learning was not play, and parents are not qualified to teach their children.

Table 11: *Achievement objectives – Te Kura o Kawepo Puna*

<p>English</p> <p>Learners will know (be able to recite) the alphabet.</p> <p>Learners will be able to write out the alphabet in both capital and small letters.</p> <p>Learners will be able to spell and to write their own names.</p> <p>Learners will be readers (of picture books with simple stories, up to Dr Seuss level).</p>
<p>Mathematics</p> <p>Learners will be able to count up to twenty.</p> <p>Learners will be able to order three numbers up to twenty.</p> <p>Learners will be able to add single digits (i.e. sum is less than twenty).</p> <p>Learners will be able to subtract a smaller digit from a larger one (where the larger number is in the range two to nine).</p> <p>Learners will recognise simple shapes (circle, triangle, square, rectangle).</p>
<p>Arts</p> <p>Learners will perform a haka.</p> <p>Learners will perform an action dance.</p> <p>Learners will know and sing three waiata.</p> <p>Learners will paint or draw a picture containing recognisable objects.</p>
<p>Health and Sport</p> <p>Learners will have completed a beginner's 'learn to swim' course and will be able to paddle or swim ten metres without flotation aids.</p> <p>Learners will be able to throw a tennis ball accurately up to five metres (able to hit a one-metre diameter target on the full from five metres three times out of five).</p> <p>Learners will be able to catch a soccer or rugby ball thrown from two metres away.</p> <p>Learners will be able to kick a soccer ball through a one-metre wide goal from five metres away.</p> <p>Learners will be able to run 50 metres faster than an adult can walk the distance.</p> <p>Learners will participate actively in two 'Kiwi' sports (called modified sport by SPARC), e.g. mini-soccer, gymfun, T-ball, mini-footy.</p>
<p>Maori</p> <p>Learners will have attended a youth wananga at Wharekawa marae (as observers rather than participants) including the powhiri.</p> <p>Learners will know a karakia for kai.</p> <p>Learners will know simple commands in Maori, and be able to respond to greetings and simple questions (e.g. 'Where is Hone?', 'How many children are here?', 'What are you doing?', 'What colour is this?').</p>
<p>Science</p> <p>Learners will have looked after a plant or plants from seed to flowering (or harvest).</p>

(continued)

Table 11: *Achievement objectives – Te Kura o Kawepo Puna (cont'd)***Science (continued)**

Learners can identify the major parts of a plant (stem/trunk, roots, flower, leaves, fruit, seed).

Learners will have looked after a pet, or been responsible for the care of a pet, for two weeks..

Learners can identify the major parts of a four-legged animal.

Social Studies

Learners will know their waka, their iwi and, in general terms, its rohe.

Learners will know the significance of Matariki, Easter, Christmas and Anzac Day.

Learners can identify Papakura on a map of Auckland, Auckland on a map of New Zealand, and New Zealand on a globe.

Technology

Learners will be able to turn a computer on and off safely, log on to a computer, and play a simple computer game.

Learners will be able to use a word-processing program to print out their own name in capital and small letters on A4 paper.

Learners will explore how a simple thing works (e.g. a torch).

Learners will bake a loaf of bread.

Maori leaving school without any qualifications

Many Maori thirteen-year-olds have given up on school, and school has given up on them. In fact, it is worse than this. The school and the student are engaged in prolonged low-level warfare that the teenager can not win and which, often in synergy with an injurious environment outside school, moulds the teenager into an anti-social loser. The teenager has not learned much in eight or nine years of schooling other than that he or she is stupid and will never get a decent job. A common response is to be surly, oppositional, irritable, aggressive and truant.

These young adults present a difficult problem, and one that more often than not cannot be solved. Sometimes there are dramatic success stories and we applaud those youth workers, schools and teachers who do try day in and day out to leave doors ajar for kids who respond to kindness by stealing your wallet. We also applaud those schools, such as Rosehill and Rangitoto colleges, which recognise that they cannot meet the needs of this group and adopt a zero-tolerance approach to unacceptable

behaviour. A common strategy with these teenagers is to refer them to an alternative education (AE) provider or to enrol them at Correspondence School until they turn fifteen and can leave school to enrol in some course or another. None of these options – AE, Correspondence School or leaving school at fifteen – provides the teenager with a realistic expectation of eventually being able to buy a house, provide for a family and acquire a stake in society.

AE providers receive \$11,100 per student per year, less an administration fee of 10 per cent if one is claimed by the managing school. Schools are responsible for the quality of AE provided by their contracted providers. Nationally, there are 1820 funded AE places and more than 200 AE providers. Roughly speaking, students are eligible for AE if they are aged thirteen to fifteen and are alienated from the mainstream school system (suspended, excluded or absent for at least half of the previous twenty weeks for reasons other than illness). Schools are required to have carried out a diagnostic assessment and to have identified desired outcomes that will be addressed by a learning plan. The only reports required by the Ministry are six-monthly financial reports and monthly attendance reports.

All this adds up to a view of AE as a school-led holding pen for students whom the school has given up on, and who have given up on school. There are no great expectations of student achievement and the money is good for a struggling PTE. The deficit model is alive and well in AE – these kids are in AE because there is something the matter with them, not something the matter with their school environment.

An ERO report (Education Review Office 2004a) into alternative education observed that many AE providers have a life-skills rather than an achievement focus.

Enrolment at Correspondence School is available for urban students who are at risk. More overtly than with AE this is an 'out of sight, out of mind' philosophy which satisfies the legal requirement for children to be enrolled at a registered school. No achievement data are reported on for these students who, as with AE, are predominantly Maori. The Correspondence School is funded to provide support for these students

and in some areas contracts external groups to provide that learner support.

Our problem, in considering whether to chase AE or Correspondence School contracts, is the requirement to buy into a model that says the kids are defective when in our view the kids may have been damaged by their school environment but they can often operate very well in a different learning environment. Our strongly held view that the primary aim of schooling is academic achievement is also at odds with that of the Ministry and of some schools when talking about alienated and at-risk students. We also feel that any AE or tutoring facility we established would meet the needs of some, but not all, alienated or at-risk students. There are also many Maori students who, while neither alienated nor candidates for Correspondence School, are not going to leave school with adequate numeracy and literacy skills for employment in a job that will eventually pay enough for them to own a house and provide for a family.

With all this in mind, the Papakura Urban Maori Authority has established the Te Wero Sports Academy. The target group is male youths who have abandoned the state school system, who do not have adequate employment-related qualifications, who have dreams of playing professional rugby league and who are prepared to work hard (including remaining drug-free) for forty weeks from the beginning of February till the end of October or early November to see how far they can go in the sport in that time. We are not seeking elite players.

We can make the difference for some of these young people. Very few of the young people who enter the proposed academy will go on to play professional league, but we can get them into trade apprenticeships after a year in the academy. During their time there they men will have a full week from 7 a.m. (weight training) to 4 p.m. Monday to Friday with a mixture of personal training, schoolwork and sport-related study such as nutrition, sports science and video analysis.

Primary and secondary education

The aim of the first part of this chapter has been to provide something

of a counterpoint to the opening quote from Lt-Colonel J H Russell's 1873 report to the Native Minister. Our community does want its own school. We have an integrated strategy for lifting the average Maori family's income, and achievement in the compulsory education years is integral to that. We have tried to work with the existing state schools in Papakura, and have a good understanding of their limitations. We are also aware that the existing state schools are often damaging to Maori youth. Not only do they make insufficient academic progress, but also their psychological well-being is damaged.

During 2004 we settled on a strategic goal of working towards the establishment of a designated character school, Papakura Middle School, which would operate from new entrant to the end of form four (Years 1 to 10) and which would integrate with our early childhood education facilities at one end and with the sports academy at the other. By that time we had given up on working with schools in Papakura. All the schools in Papakura, even Papakura High School with its below average NCEA pass rates, and the five schools with recent failed ERO audits, consider themselves to be above average. This is not an uncommon thing in humans – for example, 95 per cent of male drivers consider themselves to be above average drivers.

At the same time, schools and teachers try to claim that teaching the curriculum requires special training and knowledge that only they have. This is rubbish. If only qualified and registered teachers can teach the curriculum to Maori then why are our 'solo mums who can't read' (as a senior teacher from Mansell Senior School expressed it so eloquently) so successful at doing this? If such special training and knowledge exist, and if teachers have it, then why do 40 per cent of Maori not achieve the minimum literacy and numeracy requirements of NCEA Level One? Why do Maori at Papakura High School fail half the unit and achievement standards that they sit? Why do 60 per cent of Maori in Year 11 fail NCEA Level One?

Hand in hand with these mistaken beliefs that their school is above average and that they possess vital special knowledge and skills is a belief that neither the teacher nor the school is accountable for the performance

of those students who 'choose not to take advantage of' the teaching on offer at the school. Failure, truancy and behaviour problems are not critical events viewed as opportunities for school improvement through reflection and making changes. They are evidence of deficits within the students, their parents or their culture, and all these things are outside the school's control. All the school can do is refer the child to an appropriate agency.

For example, one twelve-year-old at Redhill School beat up the same much smaller child three times over a course of a term or so. Three times. According to the school this is a police problem. Absolute rubbish. The board and the principal are responsible for the physical and emotional safety of their students, not the police. This is not a mindset within which we can work. In our view it is the local schools that need to change. Improved student attendance, behaviour and achievement will follow. However, the needs of some students will not be met even if schools make all the improvement they can make, and more designated character schools are needed for this large group of Maori students.

The missionaries recognised that Maori were not only keen and quick learners who learned well by rote and who would persist with a task they were interested in until it was mastered, but also that Maori were able to teach Maori effectively. Several of the reasons for Maori non-achievement in state schools today were identified nearly 200 years ago by Kendall. These are: Maori children are easily distracted; Maori need a reason to come to school; Maori parents take their children out of school from time to time for a variety of reasons; and inadequate resources and funding.

In the years since Kendall, other barriers to achievement have been identified or erected. These include:

- The state school system is not focused on achievement.
 - Too many teachers, principals and boards are globally incompetent, and these incompetents are concentrated in schools with high Maori populations.
-

- The majority of teachers, principals and boards are culturally incompetent with respect to Maori student achievement, attendance and discipline.
- Too many Maori teachers and principals are the products of colonisation.
- Too many teachers, principals and schools abuse Maori pupils.

In *Maori Health* we referred to house niggers, following the academic line begun by Malcolm X in the United States. Within the education sector these same people are referred to as 'colonised'. It's harsh to label those Maori who have struggled and sacrificed to become qualified teachers as 'house niggers'.

Malcolm X, in a speech delivered in Detroit on 10 November 1963, (a speech known as 'Message to the Grass Roots'), said

... back during slavery. There was two kinds of slaves. There was the house Negro and the field Negro. The house Negroes – they lived in the house with master, they dressed pretty good, they ate good 'cause they ate his food – what he left. They lived in the attic or the basement, but still they lived near the master; and they loved their master more than the master loved himself. They would give their life to save the master's house quicker than the master would. The house Negro, if the master said, 'We got a good house here,' the house Negro would say, 'Yeah, we got a good house here.' Whenever the master said 'we', he said 'we'. That's how you can tell a house Negro.

If the master's house caught on fire, the house Negro would fight harder to put the blaze out than the master would. If the master got sick, the house Negro would say, 'What's the matter, boss, we sick?' We sick! He identified himself with his master more than his master identified with himself. And if you came to the house Negro and said, 'Let's run away, let's escape, let's separate,' the house Negro would look at you and say, 'Man, you crazy. What you mean, separate? Where is there a better house than this? Where can I wear better clothes than this? Where can I eat better food than this?' That was that house Negro. In those days he was called a 'house nigger'.

And that's what we call him today, because we've still got some house niggers running around here.

This modern house Negro loves his master. He wants to live near him. He'll pay three times as much as the house is worth just to live near his master, and then brag about 'I'm the only Negro out here.' 'I'm the only one on my job.' 'I'm the only one in this school.' You're nothing but a house Negro.

...

Just as the slavemaster of that day used Tom, the house Negro, to keep the field Negroes in check, the same old slavemaster today has Negroes who are nothing but modern Uncle Toms, 20th century Uncle Toms, to keep you and me in check, keep us under control, keep us passive

...

The slavemaster took Tom and dressed him well, and fed him well, and even gave him a little education – a little education; gave him a long coat and a top hat and made all the other slaves look up to him. Then he used Tom to control them. The same strategy that was used in those days is used today, by the same white man. He takes a Negro, a so-called Negro, and make him prominent, build him up, publicize him, make him a celebrity. And then he becomes a spokesman for Negroes – and a Negro leader.

The whole speech can be heard on the Internet at <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/malcolmxgrassroots.htm>

'Colonised' has a much nicer sound and makes it appear as though what has happened is somehow the white man's fault, nothing to do with the Maori. But no matter how well intentioned these Maori are, no matter how much these Maori want to improve Maori achievement in education, if they don't do this but merely act as a brown-faced tool of colonisation they are house niggers, colonised if you must.

Many Maori teachers have swallowed the teachers' college ideology hook, line and sinker. In the 1950s and 1960s these teachers made Maori kids leave their language at the school gates. Today, many Maori with a teaching qualification will deny that many Maori without a teaching qualification can often teach Maori kids at least as well as non-Maori

with a teaching qualification. These house niggers deny what Maori have known for centuries – Maori know how to teach Maori. The teachers' colleges have yet to learn.

We never intended to move from a tutoring service for a couple of kids released from Kelvin Road School each afternoon, as we were in 2004, to a designated character school in one step. The plan was to increase our skills and capacity in a step-wise fashion. In 2004 we had acquired skills in assessment, providing catch-up teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy, and behaviour modification. We had also become familiar with the relevant areas of the National Qualifications Framework and had established links with local PTEs.

The education system has always allowed parents who were dissatisfied with the state school system and who did not wish, or could not afford, private schooling for their children to make other arrangements and to obtain an exemption from enrolment at a registered school. The criteria for the award of such an exemption under the Education Act 1989 is that the child(ren) will be taught 'at least as regularly and as well' as they would have been at a state school. Our plan in 2005 was to assist selected families with applications to home school their children, and then to assist with the actual schooling through providing resources and tutoring to achieve unit standards. We were concerned with two groups of students – those not achieving at Papakura schools and those at risk of abuse from one or two schools.

Applications to home school two children were filed in November 2004. Our expectation was that these would be dealt with before Christmas, and that once we had the model right further applications could be lodged in the New Year. However, the Ministry chose to process the applications very slowly, and in late January wrote confirming that the applications had been received. It also became clear over the summer that the parents of a number of students enrolled at but not attending Papakura High School wanted their children to attend our facility. We did not intend to provide any education services to secondary school-age children, beyond perhaps encouraging non-achieving Maori at Papakura High who were

under the dual stresses of stand-down and the truancy service to enrol with the Correspondence School and then to provide assistance with tutoring. In our view there was infrastructure to put in place before our community could assume responsibility for secondary school education with any prospect of success.

Key elements of that infrastructure were a cultural affirmation programme for which we hoped those whaea and matua involved with the te reo classes would take responsibility, a youth drop-in facility which we hoped to establish at the old netball pavilion on the Smiths Park recreation reserve, and the all-important hook into learning which would come through either sport or employment-related training. In addition the trust needed to engage the families of secondary school students. Even with all this in place, we were always realistic that when the trust's secondary school-level facilities did open sometime in the future they would not be able to take on all comers. We have always been pragmatic, appreciating that the trust cannot help everyone but that it can help some people.

With secondary school-age pupils our aims were, at some future time, to meet the educational needs of young people who wanted a job, or who had hopes of making it as a professional sportsperson. We could not meet the needs of those who did not want a job, did not play sport and had fallen into that nasty, destructive self-centred hole of living for today and living for themselves, destroying or stealing property, treating others with disrespect, and then getting bitter because the rest of the world treats them the same way they treat it. For them we could perhaps provide a place to hang out, a free lunch, a kind ear and a proximity to the better life that hard work could bring.

We opened in Term One of 2005 with perhaps 30 children attending the youth drop-in facility at the old netball pavilion in Smiths Ave which was made available to us by the Papakura Social and Recreation Club. The majority of these young people were primary school-age, and they were provided with schooling focused on improving their numeracy and literacy, although in the first weeks they were also involved in raising day-old chickens and observing the daily changes in these, and in breaking

down torches as an introduction to electricity, circuits and technology. In March the students all attended the Auckland Secondary Schools Polynesian festival as part of a social sciences module on the Pacific.

The primary school children were split into two or three groups according to their level of achievement. Each group had at least one tutor. Aspects of this operation have been described in the chapter on pastoral care. The secondary school-age students tended to drift in and out. On most days there were about ten adults present. All comers were provided with morning tea and lunch.

The provision of this youth drop-in facility for secondary school students was associated with the cessation of Maori youth suicide in Papakura.

All the students entered with very low levels of achievement. At the end of the first Term Fourteen students (seven from Papakura High School, six of intermediate age and one Year 6 student) were assessed by a local PTE for unit standard 8489, 'perform calculations with whole numbers'. This is a test using word problems of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division where the numbers involved are less than 100. A typical question might be, 'In a hospital ward each patient is allowed three visitors. There are nine patients on the ward. How many visitors can there be?' One of the Papakura High School students passed, as did one of the intermediate-age students and the single Year 6 student.

The improvement during the year has been huge, with an enormous catch-up in reading and writing, and running ahead in mathematics and science. By way of illustration, one eleven-year-old (Year 7) boy wrote the following story on 4 February 2005 after being read a story about a taniwha:

Beneth thir osin same Think was moving and making the waves move in time with it. Sudinle a hoog krech sorfist. The tanersfose head rosd hi abov the water. Its ese glemd like emte mons.

With all respect to Kelvin Road School, this is a poor return on six years of state primary education. For this boy at that time writing was a

frustrating experience as he was unable to convey what was in his head onto the paper. On 8 September, the same boy wrote this story, also in forty minutes, after a class trip to the circus:

I went to the Welber bros circus and it was cool there was heat coming from under the floor and it was hot and we brought some of these lights and you can swing them around and the lights will flash and we had to wait 5 minutes for the show to start.

And ween the show started we saw some stuff coning from the roof it was so it look like it is cold and the lady walked out of this door and she was making it look like she is going to die because it is cold for her.

Then she was acting that she was dead and then a clown walked out of the door and then he was coming to pick up that lady how was lying on the ground then the clown pick up the lady and she stod up and they run to the door and they tall some people to come and they run out of the door and they went to dance.

And the entertainers came and stuck a poll in the ground and there were some muscular entertainers and they climbed up a poll and they wer swing around it and hold on to the poll with there legs and hang of it and we thort that he going to fall of but he was going to flip of the poll.

And the clown went on the stage and the entertainers like the clown and there was a othere clown he was talling the othere clown to clean the floor the clown had a dum radio it had duck tap on the radio and ween he tuches the radio it plays the music and it was loud.

And my fauverite part was ween the entertainers done the moon walk it was cool and his firend went up on the roof and went across the rope and he almost fall of the rope and the man how was doing the moon walk he ran up the ladder and picked up his firend the end.

The improvement is huge. Although there are spelling and other errors, there is also a clear account of what this lad liked about the circus. To get this far, and this far is only what one would reasonably expect from a Year 4 student, a huge amount of work had to be done in reading and spelling.

Another year at a state school in Papakura, even one of the better state

schools such as Kelvin Road School, would not have lifted this boy so far. The evidence of this is his older brother, who began at Papakura High School this year and still producing stories like the first one.

Table 12 sets out the teaching and learning content planned in some subject areas for one group of six boys (including the one who wrote the two stories) aged nine to twelve in Term One of 2006. All finished 2005 achieving at about the same level. In 2006, three are in Year 5, one is in Year 7, and two are in Year 8. Term one mathematics is largely revision as is Term One science (except for electricity and the carbon/water cycles). We place high expectations on these boys, partly because they can achieve at this level and partly because expectations drive achievement. We do not anticipate getting through the whole of any textbook, but are sure that the boys will become confident with the material and with the texts. In our experience, Maori boys are as lazy as they are allowed to be, but work as hard as they have to.

Although their academic progress is most important, also important are the raised self-esteem of our students, their enthusiasm for learning, and the changes in their general attitude as observed by their parents. All six of the boys in this group are present at 8 a.m. every day, testing each other and preparing for the spelling test they insist on but do not always receive. Four of the six have not missed one day all year – a huge turnaround. The really rewarding thing, though, is to hear the boys contradicting aunties and others who say that school is not important and that schoolwork can wait. One of the boys was assigned to summer school in order to improve his spelling and four of the other boys insisted on coming as well. The boys have asked, in all seriousness, why they can't have school on Saturday and Sunday too. Among their peers, they are now recognised as clever when a year ago they were dummies.

We are not scared of introducing our students to concepts in an appropriate bundle. For example, data display such as stem and leaf plots, and ideas of location such as mean, median and mode, are boring and intellectually irrelevant unless they are taught hand-in-hand with ideas of probability and the associated concepts of variability. The reason why this does not happen in the curriculum is because of knowledge deficits

Table 12: *Te Kura o Kawepo, curriculum delivery Term One 2006*

	Overview	Term One
ENGLISH	Aim is to cover the requirements of Year 7–8 English, using the ESA study guide (Y8) as a loose text. A main goal is to develop competence in transactional reading/writing e.g. instructions and reports.	Assessment – reading age, vocabulary, spelling, three books to read – chapter summaries, character descriptions, themes e.g. <i>Pawn of Prophecy</i> , David Eddings, <i>Animal Farm</i> , George Orwell.
HEATH and PE	Main goals for the year are to develop habits of personal fitness, to ensure basic movement skills are in place and develop competencies in a range of sports. Texts: ESA Y11 Physical Education, ESA Y11 Biology & Human Biology.	Swimming, tennis or golf. Human biology – water, muscle, muscle groups bone, fat, nutrition, calories.
MATHS	Aim is to cover the Level 4 maths curriculum and begin L5. There are a number of accessible Level One unit standards such as 8489, 5234, 5224, 5225, 5227, 8490, and 8491. Texts: Beta Mathematics (Barton).	Assessment – unit standards 8489, 5234 and perhaps, 5224, and 5227 Revise – timetables, division, conversion of fractions to decimals to fractions, ordering fractions. When everybody in the group can do this, the group can use calculators. Revise – calculation of time and date intervals, pays (gross, less tax and net). Revise – mean, median, mode, stem and leaf plots, probability, independent events, expected value, fair bet, tree diagrams.

in primary school teachers. Probability does require prerequisite number skills – an ability to divide and an understanding of fractions – but it does not require anything else.

Similarly, Ohm's Law is absolutely basic to the study of electricity.

Table 12: *Te Kura o Kaweipo, curriculum delivery Term One 2006*

	Overview	Term One
SCIENCE	Overall aim is to cover, and perhaps to go beyond the Year 9 science syllabus (L5) The ESA Study Guide (Y9) is a loose text. Unit standards such as 20622, 6377, and 6329 may be accessible.	Physics – velocity-time graphs, area under the graph, electricity, voltage, current, resistance, Ohm's Law. Parallel and series circuits. Alternating and DC. Chemistry – Periodic table, first twenty elements, chemical reactions, identifying substances, metals and non-metals, water cycle, carbon cycle, food chains.
SOCIAL SCIENCES	We have tried to develop a habit of at least once a week photocopying a newspaper clipping and asking the boys to read the article and answer questions about it. The best choices have been stories that are going to be on the TV news for several nights.	Ratana Day. Papakura district history. New Zealand geography. Commonwealth Games.
TECH	Our focus in 2006 is on computing. Text: ESA Y11 Information Management. We would also like to cover motor-car engines and some electrical appliances.	Assessment – 5941

Once the concept of electricity is introduced as the flow of electrons and a few simple circuits have been constructed, it is difficult to proceed coherently without introducing Ohm's Law. The reason why this is not done at primary school is because most primary school teachers lack the requisite familiarity with the science. Taking matters one step further, it seems very strange considering the importance of AC rather than DC in household technology that this difference and the reason for preferring alternating current are not discussed in primary school science.

On several occasions in 2004 we tried to set up meetings with the Ministry of Education to discuss our plans, but had no success. We were

sent forms to apply for registration as a private school, which was not our aim. We did not expect local schools to be enthusiastic, and although we had found the Ministry's response in 2004 quite bizarre we found encouraging signs in the multiple claims in various publications by the Ministry that it recognised the problems with Maori achievement in the compulsory education years, and that it was committed to working with Maori communities. For example, the executive summary of the Ministry's 2004 annual report on Maori education (Ministry of Education 2004) reads in part, 'Key areas of focus for Maori education continue to be . . . improving the engagement of whanau, hapu, iwi, and Maori communities in education'. A few paragraphs later one reads, 'A fundamental aspect of the government's approach to Maori education is the fostering and support for the increased involvement and authority of Maori in education at all levels'.

We were not surprised, though, when the Ministry's reaction to our drop-in facility was an instruction to close it down. We had an interesting meeting with Ministry officials at the end of February 2005. They could not tell us why what we were doing was a school, although they were sure it was. They agreed that the Education Act 1989 allows parents to apply for exemptions from enrolment for their children but stated very clearly that such exemptions would not be granted for students attending our facility. This was a strange position as the only consideration in the Act is whether the student(s) will be taught 'at least as regularly and as well'. The meeting was cordial but ended with the officials stating that we would be prosecuted for running an illegal school and that parents would be pressured to return their children to a state school. The officials agreed that achievement was important. They agreed that many schools in Papakura had been serving their Maori pupils poorly for a number of years and that Ministry help to those schools for a number of years had not had a dramatic influence. However, their priority was to placate those state schools in Papakura that had complained to the Ministry.

We suggested that one way forward was to relocate our primary school tutoring facility in an empty classroom at Edmund Hillary School and to enrol the children in that school with some form of power sharing

being negotiated between ourselves and the principal. The Ministry, to its credit, did discuss this option with the principal at Edmund Hillary School. The idea was rejected by her without being put to the board.

The Ministry has commenced a prosecution alleging that we are in breach of section 35A (12) of the Education Act 1989 as we are operating an unregistered school. A year later the prosecution has not come to court, although it got very close in late November 2005 when the court pulled the plug on the day matters were to commence.

The prosecution is a simple thing in two parts. First, there is the matter of defining a school and then the matter of deciding whether what we do fits that definition. We have asked the Ministry for its definition of a school, and the basis for it. Obviously, if they are correct then it should be possible (given the right of parents to educate children outside the registered school system) for us to modify our activities so as to fall outside the definition of a school. The Ministry has declined to provide a definition of a school, and has declined an Official Information Act request on the grounds of 'litigation privilege'.

There is the intuitive idea of what a school is. Dr Don Brash, leader of the National Party, offered this definition of a school in his speech on 13 April 2005 introducing the party's education policy: 'A school is a school: buildings, equipment and teachers, organised around a culture of learning and aspiration.' We think a school also requires a curriculum and students, but the idea is right. There are necessary elements to a school and our facility did not have all of these. In addition, our facility has other elements not found in a school. The Ministry also has the problem of explaining why we are a school but numerous other facilities, such as the Kip McGrath centres, are not.

The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines a school as 'an establishment in which children are given formal education'. Our facility is not an establishment, with that word's connotations of something that is settled, something that has some kind of formal backing. Our facility, with its succession of temporary premises, its untrained teachers, its community support, its continual harassment by the state, is a guerrilla operation and there is nothing further from an establishment.

Second, even if a court found that our facility was a school, there is the important 'so what?' question. The Ministry of Education would have the court believe that a great crime has been committed. The matter will be heard in a criminal court. The Ministry's case is that these poor children have suffered during their year away from the state school system. This is rubbish, manifestly so, and we have a great deal of material to show the court to refute this. These children have had a great year, a year that puts them on the up and up rather than further along the downhill slide. It cannot be a crime to teach Maori kids to read and write and to enjoy their schooling. This is the fundamental problem with the Ministry's position.

On 22 June 2005 we met with the Ministry and the Crown prosecutor. The regional head of the Ministry of Education (a former long-serving primary school principal now enjoying a sunset posting) was there, together with the manager of network planning and another bureaucrat whom we were really looking forward to talking to in front of a judge. This third bureaucrat had, so far as we knew, attempted to have WINZ cut the benefits of several of our parents, had visited and threatened them at home, and we thought she had also stirred up sufficient trouble with the Tertiary Education Commission for the PTE we were using to assess our students against unit standards that that PTE had withdrawn from our arrangement with it.

By this time, we had found some funding to employ a registered teacher and we had compliant premises. We were prepared to apply for registration as a private school. The regional head of the Ministry responded by saying that no such application would be processed until all the children in our facility were enrolled with and attending registered schools. Once again, as with our previous wish to apply for exemptions from enrolment, the Ministry was acting illegally: it is required to assess applications for registration as a private school against the 'efficiency' criteria of the Education Act 1989. It has no discretion to impose other criteria.

Alongside the prosecutions of the 'school's' management the Ministry of Education commenced a campaign of intimidation and harassment with the aim of forcing parents to return their children to state schools.

The positive aspect of this were the carrots – offers to enrol, fees paid, at Wesley College and Hato Petera appeared, as did places on hairdressing and other courses. The negative aspects were the benefit cuts, the malicious referrals to Child, Youth and Family (which, to its credit, did not act on these) and downright nasty incidents such as the visit to one mother by the Ministry with her former partner, a lowlife who had raped her as a child and could still terrify her.

The majority of the students attending our facility were chased away by the Ministry during the year. In each case the parents made the choice, albeit under duress. One of the girls is now pregnant. Another boy, aged twelve and too young to enrol in an alternative education programme, was sent to one where as the youngest and smallest boy a number of predictable things have happened. Most of the parents have come back to us to report the deterioration in their children's school performance and general attitude and behaviour.

At our June meeting the local head of the Ministry told us that he had discussed matters with the Minister of Education who had approved everything – the contacts with the parents, the prosecutions, the whole lot. In 2001, more than 4000 children were referred to the Ministry of Education as not enrolled at a registered school. No parent was prosecuted. In 2005 all our recalcitrant parents were prosecuted.

The importance of all this lies in what it says about the true priorities of the Ministry and of the Minister. Te Kura o Kawepo represents an integrated, community-based, local solution to an acknowledged problem. It has been shown to work, and the mechanism for its ongoing funding through formal recognition as a designated character school exists in the current Education Act. Land for new schools in the area has been purchased by the Ministry, whose rhetoric and policies indicate that it would support this innovation.

However, Maori educational achievement is not the Ministry's priority. Instead, the Ministry has as its current regional manager a former primary school principal and long-time Papakura resident who knows and is friends with local school principals. He has abused the power of his position to protect those principals from a perceived threat.

The Minister, as always, has the difficult task of rising above the quality of the information he is fed by the Ministry. In our case, matters were made worse as David Benson-Pope, himself a former bully of a schoolteacher, was Minister and our facility had the support of Dr Don Brash, leader of the National Party. We have a core philosophical difference with the Labour Party on the issue of poorly performing schools. There are two answers to schools that contribute to the 60 per cent NCEA Level One failure rate of fifth-form Maori. The state either moves in, fires the principal and board and installs competent people, or it allows genuine competition to develop. Neither option has been acceptable to the Labour government, which has preferred gentle tinkering with the consequence that schools like Edmund Hillary continue to produce burglars, rapists, druggies, solo mums, violent offenders and other drop-kicks in disproportionate numbers while the principal calls these apprentice misfits 'awesome tamariki'.
