
Roydvale School Board News - November 2011

As we approach the end of the year, it is clear that Roydvale School is well-settled into its new sort of 'normal'. For the most part, the school has been able to concentrate on its business-as-usual activities, and its typical calm and focused atmosphere has prevailed. Nevertheless, there obviously have been disruptions of the natural and the bureaucratic sorts over the year.

Principal Leaving

We would like to announce that Paul has successfully gained a new appointment as the principal of Ilam School. We congratulate him in achieving this success. In the seven years that Paul has been at Roydvale he has lead the school through significant change and developed a strong team of leaders and skilled teachers. Paul will be leaving us at the end of the first term 2012, ensuring a well managed transition for the new principal. While this may come as a surprise and be unsettling for some of the school community, we are confident that the school is in a position to continue to provide a quality education and a great environment for your children. The Board will commence the appointment process shortly with the aim of appointing a new principal early in the first term.

Property Matters:

School property is owned by the Ministry of Education, but schools have the responsibility for the day-to-day management of their buildings. Each school's Board of Trustees is required to formulate, with Ministry agreement, a five year property plan and budget (Five Year Agreement or 5YA) that sets out its intentions for maintaining and upgrading the school property environment. Early in the year, Andrew Panckhurst, the Board's property representative, had put much work into a new 5YA due to be implemented in the middle of the year. More recently though, the Ministry of Education has understandably placed a hold on all 5YA planning and spending in our region as it comes to grips with damages, changes and uncertainty. Also, it has recently become apparent that the Ministry's insurance cover for paving, fencing and pools is not what many had believed it to be.

For us, the most obvious and immediate ramification is that damaged pathways and courts will probably not be replaced in the near future. Also, there will now be no planned work done on the swimming pool. For the most part, our buildings are in a good state, with most of the classrooms and offices being upgraded, and the entire school being painted externally in recent years. Nevertheless, we are concerned about how these financial constraints will impinge on property maintenance and enhancement in the medium term.

There has been some good news. The landscaping projects are now largely complete. It is pleasing to see the plantings and features by the offices and staff room, along with the tidy up around Room 15 and along the fence line towards Sir William Pickering Drive. Also, the swimming pool will again be in action this summer. We encourage school families to make use of this facility now that the blistering summer days are arriving.

School Policies and Community Consultation

The school has a series of policies and procedures that guide how it operates, with the Board of Trustees being responsible for ensuring these are appropriate and adhered to. The school community has the right and the opportunity to contribute to them.

Each of the policies is regularly reviewed and updated. There is a period for community consultation before updated policies are formally adopted by the Board. Currently an amended School Administration Policy is available for community consultation. You are invited to view the proposed changes and submit comments before it is adopted at next month's Board meeting. The policies up for consultation, along with all current policies and procedures, are available at the school office.

Board Insights 2: Student Achievement

In our last newsletter, we gave an overview of the Board of Trustees' role. Here we would like to focus on one particular governance aspect. School boards are responsible for ensuring that student learning and achievement are continually improving. The Board's part is in the setting of priorities and goals, and then in monitoring performance.

A large part of the work in measuring achievement and progress is actually performed by the school's teachers and management, who are, of course, the teaching professionals. The Principal presents regular School-Wide Student Achievement reports in reading, writing, numeracy, topic and Progressive Achievement Test (PAT) results to the Board. These reports provide data to the level of year groups and gender, and give real insight into how students are achieving against national norms and the school's own expectations. An important aspect is that this measuring and reporting has been conducted for several years and so trends can be discerned – e.g. how the 2011 Year 4s compare to prior Year 4 groups, and how a particular cohort of students are improving as they progress through the years.

Through this reporting, the Board is able to satisfy itself, and therefore its stakeholders, that the school is fulfilling its obligations. If the Board cannot be satisfied, then it will need to become involved in rectifying the situation.

For the most part, these reports provide positive reading, with the large majority of Roydvale students achieving and progressing at or above expectations. Just as importantly though, these reports indicate where expectations haven't been met and explain the steps taken to address such situations.

In short, the school has active governance processes for overseeing the measuring and reporting of student achievement, and for ensuring that expectations are met.

2011 has been quite a year for everyone. We would like to wish everyone in the Roydvale School community a relaxed happy Christmas and we look forward to a good year in 2012.

Roydvale School Board of Trustees