

Kohia Terrace School, Auckland 2016



Raising parent engagement to its next level

Background

Kohia Terrace School (KTS) is a small primary school in Epsom, Auckland that caters to students from Years 1-8. KTS is driven by its vision “The power to dream and the passion to achieve”.

Alison Spence, who has led KTS for 8 years, completed the Strategic Leadership for Principals Programme run by the SpringboardTrust in 2014. She worked with her Capacity Partner Lindsay Kelly to develop a strategic plan for the school. During the course of the SLP programme as she was developing the plan, Alison started the process of engaging with parents over the strategic goals of the school.

Following the completion of SLPP, parent engagement was a key area of interest for the KTS leadership team as the school faced challenges in engaging with an increasingly highly diverse audience of parents. This decile 10 school has a 50% NZ European roll and the other half of the school comprises of 21% Chinese, 8% Indian, 4% each

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Philippa Campbell, Deputy Principal

of Pacifica and Sri Lankan students with the rest being of Maori, Australian, British/Irish, Fijian, Filipino, Latin American and other Asian ethnicities.

The project

The Parent Engagement project started in October 2015 with a meeting between Principal Alison Spence and Springboard Trust. Alison worked with her (volunteer) Engagement Manager, Rich Easton to refine the school Charter which formed the basis of the plan for the school for 2016. With the blessing of the school Board they scoped out the project which was to run during the next 12 months under the leadership of the Deputy Principal Philippa Campbell.

Deputy Principal Philippa says, "My goal was to create a guide – what we called the KTS Parents Guide. The guide enabled parents to pick up what makes us KTS, the Kohia Terrace School".

The project designed a series of mini surveys in the school newsletter to understand parents' perspectives on the plan. A number of engagement sessions targeted at parents of different ethnic backgrounds were held to obtain rich information on how best to engage with parents. Springboard Trust provided specialist assistance in the setting up and analysis of data from the surveys. A successful parent/teacher/student night focused on communicating the strategic plan achieved a new high of 90% attendance.

Alison speaks appreciatively about their Engagement Manager Rich Easton and refers to him as a "bit of sparkle that came into their lives" who supported and guided the team throughout the project. It was at an early stage when Rich got involved. Alison and Philippa had scoped the activities they wanted to do and he helped them put some structure into the process.

**"A bit of sparkle that came into our lives."
Principal Alison Spence about
Engagement Manager Rich Easton**

Rich regularly met with the KTS team to keep them on track and to provide a sounding board for interpreting the quantitative and qualitative feedback and transforming this into changes in the way that the school engages more meaningfully with parents.

The outcomes

The important components of the plan are displayed throughout the school ensuring that parents, teachers and students are familiar with the aspirations, goals and values of the school. Parents have effective channels to provide feedback and make suggestions. Communications to parents are aligned to the plan reinforcing their understanding of the strategic direction of the school. A platform has been created for the whole community to move forward together.

Principals can now access a set of services that connect them with best practice in change leadership and strategy implementation.

These services can help to accelerate implementation and continue the professional development of school leaders.

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