Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Monday 17 March 2025 from 7 pm to 7:50 pm and 8:44 pm to 9:58 pm

Present: Byron Lynds (Presiding Member), Stacey Newlands (Deputy Presiding Member), Ava Szabo (Principal), Rod Webster, Juliette George (Staff Representative), Jenny Jellicoe, Rachel Visser (Student Representative), Anahera Brown (via zoom), Michela Homer (Staff Representative), Hayley Luan (minutes)

Apologies: Lillian Pak

Parents Petition Regarding the 9-12 Camp

Natalie Horspool and Kate Atkinson attended the meeting. They presented a parent petition signed by 26 whānau against the rescheduling of the 2025 9-12 camp. Natalie noted that tamariki are upset that the 9-12 camp has been rescheduled for 2025. It was also quite a shock to them as they were expecting to attend the 9-12 camp when they were in the 6-9 classes.

Kate noted that in November 2024, Ava emailed the 9-12 community with regards to the unpaid 9-12 camp donations. After Ava's email, almost all the donations were paid for the 9-12 camp in 2024. Ava noted that does not relate to the rescheduling of the camp in 2025.

Kate noted that Anna emailed the Primary community regarding the rescheduling of the 2025 camp. It was stated in her email that the rescheduling was due to a combination of factors, including Nadine being away for Montessori training, the weather, the community bonding and the budget. The 2025 9-12 camp was therefore not going ahead in 2025 and will resume in Term 1 2026. Kate noted that budget wise, it should not be a problem as almost all families paid for the 9-12 camp in 2024. At least 26 families want to assist using their specialties/interests including running activities on camp or helping with cooking for the camp etc. Natalie noted that the parent community are also happy to arrange fundraising events to assist with camp costs.

Byron questioned if any Board members have children in the 9-12 classes. Anahera and Jenny are parents of 9-12 students and they were not contacted by Natalie and Kate due to a conflict of interest.

Byron noted that the Board members have not had the opportunity to discuss the petition yet as it was sent a few hours prior to the Board meeting. The most recent 9-12 camp took place in Term 4 in 2024. Natalie noted it was previously held in Term 1 and was moved to Term 3 then in Term 4 over the past 10 years. She appreciates that the camp may have to be staggered and take place during different terms. Natalie noted that when she spoke with Anna, the Primary DP, last week, Anna noted that El Rancho does not have the days available for a 9-12 camp in 2025. However, there are other campsites that could be suitable for the 9-12 camp such as Kaitoke and there are also fantastic campsites for schools in Otaki and Levin.

Natalie noted that the EOTC trips should be an addition to the camp not to replace the camp. The overnight component is an essential part of a camp which provides considerable development and growth for the children. It was noted that the Year 4 sleepover is for one overnight offsite and a proper 9-12 camp should contain at least 2 overnights offsite. The whānau appreciate that it may need to be a shorter camp in 2025 if offered, given the transition plan for 2026.

Byron noted that the Board will consider the situation and a sub-committee may be put together to discuss the situation. Byron will keep in touch with both Natalie and Kate in the interim and advise the Board's final decision once it is made.

Ava questioned if she should be involved in the discussion going forward? Byron noted that at present, the issue is a concern and not a complaint so Ava should be involved in the process. Byron noted that it would be easier if this issue was put forward as a complaint so there is a proper procedure to follow. However, it would then become a Board matter and Ava would be excluded from having further discussions with whānau. Natalie was concerned that would shut down the opportunity for the 26 whānau to have further discussions with Ava. The concern is not against anyone in particular, but rather towards the decision of the rescheduling of the 9-12 camp. It was noted that the Board will take the parent petition as a concern and have further discussions.

Kate and Natalie left the meeting at 7.17 pm.

It was noted that this seems to be a management issue rather than a governance issue. It is important to acknowledge the disappointment of the parent community and look into the reasons for the rescheduling of the 9-12 camp. Juliette noted that the Board should look at what the purpose is to take tamariki away for 2 nights on camp. It is not easy to find a location to provide 2 overnights for a camp. Ava noted there is a lot of administrative work that kaiako would have to do to arrange a camp, however the rescheduling of the 9-12 camp in 2025 is really about the school Montessori philosophy rather than administration.

It was noted that camps should have a deeper meaning rather than just sleeping overnight offsite. Going to El Rancho was great, however all of the meals and all of the activities are pre-planned. It would be good to allow our ākonga the opportunity to be more involved with the planning and to have them focus on extending their curriculum learning. Camps should be more than just a physical experience and also provide emotional experience and personal growth. El Rancho unfortunately did not meet those requirements. Attending a camp at the beginning of the year helps to build the community for the remainder of the year. Ava noted that Tanya was surprised to see transitioning Year 8 ākonga coming to Kawakawa last year and not having the same independence she remembered. That group attended El Rancho in 2023 and were not given the opportunity to plan anything themselves. The Year 8 ākonga were

quite socked that Kawakawa ākonga were planning and organising activities for Odyssey, which was not an experience they gained from El Rancho. The Montessori philosophy is about allowing children to grow in many dimensions and it seems to be the time to change the way how the 9-12 camp is managed.

Ava noted that the EOTC activities on offer for 2025 still provide challenges for ākonga both emotionally and physically. At the end of 2024, each of the Primary classes had a trip during the last week of term. Year 7 ākonga from Tāwhai wrote a letter to Ava outlining their plan to have an overnight stay at Kaitoke in 2025. This has been fully arranged by the Year 7 ākonga as Montessori students and will be fully supported by the school.

Ava noted when Natalie first came to see her, she had checked that EL Rancho could provide a camp for 2 overnights. The 9-12 ākonga are looking at different options for EOTC activities. The Year 7 ākonga from Tāwhai have arranged for one day out at an adventure park at Kaitoke where they will have a variety of activities including beach education and water skills. Other options include going to Adrenaline forest and a camp day at school with community kai. There were also discussions regarding a potential Wā Ora WOW (world of wearable) event which is all about being creative, working together and presenting back to whānau. Although these activities are not about staying offsite overnight, they are about personal growth and fit with the Montessori philosophy.

Another important reason to reset the 9-12 camp to the beginning of 2026 is to look after the Montessori teachers. Nadine is still on her Montessori training and may be overwhelmed by all the work around the 9-12 camp alongside her Montessori training.

Stacey noted it is important to communicate with whānau and ākonga regarding the information for the reasons for the camp rescheduling. It was noted that ākonga spend a lot of time cooking and planning for the camps which take up a lot of teaching hours. It will take time to plan for the new format for the 9-12 camp. Juliette noted the Year 7s may want to have a special experience with an overnight event to prepare them for Odyssey. Rachel noted for ākonga, it is incredible to go on a camp and provides a very valuable experience. She offered to join the sub-committee if required.

It was noted that the 9-12 camp previously held at El Rancho does not align with our strategy and special character. It may be stressful for whānau to pay for the 9-12 camp in Term 4 and then for Odyssey in Term 1 the following year. Anahera noted it would be good to stagger the payments for Odyssey. Ava noted that whānau pay donations for school camps and Odyssey. EOTC activities are paid from whānau activities contributions. As camp donations are voluntary, if whānau choose not to pay, the school is unable to force them and the school has to bear the cost. It is good to hear that the parents are offering to host fundraising activities for the 9-12 camp.

Byron will respond to Kate and Natalie on behalf of the Board sharing management comments. Byron will also explain the reasons for the rescheduling of the 9-12 camp for 2025 making reference to the Montessori philosophy and what is intended to replace the current 9-12 camp. The Board being an employer also have to look after our Montessori trained teachers, which is important to maintain the school special character.

Ava is happy to continue conversations with Kate, Natalie and the 9-12 whānau. She will document all conversations for future reference.

Declaration of Interests

Byron is a member of the Trust.

Acceptance of Previous Minutes

Motion: The minutes of the last Board of Trustees' meeting held on Monday 17 February 2025 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

Moved by Rod/ Seconded by Stacey/ Carried unanimously with no abstentions or nays.

Chair's Update

In-committee Meeting from 8:45 pm to 8:48 pm

Motion: That the public be excluded from the following part/s of the proceedings of this meeting namely for agenda items under In-Committee. Minutes are kept in the PEB minute book.

The meeting reopened at 8:48 pm.

Tumuaki/Principal's Report – March 2025

Ava presented the Principal's report which aligns with the Strategic Goals.

Goal 1: To support each child/ākonga's progress and achievement against the NZ Curriculum and Te Whāriki

Ava noted the Analysis of Variance is no longer required by the MoE and is replaced by the Statements of Variance. Ava noted that the Analysis of Variance for 2024 has already been sent to the MoE and is presented to the Board at this meeting as it contains a wealth of information.

The next parent education evening is fast approaching. Some of the High School staff are looking at the possibility of recording the parent education evenings to be available for whānau who are not available to attend. The recent Year 11 evening in Tāwari allowed ākonga to demonstrate their work to their whānau. As NCEA Level 1 is no longer mandatory, ākonga are able to work on subjects that they are interested in.

Goal 2: To ensure we build, develop and practice an authentic Montessori programme and approach throughout the school aligned with MJ2EX and the Wā Ora Montessori essential elements.

Carol has been appointed as the new Montessori Specialist Teacher following Robin's retirement. This role is funded by the MoE and is an additional 4 hours per week on top of Carol's daily teaching role. The school will fund 4 hours for a relief teacher for Carol from the operational grant.

Goal 3: To establish, maintain and improve equitable learning outcomes as Tiriti partners, recognising the importance of partnership with Māori in education.

Nothing to discuss.

Personnel

There are a number of Fixed Term support staff positions in the Primary sector moving to Permanent positions. As they are Permanent positions, they must be advertised and the advertisements for these positions have attracted a large amount of interest within the local community. Ava noted that it is against legislation to have fixed term contracts rolling over year after year without a legitimate reason and they were required to become permanent contracts.

Nadine is away on Montessori training in Term 2 and Ben will be covering as Assistant Teacher in Tōtara.

Roll

The roll is looking as expected and the 6-9 classes are getting bigger.

Health and Safety

There are no head injuries to report. 2 children received broken bones due to falling from the playground equipment. The bark has since been topped up in both Primary playgrounds. The equipment is compliant and is checked on an annual basis in December.

Motion: That the Principal's Report for March 2025 be accepted.

Moved by Jenny; Seconded by Stacey; All in favour motion carried.

Annual Plan

Ava presented the Annual Plan for 2025 which has been reviewed and updated by the SLT at the recent meeting.

It is now a requirement from MoE that attendance information be included in the Annual Plan and the Strategic Plan. A new system called STAR (Stepped Attendance Response) has been introduced by MoE containing a lot of information and recommendations regarding school attendance. In terms of our situation, the STAR procedure will be more in relation to children who are struggling to come to school, rather than those having holidays overseas or being sick during term time. It is worth noting we identify tamariki early in the Preschool and are able to transfer the information to the Primary school when they transition.

The focus for 2025 is on curriculum, reading and writing as well as attendance. We will continue to support students with Maths and Literacy to meet the co-requisite requirements for NCEA. Additional support and a variety of programmes are in place to help those ākonga who did not pass in 2024 as year 11s and are repeating again in 2025. The current issue is that there is no substantial feedback provided for ākonga to know where they went wrong in the exams. At the Principal's hui, the MoE noted that the maths exams will change and the focus will be on maths rather than literacy. Year 11s progress is monitored throughout the year so the teachers are aware with how to help them meet the targets. Moderation protocols are being investigated, which contains useful indicators to track student progress. E-Asttle and PATs are currently the main assessment methods for Primary ākonga.

In terms of Montessori authenticity, the main focus is on the planes of development of our tamariki. It is important that the teachers understand the characteristics for different age groups. There have been discussions regarding other ways to offer parent education

evenings to attract more interest and have more whānau attend. This may be a different way to offer Montessori philosophy to the school community.

A second bus tour for staff has been booked with Huia Puketapu to provide local knowledge of the Hutt Valley area and have this passed onto tamariki at school.

Motion: That the Annual Plan for 2025 be accepted.

Moved by Byron; Seconded by Rod; All in favour motion carried.

Analysis of Variance 2024

Ava presented the Analysis of Variance for 2024. Writing results have increased to 65% for those who are at and above the National Standard. There was a big improvement in Kawakawa ākonga compared to 2023. Approximately 80% of Year 9 and Year 10 ākonga are at/above the standard for writing, which is an increase from 51% in 2023. A lot of mahi has been happening to assist Kawakawa ākonga with high needs. Year 9s are at 86% compared with 46% in 2023. It was noted that it may be due to different cohorts. About 70% of Year 10 ākonga are at or above the standard in writing. Literacy programmes are tailored to meet the individual needs of a small group of ākonga and Teacher Aides are working hard to assist ākonga with their learning. Majority of the priority learners either made accelerated progress or received a similar result. Further investigation will occur for those who did not progress.

The writing results for boys jumped from 48% to 60%, which may be affected by different cohorts. Reading results remain the same. The drop in Māori students reading will be investigated further by the Primary team. The maths results continue to be strong and ākonga benefit from the Montessori equipment offered in each class. The drop in girls' writing will be investigated.

The numbers of priority learners are going up. It was noted that there have been previous discussions regarding us being a Montessori school, that we can be a magnet for neurodiversity students. However, in reality, other schools are in the same boat. There are about 45% to 50% of students with additional needs at other schools. We are currently investigating how to support these young ones who attend our school. Unfortunately, resources that were previously available are no longer available and it is uncertain what resources will be in place going forward.

It was also noted that the reading results for Māori boys had a drop from 83% in 2023 to 72% in 2024. Many boys are not natural readers and the results fit with the national trend. A Teacher Aide is employed to provide one on one support to help students with their reading. Year 9-10 Kawakawa ākonga did well in reading with 84% at or above the standard compared to 66% last year. Boys reading was 64% compared to 55% in 2023. Girls reading is at 95% which is excellent. Ava noted that learning begins in the Preschool and continues through to the High School.

30 Kawakawa ākonga used to be in one class, however this class has now been split into two groups with 15 students in each group. This is due to a staff member being away on medical leave and the role not being able to be filled with a relieving teacher. This scenario makes it easier for kaiako to manage the class and ākonga to focus on their study. An after school maths club is offered to all Kawakawa and Tāwari ākonga. The Tāwari maths club focus is on ākonga who have not gained numeracy credits and it is recommended that they attend.

A full NCEA report will be presented at the next Board meeting in May. In terms of the literacy and numeracy results, due to the small cohort, the change from 78% to 100% only refers to 2-3 students. The results for the Year 12s and Year 13s are above average of the school equity index compared to schools of a similar equity index. Extra support is provided to Year 11 students. Previously, students joined a structured programme and the focus was on getting the number of credits they aimed for. The focus has now changed to reflect every student being on a separate learning programme no matter how many credits they choose to do. It was noted that all ākonga who wanted to attend university successfully gained the UE qualification.

The Analysis of Variance contains information from different areas and was completed prior to the Annual Plan. The goals on the Analysis of Variance align with the goals on the Annual Plan.

Juliette noted that the reading mums come to school to work with Primary ākonga 3 times a week.

Motion: That the Analysis of Variance for 2024 is accepted.

Moved by Jenny; Seconded by Rachel; All in favour motion carried.

2025 Strategic Plan

Ava presented the updated Strategic Plan for 2025. The areas that are highlighted in yellow are the additions for 2025 and reflect the latest MoE priorities on reading, writing, maths and attendance to improve overall achievement.

The Strategic Plan will be submitted to the MoE after approval from the Board. At present, it is uncertain what will be required for 2026 onwards.

Motion: That the Strategic Plan for 2025 is accepted.

Moved by Michela; Seconded by Juliette; All in favour motion carried.

2025 Odyssey

Ava presented the SASS forms for 2025 Odyssey. Tanya sent out the SASS forms along with the supporting documents regarding the 2025 Odyssey a couple of weeks ago. Health and safety conditions are included in the forms with no names identified. The Board thanked Tanya for preparing the comprehensive information for 2025 Odyssey.

A few ākonga decided not to attend 2025 Odyssey due to a variety of reasons. Overall, Kawakawa ākonga are happy to attend with their peers now that it is being held at the end of Term 1. In 2024, there were 12 students who did not attend Odyssey (or attended only part of Odyssey). They were supervised by the Tāwari kaiako during their non-contact hours.

Exit Interview Summary

Anahera presented the exit interview summary. She thanked Ava for passing on the names of the departing staff. The committee received information for 6 departing staff in 2024. Interviews were offered to 4 of them with 1 no response, 1 declined and 2 staff accepted the interviews. The summary is based on the 2 staff who accepted the interview.

The interview template lines up with the school Strategic Plan and will be used for all exit interviews going forward. Thanks to Byron and Stacey for reviewing the template.

The positive feedback received included a close school community, positive relationships with colleagues, students, parents and teachers, SLT support during personal challenges and difficulties, a variety of PD opportunities, structured admin team, proud of Montessori authenticity, independent learning for students, team collaboration etc.

Other feedback included difficulties with changes in leadership and transitions at the High School, PD not being proactive.
Anahera will share the summary with the Board. It was suggested that the summary be reviewed once a year to determine if there are any improvements or amendments that need to be made.

Ava asked whether the interviewees knew the information would be shared when they attend the interview? Anahera noted that the template mentions that the information will be shared with the Board, however it does not state the names of the Board members. Michela suggested to put the following wording in the cover email - "the interviews help the Board and our school to identify areas we can do better". The exit interview process has been formalised over the years and by adding the wording, it will make it transparent for staff who accept the interview.

Anahera noted that people appreciate the exit interviews. Ava acknowledged Anahera for completing the exit interviews.

BoT Financial Updates

Hayley presented the March Board financials.

The variances were mainly due to timing. The Kaitoke camp and Waitangi trip are not budgeted, however money has been collected from parents to cover the costs.

The Principals' well-being funding of $12k granted by the government was spent in 2024. The spending included Montessori Conference in the USA for $9,500; the Trans-Tasman Principal Conference for $1,200; team meetings for $1,300.

Motion: That the updated March Board financials are accepted.

Moved by Ava; Seconded by Jenny; All in favour motion carried.

Other Business

Rod Webster will compile the Board newsletter article which is due in 12 weeks.

Stacey, Michela and Anahera will be members of the Discipline Committee as Mark Skelly has stepped down.

Michela questioned if there is a column on the school website for the Board of Trustees policies? It was noted that all Area School policies are now managed by School Docs which is on the school website with login details.

The PTA has questioned if there is anything the Board wants to fundraise for? It was noted that a video camera with gimbal or a sound system could be good. The video camera can be used to record whānau education evenings for those who are unable to attend.

Administration

Correspondence

The correspondence was noted.

Agenda Items Next Meeting

- NCEA report

The meeting closed at 9.58 pm.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Monday 19 May 2025 in the Tāwari classroom at the High School.

Signed Presiding Member, Wā Ora Montessori School

Date 19/05/2025

Action	Personnel	Due
Anahera to share the exit interview summary to the Board	Board	Before the next Board meeting on 19th May

2025 Council/BOT Meetings

7.00pm at Wā Ora Montessori School – Tāwari Classroom

January – No meeting
Monday 17 February 2025 (Week 3, Term 1)
Monday 17 March 2025 (Week 7, Term 1)
April – No meeting
Monday 19 May 2025 (Week 4, Term 2)
Monday 16 June 2025 (Week 8, Term 2)
July-No meeting
Monday 18 August 2025 (Week 6, Term 3)
Monday 15 September 2025 (Week 10, Term 3)
Monday 20 October 2025 (Week 3, Term 4)
Monday 17 November 2025 (Week 7, Term 4)