Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Monday 19 May 2025 from 7:04 pm to 8:41 pm

Present: Byron Lynds (Presiding Member), Stacey Newlands (Deputy Presiding Member), Ava Szabo (Principal), Rod Webster, Juliette George (Staff Representative), Jenny Jellicoe (via Zoom), Rachel Visser (Student Representative), Hayley Luan (minutes), Tanya Laybourn (left @ 7.52pm)

Apologies: Lillian Pak, Michela Homer (Staff Representative), Anahera Brown

NCEA Report

Tanya Laybourn, High School DP, presented the NCEA report for 2024 results. She apologised for the length of the report as it contains quite a lot of analysis and teachers' voices for each subject. Tanya noted that she could condense the report if necessary and she is keen to find out what the Board wants to know from the NCEA report.

The word "nudge" has been included intentionally in the report. A lot of work has been done to get the High School to "nudge" closer to become an authentic Montessori environment. It is important for ākonga to learn from outside the classrooms as per the Montessori philosophy.

The recommendations on page one discuss how to help ākonga boost their NCEA grades. Tanya noted that there is big potential for the school to assist ākonga getting more merits and excellences. It was also noted that Wā Ora's philosophy is to form better human beings rather than simply focusing on getting high grades.

Byron questioned whether ākonga felt they had already done their best by getting achieved? Juliette noted that some ākonga may just want to pass rather than getting merits or excellences. Ava noted when NCEA was first introduced in 2004, it was like a market place where students could choose which subjects they wanted to do. They can choose not to take any external exams if they do not want to. Stacey questioned whether the Montessori approach makes our students less equipped to take external exams? Tanya noted she does not think our students are less equipped. Juliette noted we do not have a massive focus on exams being a Montessori school and aligning with our philosophy – ākonga can choose to sit external exams and try their best. It was suggested ākonga may feel quite stressed about external exams. Tanya noted ākonga are provided with tutorials and workshops during study leave.

Rachel noted that motivation for study may decrease in Term 4. Some ākonga do not understand how important exams are and some may not understand the huge effort they have to put in to prepare for exams and keep working on it. Rob noted that the removal of NCEA Level1 exams may give ākonga more time to prepare for Level 2 and Level 3 exams. As a result, they would not get over stressed and are able to plan for their exams strategically. Tanya noted the current Year 13 ākonga sat NCEA Level 1 exams when they were in Year 11. It will take a full cycle of 3 years to see the impact of removing NCEA Level 1 exams.

It is compulsory for Year 11 ākonga to take numeracy and literacy exams. Tanya noted she did not convert the results into percentages because of the small cohort in Tawari - one student may have a significant impact. Year 11 ākonga have felt the pressure with their first exam tomorrow. It was noted the numeracy and literacy exams are an ongoing journey, as ākonga have to pass both exams in order to receive NCEA qualifications. Tanya noted although she teaches English, she does not mark the exams nor does she receive any feedback about the results. She hopes it will become more streamlined and more student friendly. Ava noted that the current problem is that no detailed feedback is received, making it difficult for kaiako to help ākonga when there is limited knowledge about where mistakes were made.

Ava noted at the recent Principal's hui she attended, feedback from other schools is that the numeracy exam is like a literacy assessment with maths in it. There are two ways to answer the questions but only one way is marked as the correct answer. The Ministry of Education has noted they would make the numeracy test more about maths this year. No other changes have been made at present. The MoE also announced that the NCEA exams would be marked faster this year and the results should be published within a month after the exams. Juliette noted that previously ākonga did not know whether they had passed the exams or not before they were signing up for the end of year exams.

The Board appreciated the insight on the front page and thanked Tanya for compiling such a thorough and comprehensive NCEA report. Stacey noted it is incredible for such a small school like ours to offer a variety of subjects with different arrangements. Stacey questioned what is the workload for the teachers? Tanya noted that a lot of support has been given to staff members.

It was noted that external courses are offered to ākonga for the first time this year. Zena has been working very hard to ensure that ākonga do not miss the opportunity to enrol with Te Kura. There are three ākonga enrolled in Te Kura for languages this year with support staff to help them. It was noted that it is quite challenging to study via Te Kura due to the lack of support. Ava noted that only Year 9 and Year 10 ākonga are allowed to enrol in Te Kura.

Questions invited. Stacey questioned what is the plan for the maths teacher role for 2026 as the current staff member is on a fixed term contract finishing at the end of 2025. Ava responded that our new maths teacher has a great relationship with students and has positively enhanced maths at school. We are currently in conversation with regard to 2027, and will provide an update as more information becomes available.

The Board thanked Tanya for her mahi preparing the NCEA report which is comprehensive and informative.

Motion: That the NCEA Report for 2024 results be accepted.

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

Tawari Outdoor Education Camp

Tanya presented the Tawari outdoor education camp EOTC form. Tanya teaches Outdoor Education as a subject along with PE. There are 7 boys who are in the Outdoor Education class at present. The camp will take place in the central north island and Adventure Specialities Trust is the external provider for the camp.

Stacey questioned what is the reason there are only boys attending this camp. Tanya noted only boys have chosen the Outdoor Education programme for 2025. Stacey appreciated the risk assessment form with comprehensive information. It was noted that the school van will be the main vehicle for the camp.

Tanya noted the risks teachers have to deal with on camps are not necessarily those of drowning or falling off cliffs. The are other risks relating to well-being and the mental and physical health of ākonga on the camps. It takes great effort from staff to look after the ākonga on camp and to accommodate their anxiety, depression, behaviour issues, medication, family dramas etc. Tanya wanted to bring that to the Board's attention and the importance of managing those risks. It is a massive undertaking for kaiako to look after a large number of children with different needs. There are detailed behavioural plans and safety plans for some ākonga. Hilary did an amazing job working with whānau to ensure all needs were met on Odyssey. Kawakawa staff also worked very hard to address the needs of a variety of students.

Rachel questioned whether the special key areas addressed above were part of the normal teacher training? Juliette noted that it all leans to the job. She works with children when they are in the Primary School and knows them well. That knowledge helps Juliette understand them better when they are in the High School. It is about sharing knowledge, building relationships with parents and hearing the children's voice.

Motion: That the Tawari Outdoor Education Camp be approved to proceed.

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

Girl's Well-being EOTC Form

Tanya presented the girls well-being EOTC form.

Adventure Therapy will be used for the girl's well-being camp as it works well for a single sex group. More well-being goals can be achieved when girls are with girls. Claire, who is an experienced counsellor and adventure therapist, will facilitate the camp. Tanya is attempting to figure out the best way to arrange the boys' well-being camp. She believes that the boys well-being camp should be led by a male. It was noted that there is no fluid gender in Tawari, so it was not addressed.

Renee has resigned from her role as Well Being Co-ordinator and her successor may be able to assist with a boy's well-being programme. Rachel questioned whether there was anything that sparked the idea of organising a girls well-being camp? Tanya noted the camp is to address a need that has never been addressed. The original idea was that Renee would be able to build on top of what the girls had have learned from the camp. With Renee's resignation, there will be other ways to follow up.

Byron noted he fully endorses the girls' well-being camp to go ahead, however, there may be questions asked by the boys about their well-being camp. It would be good to offer the boys a similar opportunity for their well-being.

Tanya noted the boys need support from a male to guide them towards manhood. Both boys' and girls' needs are very different and they also process things differently. There is a very female heavy staffing team in the High School and there needs to be a better way to arrange a boys' well-being camp.

Jenny questioned whether the camp for girls is from a specific year group? Tanya noted the camp is offered to all girls from Year 10s to Year 12s. The cost will be covered by Tawari activities contributions.

Year 13 Leadership Camp

Tanya noted the current Year 13s are keen to get involved in leadership activities and she has been working hard to provide leadership ideas and opportunities. Year 13 ākonga have chosen a celebrities' type of event and have taken on organising the event.

Tanya proposed organising an overnight Year 13 leadership tramp in August (Term 3). She is aware that documents have to be sent to the Board for approval two board meetings in advance. It was noted that it is not easy to supply the documents in October/November for camps in Term 1 as it is the busiest period of the year. Rachel noted she is very excited about the leadership camp. Byron questioned whether there were any considerations to involve Year 13s taking on a leadership role for Odyssey? It was noted that Odyssey is more about the Kawakawa community (Year 8 to Year 10).

Stacey noted it is not good practice to review risk assessment forms right before camps take place. In terms of the Year 13 camp, if the 2 Board meetings in advance is a barrier, is there a different approach needed for the Board to approve the camp? Tanya noted it becomes tricky when external providers are involved and sometimes there is no Board meeting over 2 months due to school holidays. Byron noted that the Board could try to review the camp documents in late December/early January before the February Board meeting and approve the camp for Term 1.

Now that Odyssey is taking place in April, it makes it easier to review the forms for Odyssey at the February and March Board meetings.

Tanya left the meeting at 7:52pm.

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 17th March 2025 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

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

Chair's Update

Byron responded to Kate and Natalie regarding the Board discussions about the rescheduling of the 9-12 camp. No further response has been received by either Byron or Ava. It was noted that the current Year 7s will be in Kawakawa next year and able to attend Odyssey for 3 years. The Year 5s and Year 6s will attend the 9-12 camp in Term 1 2026.

Tumuaki/Principal's Report – May 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 that the Ministry of Education has a big focus on attendance at present. The 69% attendance at Wā Ora has been mainly due to sickness. On page 4, the daily and weekly attendance sits at 90%. The total sickness of 61% lowered the attendance rate from 90% to 69%. Year 11s and Year 5s have the highest percentage of sickness. We are a small school and a small number of students on sick leave causes a significant change to the attendance percentage. Ava noted she believes medical reasons should not be counted when calculating attendance. If medical reasons were excluded, the average attendance of 90% is not far below the required attendance rate of 94%. The school contacts whānau asking for reasons when children are not at school. It would be difficult to reach 94% if medical reasons are being counted as absences.

Rod questioned if not attending school impacts students' learning? Ava noted those ākonga whose learning is impacted by their absences are those who have quite long absences. We are in constant communication with whānau to get them back to school and that is where all the effort needs to go. Some ākonga do not want to attend school due to mental health issues. Ākonga who are away on holidays during term time tend to perform well academically. Byron questioned whether whānau have to contact Ava to apply for extended leave for holidays? Ava noted that whānau have to inform the school for holiday leave, however Ava does not have the authority to stop them going on holidays. It was noted that if ākonga are away for more than 5 days in a row at any time, they are marked as irregular absence.

The Preschool attendance is marked daily and absent children are followed up consistently. It was noted Preschool attendance patterns tend to follow the child when they transition to Primary. There are ongoing conversations with whānau regarding absences.

The education evenings went very well. Kathryn Berkett is confirmed to talk about neuro-diverse brains in Term 3. Kathryn will present at a full staff hui followed by a whānau evening.

It was noted that only 6 families completed the new parent survey. The feedback received was very positive. Question raised how to get more people to complete the survey? It was noted that the survey is sent out to new parents when their children have been at Wā Ora for 6 weeks.

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.

Nothing to discuss.

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

Another bus trip with Huia Puketapu regarding local curriculum in Lower Hutt has been booked for the Teacher Only Day scheduled for Monday 10th November 2025. This provides good continuity after the first bus trip around Wellington.

The Primary and Preschool Kapa Haka groups will present at Hutt Fest on 26th June.

The next whānau hui evening is scheduled for this Friday. Ava noted Phaedra and Tenakee may step down from teaching Kapa Haka after school when their school year wraps up, however there may be other people who are interested in stepping into this space. Patira will teach guitar at the High School. Dannielle has set up a Te Reo Maori club for parents whilst their children are at Kapa Haka. Positive feedback has been received.

Personnel

Nadine and Robyn are continuing with their Montessori training.

Stacey questioned whether Renee's role as Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator will continue to be funded? Ava noted she has a person in mind who can take over this role in the High School for the remainder of the year. This would be a fixed-term contract if they accept the offer. There would be a different setting in the Primary School. At present, Johanna Pibal, a registered experienced counsellor, is continuing to provide offsite counselling service to ākonga. Ava noted Wā Ora also has a relationship with Bethlehem Tertiary Institute (BTI) who would like to offer 1,000 hours free counselling for our ākonga. This is part of the learning practice for their students to become counsellors. This learning practice can be for High School ākonga when they begin and towards the end of their study, they are able to counsel younger children.

Roll

Two children were enrolled into the Preschool to fill the vacancies. The Preschool has 95 students at present. The next pre-enrolment evening is scheduled for next Thursday and is for potential Preschool children only.

The 6-9 classes will have more ākonga at the end of 2025. The extra 16 ākonga that we were required to enrol last year has contributed to the increased student roll for the Area School.

Before School Care and After School Care Update

Ava updated the Board regarding the Primary/Preschool before and after school care setting in Michela's absence. Ava noted we have been advised that "after school care" does not apply in a Preschool setting and should be included in the daily Preschool operational hours and called long day care. We were also advised that Primary ākonga should not be located in the Preschool area during before and after school care hours. This is part of the ECE regulations. Ava acknowledged Michela for her hard work in making the changes to the before and after school care setting. Both Hutt City Council and the Ministry of Education have been informed of the changes. The Preschool operational hours have now been extended to 8 am to 6 pm to accommodate before and after school care hours. It was noted that this is not a change of regulations but to ensure we align with the ECE regulations.

There will be an extra cost to operate the Preschool long day care as a fully registered teacher is required to be employed for the Preschool before and after school care. This is not a requirement for Primary before and after school care. A lot of positive feedback has been received regarding the new setting and Primary ākonga are happy to be able to stay in the Primary environment.

Byron questioned what is the financial impact on hiring another fully registered teacher for before and after school care? Ava noted that further conversations will need to take place regarding how much to charge for the Preschool extended day. A registered teacher has been employed for 3 hours every day from 3pm to 6pm. Due to cost, whānau are no longer able to book one-off Preschool after school care - they are required to book permanent hours for after school care and pay for those booked hours regardless of attendance.

It is a large cost to employ another registered teacher for longer Preschool days. It was noted that when the Preschool is empty of children, visitors are allowed to be brought into this area. Primary ākonga are therefore taken to the Preschool area to finish off after school care with their supervisor from 5pm.

It was also noted that 5 year olds are still counted as pre-schoolers and cannot be booked into Primary after school care. Jenny questioned what happens if parents are unable to collect their children at 3pm due to an emergency. Ava noted there will be further discussions regarding those situations. Question raised if the cost of having an additional registered teacher will be passed on to the parents? Ava noted that the Preschool is required to be operated under the required teacher to student ratio. One registered teacher can look after a maximum of 6 children and another registered teacher is required to be onsite for up to 20 children. One extra registered teacher is then required for every 10 children above 20 children.

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

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

BoT Financial Updates

Hayley presented the May Board financials.

The BoT cash flow is forecast to be down to $14k at the end of June. It was budgeted for the Board to request a Trust donation of $500k in September to cover extra staffing. Due to the extra teacher's salary and relatively bigger fixed assets spending at the beginning of the year, the Board cash flow will be very tight at the end of June. It is suggested to request a Trust donation of $200k in June to help with the BoT cash flow. Hayley to send a donation request to the Trust on behalf of the Board.

The Odyssey donations are still being collected it was noted that 2 families will not be paying Odyssey donations this year.

Deloitte is still auditing the 2024 accounts and should be completed by the end of this week. A quote has been received from BDO for the Council 2025 audit for $14k, (Deloitte quoted for $6.5k). BDO noted they are confident they can complete the Council audit on time with no delays.

The BoT is currently on a three-year contract with Deloitte until 2026. Byron noted that it is advantageous for one firm to audit both accounts. The issue with Deloitte is that they have been very slow auditing the accounts in previous years.

Ava noted her biggest concern is that the audit has to be done on time. The Council would be able to appoint a new firm for the 2025 audit at the upcoming AGM. In regards to changing the BoT firm, the school would have to apply to the Auditor General. Byron noted unless there is a good reason to change the auditor, the request of changing audit firms is unlikely to be approved.

Byron suggested Hayley to obtain another quote from Baker Tilly Staple Rodway.

Motion: That the updated May Board financials are accepted.

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

Administration

Correspondence

The correspondence was noted.

Agenda Items Next Meeting

- Year 13 leadership camp EOTC form
- PCBU risk report for Board responsibilities
- Board policies review

The meeting closed at 8.41 pm.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Monday 16th June 2025 in the Tāwari classroom at the High School.

Signed Presiding Member, Wā Ora Montessori School

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Date 24/6/2025

Action	Personnel	Due
Hayley to send a request to the Trust for $200k donations on behalf of the Board	Hayley	By the end of June 2025
Hayley to get another quote for Council 2025 audit from Baker Tilly Staple Rodway	Hayley	By the Council AGM on 10th June

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)