



Newsletter

ERO is placing increasing emphasis on effective self review as a key decider that will determine how soon one of their teams will next visit your school ... self review becomes a deeply self reflective practice ... [it] 'is not an event or a folder'.

Kia ora tatou, talofa lava, malo e lelei, greetings.

At a recent ERO self review workshop, Carol Mutch, the advisor to the Chief Review Officer, Dr Graham Stoop, indicated that he hopes to encourage and develop closer and more collegial working relationships with schools. Indeed, he seeks a more 'trusting relationship' with schools. This is to be welcomed.

Many readers of this newsletter may already have attended one of these workshops, however if you have not as yet, you may be interested in some reflections on the one held at Edgewater College on 22nd April.

As you are aware, ERO is placing increasing emphasis on effective self review as a key decider that will determine how soon one of their teams will next visit your school; indeed, some schools may get as much as a five year break between reviews. More on this later.

What are ERO's expectations?

Definition

ERO wants schools to determine their own definition of self review and to not only stick with this definition, but be able

Reflections on an Education Review Office Self Review Workshop

to justify it. This therefore means that Boards and schools really need to have a professional discussion that is robust enough and critical enough to come up with a clear picture of what 'self review' means to them.

Data analysis

Too often, ERO is bombarded with paper (well, that's a legitimate strategy, isn't it?). ERO is however not too keen on fighting a paper war – it wants to see much more interrogation by a school of its data, and it wants to see data develop over a period of time, so that schools tell a 'performance story'. This narrative details a school's journey as evidenced by the data and tells of the turns and initiatives taken by a school in response to that data.

Decisions about next steps

As a result of rigorous data analysis, a school ought to make decisions about its next steps, with carefully pondered justifications, priorities and expectations of success. **THIS** is what ERO is really interested in. So you can see that self review becomes a deeply self reflective practice – in the words of Carol Mutch, self review 'is not an event or a folder'.

Policies and procedures

There may be many Boards, Principals or senior staff who see self review simply as the cycle of perpetually 'reviewing' policies and procedures to ensure these are up-to-date and relevant. Whilst that is important, it is not what ERO has in mind as an instance of effective self review. Rather, self review ought to be an opportunity to reflect on the outcomes of teaching and learning.

A changed focus

Challenges

ERO is focussed on the challenge that is presented by trying to balance improvement and accountability; internal review and external review. This challenge is magnified by the fact that the ERO report is made public. A possible alternative ERO is exploring is the development of twin reports – one that is designed for public consumption and a different one for the school, rather than the present practice of a full report for the school and a condensed version of the same report for the community.

A post-modern approach?

In keeping with so much else in current New Zealand education, there appears to be a commitment by ERO to move away from 'one size fits all' reviews to reviews that treat each school as a unique identity and which focus on the unique differences of each school.

Approaches to self review

It is valuable for Boards to see review at three distinct levels: strategic, business-as-usual and spontaneous, the latter taking place when there have been unexpected events which require processes and policies to be reconsidered in the light of such events. ERO also discourages highly focussed reviews, such as a review of 'spelling', for example.

Typically, self review could look like action research, where an issue is highlighted, and considered in light of a

Mockingbird Education Management Consultants is focussed on delivering **QUALITY OUTCOMES** to schools - call today to arrange a free consultation.



MOCKINGBIRD EDUCATION MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS

Po Box 54220
The Marina

Phone & Fax: +64 9 537 6773
Mob: 027 433 8330

particular hypothesis or assumption about how change could make a difference. This is widely discussed and the parameters are established, including resources required, timeframes and benchmarks for progress checks. The review process takes place in relation to those parameters, with as much buy-in from those involved as possible. At the end, the review progress and results are evaluated and next steps determined.

Conclusion

The 5 years between reviews sounds tempting. It appears however that ERO has not yet fully worked out how to monitor those schools over such an extended time frame (other than a 'how's it going?' phone call). It is questionable whether a school that has leadership change within that 5 year spell can sustain the same levels of performance.

It seems also that schools on the long cycle will be treated differently at review time, being offered much more autonomy than schools on shorter cycles. This too is problematic, as is the movement away from a unitary standard for all schools. Like them or loathe them, ERO reviews offer many positive consequences for schools. These positives may be lost, along with overall standards, if ERO moves into an approach that is over-customised and differentially standardised.

Business Activity in 2010

Apr 2010: Business Activity

- On-going NZC implementation work (whole staff workshops & committee work)
- Board consultation
- 'Learning to Learn'



Is this good enough reason to explain a late newsletter? Grandson # 1, Roman Vito b 6th Apr! Note the doting first time grandparent! Is there a course one has to register to take???

Apr 2010: Client Schools

Sancta Maria Catholic Primary School
Wesley College

Other points of interest:

1. Working on the writing-up of my Doctoral thesis has meant a lighter workload. Currently I am working on 8 contracts.
2. I have done some training as a Philosophy for Children (P4C) educator, and take a Year 5 class for an hour lesson each week. This is helping to develop thinking skills with this group and is the focus of an action research investigation.
3. I am to join the Board of Trustees of St Joseph's School, Orakei, as a Proprietor's Rep.

Mockingbird Education Management Consultants has been established to provide high quality professional advice, service and support to New Zealand schools.

It is a consultancy based on:

- Trust
- Quality
- Professionalism

Mockingbird understands that:

- Principals and Senior Managers are busy professionals
- Middle Managers need support and guidance
- Schools have to achieve results

Therefore, Mockingbird will work closely with you to identify the advice, service or support you require and how best to deliver that to you, your senior managers, staff or school community.