

Otari School Leadership, Participation and Well-Being in Year 7 and 8

Results of a Year 7 and 8 Survey

Background

This year one of my appraisal goals required me to focus on some issues related to the needs and interests of students within the year 7 and 8 cohorts. The goal is below:

Effectively address the needs of year 7 and 8 students, in relation to:

- **Leadership**
- **Hauora/well being**
- **Participating and contributing**

and develop activities and programmes accordingly.

This was due to feedback last year in relation to leadership, student participation and well being. The feedback was part of strategic plan consultation. Year 7 and 8 students had a meeting with a board member and the resulting feedback formed the basis for the goal.

The following survey has contributed information to help me evaluate outcomes of the goal . It has provided information for further reflection and goal setting and either confirms observations and beliefs or challenges established views.

In term one I wrote the following in my appraisal document in relation to the expected outcomes of my appraisal goal:

Generally, senior students express a high level of satisfaction with their time at Otari, however consultation in 2018 revealed senior students felt there could be more things to engage and interest them. I want to drill down further in relation to these findings.

Is this still a shared view?

What kind of activities would senior students like to see established?

What are the possibilities?

How can we work together to address issues and achieve outcomes?

We also know that in relation to relationships and well being that there are behaviours, attitudes and incidents that indicate more could be done to enhance the year 7 and 8 culture. Therefore I want to inquire further in to this and also address some of these issues through a more effective hauora programme.

Impact on learners: More engaged and involved student!

Impact on culture: Improved student relationships, communication, cooperation, leadership and mutual support.

Survey Results

LEADERSHIP

Percentage of children who:

enjoy being involved in leadership: 66%

are not interested in being involved in leadership **but like participating** in activities: 30%

are not interested in being involved in leadership or supporting leadership activities: 4%

believe there **are enough** opportunities for being involved in leadership: 96%

believe there **are not enough** opportunities to be involved in leadership: 4%

believe students **are encouraged** to have ideas that promote leadership: 85%

believe students **are not encouraged** to have ideas that promote leadership: 15%

indicate they **are involved** in some form of leadership: 94%

indicate they **are not involved** in any leadership at all: 6%

Student council	Librarian	Running a school activity	Sports monitor	Helping younger students	Other
14	25	5	17	25	3

These results indicate that Otari School is providing enough leadership opportunities and that those students who wish to are engaging in them. It is pleasing that a high percentage of students believe they are encouraged to have ideas that promote leadership.

PARTICIPATION

indicate they **have participated in and supported** voluntary activities: 92%

indicate they **have not participated and supported** any voluntary activities: 8%

Gardening	Planting	Sports organisation	Duties (like hall set up)	Class activities	bush guides	Fundraising
1	2	16	25	12	5	20

Number of voluntary activities each student was involved in.

Activities	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
students	4	19	8	10	4	2	1

While levels of participation vary considerably, the majority of students (91%) are participating in 1 or more voluntary activities that contribute positively to the school. 35% of year 7 and 8 students are involved in 3 or more voluntary activities.

WELLBEING

Children believe they have benefitted from:

- learning about the changes that happen as they grow: 19 - 40%
- Learning how to manage themselves better when there is conflict: 18 - 38%
- Getting to know kids from other strands: 18 - 38%
- Having talks with their teacher: 14 - 29%
- Having talks/check ins with the principal: 4 - 8% (A few children do this)
- Having opportunities to share feelings and ideas with other students: 16 - 33%

I find it interesting that quite a lot of children felt they had benefited from learning about the changes as they grow, because they often express how uncomfortable they feel when we explore pubertal change. I also find it encouraging that 18 children ticked getting to know children from other strands had been of benefit.

Other results reflect students who have wanted to talk to the teachers and/or friends (in relation to their well being) and have benefitted from this. It tells us that there are a number of children gaining some benefit from talking with their teachers and friends, however the numbers may not reflect those who needed a talk but didn't seek it, or those that had a chat but didn't feel it was beneficial.

It is only a small group of students who need to have a check in with the Principal and I am glad they find this has been of benefit.

Is bullying dealt with effectively at Otari School?

Yes, when bullying is seen or reported it is dealt with effectively: 33 - 69%

Usually, but more could be done: 31%

No, it is not dealt with effectively: 0

We like to think we deal with bullying effectively. It is a positive sign that that there were no children who felt we didn't. It is some time since we last had a survey on bullying and I wasn't sure whether our perception of how well we respond to incidences of bullying would be supported by the student view. The 31% who answered that more could be done provided some good ideas and commentary worthy of further consideration and discussion. These are written below:

What else could be done to deal with bullying more effectively?

Individual responses:

"See who started it and not going for good kids and bad."

"I think you could listen to both sides of the story to see what the problem is and find a solution or encourage the students to play with kids from the other strands or other people in general, and take some time away from each other."

"More supervision in class"

"More supervision in the classes"

“Asking the students what they would have done in the situation”

“Talk about it more.”

“If they repeat it, then firmly tell them to stop.”

“Sometimes I’ve seen a little bit of bullying/teasing and I just think they should tell the teachers more because usually they don’t. (When I see it happen, I do.)

“To tell them off more or have more of a punishment because it happens too often.”

“On the playground teachers should notice what all the kids are doing.”

“Harder punishment.”

“More punishment for repeat offenders.”

“I think when it is reported it is dealt with, but sometimes people don’t say because they’re scared of consequences. But I don’t think that really happens here. Not too sure though.”

“Asking the student what they would like done in the situation.”

Enjoyment and challenges: Why students enjoy being a senior at Otari School and what they find challenging. (Most children chose to write under both.)

I have grouped the same or very similar reasons and the number of responses, as well as provided a sample of student comments.

THE PERKS or POSITIVES: I enjoyed being a year 7 or 8 because:

There are more activities and opportunities: 16 responses

“There are a lot of perks to being a year 8”

“You get so many opportunities to put your name down for things and you get to interact with students from other strands.”

“There are more opportunities to lead and participate.”

“There are a lot of things to do when you are a senior at Otari”

I feel I get more freedom.”

“I get to participate in events that younger kids can’t.”

You get more responsibility/have more power and/or confidence - like looking after younger kids - 15 responses

“You can try out for student council and do more activities for the younger students.”

“ I like helping younger kids.”

“I kinda like the responsibilities that come with it.”

“There are a lot of opportunities to take part in helping out with little kids and being role models for them.” (5 more responses were specifically about enjoying looking after younger kids)

You go to camp: 11 responses

"Camp was amazing!"

"I got to go to camp."

You get to know more people and make more friends in other strands - 8 Responses

"I have made more friends."

"Camp was amazing and I made a lot of friends"

"It's been fun - and knowing people more."

You get more challenging work/learn more/get more independent work - 5 responses

"You also get a lot more independent work and are able to do a lot more things independently."

"You get harder work"

THE CHALLENGES or NEGATIVES: I found it challenging being a senior because:

Harder work - 6 responses

"Sometimes with Maths you're expected to know something, and if you don't..."

"A bit more work"

"Hard work"

"I'm not the best at spelling"

Responsibility and expectations, looking after younger students/being a role model - 14 Responses

"There's a lot more responsibility than a junior student."

"There are a lot of expectations to live up to."

"Teachers expect more from you."

"Because I have to take care of little kids."

"At this point we have to do a lot more - like speeches."

"I find it hard to act as a role model for younger students."

The juniors look up to you for help when you can't do much to help."

“because of the responsibilities, and I often get really shy and anxious when public speaking or helping younger kids.”

Year 8’s leave - 2 reponses

“All my year 8 friends are leaving.”

There were also a couple of “outlier” comments that didn’t fit a category:

“I don’t have as much freedom and am unfairly targeted”

“...also there’s the overhanging fact that there’s not much time left at Otari, but that isn’t to say I don’t enjoy being here.”

FURTHER COMMENTS

children were asked to provide any further comments they wanted about activities, leadership or well-being at otari school. All of the comments are below:

“Leadership and taking action to help or do things for the school, is most definitely supported and encouraged, but I know a lot of people (like myself) find it tricky to find their feet in doing this, and in trying to take a leadership role in the school. If there is something the school could do to help students find their voice and confidence, that would go a long way.” (Y8 girl)

“I think there should be more learning outside and there should be sports tournaments.” (Y7 boy)

“Sometimes it’s stressful when having tons of work.” (Y7 boy)

“Please let kids go to camp more than once in the future.” (Y8 girl)

I think Otari leadership is well encouraged and there’s a lot of activities to participate in.” (Y7 girl)

“I do not always feel I am enjoying/learning interesting things... but I don’t know quite how to change this for the moment.” (Y7 boy)

“Being a senior helps me as I grow up.” (Y7 boy)

I have found the feedback related to enjoyment and challenge most valuable, as well as the further comments. I had initially expected the children to indicate they had either enjoyed being or senior or had found it challenging. What happened is most write under both and I think in the end this provided richer feedback. Life is both enjoyment and challenge and in a few responses the same underlying reason was a source of pleasure and stress. A good example of this is how much our year 7 and 8 students like more responsibility, freedom, leadership opportunities and activities and yet also find the raised expectations and the responsibility itself a source of stress. This would be a good area to talk more about and explore with them. If we empower

these young children we also need to effectively help them to manage challenges and responsibilities.

Overall I think this survey indicates we are meeting the needs of our year 7 and 8 students in relation to leadership and well-being. Most are involving themselves in school life and enjoying the opportunities that are available for them. The survey also indicates we could be providing some more experiences and resources to enhance the year 7 and 8 experience.

We are effectively dealing with bullying but there are some things that we need to reflect on and perhaps improve to ensure children feel incidences are dealt with fairly and fully.

SUMMARY

Most children are enjoying many aspects of school life as a senior, particularly in relation to leadership opportunities and participation in a range of activities. Some also find the responsibility and raised expectations a challenge. We need to keep expectations realistic and remember these seniors are still children, even though they sometimes express themselves like adults.

With freedom, leadership opportunities, and wider participation in activities, there can be more work, challenge and higher expectations. This in itself is important for children to learn and build resilience from. I believe the results of the survey and the mix of commentary expressing both enjoyment and challenge indicates we might be doing this reasonably well. We want seniors to have fun and enjoy their time, however there is little value in just providing experiences that never demand any challenge, self-management, cooperation, flexibility, planning or disagreement. We need to be mindful of supporting them in ways that really develop the skills and strategies for future leadership and regularly review the sorts of resources and programmes that encourage participation in school-wide activities. This will help us enable young people to continue to contribute meaningfully to their school communities as they move through their schooling and into adulthood.

Going forward:

- 1. Explore options for the provision of resources and activities that will particularly engage senior students on the playground and relation to EOTC activities, and pursue those that are feasible.*
- 2. Provide more experiences in drama and music.*
- 3. Ensure teachers provide the same messages about bullying, strategies for dealing with bullying and responses to bullying. This will be led by the Principal.*

Clifford Wicks

12.11.2020

