



CAMPBELLS BAY SCHOOL

Not self, but service.
Ko te ratonga te tuatahi, ko koe te tuarua
Est. 1925

How Big is Big Enough for Campbells Bay School?

In May/June of 2018 the Board asked me to examine whether there is such a thing as an optimal size of a school and, in particular, how big is big enough for Campbells Bay School. This was against the background of an increasing student roll at the school. The Board sought to be able to make research based decisions regarding school size. My first action was to research the literature on school size. Very little research in the



New Zealand context was available while much of the research came from North America. Completing the literature review enabled me to pose questions for my field work that involved gaining information from principals in Auckland and in the US/Canada. The latter group was selected as these two countries provided a considerable body of literature about school size.

In terms of the literature there were two main conclusions to be drawn, namely (1) It seems likely that smaller rather than larger schools benefit students from lower socioeconomic communities and communities with substantial numbers of minority group students and (2) there was no such wide spread agreement on any other matter other than there needed to be more research. Perhaps my research contributed in some very small way to the exhortation for 'more research.' So what did I find out from my field work against the backdrop of the literature on school size?

The most powerful finding is that every school has its own set of circumstances that will determine 'how big is big enough'? To establish the answer to this question I developed a set of indicators to use to help make the decision as objective as possible. The indicators were drawn from the literature against the backdrop of an overriding "super" indicator being that all students are provided with the best possible environment to ensure excellent learning outcomes. The indicators: (1) Current and possible classroom spaces available. (2) The 'core resources' (in our school: art room, performing arts rooms, learning hub/library, courts, fields and hall)



available to the school for students to have access to in the context of the school being able to ensure students have access to the curriculum. (3) Access to adventure playgrounds. (4) Adequate teacher and staff support. (5) Availability of withdrawal spaces to

work in small groups. (6) Equitable access for students for sporting and cultural activities. (7) Ability to recruit high quality teachers. (8) Access to career pathways for teachers in the school. (9) Providing teachers with opportunities to specialize. (10) Ability to provide high quality and timely professional development for staff. As one principal said, "Whether the most effective school is small or big, it depends on the people, the systems that are in place, the support and the resources." So, what does this mean for Campbells Bay School?

As a school, we are fortunate to have adequate classroom spaces and access, in spite of the teacher supply crisis, to high quality teachers. From a purely observational perspective, adventure playgrounds are either at or above capacity. (See below). Having collected data on the usage of our 'core resources' we found that on a booking

basis in term one we had 66% usage in the art room and performing arts rooms, 60% in the learning hub/library, 60% on the field and 37% on the courts. When the hall was in use last year usage was at 60%. It needs to be borne in mind these are booked slots and do not take account of casual or recreational use. We have adequate spaces to use for small group teaching and we are continuing to increase resources to provide



for more opportunities for students to engage in sporting and cultural activities. For example, Sharon Knight will be working in the music field four days a week rather than two from the start of term four. Our school provides for an abundance of career opportunities for staff while teachers can specialise and

participate in timely and relevant professional development.

However, all is not rosy. With the field out of action for long periods of time because of wetness there has been pressure on the hard court areas and, as has been noted, the adventure playgrounds are under pressure. Because of these observations the Board has committed to a drainage upgrade of the field, while a playground for the



new entrant area of the field (for 2019) has been budgeted for installation in the 2018/2019 summer holidays. As has been communicated by the Board, there are also plans to place an all-weather turf in the western corner of the field to replace the netball court that will be lost when the additional classrooms are built by the Ministry of Education. The addition of these

classrooms will then mean the 11 classrooms on the field can be removed.

So, how big is big enough for Campbells Bay School? What my investigation attempted to do was to remove as much subjectivity to the question of school size for Campbells Bay as possible by using the aforementioned indicators. Hence, as a school we are effectively managing current levels of growth in relation to most of the indicators, with the caveat that attention needs to be paid to access to the field and to adventure playgrounds. This is something that is being worked on. In the meantime, we continue to monitor our student roll carefully while always keeping a careful watch on the dynamics of the human dimension to ensure everybody has a sense of belonging at our school.