



Schools shun discipline to cut red tape

Principals frustrated with too much paperwork

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EDUCATION

TEACHERS are shying away from disciplining badly behaved students because there's too much paperwork involved, a regional teachers' leader claims.

Principals have become frustrated with the discipline process, and teachers sometimes feel pressured to issue their own "informal consequences" instead of detentions, according to a paper to be presented at the Post Primary Teachers' Association's national conference in Wellington tomorrow.

Manawatu and Whanganui PPTA regional chairman Rob Torr says some teachers in the region are not allowed to issue formal detentions, or have significant restrictions put on using them.

"They can't physically issue a formal lunchtime detention themselves. Instead, they have to fill out the appropriate paperwork, then pass it on to their manager, and that is time spent away from student learning."

Mr Torr will present the paper, *Student Misbehaviour - Of No Meaningful Consequence*, on behalf of principals frustrated with the discipline process, and teachers at the conference are expected to discuss issues around "excessive

paperwork and delays" putting some of them off reporting incidents of misbehaviour.

A lack of power for teachers, and an unwillingness to address bad behaviour, was highlighted in a report by ombudsman David McGee in 2011, and is referred to in the paper.

The report, into a series of violent incidents at Hutt Valley High School in 2007, raised concerns about teachers' inability to respond to violent incidents, and about little follow-through by senior managers.

Mr McGee said in his report that he hoped the minimising of serious incidents was not a culture widely adopted by other schools.

That concern was dismissed yesterday by Secondary School Principals' Association president Tom Parsons, who said schools had "many arrows in their quiver" when it came to dealing with bad behaviour.

The Hutt Valley High School cases had since been addressed, and there were resources available to fix any issues that schools faced, he said.

In May, Education Minister Heke Parata announced \$63.6 million for the Positive Behaviour for

Learning (PB4L) programme, which a ministry spokeswoman said arose from a 2009 national summit on concerns about worsening violence and anti-social behaviour in schools.

"Schools wanted more options and more sophisticated tools," the spokeswoman said.

"Early results of research into schools that took up the positive behaviour framework in 2010 indicate that the schools had improved NCEA level 1 achievement and improved student retention after a two-year period."

Naenae College principal John

Russell said making a systemic change, such as adopting PB4L, was quickly picked up by teachers, and led to less paperwork and time being spent on discipline.

"Schools are far better at dealing with discipline issues than they were five years ago."

Taita College principal John Murdoch was supportive of the progress PB4L had made in his school.

"It's a toolkit and it depends who is holding the hammer, but if you have good leadership within the school it works well.

"Teachers have to deal with behaviour issues all the time, but when you start to focus on just the

behaviour, you have problems.”

Mr Torr said that PB4L would help fix some of the paperwork problems, but several schools were still embedding or adopting it.

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Rob Torr, PPTA regional chairman

BEHAVIOUR SCHEME ‘NOT A MAGIC FIX’

A behaviour programme being introduced to all schools has been designed to bring consistency to how teachers define incidents of bad behaviour among pupils.

“Many teachers are reporting they feel less isolated in dealing with challenging behaviour, because the framework provides teachers with the skills and support to respond,” a Ministry of Education spokeswoman said of the Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) programme.

The programme, which is already being used by 408 New Zealand schools, was introduced only when it had gained support from 80 per cent of a school’s teachers, she said.

“It has the support of teacher unions and other sector groups who are partners in its rollout.”

PB4L is a set of initiatives that aims to turn around problem behaviour and to encourage pro-social behaviour, by recognising that punitive and exclusionary discipline does not bring about long-term changes.

However, Secondary School Principals’ Association president Tom Parsons said that the programme was not a “magic fix”, and would not end the problem of bullying.

Mr Parsons said the scheme worked well for some schools, but others preferred different systems that worked better for them.