

# North New Brighton School



Submission response to Ministry of Education's proposal to:

Merge North New Brighton School with Freeville and Central New Brighton  
Schools

Or

Merge North New Brighton School with Freeville School and close Central  
New Brighton School.

July 2013

*Option 1 - Merger of North New Brighton School, Central New Brighton School, and Freeville School on the North New Brighton School site.*

*Option 2 - Merger of North New Brighton School and Freeville School on the North New Brighton School site, and closure of Central New Brighton School.*

The North New Brighton School Board of Trustees, with the unanimous endorsement of ALL staff, (teaching & support), agree with, and support:

**Option 1: Merger of North New Brighton School, Central New Brighton School, and Freeville School on the North New Brighton School site.**

We believe this option would give equal and fair opportunity to all three schools from a community, student and staff perspective.

This option would have the advantage of all three communities coming together and building a shared vision. This would also give the three communities an equal voice in the new merged structure.

The ability to work together as three co-operative communities to co-construct a learning environment, vision and curriculum is essential for all groups to gain a sense of ownership of the new school. This can only be achieved within a 'merging' structure of the three schools.

In a merger of all three schools, students coming to the new school would feel included and connected. Closure of Central New Brighton School could result in feelings of alienation and rejection by the Central New Brighton students, staff and community. This is not a great way for students to enter a new school, and expect to successfully and seamlessly continue with their education, especially when they have been evicted from their current school and forced into a new one.

One obvious benefit of Central New Brighton staff being included in the merged school structure is continuity for Central New Brighton children. Established relationships and a sense of familiarity would be maintained. Without these relationships there may be scope for negative behaviour issues, which could either be prevented, or certainly mitigated, with a three-way merger structure.

It is in all of our best interests to co-create a GREAT school in the New Brighton community where all children, families, whanau and staff feel that they belong. This should be an environment where all children can learn and achieve to reach their full potential.

We believe this feeling of belonging and acceptance is a vital and necessary element in a successful melding of three school cultures into a new, vibrant and dynamic school for the wider New Brighton community.

## Time frame of Merger

The Board of Trustees, staff and parents are extremely concerned at the Ministry of Education's proposed time frame of Term 2, 2014.

Our Board's proposal in March outlined what we considered a reasoned, viable and pragmatic approach to merging North New Brighton and Freeville School's, under the one governance body, with full merger commencing in 2016. We are disappointed that this was not considered, as we believe this would have been an effective means of bringing the two communities together over a strategically structured two-year period.

We strongly believe a Term 2 merger would be extremely detrimental to all students and staff. We feel it is **logical** and **common sense** to merge at the **BEGINNING** of a school year. North New Brighton School's preference is the beginning of the 2015 school year.

The new proposal made by the Ministry of Education, in May of this year, has required a new direction to be grasped and worked through. The Boards and staff have begun to plan for this new outcome, however the process is complex, far from complete, and requires further time and work.

A three-way merger, initially on two sites, needs to be managed well to give a sense of full inclusiveness for students from all three schools. The Term 2 time frame given, because of its very nature of a 'part-way through the school year, does not give optimum opportunity for this to be successful for the groups involved.

A seamless transition for Central New Brighton School onto the North New Brighton School site with minimal disruption to teaching and learning will be extremely difficult if the May merge date is enforced. This timeframe also compromises the teaching and learning programmes for students on the North New Brighton School site.

From experience, we know that setting up a new class within a school causes disruption to teaching and learning, and takes some time to establish new relationships between students, as well as between students and teacher.

Moving Central New Brighton School onto the North New Brighton School site in Term 2 has the following issues and challenges that need to be carefully considered:

- **Relationships:**

Professor Angus MacFarlane often states positive relationships are a key element in achievement of students, in particular our Maori and Pasifika children. It takes time to build these relationships, which normally happen at the beginning of the year.

A Term 2 start and change in teacher and class would mean new relationships would need to be developed. It is vital that time is spent doing this well as strong relationships allow students to identify and feel a sense of belonging to a particular class, or team, or school. It does not seem sound or reasonable to do this at the beginning of the year with one group of students and then all over again within ten weeks. Parents also need to establish a relationship with the new teacher to foster a strong home-school partnership for learning.



- **Class/School Culture:**

Classes at each of the schools in Term 1 will already have their rules and culture established. To establish and build up new rules will be extremely challenging given children have already established an allegiance with their Term 1 teacher and classmates. To re-establish or build relationships with a new group of students will probably take the best part of a term. Students will also need to become familiar with the merged school-wide values, principles and characteristics. It is necessary for school-wide expectations and the development of the school culture to be done well as this will ensure the merged school community comes together seamlessly and that all parties embrace the "new" school. It is both confusing and inconsistent to have one set of rules, values etc. for one term then introduce a new set for the following term.

- **Disruption to teaching and learning / achievement:**

At the beginning of the year, it is expected children will move on and join another class and another teacher, which is a common sense and logical step.

When families move from one area to the next it is logical to move schools and children have to fit into the already setup classroom.

To move as a group into another classroom in Term 2 would be very disruptive for teaching and learning. This results in a break to the teaching and learning programme and requires a re-learning and re-establishment of classroom routines. The first few weeks of Term 2, which would normally be spent focused on teaching and learning, would need to be used to become familiar with students learning needs, their goals, gathering assessment information and planning appropriate next steps. Time spent establishing new routines and expectations as children settle into their learning may affect achievement outcomes.

Research evidence, both national and international, shows that when students make a transition from one schooling system to another, their achievement declines and learning can be impeded for at least six months and up to a year or more while they deal with other priorities caused by the shift.

Hawk, K & Hill, J (2004) "Transition traumas, traps, turning points and triumphs: Putting student needs first" [www.educationgroup.co.nz](http://www.educationgroup.co.nz)

Therefore, it is important that disruption is kept to a minimum.

- **Workload / Systems:**

There will be an increased level of workload, with a merger that takes place during a school year. Teachers need to develop, become familiar with, and implement the merged schools curriculum as well as plan for a new class. They will have to set up in a new classroom and possibly move from their existing building or school. Some teachers may also need to familiarize themselves with a change of year level. Changes to planning and assessment will also need to be considered. At the beginning of a year, teachers have time to prepare for these changes; it will be stressful, time-consuming and unrealistic to do this well within a shorter time between terms.

Long-term planning will be difficult school-wide, to come up with meaningful direction when there will be a shift/change after one term. It would be very difficult to complete Ministry of Education's requirements eg; charter, achievement targets, strategic plan etc. when only planning for one term. Analysis of assessment data over the year will be invalid and void as the two/three groups of data would be incomparable.

It is vitally important these disruptions are minimized and continuity of teaching and learning programmes is maintained to ensure the best outcomes for students.

This is especially relevant in the context of post-earthquake Christchurch, where children, families and staff have been affected by adversity.

**We believe this can best be achieved and managed through a start of year merger date.**

Another difficulty is the injustice rendered upon teachers who do not win a position in the new school, through no fault of their own. The option of permanent employment is practically removed from these teachers, particularly because other merging schools at the start of 2014 (or teachers from closing schools) will have already filled those positions.

The option of Retraining, as outlined in the Collective Agreement, clause 17.1(b) is also likely to be removed from these teachers, simply because any tertiary course content will start in February, or possibly July, if done as semesters.

North New Brighton School fully supports the inclusion of Freeville School's bi-lingual unit into the merged school and believes it will provide an option for akonga and whanau who choose to learn both languages. We see this as a positive asset to the merged school and communities.

Due thought and careful consideration needs to be given by the Ministry of Education over many issues that confront our three schools in this merger:

1. Media publicity around school mergers over a period of time, and recent television coverage has highlighted problems where schools have continued to be using shared/split sites long after merger dates, or where schools have waited for prolonged periods of time before construction of new school buildings commence. Has the Ministry of Education learnt from these problems of previous mergers so that this proposed merger can be completed in a timely manner with adequate funding and support?
2. The implications of financial, staffing and logistical issues that will arise from the new school having a shared site, (NNB and Freeville sites), for at least two years, needs to be considered. Staffing, such as teachers and management, need to be over and above the FTTE entitlement given to schools that function on ONE site. Additional support staff will also need to be employed at both sites, such as, office administrators and caretakers.
3. There needs to be clear boundaries and detailed job descriptions in place outlining roles and responsibilities of change managers, expectations required from the schools, role of the current principals, incoming principal, Board of Trustees etc. An earlier merge date may necessitate more than one change manager, or deputy change managers, being appointed.
4. Increased workload in a merging school, as opposed to the opening of a new school, is far greater. Staff will need to meet more regularly, in addition to their normal teaching and learning tasks, to develop and craft the merged school's curriculum, principles and values. Assistance from the Ministry of Education would be seen as necessary and invaluable in easing the increased workload and stress on teaching and management staff.
5. Consideration needs to be given to the OSCAR programme. Prior to the earthquake, OSCAR operated from the North New Brighton School hall. However, since the hall has been unusable since February 2011, OSCAR has used a surplus prefab. The Ministry, doing whatever it takes to make mergers as easy as possible on schools and communities, should look favourably towards allowing our OSCAR to operate out of a prefab until all the school buildings are completed in 2016. We have a number of families who utilize this service and expect it to remain operating from their school, especially when travel time across Christchurch from work places has increased significantly since the quake.



## Conclusion

North New Brighton School agrees with the merging of North New Brighton, Freeville and Central New Brighton Schools.

All three merging schools are strongly united against a merge that would take place at any time **DURING** a school year. North New Brighton School believes it does not make sound educational sense. The Ministry of Education also recognises that a merge part way through the year is not "ideal".

We implore both the Ministry of Education, and Minister of Education, in the best interests of the children, staff and communities, to **review the May decision and declare a start of year merger date.**

**Ideally, 2015 would be our school's preference, or 2014 start of year, if 2015 is not granted.**

Linda Boyce  
Chairperson, Board of Trustees

3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2013

Brian Walkinshaw  
Principal

3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2013