

Starpath Implementation

Bay of Islands College

Bay of Islands College signed the Starpath agreement in June 2012. Within nine months the school had a new Principal and a new Deputy Principal. The new Deputy Principal, Zorina Wigglesworth, was given responsibility for curriculum and took on the role of steering the implementation of the project in the school. Researchers spoke to Zorina about her role as the Starpath champion.

A number of factors kept the school on track

There was potential for the school to be distracted by the changes in senior leadership. Zorina pointed out a number of factors that kept the school on track:

- Her action plan created a vision for the school that tapped into the belief held by staff that boosting student achievement was their core business.
- There was already a strong foundation for Starpath strategies like whānau conferences in the Reo Rua Unit. Long standing staff had a deep respect for families and connected with them in the local community.
- The new Principal understood the key strategies offered by Starpath and was prepared to support the work even though his own focus needed to be elsewhere.
- The school was offered a number of non-Starpach initiatives and decided not to be involved at that time because they didn't want to be side-tracked.

Aspects that contributed to successful implementation

As the Starpath coordinator Zorina highlighted aspects of successful implementation:

- Careful step by step planning allowed for new Starpath activities to be trialled and practiced before full implementation.
- Management of the school calendar meant that implementation moved at a controlled pace, reducing the potential to overwhelm staff.
- Responding to feedback in an open co-constructive style built staff confidence in the process of change.
- A reflective approach meant the senior leaders were supportive of things that worked but were prepared to let go of things that didn't. It was difficult to get parents to meetings about NCEA but they are coming to understand it through discussion at whānau-community conferences.

Staff-wide contribution to the Project was a key factor in its success

In conversation with Zorina it was obvious that this was a whole staff approach:

- Right from the beginning staff were invited to be part of the decision making. She drew people together and opened the conversation.
- Teachers were encouraged to share information about student achievement. Literacy leaders put Year 9 and 10 asTTle information in a staff shared drive. This meant data was readily available.
- Ideas were incorporated that were already part of school practice. As part of Te Kotahitanga students were often trained to have effective conversations. The school adopted this idea, giving students time to practice their role in the whānau conferences.
- Although others were heavily involved with tasks and contributed ideas it was Zorina who had overall responsibility for the Starpath programme, to keep the communication lines open and hold the programme together.
- The school also incorporated aspects of Kia Eke Panuku (introduced 2014) and Restorative Practices (introduced 2015) in ways which were supporting student success. The leaders of these programmes worked in well with Zorina.

Personal attributes

Zorina believes the following characteristics helped her in the Starpath role:

- She is a self-proclaimed systems person who believes that if you want to make any change of significance you need a strong vision that is accompanied by a clear action plan. Her first task in the Starpath role was to co-construct an action plan with staff.
- She is reflective as a teacher and a leader, interested in educational research and its application in schools.
- Being prepared to use resources that were available from outside the school. She welcomed the support offered by Starpath and was also interested to visit other schools to see how they were making the programme work.