



# GAME! Consultancy Newsletter

Governance and Management in Education

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## What's this newsletter all about?



Welcome to the first of the GAME Consultancy Newsletters. This newsletter is designed to provide regional information and news (albeit rather biased) for the 280 secondary and primary schools from Dannevirke and Otaki south to Wellington, and is intended to be sent out 3 or 4 times a year. It will provide a brief insight into issues that affect principals in the area of

governance and management and will be used to supplement the support the consultancy is providing for schools in our region.

Over the last 5 weeks I have been visiting you individually to introduce myself and promote programmes provided by GAME Consultancy. Almost 200 schools in Wellington, Kapiti and central/southern Wairarapa were informed of my visit and 3000 km later I've now met most of you. What a great pleasure this has been!

To those I have visited, thanks for your welcoming reception and encouraging words.

School leadership functions most effectively when external advice is used to guide, support and compliment school-based programmes and initiatives. GAME introduces new ideas to schools and, through delegated responsibilities, lessens the workload and pressure on principals and boards. It provides valuable connections among schools and with outside agencies. The operating model is one of head-to-head contacts and school-specific support. This is often achieved through 'chewing the professional fat'.

If you haven't already, check the website for the programmes on offer: [www.game.school.nz](http://www.game.school.nz)

## How did GAME develop?

The inspiration for the consultancy came from my understanding that there was a lack of support available for schools in the area of governance and management. This was seen in the Victoria University advisory service's continuing focus on areas of government interest, the loss of ERO's facility for post review assistance, and the emphases of the Ministry's intervention programmes on only the most needy of schools. In 2010 this situation was likely to be further exacerbated by the resources of STA being focussed on board elections.

A gap was developing that meant that schools were not always able to receive the free external support for school-based programmes that they required.

## Why is Bryan Gwilliam suited to this consultancy role?



From 1990 - 1995 I was employed by the Wellington College of Education as the Adviser to Rural Schools. The area included Wellington, Wairarapa and Horowhenua. This was an especially exciting time in NZ education as the onset of Tomorrow's Schools meant that governance and management systems were essentially being invented. Rural advisers from around the country had a significant role to play in developing these. My masters degree from Massey was completed during this period.

In 1995 I was appointed as the principal of Wadestown School. This large inner city decile 10 school was characterised by it very high community expectations. I stayed at the school for nearly 13 years during which time significant governance and management programmes were developed, implemented, reviewed and redeveloped.

Two years ago, at the 'sprightly' age of 54 I left Wadestown thinking it was time to give someone else a go. At this time I could see there was a growing market for professional services to be available to schools by private providers. After two terms of sabbatical (and these are essential for all principals) I set about defining the governance and management consultancy. Knowing that my experience remained limited, in term 4 of 2008 I spent time in the local Ministry office as a development officer in the student support section. This introduced me to aspects of the education system for which I had very little understanding (suspensions, home schooling, truancy and secondary schools). It also gave me a valuable insight into a government department, the services provided by the Ministry of Education and the characters who represent us at the local level.

Knowing that ERO dominates so much of our thinking and planning as principals, a stint in the ERO office was essential. For all of 2009 I was contracted to ERO in Wellington and, because of potential conflicts of interest in the primary sector, spent much of this time reviewing secondary schools and early childhood centres.

With my CV now complete GAME Consultancy came into existence this year.

On the personal front, my wife Ann teaches at Eastern Hutt School (keep me grounded to developments at the chalkface) and I have 3 children Kate (26), Abbie (23) and Evan (22).

## Where did the name come from?

Initially I wanted to call the company 'Creosote Consultancy'. I thought it was catchy and that it was such an unusual name schools would see it's humour and remember it. However colleagues thought it smacked of something dark, smelly, dated

and designed to cover things up. It didn't get past go. GAME was suggested by a reviewer colleague who, as we were travelling together up to review a school on the Kapiti coast, struck upon it somewhere between Pukerua Bay and Paekakariki.

## What doesn't GAME Consultancy do?

There are only three things I do not feel able to do in support of schools:

- The hardware and software aspects of computer technology are out of my league (one of your junior students might know more than I do)
- NCEA remains a mystery to me even though I am a great supporter of it. I'm afraid ERO training didn't fully prepare me for this.
- Principal competency appraisals instigated by the Board are best left to people who enjoy negativity.

## What have I seen on my travels?

Firstly let me apologise for the way I invited myself to your place. It was presumptuous. However if I had had to confirm times with principals I suspect I wouldn't have ever left home. As it was I think I surprised a lot of you anyway.

Reflections from my travel:

- It's probably easier to meet the prime minister than to see a secondary school principal.
- Principals looked a bit frazzled.
- ERO and national standards consume conversations.
- Email contact is not the most effective form of communication.
- Provincial and rural principals appeared more relaxed than their city colleagues.
- Most people commented on the absence of support for their school in governance and management.
- Principals lead very isolated existences

It was great to catch up with so many old and dear friends!!

### ***Stressed ..... are you or aren't you?***

*I am not sure exactly how it works, but this is amazingly accurate. Read this full description before looking at the dolphin picture on the next page.*

*The picture depicts two identical dolphins jumping out of the water. In a closely monitored scientific study, in spite of the fact that the dolphins are identical, a person under stress will find differences in the two dolphins. The more differences a person finds between the dolphins, the higher the level of stress that person is experiencing.*

*Look at the photograph and if you find more than one or two differences you may want to consider a sabbatical.*



## What work is coming in for the consultancy?

I have been very pleased but also surprised at the level of interest already taken by many schools in GAME's programmes and packages. The response has been wonderful and the year is already beginning to fill up. The variety of work crosses a whole spectrum of school operations including

principals simply wanting professional discussions, a school requiring a comprehensive external review, and a large secondary school requesting a student and community survey. Self review and strategic planning appear to be of particular interest to many schools.



However, most work is predictably coming from principal appraisal, ERO preparation, and board training.

And it seems as though I'm hitting the spot for some anyway .... An unsolicited email this week from Naenae Intermediate "Hi Bryan, You did a great job yesterday and staff members have said how much they enjoyed listening to you. I enjoyed it too. We felt we learnt much and you also confirmed many of the good practices that we were already doing. I'll be recommending you to other schools. Cheers Steve"

Although presently GAME is only me, contacts with other educationists mean that supplementary specialist support can be sought when the need may arise.

## Who's new in principal positions this term?

Welcome to the new permanent principals who began this term:



Moirra Howard	Birchville
Nicky Sturgeon	Brandon Intermediate
Anne Lye	Churton Park
Paul Adamson	Fernridge
Hamish Davidson	Onslow
Sue McLachlan	Pirinoa
Margie Sutherland	South Featherston
Dairne Kaimoana	Titahi Bay Intermediate

And the best of luck to those of you holding the fort at Heretaunga College, Hutt Central, Island Bay, Pukeatua, Rewa Rewa and Wainuiomata College

## What's so great about GAME's principal appraisal model?

The most useful principal appraisal is one based on a model that is professionally satisfying for the principal first and foremost. Compliance is secondary to the professional dialogue and development the appraiser and appraisee are engaged in during the year. With this in mind, the success of the appraisal process is based on mutual trust and professionalism between the principal, the board chair and the external appraiser. The appraiser's educational currency is also an important factor in the success of this model. The appraisal is designed to alert the principal to his/her strengths and areas for improvement based on the feedback from stakeholders, the knowledge and experience of the appraiser, and personal self reflection. It also highlights 'next steps'. This being the case the final report is written for the principal's benefit more so than for the board chair's information.

The legal position is that the principal must be appraised by the board, which delegates this authority to the board chair. The implication therefore is that the external appraiser's report may form only part (albeit a very large part) of the chairpersons overall assessment of the principal's effectiveness. If the board chair is unhappy with the principal's performance, or if the board wants to instigate the appraisal themselves (possibly using an external appraiser, although me me), then the appraisal or competency process will be quite different. The suggested specifics of this model:

- The principal and external evaluator develop a performance agreement based on school and personal goals and the requirements of the professional standards. A sample principal job description and performance agreement may be provided by the consultant if requested.
- During the year the consultant has conversations with at least the Board Chair, DP, AP, 3 teachers, and one administration staff member (Each lasting approximately 30 minutes)
- A short confidential survey is provided all staff and trustees based on the professional standards and analysed by

the consultant. The same survey to be completed by the principal and compared with the responses from the others.

- Meetings on 3 occasions with the principal to discuss progress and professional development opportunities.
- At the end of the year the principal completes a self review report written against the goals of the performance agreement.
- The provision of a short interim mid-year progress report and a comprehensive final report based on the performance agreement.
- Presentation of the report to the board if the principal requires.

## What are the changes that have occurred in ERO reviewing this year?

The big change is that there is no School Specific Focus as from this year. In previous years the school, in agreement with ERO, determined this focus. Schools often selected Numeracy or Literacy as the lens through which ERO would view the school. In 2010 there is only one overarching evaluation question:

*How effectively does your school's curriculum promote student learning – engagement, progress and achievement?*

To answer this ERO reviewers will:

- ask how you make decisions about your school's curriculum using self-review and student achievement information;
- evaluate how effectively your school curriculum is designed to address the identified strengths and needs of your students;
- continue to evaluate how effectively your school curriculum promotes success and achievement for Māori and Pacific students;
- ask how schools' assessment practices enable them to make judgements about student progress and achievement against National Standards (where applicable);
- write reports that are concise and that comment on strengths and areas for development and review. *(replaces the previous areas of good performance and areas for improvement)*

To achieve this they will:

- exchange information and agree about the process for and conduct of the review;
- determine the scope of the review with you, based on the priorities you have set in your curriculum using your self-review and student achievement information;
- recognise the context of your school and its community;
- make judgements based on the evidence from discussions with you, observations of your curriculum in action, and your supporting documents;
- confirm aspects of student safety, and, through the Board Assurance Checklist, check that students are receiving their entitlements; and
- involve the board and school leaders in discussions about your school's strengths and areas for review and development.

Review officers will continue to collect information on national evaluation topics. The findings will form an integrated part of your report, and may contribute to a national report. There will continue to be a section related to compliance.

**But what does all this really mean to my school? .... call GAME and I would be happy to talk you through it.**

## Where does GAME stand on National Standards?

GAME has no political standpoint.

Many principals are now attending inservice training on the National Standards. I feel there is much work that GAME can do to support schools in the implementation of the standards and the development of the associated reporting systems. ERO training and time to recreate these in your school context means that this is another task you can delegate to an outside provider.

## How can an ex-primary school principal support Secondary Schools?

Easy! Schools at governance and management level operate similarly whether you are leading Hutt Valley High School or Tiraumea School in the central Wairarapa. ...the fundamentals are the same. Most things that are applicable in one sector are relevant in the other. Disregarding NCEA, the areas of curriculum development and assessment in Years 9 and 10 are paralleled in primary and intermediate schools. One area of perceived weakness identified in my ERO experience of secondary schools was the inadequate use of national testing tools in Years 9 and 10. I particularly look forward to the opportunity of working with staff in this area.



No Need to Reply.

Never take life seriously. Nobody gets out alive anyway.

If you really want a good laugh, have a look at this 'Mr Bean, school principal' skit.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTfGtLIOydU>

Have a great start to the year. Let me when I can develop a GAME plan for your school.

All the best and hope to see you soon.

*Bryan*