



香港直接資助學校議會
Hong Kong Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools Council



VISIT UNIVERSITY

NEW ZEALAND EDUCATIONAL TRIP 2025





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FOREWORD

The Hong Kong Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools Council (DSSSC) has over 16 years of experience organizing educational trips to various countries, including Estonia in 2024, Sweden in 2023, Germany in 2019, Scotland in 2018, and Finland in 2017. These trips aim to broaden the horizons of educators and students, foster a global perspective, and facilitate the exchange of educational practices.

In late April 2025, the DSSSC organized an educational trip to New Zealand, continuing its tradition of international educational exchanges. Our diverse delegation, including principals and teachers, embarked on a journey to explore New Zealand's unique educational landscape. During the trip, delegates engaged in meaningful exchanges with local educators and students, gaining valuable insights into a system renowned for its holistic curriculum and inclusivity.

We observed how New Zealand schools strike a rare balance, where rigorous learning sits comfortably alongside a genuine focus on student wellbeing, and where sports, arts, and cultural activities are embraced as essential. The delegates also explored the country's decentralized system and its strong bicultural foundation, which meaningfully integrates Māori language and cultural practices into daily school life. These interactions provided a deeper understanding of how the system caters to diverse learning needs through various school types, including state, state-integrated, and private schools.

Beyond academic exploration, this tour fostered strong bonds among participants. Collaborative exchanges of ideas and best practices strengthened our educational community. I truly believe that this trip offered our delegates an inspiring platform for reflecting on the essence of education while considering the next steps in nurturing future generations.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the delegates for their participation and support in making this educational trip a remarkable success. I look forward to welcoming you to the next DSS educational trip and event.

Mr. CHEN Dion, MH

Chairman, Hong Kong Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools Council
Principal, Ying Wa College



DELEGATION

School	Position	Name
Ying Wa College	Principal & Head of Delegation	Mr. CHEN Dion
China Holiness College	Principal	Ms. CHAN Wai Wa (Eva)
Diocesan Girls' School	Headmistress	Mrs. LAU Kun Lai Kuen, Stella
ECF Saint Too Canaan College	Principal	Mr. LEE Ka Ming
	Vice Principal	Mr. YAN Ka Chi (Brian)
ELCHK Lutheran Academy	Chief Principal	Dr. LAM Hak Chung Patrick
Good Hope School	Vice Principal	Mr. Pang Bing Lun Leander
Heung To Secondary School (Tseung Kwan O)	Assistant principal	Ms. YAN Lut Wa (Eva)
HKBUAS Wong Kam Fai Secondary and Primary School	Chief Principal	Dr. CHAN Wai Kai (Benjamin)
	Vice Principal	Dr. TANG Wing Suen (Wing)
Po Leung Kuk Laws Foundation College	Assistant Principal	Ms. CHEUNG Pui Yin (Lisa)
St. Margaret's Co-educational English Secondary and Primary School	Assistant Vice Principal	Dr. LAM Chun Kit (Jack)
	Vice Principal	Ms. SIT Tsang Jenny
Stewards Pooi Kei College	Head of English Language KLA	Ms. YUEN Yee Kwan (Eva)
W F Joseph Lee Primary School	Master teacher	Ms. NG Ka Yan (Hannah)
Ying Wa College	Careers Master	Mr. WONG Ching Fu (Jeff)
	Assistant Principal/ Head of Student Development	Mr. CHIU King Sum Isaac
YMCA of Hong Kong Christian College	Head of ECA	LEUNG Sin Hang Charlotte
Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools Council	Secretary	Ms. LEE Sybel

YMCA of Hong Kong Christian College

Mr. CHIU King Sum Isaac

Assistant Principal

Ms. LEUNG Sin Hang Charlotte

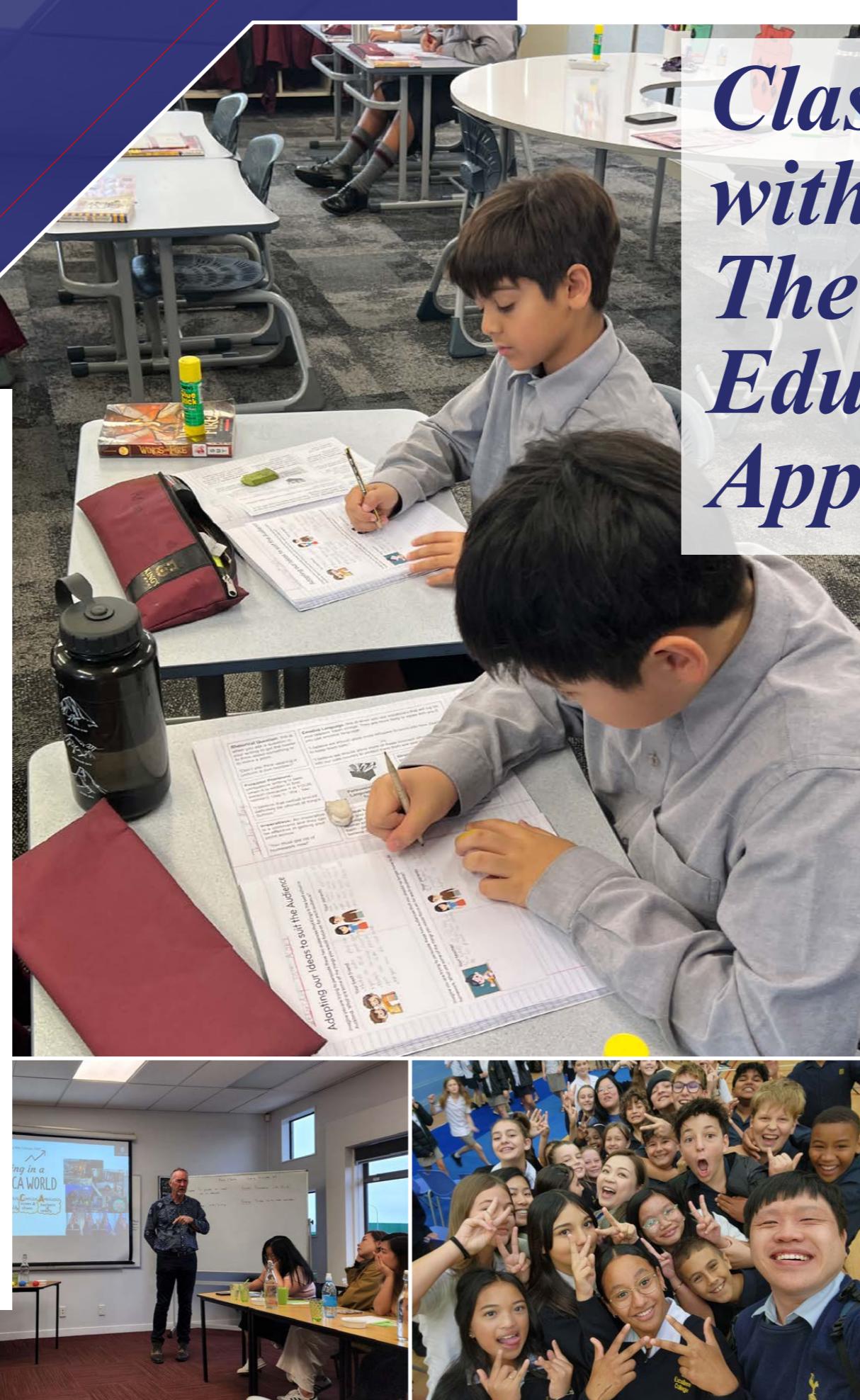
Head of ECA

There's something refreshingly different about New Zealand's approach to education. While many systems propel students into an endless race for academic results, Kiwi schools manage to strike a rare balance—rigorous learning sits comfortably alongside a genuine focus on wellbeing, where sports, arts, and cultural activities aren't sidelined but embraced as essential. It's an education system that understands childhood shouldn't be sacrificed at the altar of standardised testing—and yet, students here thrive.

New Zealand education is known for its holistic curriculum, inclusivity, and adaptability to diverse learning needs and cultural contexts. At its core, the system comprises four main types of schools: fully government-funded state schools, state-integrated schools, private schools, and more recently established charter schools. State schools are government-owned and funded, while state-integrated schools are also government-funded but may charge compulsory fees. Private schools are not government-funded and charge set annual fees.

The education system in New Zealand is known for its decentralized system where authority for day-to-day operations and financial management is devolved from central government to educational institutions. This autonomy extends to curriculum choices, with many schools offering both the national NCEA system alongside international programmes like IB or A-Levels, providing flexibility that caters to diverse aspirations.

New Zealand's education system is a three-level structure encompassing early childhood education, primary and secondary school, and tertiary education. In particular, the Primary and Secondary Education section consists of Primary School for Years 1 to 6 or 8; Intermediate School for Years 7 and 8 and Secondary School for Years 9 to 13, leading to the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Levels 1, 2, and 3.



Classrooms without Borders: The New Zealand Education Approach

Equally noteworthy is the range of practical learning opportunities—schools offer everything from traditional academic subjects to vocational pathways like carpentry, music composition, and agricultural business. This emphasis on real-world skills ensures students can tailor their education to their strengths, whether they're bound for university or direct entry into the workforce.

Another defining characteristic of the system is its strong bicultural foundation which embraces inclusivity, ethnic and cultural diversity. New Zealand's education system actively caters for the diverse needs of its population, particularly its indigenous Māori learners. Many schools incorporate the Māori language and cultural practices into daily life, fostering a sense of belonging and cultural pride for Māori students. Beyond formal acknowledgement, cultural diversity is meaningfully integrated into school life through classroom pedagogy, cultural events, and daily interactions, creating inclusive learning environments where students from Māori, Pasifika, Asian, and European backgrounds all experience genuine belonging.

The New Zealand approach combines local adaptability with global perspectives, preparing students for both national and international pathways. Its emphasis on cultural inclusion, balanced learning, and institutional autonomy presents an interesting model of public education that prioritises both academic achievement and student wellbeing within a diverse society. The system continues to evolve while maintaining its core commitment to accessible, quality education for all learners.

Diocesan Girls' School

Mrs. Stella LAU, SBS, JP

Headmistress

A Diocesan Reunion

Perhaps no headmistress was more excited than I was when our delegation arrived in Auckland for the annual educational trip of the Hong Kong Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools, to learn about good practices at leading institutions in different parts of the world.

This year's destination was New Zealand, and I was thrilled to reconnect with Ms. Heather McRae, widely respected principal at Diocesan School for Girls, located in Epsom. Since our schools may be said to share a name, faith, and vision, our exchange programme for students and teachers commenced more than a decade before this trip for DSS principals.

It was a delightful reunion for Heather and myself. The pandemic years melted away as we re-acquainted each other with the developments at our schools and in the community at large. We shared insights on how to best cultivate in our students the attitude and skill set to ride the crest of a fast-evolving world. Most of all, we exchanged ideas for continuing to nurture a community where learning is fun and rewarding for teachers, students and parents alike.



Ying Wa College

Mr. CHEN Dion, MH

Principal

Mr. WONG Ching Fu (Jeff)

Careers Master



On the morning of April 29th, under clear skies, we paid a visit to Auckland Grammar School, a prestigious boys' school with a rich history in New Zealand. Upon arrival, we were fortunate to attend the morning assembly, witnessing waves of energetic young men arriving one after another. The hall was bustling with noise as boys chatted eagerly, seemingly looking forward to the new term. Suddenly, the bell rang, and all fell silent, demonstrating the students' adeptness at respect and discipline within the school's rules. The principal and vice principal strolled onto the stage, delivering about a fifteen-minute address. Despite the solemn setting of the assembly hall, the morning session consisted of reminders for students to pay attention to grooming, hair styling, and details of the day's training schedule, prompting a wry smile as it highlighted the universal truth that young men everywhere need constant reminders.

Subsequently, we proceeded to the meeting room, where the principal and school leaders took turns sharing information about the school. They mentioned the implementation of a dual-track curriculum, offering both the New Zealand local curriculum and the Cambridge International Examination curriculum to cater to students' varying abilities and needs. The principal also touched upon the obligation of State Schools to admit children from the school district, leading to an increase in nearby residential buildings and soaring property prices, signifying the school's considerable attraction to New Zealand residents. The School Board of New Zealand schools wields significant influence over educational policies, with Auckland Grammar School's School Board comprising professionals from the community, emphasizing educational quality and student performance. According to teachers, students generally hold high expectations for the quality of teaching, prompting teachers to possess a sense of self-motivation and self-discipline.



Legacy of Excellence: A Historical Pursuit - Auckland Grammar School

Moreover, the school arranged for three student ambassadors, who sacrificed their lesson time to lead us on a tour of the campus. This tour included vast grass playing fields, standard swimming pool facilities, historic teaching buildings, and a well-equipped library, allowing us to fully experience the school's aristocratic ambiance and its emphasis on an all-rounded education. The school places a strong emphasis on students' physical development by offering thirty-nine different sports activities, allowing students to freely choose to join relevant teams, fostering physical fitness and sportsmanship. Given the school's long history and achievements, students who can be a part of it generally exhibit a strong sense of belonging and pride.

During the tour, we passed by several classrooms and observed the boys behaving in an orderly and attentive manner, prompting admiration for the school's simple and sincere atmosphere. The vice principal mentioned that this was due to the clear boundaries set for students, allowing them to understand their limits and then granting them considerable freedom, cultivating qualities of self-discipline and self-awareness. Like most New Zealand secondary schools, the school operates with seven class periods per day, including tea time and lunch time. Students move between classes for different subjects, resembling the operational model of local universities in Hong Kong. Additionally, the school operates a streaming system for senior students based on subject proficiency, narrowing the learning diversity within classes. With a system that allows for student transfers, students are reassigned annually to prevent academic neglect and provide motivation for students in weaker classes to strive for improvement. Due to the subject-based streaming, the labeling effect resulting from streaming is significantly reduced.

Our time at Auckland Grammar School was brief, and although we did not observe any classes, through interactions with staff and students, as well as the campus tour, we gained a full appreciation of the school's pursuit of academic excellence.

HKBUAS Wong Kam Fai Secondary and Primary School

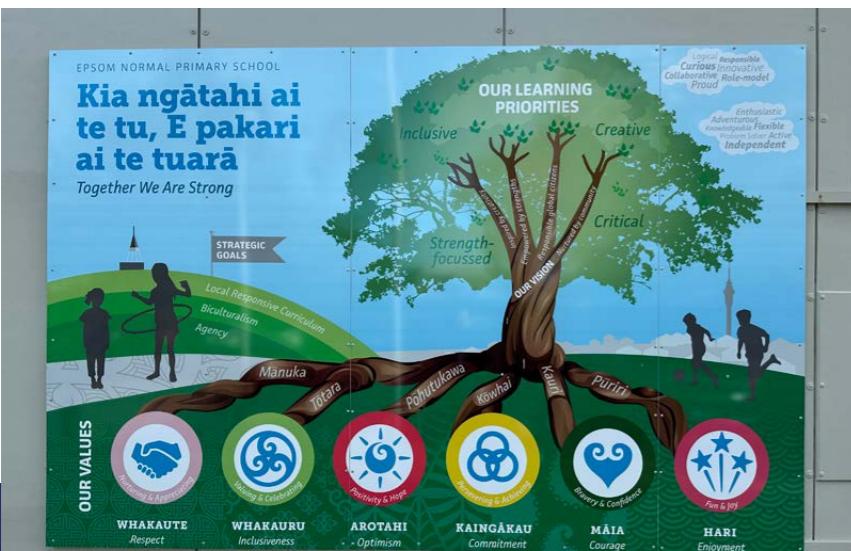
Dr. CHAN Wai Kai (Benjamin)
Chief Principal

In April 2025, I joined a Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools Council delegation to New Zealand to study their education system, focusing specifically on primary and secondary schools. This visit gave me firsthand experience of New Zealand's "learner-centered" approach in action and revealed many valuable school practices worth learning from.

250 times larger than Hong Kong, New Zealand is vast yet sparsely populated. Known for its agriculture, environmental protection, and human rights, Hong Kong principals would surely envy New Zealand's expansive and green campuses. New Zealand actively revives indigenous Māori language and culture, while also embracing multiculturalism due to high immigration rates. This dual focus is visible everywhere – from campus designs to school activities, leaving me with a deep impression.

Deeply Rooted Māori & Multicultural Experiences

Two schools welcomed us with traditional Māori ceremonies. At one school, all its members gathered prior to our arrival and greeted us with a brief naturalistic Māori ritual and traditional welcome song. The staff and students stood opposite us for the "Hongi" (nose-pressing greeting), symbolizing sharing breath and becoming part of their families. At another school, older students gave a simpler but equally solemn welcome with a traditional Māori song with guitar accompaniment. These arrangements inspired Hong Kong principals to think of the possibility of integrating Hong Kong and Chinese traditions into daily school life. When hosting their international buddies, our students could tell the good stories of Hong Kong and China by connecting the heritage with the culture.



Insights on New Zealand Education Study Tour



Differentiated Learning

Children start Year 1 on their fifth birthday in New Zealand. Smaller, remote schools often adopt mixed-age class teaching. Immigrant population also creates diverse classrooms. This demands flexible teaching strategies and poses real challenges for educators. Differentiated instruction – varying content, activities, and assessments for varied ages, backgrounds, readiness, and languages – is essential. In Hong Kong, teachers often find differentiation difficult due to large classes and curriculum pressure; tailoring requires a great deal of time. However, teachers in New Zealand kept lectures short. After introducing core concepts or tasks, students chose activities based on their needs, sometimes grouped by the teachers. Classrooms buzzed with students working alone, in pairs, or in small groups – often on different materials. This was differentiation in practice. Sometimes, teaching assistants were in class to provide pull-out support for students with special needs. While Hong Kong also faces implementation hurdles with this group of students, teachers must proactively address the diversity to maximize every learner's potential.

The Teacher Mindset: "What More Can We Do?"

Conversations with Kiwi teachers frequently circled back to one question: "What more can we do for our students?" This mindset is powerfully instructive. Student learning diversity is a given. After implementing support strategies – whether results meet expectations or fall short – asking "What more can we do?" becomes a driving force for improvement and impact. It pushes teachers to refine materials and methods, fostering better learning. Approaching differences positively and seeking ways to boost learning makes teaching more effective. As the saying goes, "There's no such thing as an unteachable student, only teaching methods we haven't found yet."

Conclusion: Wellbeing Matters

Schools are crucial communities for building knowledge, skills, and attitudes – but nurturing "student wellbeing and happiness" must be a core mission too. What stood out? Almost every student greeted us warmly: smiling, confident, and genuinely engaged. That left a lasting impression.

China Holiness College

Ms. CHAN Wai Wa (Eva)

Principal

As an educator and a principal embarking on an enlightening educational exchange journey to New Zealand, I had the privilege to visit Macleans College. This experience not only shed light on the educational landscape in New Zealand but also underscored the collective efforts of educators in both New Zealand and Hong Kong, who tirelessly leverage their strengths to nurture the youth, preparing them to tackle the challenges of tomorrow and contribute meaningfully to society, their nations, and the world at large.

Macleans College is a picturesque haven nestled in the lush greenery, sprawling lawns, and with a breathtaking view of the boundless ocean. The school's serene setting amidst New Zealand's natural beauty serves as a testament to the abundance of natural resources that complement its academic environment.

One of the distinctive features of Macleans College is its commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive learning environment. The school not only attracts local students but also students from various corners of the globe. In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the proportion of Chinese students, highlighting the school's dedication to cultural diversity and global engagement. It is heartening to witness the school's deliberate efforts in facilitating exchanges and collaborations with Chinese educational institutions, further enriching the cultural tapestry of the school community.



Bridging Cultures and Enriching the Experiences of Nurturing the Youth



Reflecting on this enriching experience, it is evident that education transcends geographical boundaries and cultural differences. The exchange program has not only broadened our perspectives but also reinforced the importance of collaboration and mutual learning among educators worldwide. It serves as a reminder of the transformative power of education in shaping the future generation and fostering global citizenship.

In closing, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Hong Kong Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools Council (DSSSC) for organizing this insightful exchange program, which has provided Hong Kong educators with a platform for networking, learning, and professional growth. Let us continue to strive towards excellence, working hand in hand to enhance the educational standards of our schools and empower our students to excel in an increasingly interconnected world. Through initiatives like these, we can bridge cultures, inspire young minds, and pave the way for a brighter future filled with possibilities and opportunities for all.

W F Joseph Lee Primary School

Ms. NG Ka Yan (Hannah)
Master Teacher, Academic Registry



Located in the centre of Auckland, Newmarket Primary School is a distinctive educational establishment that places a strong emphasis on community and personal development. This tiny school is committed to developing big people in a calm setting, encouraging not only academic achievement but also social and emotional growth.

A Commitment to Space

Establishing a friendly and flexible environment for students is a top priority for the leadership team at Newmarket Primary School, which is headed by the principal. They are aware that student engagement and achievement are greatly influenced by a favourable learning environment. Students' and teachers' feedback is actively gathered by the team to make sure the school's facilities are suitable for its diverse student body. The school uses cutting-edge techniques, like camera analysis and observational studies, to track how teachers and children interact in their surroundings. Through the use of data, the administration is able to spot trends and behaviours, which results in deliberate changes to the school's layout. Every student has the chance to succeed at Newmarket Primary School because greater space is available for play and educational activities.

Newmarket Primary School: A Calm and Small School that Grows Big People



Embracing Diversity

Newmarket Primary School's great cultural mix is one of its unique selling points. With students from 36 different nations, the school is a dynamic mingling of experiences and backgrounds. The fact that 80% of students use English as a second language shows how much the diverse student body is valued and accepted. By including the Māori language into the curriculum and everyday activities, the school respects and values it. By enabling students to connect with their ancestry and improve their language abilities, this dedication to diversity enhances the educational process.

Supporting Teachers

Newmarket Primary School understands how critical it is to assist its teachers as well. The school makes sure teachers have enough time off from classes so they may work with colleagues and concentrate on their professional growth. Students eventually gain from this investment in teachers' well-being since it leads to more effective teaching methods. Newmarket Primary School improves the entire school experience by cultivating a positive ripple effect that supports teachers.

Customized Curriculum

Realising that each child is different, Newmarket Primary School strives to develop a curriculum that is tailored to each student's requirements and learning preferences. The leadership team ensures that every kid receives the individualised attention they need by collaborating closely with teachers to create instructional strategies that work best for their pupils. This individualised approach helps students to pursue their hobbies and interests in addition to promoting academic success.

A Community of Growth

In essence, Newmarket Primary School is a community dedicated to the growth of each student. The school fosters a friendly environment for kids to develop into well-rounded persons by accepting diversity, supporting instructors, and customising the curriculum. As Newmarket Primary School grows, it remains committed to its objective of honouring each child's potential, ensuring that they leave not only with knowledge, but also with the confidence and skills to navigate the world ahead. Big individuals thrive in this peaceful and friendly environment.

Stewards Pooi Kei College

Ms. SIT Tsang Jenny

Vice Principal

Ms. YUEN Yee Kwan (Eva)

Head of English

In the afternoon of 30 April, following our visit to St. Cuthbert's College, colleagues from secondary schools had the privilege of touring Albany Senior High School. This co-educational institution caters exclusively to students in Years 11 to 13, typically aged 14 to 18, and is famous for its innovative and student-centered approach to senior secondary education.

As we entered the school, we were immediately struck by its flamboyant and vibrant atmosphere. The open-plan design, with no traditional walled classrooms, allowed students to be seen working collaboratively across the floor and in discussion areas. Some were even repairing a model plane alongside their teachers. It happened to be their dedicated day for the "Impact Project," a weekly feature of the school's curriculum that encourages students to take ownership of large-scale, long-term projects. These projects foster learning beyond the classroom and emphasize meaningful contributions to society.

Albany Senior High attracts students from across Auckland who are preparing for their NCEA examinations and future careers. Much like the elective subjects in the HKDSE, students focus on specialist subjects tailored to their interests. The "Impact Projects" we observed showcased remarkable creativity and engagement, with students working on diverse initiatives ranging from writing fiction novels to studying aerodynamics, dedicating every Wednesday throughout the year to these endeavors. The involvement of mentors and community partners provides students with valuable insights into real-world challenges. Rather than merely completing summative assessments, students culminate their work by presenting at the annual "Gold Night," where they compete for the Impact Project Gold Award and scholarships. This event is open to the community, strengthening students' sense of belonging and service while offering apprenticeship opportunities upon graduation.



Albany Senior High School – How You are Bright

During our visit, some students showcased a board game they had designed, and we also experienced a project that integrated augmented reality technology. It was clear that students demonstrated a strong sense of ownership and pride in their work, reflecting high levels of creativity, engagement, and commitment. Reflecting on the Hong Kong curriculum, the question is not whether our students are ready to embrace such innovative and experiential modes of learning, but rather whether these pedagogical approaches can be widely accepted as effective preparation for their future. This visit has prompted us to reconsider how project-based learning and technology-enhanced learning environments can be integrated to foster deeper understanding, critical thinking, and 21st-century skills development.

Albany Senior High is also known for its modern learning modes and inclusive environment. Students do not wear uniforms yet exhibit a strong sense of belonging. Beyond the tailored curriculum, students attend weekly tutorials similar to class teacher periods, where tutors build close relationships with students and their families, providing pastoral care and career guidance. Students are not streamed but receive personalized learning experiences. A distinctive feature of the school culture is that teachers are addressed by their first names, breaking down traditional barriers and fostering open communication and deeper partnerships. Principal Claire Amos shared the school's inspiring mantra: "It is not if you are bright, it is how you are bright." This philosophy recognizes and nurtures the unique gifts and talents of every learner. We can see how the philosophy is actualized during our visit.

The school's vision - to nurture, inspire, and empower each other to achieve highly and be good citizens-is clearly embodied throughout the campus. We are grateful to the teaching staff and students for their warm welcome and openness. This visit, along with the entire trip, has been truly inspiring. Walking through the innovative campuses, engaging with educators and students, and reflecting on new ideas have provided valuable insights into how we might enhance our own educational practices. Topics such as the limited amount of homework assigned, the state ban on mobile phones on campus, and student-driven extracurricular activities sparked meaningful discussions.



ECF Saint Too Canaan College

Mr. YAN Ka Chi (Brian)

Vice Principal

As I walked through the gates of Chelsea Primary School, nestled in the leafy suburb of Chatswood on Auckland's North Shore, I was struck by the hum of warmth that seemed to radiate from its red-brick buildings. With around 400 students—nearly half from families with roots in China, Hong Kong, Korea, India, and Europe—the school felt like a microcosm of the world. Principal Chrissy Wakeman later told me their mission, "Te Whakatipu Ākonga Miharo" (Growing Great Learners), is not just about academics but about nurturing "whole children" who feel seen, valued, and challenged." As an educator in Hong Kong, where high-stakes testing often overshadows holistic growth, I couldn't help but lean into this philosophy, curious to see how it played out in practice.

A Welcome That Felt Like Coming Home

My visit began with a moment that lingered long after I left: two students, Champagne and Avery, both with the bright confidence of girls who know they belong, greeted me at the entrance. Their Chinese heritage—reflected in their names and the occasional switch to Mandarin as they chatted—added a layer of familiarity for me. Yet what struck me most was their effortless pride in representing the school. "We're Cultural Leaders," Avery explained, her voice steady and warm. "We help new students feel welcome, just like others did for us."

As they guided me through sunlit classrooms and shared stories of friendship, I thought of Hong Kong's international schools, where diversity is common but often siloed by language streams or curricula. Here, difference wasn't just tolerated—it was the glue. Kay Finlay, the International Student Manager, later shared how her Cultural Leaders program intentionally taps into students' unique backgrounds. "Every child has a talent," she said. "Sometimes it's language, sometimes it's empathy. Our job is to help them find it."



The Joy of Slowing Down: Pens, Paper, and the Lost Art of Thinking

In a Year 5 classroom, students designed their dream house in groups with their knowledge of 3D drawing, use of colors and sustainability, their voices rising in excitement. No tablets, no AI-generated summaries—just ink, paper, and lively minds at work.

Principal Wakeman later explained the school's deliberate shift away from screens in early education. "We want children to think, not just click," she said. "Handwriting isn't nostalgia—it's neuroscience. When you write by hand, you remember more. When you read deeply, you learn to question."

This resonated deeply. In Hong Kong, even kindergartens now tout "STEM labs" and coding classes, often at the expense of play or creativity. At Chelsea, however, technology isn't rejected—it's delayed. Devices are introduced in later years, once foundational skills are secure. "We're not preparing children for exams," Wakeman added. "We're preparing them for life." Just like the social psychologist Jonathan Haidt said in his book "The Anxious Generation", "When kids are rooted in real relationships, they are not washed away by social media."

The contrast was refreshing. In a world racing to automate, Chelsea dares to ask: What do we lose when we outsource thinking to machines?

A Morning at Chelsea Primary: Where Culture Meets Curiosity and Pen Meets Paper

Whanaungatanga: The Art of Building a Family

The Māori concept of whanaungatanga—often translated as "family" but encompassing broader kinship—was palpable. In the playground, older children shepherded younger ones through a game, their patience a quiet lesson in leadership.

"Relationships are our foundation," Wakeman said. "You can't learn if you don't feel safe." This ethos reminded me of Hong Kong's elite schools, where academic rigor often overshadows emotional well-being. Here, well-being wasn't a sidebar—it was the syllabus. During a lesson on burning marshmallows (a playful gateway to combustion science), the teacher wove in discussions about Indigenous Australian fire practices, safety, and even the cultural significance of campfire snacks. Learning wasn't siloed into subjects; it was alive, messy, and deeply human.

Reflections: What Hong Kong Could Learn from a Suburb in Auckland

As I left Chelsea Primary, I found myself reflecting on my own schooling in Hong Kong—a system I admire for its discipline but one that often leaves little room for curiosity or cultural bridging. At Chelsea, students aren't just "academic achievers"; they're collaborators, thinkers, and cultural ambassadors. The school's focus on handwriting over hashtags, relationships over rankings, offers a counter-narrative to the anxiety-driven education so common in Asia.

Yet this isn't a critique of Hong Kong. It's a reminder that education is a living ecosystem, shaped by choices. Chelsea chooses slowness in a fast world, depth in an age of skimming, and kinship in a time of fragmentation. For educators everywhere—whether in Auckland, Hong Kong, or beyond—that's a vision worth leaning into.



ELCHK Lutheran Academy

Dr. LAM Hak Chung Patrick
Chief Principal



Founded in 1915, St. Cuthbert's College is a Year 1-13 private Christian girls' school with 344 staff and 1,500 students. Having highlighted the importance of holistic development, the School is committed to academic excellence, well-being and numerous leadership development opportunities. Like many DSS schools in Hong Kong, the School offers dual exits in its senior school, including the national curriculum NCEA and IB Diploma Programme. Additionally, the school provides state-of-the-art boarding facilities for 110 boarding students. Five special features as the lessons learnt are illustrated below.

To begin with, the academic framework at St. Cuthbert's is well-articulated, with a particular focus on promoting academic excellence and science education for girls. This focus has been integral to the school's mission and annual plan since its inception. In order to set a high standard of academics (currently 100% passing rate and 88% excellence/ merit rate in NCEA; 100% passing rate and 22% scoring 40+ in IBDP; overall 99% university entry rate), the School emphasizes on the quality and professional development of its teachers, which will be illustrated in the final section. Besides, a set of high expectations has been built amongst the students. Five different levels of scholarship for academic accomplishment have been provided to motivate all students to strive for excellence. In order to address individual differences, apart from the conventional support measures for the SEN students, the School offers a great range of subject choices in both NCEA and IBDP programmes in spite of the financial implications. The School also promotes excellence in talent development, including performing arts and sports.

Second, there are ample opportunities for life skills and leadership development amongst students with relevant pastoral care support. Well-being of students, as stated in the first paragraph, is highlighted as the School's one of the three developmental priorities. Homeroom teachers (Y1-8) and tutor system (Y9-13 same tutor throughout the years) are articulated to facilitate sufficient frequency and time for group and individual counselling. A well-structured social emotional programme is introduced every Thursday. Eight hours per week is dedicated to pastoral care, including chapel, homeroom/tutor group and SEL programme in which all teachers and counsellors are engaged. The pastoral care system is formulated in five themes, namely emotional management, empathy, decision making, community engagement and global citizenship. In order to develop students' life skills and leadership, a lot of school visits and publicity events are taken up by student ambassadors. In order to promote a healthy lifestyle, all students must take part in a cross country run every year. Concerning the development of independence and life skills of all girl students, one of the signature events is the 1-month compulsory outdoor programme at Kahunui, a forest in Central North Island where the use of mobile phone is prohibited.

Third, St. Cuthbert's has optimized the potential of its through-train school model. Like the general situation of Hong Kong, many NZ primary teachers are not trained in science. To foster the science development in the primary school, secondary school science teachers collaborate with the upper primary colleagues in developing and implementing primary science curriculum. Similar primary-secondary collaboration is facilitated in Visual Arts and

St. Cuthbert's College, Auckland, New Zealand

STEAM areas. Seamless collaboration between the primary and secondary sections is also introduced in the student population. A range of buddy programmes have been introduced for invaluable peer role modelling, and "big sisters little sisters" relationships. As the School has been established for over a century with reputation, the community of alumni is consolidated to support the school development. The old girls' reunion, known as St. Cuthbert's Day, is organized annually and they are also engaged in a lot of school activities, projects and school development.

The boarding programme with the well-furnished environment is another iconic feature. It mainly caters for 110 local and overseas students. The residential dormitory, in twin bedroom arrangement, is composed of three spacious blocks for Y7-8, Y9-11 and Y12-13 students respectively. The environment is decorated in a very home-like cozy environment with both spacious indoor and outdoor communal areas. A lot of lively pictures and messages of hall life episodes have been displayed. As it is so close to the school's cafeteria, the boarding students enjoy their three meals with designed time conveniently. That leaves plenty of space for other uses in the dormitory, such as laundry, social gathering, small group activities and independent study. Besides, the well-articulated routines during the weekdays help students develop a healthy and positive lifestyle while the special programme during the weekend and holiday provide enrichment opportunities for the boarders.

Last but never the least, a professional learning community amongst the teachers is established. A total of 10 professional learning groups are formed amongst its teaching staff and monthly meetings are held. Each cluster may focus on a particular pedagogical area, such as culture (Māori/ Chinese), cognitive theory, high performing learning model, ed tech and so on. Each group is led by an expert teacher who shares his/ her insights, new information and good practices. The members may share how they refine their pedagogies accordingly and any issues arisen. A strong sharing culture in the peer support atmosphere, for both succession of good practices and curricular improvement, is cultivated. Besides, St. Cuthbert's is a teacher training ground for the less experienced teachers in the government initiative known as Teacher Institute. The School specializes in science, technology, math and English language. The less experienced teachers joining the scheme may teach four days a week at the school and spend the rest of the week in the government designated institution. An experienced teacher at the school is assigned as his or her mentor. The School shows its dedication in teachers' professional development and growth.

In essence, St. Cuthbert's College is one of the most popular and high achieving private schools in New Zealand and Australasia. The School enables every student to explore her strengths and talents in a supportive and inclusive environment. The five lessons learnt from the School include (a) the well articulation of academic and holistic development in dual exits of NCEA and IBDP; (b) ample leadership and life skills development opportunities with pastoral care; (c) optimization of the potentials of the through-train setting; (d) residential dormitory architecture and programmes; and (e) the establishment of a professional learning community amongst the teachers.



St. Margaret's Co-Educational English Secondary and Primary School

Dr. LAM Chun Kit (Jack)
Assistant Vice Principal

The experience of visiting Gladstone Primary School in New Zealand was both insightful and inspiring, offering me a chance to immerse myself in an educational environment that values diversity and inclusion.

School Context

Gladstone Primary School is led by Principal Dave Shadbolt and has approximately 770 students. The school maintains a favorable teacher-to-student ratio of around 1:20. This allows for more personalized support and interaction between teachers and students. The student body is culturally diverse, comprising roughly 50% students from European families and 50% from other cultural backgrounds.

While the school used to admit students from within its school zone, it started to open to students living outside the school zone as the number of in-zone students is declining. This is also a change that schools in Hong Kong experience in recent years. Schools have to adapt to its changing environment and serve a wide community to maintain its healthy enrollment.

Facilities and Infrastructure

Gladstone Primary provides a variety of facilities that enhance students' learning and their school life. For example, the school has a heated swimming pool, which is available to students even during lunch breaks, promoting well-being of the students and catering the needs of their students.

The school's classroom design also supports collaborative learning and promotes interaction between students from different classes. Classrooms are interconnected by a covered common area, where students can engage in group activities or be pulled out for differentiated learning support. This open layout compromises the needs for inclusion education and the needs for differentiation of learning.

Furthermore, the school has a studio room that is equipped with musical instruments, virtual reality equipment, and live broadcasting tools. This facility enables students to explore multimedia production, fostering students' creativity, and digital literacy.



Embracing Inclusion and Innovation: Lessons from Gladstone Primary School

Teacher Resources and Learning Support

Gladstone Primary ensures all its new students can be smoothly integrated into their primary school life. One of the key programs is the "Visit Classroom," in which prospective Year 0 students are grouped together when they start their school at Gladstone Primary. The school provides a structured orientation for the students, such as buddy pairing, that helps them adjust to the school routines and establish essential learning habits. In addition, the Principal interviews new students and provides a guided school tour to ensure that newcomers are suitable and are well-informed before they decide to join Gladstone Primary.

The presence of teacher assistants in classrooms further strengthens the differentiated learning of students, especially for students with special learning needs. One of the greatest challenges that their students face is learning English. These assistants provide focused teaching, including pull-out sessions to work on specific English knowledge and skills.

The school has invested a lot in specialized teaching aids, such as Numicon, a versatile resource used to help students with learning difficulties understand mathematics. The use of 'Froggy Books' also supports students' reading literacy development by helping students transition from picture books to text rich books.

Some subjects at Gladstone Primary, such as science and physical health, are taught by specialist teachers. This frees homeroom teachers for more planning and preparation time.

School Culture

The school culture at Gladstone Primary is built on appreciation. Staff contributions are acknowledged during morning tea sessions, which fosters a sense of belongings and promotes the morale of the teachers and staff. Students are not required to wear a school uniform. Principal Shadbolt explained that he believes that each child is unique and should feel free to express their individuality. He also believed that their students will feel safe and more comfortable without wearing a school uniform as the students did not wear a school uniform in kindergarten either.

Reflection and Insights

I was inspired by the school's strong commitment to inclusion and respect for individual differences. Their thoughtful design of physical space and transition programs are examples of takeaway for me.

The emphasis on building a positive school climate is also another area worth considering. A team of motivated teachers with high morale is the key to effectively implementing school policies and learning and teaching practices that ultimately benefit students' learning and growth.



ECF Saint Too Canaan College

Mr. LEE Ka Ming
Principal



Nestled in the heart of Auckland, King's School stands as a distinguished private independent boys' school renowned for its commitment to nurturing individual talents and fostering academic excellence. Founded on the belief that every boy possesses unique potential, the school blends tradition with innovation, creating an environment where students thrive intellectually, spiritually, and socially.

A Warm Welcome and Sacred Beginnings

Our visit began with a heartfelt greeting from Headmaster Tony Sissons, whose genuine enthusiasm for the school's mission set the tone for the day. We were then invited to attend a historical chapel service—a cornerstone of the school's ethos. The sight of boys clad in crisp red uniforms, quietly reflecting in prayer, singing hymns, and absorbing biblical teachings, was profoundly moving. This daily ritual, steeped in reverence, offers students a moment of calm and purpose before diving into their bustling schedules.

Transforming Education: The Thinking Classroom

The heart of our tour lay in exploring King's groundbreaking 'Thinking Curriculum', championed by Deputy Headmaster Dave McEwan. Having previously served in Thailand, McEwan introduced the transformative 'Thinking Classroom' model, shifting the school from traditional rote learning to dynamic, student-centered pedagogy. The approach, now embedded across all classrooms, prioritizes critical thinking, collaboration, and reflection. Key components include:

- *Thinking Whiteboard: Used for "Do Now" activities, where students tackle stimulating questions to kickstart lessons, followed by discussions on objectives and reflective recaps.*
- *Questioning & Investigation: Students are encouraged to ask probing questions and explore problems collaboratively.*
- *Visual Tools & Behaviors: Mind maps, thinking frameworks, and structured behaviors guide analytical processes.*
- *Collaborative Environment: Classrooms buzz with student-led dialogue, teamwork, and technology-integrated projects.*
- *Critical Thinking Content: Lessons emphasize problem-solving within the curriculum, preparing boys for real-world challenges.*
- *Reflection Time: Dedicated moments for students to review concepts and articulate their learning journeys.*

A Beacon of Holistic Education: Discovering King's School in Auckland



Observing Impact: Engagement and Excellence

The benefits of this model were palpable. In every class, boys demonstrated remarkable focus, articulating ideas with confidence and diving into debates with peers. Lessons followed a consistent structure—beginning with a "Do Now" prompt, transitioning to partner discussions, and culminating in whole-class exchanges. We marveled at the high caliber of academic work, from meticulously organized notebooks to sophisticated assignments showcasing analytical depth.

The Thinking Curriculum has not only boosted engagement but also cultivated essential life skills:

- *Deeper conceptual understanding through hands-on exploration.*
- *Enhanced creativity and independent thought, fostering self-reliant learners.*
- *Resilience and collaboration, as boys embrace challenges and learn from setbacks.*
- *Future-ready mindsets, equipping students to navigate complexity, think critically, and lead with integrity.*

A Legacy of Leadership and Learning

Beyond academics, King's shapes well-rounded individuals aligned with its learner profile: thinkers, risk-takers, communicators, and compassionate global citizens. The school's emphasis on open-mindedness and civic responsibility ensures boys graduate ready to contribute meaningfully to an evolving world.

Gratitude and Farewell

As our visit concluded, we extended heartfelt thanks to Headmaster Sissons, Deputy Headmaster McEwan, and the entire King's community for their warm hospitality. Their dedication to educational innovation – and the radiant enthusiasm of their students – left an indelible impression. We eagerly anticipate welcoming King's leaders to Hong Kong, continuing a dialogue on shaping tomorrow's visionary thinkers.



Good Hope School

Mr. PANG Bing Lun Leander

Vice Principal

Our educational exploration led us to North West College on 1st May, an innovative New Zealand Charter School nestled in North West Auckland. Established in February 2025 to serve Years 7–10 students, this forward-thinking institution plans gradual expansion to Year 13 by 2027. The school distinguishes itself through its commitment to small class sizes (capped at 20 students), academic rigor, and a vibrant creative arts program designed to nurture diverse learners.

Under the visionary leadership of Founding Principal Mrs. Michelle Randles, the school embodies a dual mission: "We champion academic excellence while cultivating creativity through our arts curriculum, empowering students to uncover their passions and build the skills, confidence, and adaptability needed to flourish in an evolving global society." Currently hosting 35 students, the college maintains an optimal learning environment that balances individual attention with collaborative growth.

Curriculum Framework

Rooted in the New Zealand Curriculum, the program merges foundational academics with artistic exploration. Mornings focus on core disciplines—English, Mathematics, Science, and Technology—equipping students with critical thinking and problem-solving tools. Afternoons transform into creative laboratories where learners immerse themselves in Drama, Dance, Music, and Painting. This structured yet flexible approach bridges theoretical knowledge with practical application, encouraging students to address real-world challenges through interdisciplinary projects.



North West College: Cultivating Excellence Through Personalized Learning and Arts Integration

Future-Focused Infrastructure

Currently operating from a commercial building space, the school is poised for an exciting transition to its purpose-built campus in Westgate by 2027. This upcoming state-of-the-art facility will amplify its capacity to deliver hands-on learning experiences while fostering community connections.

North West College stands as a beacon of progressive education, seamlessly blending academic mastery with artistic expression to prepare students as adaptable, well-rounded global citizens.



Heung To Secondary School (Tseung Kwan O)

Ms. YAN Lut Wa, Eva
Assistant Principal

The visit to Rangitoto College, a large school with over 4,000 students, was both enlightening and inspiring, offering fresh perspectives on curriculum design, teacher development, and literacy cultivation.

One of the most striking features of Rangitoto College is its comprehensive and flexible curriculum, which caters to a wide range of student abilities and aspirations. Unlike the more rigid structure often found in Hong Kong, where the Diploma of Secondary Education (DSE) dominates, Rangitoto offers multiple pathways, including the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), vocational courses, and the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE). This multi-track approach ensures that students are not confined to a single academic route but can instead choose a path that aligns with their strengths and future goals, fostering a more holistic and personalized learning experience.

This flexibility is particularly relevant to Hong Kong, where the heavy emphasis on the DSE can create undue stress and limit opportunities for students who may thrive in vocational or applied learning contexts. By expanding vocational education options and recognizing alternative qualifications, Hong Kong schools could better support diverse student needs and reduce the pressure associated with a one-size-fits-all examination system.

Another standout aspect of Rangitoto College is its unwavering focus on teacher development. The school has established a set of clear, research-based teaching principles designed to ensure high-quality instruction across all subjects. These principles include managing cognitive load to optimize learning, embedding subject-specific language to enhance literacy, employing explicit explanations and questioning techniques, utilizing retrieval practice to strengthen memory, and providing effective feedback to guide student progress.

What makes Rangitoto's approach particularly effective is its emphasis on practical, ongoing professional development. For example, the school has made videos featuring exemplary lessons, allowing teachers to observe and reflect on best practices in real classroom settings. This not only fosters a culture of continuous improvement but also ensures consistency in teaching quality across departments.



An Educational Visit to Rangitoto College, New Zealand: Insights for Hong Kong Schools

In Hong Kong, while professional development is a requirement, it often takes the form of generic workshops rather than subject-specific, pedagogy-driven training. Adopting a more structured and collaborative approach, such as peer observations paired with targeted feedback or a digital repository of teaching exemplars, could significantly enhance the effectiveness of teacher training in our schools. By prioritizing evidence-based practices and creating opportunities for teachers to learn from one another, we can cultivate a more dynamic and supportive professional environment.

A third key takeaway from my visit was Rangitoto's successful implementation of a sustained reading program. During English lessons, students engage in 10 minutes of silent reading, choosing books that interest them. This simple yet useful practice has helped students develop a habit of reading, leading to improved vocabulary, comprehension, and critical thinking skills. The program's success lies in its consistency and the school's efforts to create a supportive reading environment, including a well-stocked library and teachers who model reading alongside their students.

In Hong Kong, where the demands of exam preparation often leave little room for leisure reading, such an initiative could have profound benefits. Introducing a daily reading period—whether in English or Chinese—could help students develop stronger literacy skills and a lifelong love of learning. To maximize its impact, the program would need to be non-assessed and student-driven, allowing learners to explore texts that genuinely engage them.

My visit to Rangitoto College underscored the importance of flexibility, collaboration, and intentionality in education. By offering a diverse curriculum, investing in teacher development, and fostering a culture of reading, the school has created an environment where all students can thrive. For Hong Kong, these practices offer valuable lessons. Expanding vocational and applied learning opportunities, enhancing teacher training through peer collaboration and evidence-based strategies, and prioritizing sustained reading could help our schools better meet the needs of diverse learners.

As educators, we must remain open to learning from global best practices while adapting them to our local context. The insights gained from Rangitoto College have reinforced my belief that small, intentional changes can lead to significant improvements in student outcomes.

Po Leung Kuk Laws Foundation College

Dr. TANG Wing Suen (Wing)

Vice Principal

Ms. CHEUNG Pui Yin (Lisa)

Assistant Principal

Excellere College is a state-integrated Christian school located in Whangārei, New Zealand, serving students from Year 0 to Year 13. The school operates with a special character grounded in Christian teachings and values. It works closely with parents to create a supportive community focused on the growth and development of every student. Approximately 95% of the families are Christian and actively support the school's Christian education philosophy. The college also fosters a warm, family-like atmosphere where siblings can study together on the same campus.

The college offers a broad and balanced curriculum designed to promote academic achievement alongside important life skills. Classes are kept small, and a variety of specialist learning areas help make lessons more engaging and relevant. Senior students have the opportunity to achieve National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA), which are recognized qualifications within New Zealand.

Excellere College's campus features spacious playing fields and ongoing development of facilities. These include a large gymnasium and video conferencing capabilities, supporting a safe and caring environment where students are encouraged to participate fully in school life.

As part of its vision for growth, the school has developed a comprehensive 20-year plan to guide the expansion and improvement of its campus. During our visit, we were taken to see construction sites where new classrooms are being built.



Experiences at Excellere College: Growing Together in Faith and Learning

Our visit began with a warm welcome from Principal Mr. Andy Mouat. We joined the staff meeting where all teachers gathered for worship, followed by updates on school administration and celebrations of student achievements. The positive energy and mutual encouragement among the staff were striking, and the Principal's praise of their dedication highlighted strong and supportive leadership. The meeting clearly reflected a culture of teamwork and shared purpose.

We then had the opportunity to observe lessons across a range of year levels, guided by enthusiastic student leaders. Speaking with these students, we quickly sensed their pride in and affection for the school. Their happiness and engagement in learning were evident. Throughout our visit, the genuine care and commitment of teachers and staff were clear, reflecting the school's holistic approach to nurturing each student's mind, body, and spirit.

The experience left a lasting impression on us. Excellere College demonstrates how Christian values can be deeply integrated into all aspects of education, shaping not only academic success but also the personal character and faith of students. The strong sense of community, respect, and care among students, staff, and leadership brings these values to life every day.

We were particularly impressed by the warmth and cohesion within the staff team. Their shared dedication fosters a positive and supportive working environment that benefits students greatly. The worship and sharing during the staff meeting showed a genuine culture of encouragement and celebration, strengthening relationships and a sense of belonging.

The enthusiasm and confidence of the student leaders were inspiring. The school clearly encourages students to develop leadership skills and take ownership of their learning. This, combined with the caring and inclusive atmosphere, creates a safe and motivating environment where students feel valued.

This visit reinforced our understanding that education goes beyond academics. It is about building character, faith, and a strong sense of community. Excellere College's balanced approach – combining rigorous academics with spiritual and social growth – serves as an excellent model for nurturing well-rounded young people prepared to face future challenges with confidence and integrity.

Overall, our visit highlighted how a school united by shared values and purpose can profoundly impact student wellbeing and achievement. We leave inspired and encouraged to explore how these principles might be embraced and deepened in our own educational settings.





