



Ocean Charter School

Ocean Charter School Teacher Education Institute



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David's New Zealand's Experience

David and his family moved to New Zealand in September 1985. In October 1985 he contacted Nolene MacDonald, the District Inspector for South Island (Ministry of Education). He was invited to give a presentation the following week. He believed the presentation went well but was surprised when he was contacted and informed that the Ministry had booked a flight for him to travel to Wellington to give a presentation to officials in the Ministry. He not only did this but described how the present educational administrative structure diminished responsibility at a local level.

Some two years later a Commission was set up to examine the education structure in New Zealand and David submitted a detailed description of why it was important for schools to be part of the community and that local responsibility should be paramount. In 1988 the Commission issued its report which included most of the points David had described and two years later the changes were implemented.

The New Zealand Model

Each school is community based and has its own charter. It is run by a Board of Trustees (usually five) each of which had to be a parent of a child attending that particular school together with the Principal and a trustee elected by the school staff. The Board could co-opt other persons to the Board on a temporary basis if they required certain expertise. The Board establishes a Charter, a type of contract where the Board undertakes to the Minister to take all reasonable steps to administer the school in accordance with the purposes contained in the charter. Boards are required to update their charters annually and also to provide annual reports on how well they have achieved against their charter goals and to account for their spending of public money.

Teachers' salaries are paid on a national basis through the Ministry of Education. Educational Review Officers (EROs - something akin to Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools in the UK) oversee the whole system. When the present model was established numerous layers of administration became superfluous including about half the Ministry of Education which disappeared resulting in substantial financial savings! The funds were given to school directly and they could hire (together with other schools if this was appropriate) whatever consultants they needed on a needs basis. New Zealand Ministry of Education issues a set of national administration guidelines that provide a framework within which school boards need to operate. It also has a national qualifications system and it was agreed that a national examination structure should still exist for students reaching the end of high school.

Even today when most of the developed world is obsessed with testing students of all ages the New Zealand Ministry of Education fully appreciates that learning patterns can be different, *"Successful outcomes for all students require a range of learning pathways. One size does not fit all. Children arrive at school with different early childhood experiences and different levels of development. How students learn, the pace at which they learn and their interests vary between individuals. These differences are recognized, to an extent, through the current system. This gives teachers and schools responsibility for organizational and teaching decisions and through provision for immersion learning and designated character schools. However, the current system needs to continually look for ways to provide flexible pathways, especially for learners with diverse needs."*

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The vast majority of teachers are responsible, committed and dedicated to their students and teaching. Why aren't they empowered and trusted in the USA? Please visit <http://members.cox.net/tei> to view research showing countries where students outperform the USA, where spending is almost paltry compared with the USA, and whose administrative structures are quite different, for example where no testing or formal assessment occurs.