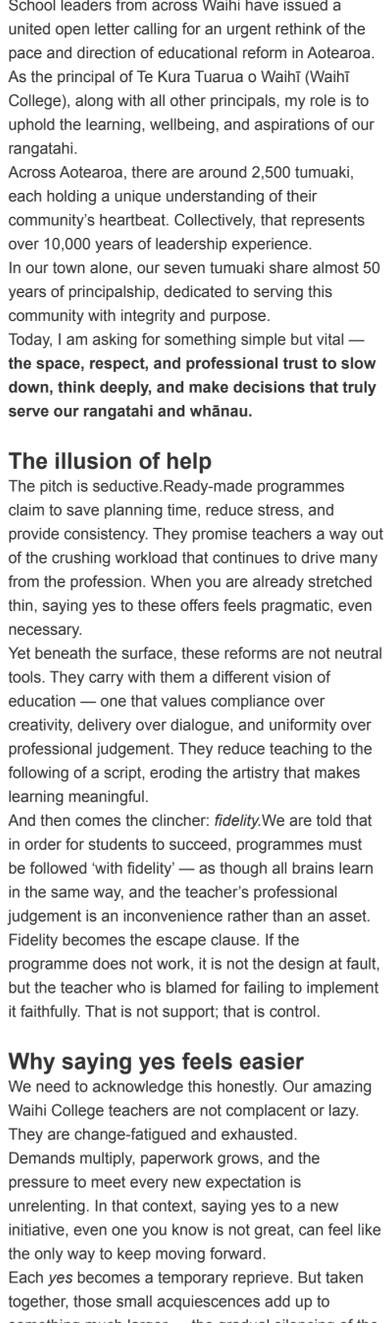


WAIHĪ COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 35 | 2025

PRINCIPAL'S COMMENT

Tēnā koutou katoa e te whānau o Waihi College, This week has marked some changes with our seniors being on study leave and our middle and junior school, leading the way. I am truly encouraged by many of them, stepping up into leadership roles in their spaces, and showcasing humanity with manaakitanga. Both this and last week, have heralded some changes in expectations of schools, and leaders.



I have written an open letter, to all who wish to read it, to articulate how important it is, to look at all things presented, with a critical eye, and lean into the profession as the experts in their field; who take our roles and jobs, seriously, with committed passion and much aroha. I welcome any discussions that might lend support to helping our Waihi Education system, authentic and community needs based, and thank the many, who reach out to encourage us along the way.

Open Letter from Briar - Tumuaki. Waihi College

The Illusion of Help: A Call to Slow Down and Trust the Profession

School leaders from across Waihi have issued a united open letter calling for an urgent rethink of the pace and direction of educational reform in Aotearoa. As the principal of Te Kura Tuarua o Waihi (Waihi College), along with all other principals, my role is to uphold the learning, wellbeing, and aspirations of our rangatahi. Across Aotearoa, there are around 2,500 tumuaki, each holding a unique understanding of their community's heartbeat. Collectively, that represents over 10,000 years of leadership experience. In our town alone, our seven tumuaki share almost 50 years of principalship, dedicated to serving this community with integrity and purpose. Today, I am asking for something simple but vital — **the space, respect, and professional trust to slow down, think deeply, and make decisions that truly serve our rangatahi and whānau.**

The illusion of help

The pitch is seductive. Ready-made programmes claim to save planning time, reduce stress, and provide consistency. They promise teachers a way out of the crushing workload that continues to drive many from the profession. When you are already stretched thin, saying yes to these offers feels pragmatic, even necessary. Yet beneath the surface, these reforms are not neutral tools. They carry with them a different vision of education — one that values compliance over creativity, delivery over dialogue, and uniformity over professional judgement. They reduce teaching to the following of a script, eroding the artistry that makes learning meaningful. And then comes the clincher: *fidelity*. We are told that in order for students to succeed, programmes must be followed 'with fidelity' — as though all brains learn in the same way, and the teacher's professional judgement is an inconvenience rather than an asset. Fidelity becomes the escape clause. If the programme does not work, it is not the design at fault, but the teacher who is blamed for failing to implement it faithfully. That is not support; that is control.

Why saying yes feels easier

We need to acknowledge this honestly. Our amazing Waihi College teachers are not complacent or lazy. They are change-fatigued and exhausted. Demands multiply, paperwork grows, and the pressure to meet every new expectation is unrelenting. In that context, saying yes to a new initiative, even one you know is not great, can feel like the only way to keep moving forward. Each yes becomes a temporary reprieve. But taken together, those small acquiescences add up to something much larger — the gradual silencing of the profession. Our learners deserve more than a one-size-fits-all education, built for someone else's country, culture, and context.

The cost of silence

Every easy yes chips away at autonomy. Every unchallenged reform signals that change can continue to be imposed without meaningful dialogue. Over time, this erodes not just workload, but identity. When teachers lose autonomy, students lose too. Learning becomes narrower, less responsive, and less connected to the diverse communities like ours, that make up Aotearoa.

The builders of learning

As tumuaki, we are more than administrators — we are architects of learning, builders of futures. Imagine constructing a whare. Every wall, beam, and nail must fit the landscape, the weather, and the people who will live there. No imported blueprint could ever account for our whenua, our winds, or our way of life. So too in education. We build learning environments that fit **our** community. Each day, we make hundreds of complex decisions about curriculum delivery, hauora, pastoral care, behaviour, and achievement. We employ kaiako who bring light to every rangatahi's potential, balancing the immediate needs of today with the long-term aspirations of tomorrow. The reason we make these decisions locally is simple: we are highly skilled, qualified, and experienced professionals. We are closest to our learners, our whānau, and our iwi. We see the daily realities, the nuanced needs, and the lived experiences that shape our students' journeys.

Honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi

At the heart of our mahi is a steadfast commitment to honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi — not as a policy checkbox, but as a living relationship. We remain staunch in our partnerships with iwi, hapū, and whānau, guided by tikanga and mātauranga Māori. Many current reforms and curriculum changes are drawn from overseas systems, often disconnected from our local context and the developmental needs of our tamariki and rangatahi. Our communities deserve an education that reflects *our own stories, values, and identities* — one that upholds Te Reo Māori, celebrates diversity, and nurtures belonging.

Reclaiming our professional voice

We call for recognition — not as dissenters, but as trusted professionals who make evidence-based, context-aware decisions every single day. We ask policymakers to pause. To listen. To recognise that the expertise required to shape effective learning already exists within our schools and communities. It is time to slow the relentless churn of initiatives and rediscover depth over speed. It is time for politicians to trust the profession. It is time for autonomy to be seen not as resistance, but as a responsibility.

A collective call to action

I ask our kaiako, our rangatahi and our community to speak up when we feel that not serve our learners. Say no when "support" really means control. Ask whether the approach is right for your ākonga, your beliefs, your context. Do not accept blame for poor outcomes when the real issue lies in design, not delivery. Stand together, so that no one carries the burden of resistance alone. The true strength of our education system lies not in imported programmes or the next policy wave, but in the thinking teachers and courageous leaders who adapt wisely, hold firm to values, and keep our tamariki and rangatahi at the centre. The tide of change will not slow on its own. But together, we can choose not to drown in it. We can choose to stand, to speak, and to reclaim the space to do what matters most: to teach and lead with integrity, humanity, and purpose — for the future of education in Aotearoa.

Ngā manaakitanga nui,
Briar Carden-Scott
Tumuaki

Ngā manaakitanga,
Briar Principal | Tumuaki Waihi College

SCHOOL WIDE

The best way to keep informed with dates and events is by using the Portal and viewing our School Calendar. If you need help logging into the Portal, contact us at office@waihicol.school.nz or on 07 863 8349.

Check out the full Year 7&8 slide presentation on our website in the Year 7&8 section, under School Life.
www.waihicol.school.nz

COLOUR RUN PIZZA PRIZE DRAW

Pizza Prize Draw! Everyone who's raised \$20 or more for our Color Run fundraiser will go into the draw to win one free large pizza of your choice! Heaps of people have already signed up — now it's time to get those last donations in.

The draw will be made on Monday 17th, so make sure you're in to win it!

If you haven't sign up yet but would like to, grab a brochure from your Ako or Homeroom teacher. It's easy as.

Chalk to Chromebooks!

Opening Night is 28 November at the Waihi Arts Centre & Museum, 54 Kenny Street.

Step back in time and explore the history of education in our town! "Chalk to Chromebooks: Waihi Schools Throughout the Decades" is a fascinating historical exhibition created by our amazing Year 13 student, Bella Paulsen. From slate boards to digital screens, see how learning has evolved through the generations.

Don't miss out on this incredible event celebrating our local schools, stories, and students!

FISH BENCHES FOR SALE

We have four fish bench/kitchen benches for sale at \$100 each. Measurements are 1830 x 510 x 40 with 100mm upstand. Please contact Mike, our Property Manager, via email on: propertymanager@waihicol.school.nz

Ngā mihi nui to Toy World Paper Plus Waihi!

A huge thank you to our wonderful local sponsor, Toy World Paper Plus Waihi, for their ongoing support of Waihi College. Their generous contribution helps our kura in many ways and we are so appreciative. Thank you for your continued commitment to our kura and our community — it truly makes a difference! Please do consider them when making your purchases and support all local stores, where you can.

Wintec Career Choices Day

Register now! Join us for an action-packed day at our Hamilton City Campus where you'll explore the exciting pathways available to you in 2026! Head to the Latest News section of our website under Keeping Informed for more details and to register

PARENT CORNER

SCHOOL TV
Don't forget to check out what's happening this week on School TV.
<https://waihicol.nz/schooltv.me/>

Wellbeing for schools

A resource for parents, caregivers and educators to better support student wellbeing.

Protecting our Tamariki – Immunise Against MMR and Meningococcal Disease.
Keeping our children and community healthy starts with prevention. Immunisation is one of the best ways to protect Tamariki from serious illnesses like measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) and meningococcal disease. Both can spread quickly and cause severe complications – but they're preventable with timely vaccination.

Meningococcal disease – Rangatahi - Heading to MENINGOCOCCAL
*On 1 March 2023, the meningococcal B vaccine was made available for free to rangatahi aged 13 to 25 that are entering or living in specified close-living situations.
*Until 28 February 2024 eligible people aged 13 to 25 years can get two doses (8 weeks apart) for free.
*Close living situations include military barracks, youth justice facilities, boarding schools or university halls of residence.
*Give yourself the best available protection from preventable diseases by ensuring you are fully immunised against Meningococcal B disease before heading off to uni!
Meningococcal disease
*Meningococcal disease can develop rapidly and be life-threatening. It can become deadly in just a few hours.
*People who survive meningococcal disease often have serious long-term effects, including amputation of limbs, hearing loss, seizures, brain injury, and permanent skin scarring

(MMR) Measles, Mumps and Rubella (German Measles and rubella).
*The MMR vaccine is a combination vaccine that protects against measles, mumps, and rubella.
*In New Zealand, it is typically administered in two doses to children at 12 and 15 months of age, though it is free for everyone under 18 regardless of immigration status.
*The vaccine is also free for those 18 and over who are eligible for funded healthcare

LOCAL PHARMACIES PROVIDING FREE VACCINE
Blarks Pharmacy – MMR – (07 8638337)
Waihi Beach Chemist – MMR and MENINGOCOCCAL (07 8638317)
UNI Students - get your 1st dose now so you can have your 2nd one done before you head off to uni!

This newsletter can also be found on our website: www.waihicol.school.nz under Keeping Informed from the main menu