



REPORT

FROM THE INAGURAL

EdRising Convening

Albany Senior High School

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EdRising
A NEW DAWN IN EDUCATION



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INTRODUCTION

This report brings together the insights, challenges, and opportunities that emerged from the recent EdRising Convening that focused on educational transformation. Over two days, educators, leaders, researchers, and people bringing community voices gathered to explore how we might reimagine schooling for a rapidly changing world.

The intention of this convening was not to offer a blueprint, but instead create a vehicle for meaningful engagement. We're being challenged to confront the limitations of the current system and to think differently about what education could and should be. Central to this provocation is the idea that transformation requires more than isolated initiatives - it calls for a clear theory of change that anchors our efforts in shared purpose and provides coherence across mindsets, practices, and policies.

Throughout the conference, five interrelated areas of focus provided a scaffold for our conversations:

1. **Empowering learners** and designing a truly learner-centred system.
2. **Strengthening communities** as drivers of change.
3. **Harnessing digital technologies** as enablers of innovation and connection.
4. **Redefining success** through more holistic and future-focused measures.
5. **Making change real in practice**, drawing on examples of effective leadership and reform.

These themes became touchstones for the rich exchanges that followed. We heard diverse perspectives, engaged with international exemplars, and tested ideas against our own

local contexts. Importantly, the conference was not only about imagining possibilities but about fostering agency - encouraging educators and leaders to see themselves as active participants in shaping the future rather than passive recipients of policy.

These themes reveal a coherent vision for educational transformation grounded in authentic relationships, systemic change, and holistic approaches to learning and development. The centrality of vision, purpose, values and narrative to the transformation effort was referenced throughout the convening.

Central to this vision is the imperative to honour our Treaty of Waitangi obligations and work in true partnership with iwi and Māori groups, while actively dismantling colonial structures that continue to privilege coloniser worldviews and systematically disadvantage tangata whenua (people of the land). The transformation requires moving from compliance-driven to relationship-centred approaches, from deficit to strengths-based thinking, and from centralised to community-led innovation.

The pages that follow capture the key insights, conversations, and provocations from this shared journey. They do not present a single, finished model of transformation, but rather a collective sense of direction - a recognition that change is urgent, that it must be systemic, and that it requires collaboration across sectors and communities.

This report is therefore both a record and an invitation: a record of the themes and learnings that emerged, and an invitation to continue the work of building an education system that is equitable, future-focused, and alive with possibility for every learner.



PROGAMME OVERVIEW

EdRising was conceived as more than just another education gathering—it was designed as a *catalyst* for change. Over two days in July 2025, educators, community leaders, government representatives, and international experts came together with a shared commitment: to re-imagine education in Aotearoa New Zealand and work toward a future where every learner thrives, supported by a system that is fit for purpose in the modern world and beyond.

At its heart, EdRising was about **collaboration**—not creating a new organisation, but nurturing a movement. By bringing together diverse voices, the conference sought to lift our collective horizon: to look beyond remediation of current problems, and instead imagine bold, aspirational futures for “horizon 3” schools and systems.

Conference Structure

The programme blended inspiration with participation:

- **Key provocations:** Each of the major themes was introduced through short, sharp presentations from two global thought leaders.
- **Local connection:** Their insights were grounded in the New Zealand context through responses from innovative educators leading change in their own communities.
- **Collective processing:** Participants then engaged in facilitated discussions, enabling them to connect global ideas with local realities and begin shaping pathways for transformation.
- **Leadership focus:** The theme of leading for transformation wove through the event, anchoring conversations in the dispositions and strategies required for meaningful change.

This structure ensured that delegates not only heard from world-class thinkers but also had the chance to test, reflect, and co-construct ideas in community.

Convening Themes

Five central themes framed the conversations and guided our collective exploration:

1. **Leading for Equity and Agency** – empowering learners, educators, and communities to drive change.
2. **Community-Led Transformation** – strengthening ecosystems of support and innovation from the ground up.
3. **Digital Futures** – navigating the opportunities and risks of AI and digital citizenship.
4. **Redefining Success** – broadening our measures of achievement to reflect future-focused capabilities.
5. **Leading for Transformation** – exploring the dispositions, strategies, and theories of action leaders need for courageous change.

Together, these themes provided a scaffold for futures-thinking, building a shared sense of aspiration and practical strategies for moving forward.

The pages that follow provide a detailed summary of what was covered and captured in each of the theme sessions, and concludes with a section outlining the steps delegates identified we could and should be taking to move things towards a transformed education system.



1: LEADING FOR EQUITY AND AGENCY

Overview

Leading for equity and agency is crucial in transforming education systems to create more student-centred, equitable learning environments. This approach focuses on empowering individuals to take greater ownership of their learning, and fostering collective efficacy to achieve learning goals. These are essential for driving meaningful change. Equity and agency operate in a powerful symbiotic relationship: equitable systems deliberately create conditions where all individuals can develop and meaningfully exercise their agency, while strengthened agency empowers diverse voices to advocate for and create more equitable practices. This mutual reinforcement creates a virtuous cycle that drives deeper systemic transformation.

Providing opportunities for students to engage with real-world and authentic learning experiences is an important part of this work. Collective efficacy, the shared belief in a group's ability to make a difference, amplifies this transformational potential. Embracing cultural values, especially Te Ao Māori, is key to quality teaching and learning for Māori students and supports them to experience success as Māori. This cultural recognition enhances the overall learning experience for all students, fostering a strong sense of identity and belonging while creating the conditions for transformative change that benefits both individuals and communities.

Provocations:

The focus for discussion in this session was centred on the following provocations:

"How might we redesign our educational structures to simultaneously value diversity, promote equity, and encourage both individual

and collective agency? What leadership approaches make this possible?"

"In what ways can cultural values and perspectives (particularly Te Ao Māori) transform our understanding of equity and agency in education, and what implications does this have for leadership practice?"

Speakers



Rhonda Broussard

Rhonda founded Beloved Community to create sustainable paths to regional racial and economic equity. Beloved Community works at the nexus of Equity in Schools where Rhonda has been a change-agent in diversity, equity, inclusion and international education throughout her career.



Hana O'Regan

Dr Hana O'Regan has worked in the areas of language revitalisation, identity and cultural development, te reo Māori, and education for over 25 years. She is a published author and composer and is recognised internationally for her work in indigenous language acquisition and revitalisation. Hana's passion for education,



community, history, and equity has resulted in a career committed to working with organisations, businesses, and individuals to support and enhance positive outcomes for learners and whānau.



Maxine Graham

A passionate advocate for the future of Aotearoa, Maxine has extensive experience in national and local government, iwi, tertiary education and community-focused organisations. She has governance experience and is currently a member of Te Arataura, the Executive Committee of Te Whakakitenga responsible for overseeing the day to day operations of Waikato Tainui. Maxine currently holds other governance roles on Māori wellbeing organisations in the Waikato, Tamaaki Makaurau and local education.

Session Summary

The opening session featured significant contributions from Rhonda Broussard, Maxine Graham, and Hana O'Regan, each providing unique perspectives grounded in their professional and personal experiences. The discussion was conducted in English, with frequent integration of te reo Māori, reflecting the bicultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Rhonda Broussard opened the substantive discussion by reflecting on her longstanding engagement with New Zealand's educational community, particularly recalling her initial visit to Wellington over a decade ago. She emphasised the enduring importance of community, relationality, and the global network of educational peers. Broussard articulated three central lines of inquiry regarding agency in

education: which students deserve to have their questions answered, which students have the right to inquiry-based pedagogy, and whose voices are honoured in policy advocacy. She highlighted the persistent inequities in access to inquiry-based learning, particularly for marginalised students, and critiqued the tendency of educational systems to restrict agency and inquiry to more privileged groups. Broussard illustrated these themes with practical examples from her career, including her leadership of a language immersion school network in the United States that integrated International Baccalaureate programmes. She described a pedagogical approach where students, even as young as eight, were encouraged to identify issues of personal significance, determine who held decision-making power, and develop advocacy campaigns—exemplified by a student-led initiative to gain access to school lockers, which involved fundraising and policy negotiation. This approach was positioned as a model for cultivating agency and bridging the gap to genuine power for young learners.

Rhonda recounted her collaboration with Dr. Maria Budd in Tennessee, where they piloted the Community Launch initiative. This programme trained intergenerational community members to evaluate charter school applications using locally developed rubrics, thereby reclaiming agency and influence over educational provision in communities historically disenfranchised by systemic inequities. She also referenced her current work with the Lubbock Community, training youth in participatory action research to move from inquiry to local policy advocacy, particularly around issues such as mental health and digital inclusion.

Maxine Graham, speaking from Waikato, provided a detailed account of her work with the National Iwi Chairs Forum and the Mātauranga Iwi Leaders Group (MILG). She contextualised her role within the broader kaupapa of Māori educational self-determination, noting the



complexities of representing 84 iwi and the ongoing challenge of increasing Māori participation in immersion education settings.

Maxine underscored the importance of whānau (family) voice, mana whenua (local authority), and the need for educational systems that enable self-determination and agency for Māori learners. She described the Forum's five-year strategic plan, which was developed through extensive consultation and feedback loops with whānau and iwi, and highlighted initiatives such as digital inclusion programmes in South Auckland, advocacy for increased learning support funding, and the Whakapapa Decisions campaign to increase Māori representation on school boards.

Maxine's narrative was interwoven with te reo Māori and concepts such as manaakitanga (hospitality), whanaungatanga (relationship), and kotahitanga (unity), reflecting the centrality of Māori values in her work. She emphasised the need for educational tools and system maps that demystify governance structures and empower whānau to navigate and influence the education system. Maxine also addressed the importance of recognising and supporting diverse pathways, including alternative provision for students for whom mainstream schooling is not suitable, and the ongoing work to document and share iwi education strategies and success stories.

Dr. Hana O'Regan adopted a more critical and provocative stance, focusing on the concept of equity within the context of coloniality. She challenged the audience to interrogate the foundational norms of the education system, which she argued are rooted in colonial ideologies that perpetuate inequity, marginalise indigenous knowledge, and reinforce hierarchical structures of power and knowledge. Drawing on the academic concept of coloniality, Hana distinguished between coloniality of power, knowledge, and being, and illustrated how these dynamics manifest in the privileging of Eurocentric curricula and the internalisation of

negative stereotypes by Māori learners.

Hana called for intentionality in designing future educational systems, advocating for a collective reckoning with historical injustices and a commitment to leaving behind structures and ideologies that perpetuate inequity. She warned against the recent corruption of the term "equity," which has been co-opted to resist affirmative initiatives and maintain privilege under the guise of equal treatment. Hana concluded by urging the development of an "equity consciousness" that is both culturally and socially attuned, and by emphasising the need for intergenerational commitment to transformative change.

The session concluded with acknowledgements of the speakers' contributions and a brief logistical note regarding the absence of a scheduled speaker, Carlos Moreno, due to a family emergency. The forum's discussions were characterised by a high level of professionalism, critical reflection, and a commitment to both systemic critique and practical innovation. The integration of Māori language and concepts throughout the session underscored the importance of cultural context and indigenous leadership in shaping the future of education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In summary, this session provided a rigorous, multi-layered exploration of equity and agency in education, grounded in both local and international perspectives. The speakers collectively advocated for educational systems that are responsive to community voice, culturally sustaining, and structurally transformative, with a clear recognition of the historical and ongoing challenges posed by coloniality and systemic inequity.



SUMMARY OF TABLE DISCUSSION

The Equity and Agency discussion engaged deeply with the systemic transformation needed to move education beyond compliance-driven approaches toward community-centred, culturally responsive practices. Participants recognised that achieving genuine equity and agency requires confronting embedded colonial structures while building new systems that honor diverse ways of knowing and being. The conversation highlighted the tension between maintaining current power structures and creating space for authentic community voice and self-determination.

Barriers and Roadblocks

The path to equity and agency faces entrenched systemic obstacles rooted in colonial knowledge systems. Embedded colonial perspectives permeate curriculum, assessment, and teaching practices, while inequitable power distribution at all system levels maintains existing hierarchies. A pervasive compliance culture prioritises conformity over innovation and risk-taking, exacerbated by education being used as a "political ping-pong ball" with frequent policy changes that undermine sustained transformation efforts.

Cultural and mindset challenges compound these structural barriers. Deeply embedded individualistic thinking conflicts with collective approaches essential for equity, while limited cultural consciousness restricts understanding of what genuine responsiveness requires. "Dinosaurs in the system" who benefit from current structures resist change, and confusion around terminology—with terms like "equity," "inclusion," and "inquiry" being misused or overused—obscures meaningful progress.

Communication failures perpetuate inequity through deficit messaging that "keeps kids down" and reinforces low self-efficacy. The crowded information environment makes transformative messages difficult to hear, while media misrepresentation through clickbait reporting demonises teachers and schools. False dichotomies create unnecessary either/or thinking, such as positioning inquiry learning against structured literacy, when integrated approaches are needed.

Resource constraints further limit progress. System overwhelm from too many inadequately supported initiatives stretches capacity thin, while funding limitations prevent meaningful transformation. Leadership gaps, particularly the lack of educational expertise in policy-making roles, combine with professional isolation to limit innovation networks and support systems.

Opportunities for Progress

Despite these barriers, participants identified significant opportunities for building genuine equity and agency. Community empowerment offers the most promising pathway forward through authentic partnerships between schools and communities, increased whānau engagement through relevant, community-specific projects, and enhanced student voice in classrooms and decision-making. Success redefined by communities in their own terms can drive meaningful transformation.

Professional and system innovation provides practical advancement opportunities. Learning communities can connect schools on similar transformation journeys, while local curriculum development creates truly responsive, culturally grounded education. Empowering teacher professional agency allows educators to act without constantly seeking permission, and developing case studies can document and share successful transformation models.



Narrative and cultural transformation presents powerful leverage points. Creating and sharing compelling stories about educational change, raising critical consciousness about inequities and their origins, and engaging proactively with media about successful innovations can shift public discourse. Intergenerational learning opportunities can create meaningful connections across age groups, building understanding and support for change.

Strategic positioning opportunities include building coalitions where schools work together as a "voice of reason," connecting with future-focused networks of like-minded educators and communities, and using technology to strengthen community connections. The current policy uncertainty, while challenging, also creates space to innovate and demonstrate alternative approaches.

Policy Recommendations

Realising equity and agency requires fundamental policy transformation beginning with foundational changes. Participants called for a 20-year cross-party agreement on educational transformation to end the political ping-pong dynamics that undermine sustained progress. Research-based policy development led by professional educators, combined with full-scale policy review to identify what perpetuates and normalises inequity, can create more responsive frameworks.

Governance must embrace genuine power sharing through inclusive decision-making that brings all stakeholders, including students, to policy tables. Community representation must ensure diverse voices in advisory groups, while local school autonomy supports school-based decision-making. Ecological thinking that considers the interplay between all system components can create more coherent policy frameworks.

Structural reforms should reimagine fundamental educational practices. Attendance policies must focus on relationships rather than rigid metrics, while assessment transforms from achievement-focused measures toward human flourishing indicators. Partnership redefinition requires authentic engagement with Māori and broader communities, supported by enhanced learning support across all sectors.

Implementation principles must guide policy application through clarity of purpose with articulated vision and theory of change. Strength-based approaches should build on existing successes rather than perpetuating deficit thinking, while differentiated support recognises that communities start at different points. Accountability alignment ensures schools are answerable for engagement, empowerment, and self-determination rather than narrow compliance measures.

The discussion revealed that leading for equity and agency demands courage to challenge colonial structures while building new systems that honour community voice, cultural responsiveness, and collective empowerment as foundations for educational transformation.



2: COMMUNITY LED TRANSFORMATION

Overview

Community-led transformation highlights the power of local communities as the driving force behind meaningful and sustainable change in education. Genuine community leadership goes beyond token consultation or occasional input—it places decision-making authority, resource control, and implementation responsibility directly in community hands. In practice, this might look like iwi-governed learning initiatives, parent-designed curriculum adaptations, or student-led school improvement projects where authority is authentically shared rather than merely delegated.

By building ecosystems where schools, families, and community organisations collaborate as equals, learning environments are created that deeply connect to the needs, aspirations, and cultural identities of the communities they serve. This approach recognises parents and community members not as passive recipients or occasional advisors but as active partners with legitimate expertise in the design, implementation, and sustainability of educational initiatives.

Importantly, community-led transformation extends its impact to the broader education system through grassroots advocacy, responsive governance, participatory decision-making, and community-based funding initiatives. This approach fosters culturally responsive practices, particularly important for indigenous communities like Māori in New Zealand, ensuring that cultural values such as Te Ao Māori are central to educational transformation.

By empowering communities to lead change, we create more accountable, transparent, and responsive education systems that drive long-term, systemic transformation, expanding

educational leadership and ensuring that reforms are sustainable beyond specific programs or funding cycles.

Provocations:

The focus for discussion in this session was centred on the following provocations:

- *What conditions and structures enable authentic community-led transformation where families, iwi, and local organisations are true decision-makers rather than just contributors or consultants?"*
- *"How can community-led approaches bridge cultural values and system requirements to create learning opportunities that are both locally relevant and systemically sustainable?"*

Speakers



Jeff Wetzler

Jeff is co-founder of Transcend, an organisation dedicated to the creation and proliferation of breakthrough school models. His passion for community-led transformation is a focus of *Extraordinary Learning for All*, a book he co-authored with colleagues from Transcend. Jeff is also a Hillary Fellow, and has spent time in New Zealand with that initiative.



Tony Monfiletto

Tony is Executive Director of the Instituto del Puente, the outward facing arm of FutureFocusedEducation. Over the years, he has been a leader in establishing the context for a new vision of high schools in his hometown of Albuquerque and across New Mexico. His broader vision is for schools to become assets that can make our communities healthier, more prosperous and just.



Barbara Ala'atoa

Former Principal and Chairperson of the Education Council, Barbara believes, "O le ala i le pule o le tautua" – The pathway to leadership is through service. A long term champion of equity, excellence and leadership, Barbara recently earned the NZ Order of Merit for her services to education.



Pam O'Connell

Pam O'Connell has worked internationally and nationally on many education panels, groups and projects. As a principal consultant, she partnered with Whanganui Iwi to co-design and implement an iwi-led education response in that rohe. Her strong interest in research, innovation, practice analysis, kaupapa Māori, capability

building and strategic action supports her role in leading research and evaluation design, innovation and quality assurance across service delivery, evaluation.

SESSION SUMMARY

This panel introduced "four really amazing stories," focusing initially on two international speakers whose work exemplifies community-driven change in education: Tony Monfiletto from New Mexico, USA, and Jeff Wetzler, co-founder of Transcend Education. Both were selected for their significant contributions to the field, with Tony's work on capstone projects and community engagement in New Mexico, and Jeff's leadership in research and development for innovative school design across the United States based on Transcend's work in numerous US states.

Tony Monfiletto provided a comprehensive account of his journey from policy analyst in New Mexico's 100% state-financed education system, where he was responsible for the state budget, to founder of Future Focused Education and its policy arm, Instituto del Puente. He described New Mexico's unique context, where despite 100% equalised funding and no local revenue determining student funding, educational outcomes remained highly inequitable.

Recognising that financial resources alone could not address these disparities, Tony shifted his focus, first becoming a teacher, then a school founder, establishing a network of five schools dedicated to serving young people off-track for graduation. Influenced by American academic Danielle Allen's theories on democratising the policy-making process (where students affected by policies should have a role in creating them), he and his team conducted extensive consultations across 13 diverse communities, gathering over 2,000 comments from students, particularly those struggling in school, through panel discussions where community members listened. Three core themes emerged



consistently across all regions, from the Navajo reservation to the oil patch: the need for learning with purpose and meaning, the importance of schools caring for student well-being, and the critical role of mentorship in preparing students to become successful adults and contributing citizens.

These findings informed four key policy initiatives: the establishment of a sustainable fund for paid internships that provide opportunities to connect with real-world contexts. These could be co-financed by employers and the state; the implementation of teen mental health first aid programmes, which include peer support and provide an early entry into behavioural health careers, addressing "behavioural health deserts" in many rural communities; the expansion of community-based, paid capstone projects specifically targeting students behind in school or at risk of disengagement, helping them get back on track to graduate; and the integration of capstones and internships as formal graduation pathways within new graduation requirements, aligned with a graduate profile reflecting community aspirations. Tony illustrated the impact of these initiatives with an example from the COVID-19 pandemic, where group internships addressing homelessness were built to combat dramatic attendance issues, providing both social-emotional support and meaningful, interdisciplinary learning experiences for students, many of whom were themselves homeless.

Jeff Wetzler, co-founder of Transcend, elaborated on the organisation's vision of enabling all young people to thrive in and transform the world through extraordinary education, viewing Transcend as an R&D engine for innovation in school design. He critiqued the persistence of outdated, industrial models of schooling prevalent in the US and globally, advocating for a "third way" of change - community-based design - which synthesises the strengths of both top-down (e.g., concentrating

expertise and resources) and grassroots (e.g., empowering young people, families, and educators) approaches. This iterative and ongoing process involves students, families, educators, administrators, experts, and community leaders collaboratively redefining educational objectives, learning experiences, and school design principles by asking questions like what is desired of graduates, what experiences are needed, what models inspire, and what trends require responsiveness.

Transcend's methodology emphasises both technical aspects, codified in a "blueprint of a school design" (including learning objectives, design principles, use of time, space, budget, content, assessment, pedagogy, educator roles, and community partnerships), and the cultivation of robust community conditions (including clarity of vision, conviction, coalition strength, a culture of trust and learning, and capacity building). The organisation employs validated tools, rubrics, and assessments, used non-judgmentally, to assess and strengthen these conditions, ensuring that design journeys are tailored to each community's starting point and proceed at a sustainable pace, "at the speed of conditions." Jeff stressed the importance of measuring both learning outcomes and student experiences, arguing that experiences are equally important as they drive outcomes and are an end in themselves, contrasting this with traditional reform's narrow focus on measurable outcomes.

Jeff advocated for the use of psychometrically validated student voice surveys to capture shifts in relevance, agency, community, and expectations. He concluded by identifying three ecosystem needs: more research-tested and refined models and design supports (to avoid communities starting from scratch), stronger evidence and insights (to demonstrate the benefits of these shifts), and a conducive policy and leadership environment (including supportive policies, state/national leaders, a knowledge base, leadership, and public discourse).



The discussion then shifted to New Zealand, with **Dr Pam O'Connell** presenting a case study from Whanganui, highlighting a project that is very community-based and deeply connected with the indigeneity of the place and its people. Pam underscored the significance of place and intergenerational connections in community-based education, particularly in relation to mana whenua. She described the creation of a "third space," or "treaty relationship space," where school and community identities intersect and are negotiated with mutual respect, allowing mana whenua to "just be who you are" and schools to operate according to their practices, with the middle space for negotiation. Pam highlighted the importance of narrative in shaping educational design, noting that understanding and integrating the language and perspectives of whānau (families) is essential for genuine agency and partnership. She explained they identified eight narratives, finding that Māori/whānau often knew what was happening but felt resigned. She emphasised the need for transparency, shared governance, and the use of "language magnetism," employing familiar language and the words of kids and teachers (e.g., explaining "streaming" or "ECM schools know our tamariki") to bridge cultural and institutional divides, drawing on recent work that foregrounds the voices of students and teachers in co-constructing educational meaning and "gifting back" data and insights.

Barbara A'la'atoa, another New Zealand educator, reflected on her 18-year tenure at Sylvia Park School, illustrating how policy frameworks like the "on-schooling strategy" and "standards for teaching professionals" can serve as enablers for community-led innovation rather than mere compliance tools, seeing them as "permission to breathe life into what that means." She described a curriculum deeply rooted in local context, where "the curriculum is the land" and "voice was the most powerful weapon," and student voice, with regular cycles of inquiry (and 'check-ins' every two weeks) and authentic, community-facing projects. These

projects, informed by learning about community matters, maramataka, national calendars, and global links, included election cycles, environmental actions, and developing grit, culminating every ten weeks in productions such as sculpture trails, art works, flash mob puppets, documentaries, video gaming awards, or civil defence exercises, ensuring "everything has to lead to them doing something." Barbara stressed the importance of sharing learning transparently with families through initiatives like Mutakaroa, which provided real-time, accessible information in a "language" and "context that was comfortable for them," fostering a sense of collective progress and guaranteeing learning progression. She concluded by advocating for optimism, defined as "finding opportunities, even tiny ones, to give yourself permission to do something amazing," and professional leadership grounded in deep knowledge, design thinking, and a commitment to scaling successful practices in a way that "doesn't make you vulnerable" and "builds knowledge."

In summary, the session provided a rich comparative analysis of community-led educational transformation, drawing on experiences from New Mexico and Aotearoa New Zealand. Key themes included the centrality of student and community voice, the integration of meaningful learning experiences, the importance of robust partnerships and shared governance, and the need for systemic supports that enable innovation to flourish. The presentations collectively challenged the notion of top-down reform, advocating instead for approaches that are deeply contextual, inclusive, and oriented towards both equity and agency.



SUMMARY OF TABLE DISCUSSIONS

The Community-Led Transformation discussion explored the critical shift from school-centric to community-centric educational approaches, revealing both significant challenges and promising pathways forward. Participants emphasised that genuine transformation requires moving beyond consultation to authentic partnership, where communities lead in proposing and implementing educational initiatives grounded in relationship-building and local context.

Barriers and Roadblocks

Participants felt the path to community-led transformation faces substantial obstacles across multiple dimensions. The sheer scale and complexity of educational transformation creates an overwhelming sense of "how do we eat an elephant?" with communities at varying levels of readiness and limited resources for genuine engagement. Time emerges as a critical constraint—authentic relationship-building demands significant investment that busy working parents and overstretched educators struggle to provide.

Systemic barriers compound these challenges. A pervasive "permission culture" stifles innovation, while overwhelming government mandates consume energy that could be directed toward community initiatives. Policy misalignment between central expectations and local needs creates tension, supported by curriculum structures that fail to accommodate relationship-focused learning approaches.

Professional capacity presents another hurdle. Many educators lack skills for authentic community engagement, with inexperienced leadership particularly challenged in building meaningful partnerships. Communication

breakdowns perpetuate the problem—educational jargon creates barriers, historical broken promises erode trust, and deficit-focused messaging reinforces power imbalances that position educators as the only one whose expertise counts, rather than collaborative partners.

Opportunities for Progress

Despite these challenges, participants identified compelling opportunities for meaningful advancement. Practical engagement strategies offer immediate pathways forward: termly whānau homework assignments can involve families in learning, schools can transform into community hubs serving broader needs, and capstone projects can provide authentic, community-connected assessment. Simple "gate conversations" can begin building the relationships that underpin deeper partnerships.

Professional transformation represents a key opportunity area. Teachers can evolve from curriculum deliverers to curriculum designers, developing skills in community listening and collaborative design. This shift requires accessible communication—sharing data and evidence in community-friendly formats, maintaining transparent dialogue, and focusing on curriculum richness rather than narrow compliance measures.

Innovation in curriculum and assessment opens further possibilities. Local curriculum design can meet specific community needs and aspirations, while place-based learning invests in local knowledge and context. Holistic assessment approaches and increased student agency can make education more relevant and engaging for learners and their communities.

Policy Recommendations

Realising community-led transformation requires fundamental policy shifts across multiple levels.



At the foundational level, participants called for bipartisan agreement on education direction to end policy volatility, mandatory community involvement in policy development, and clear frameworks defining successful community partnership. Curriculum partnership must become central to educational policy.

Professional development needs systematic reform. Initial teacher education should embed community partnership skills, while leadership development must build capability for authentic engagement. Adequate funding and ongoing support systems are essential for sustaining partnership practices.

Structural reforms should create permission to innovate rather than constrain educators. Policy must preserve anchor points that enable professional judgment and local adaptation, while providing resources for schools to become

genuine community centres that acknowledge the importance of local context.

Governance improvements include ensuring educational leadership possesses genuine educational knowledge, incorporating youth voice in policy development, and creating accountability structures where schools answer to the communities they serve. Finally, communication must be revolutionised through parent-friendly materials, accessible research, and frameworks that enable meaningful engagement between families and educators.

The discussion revealed that while community-led transformation faces significant barriers, clear pathways exist for progress through practical strategies, professional development, and supportive policy frameworks that prioritise relationships and local context in educational decision-making.





3: DIGITAL FUTURES



Overview

The Digital Futures theme focuses on the rapidly evolving landscape of technology in education, particularly the increase of virtual and online education, and the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and its implications for teaching and learning. Digital technologies are not merely enhancing traditional educational approaches—they're fundamentally transforming what's possible in teaching and learning by creating entirely new modes of knowledge creation, collaboration, and personalisation that were previously unimaginable.

This theme addresses the critical need to develop digital citizens who are not only prepared for the digital world but can also thrive in it. It emphasises the importance of digital literacy as a core competency for students and educators alike, while recognizing that the most powerful educational experiences emerge when technological innovation is balanced with meaningful human connection. The challenge is not choosing between technology and human relationships, but thoughtfully integrating digital tools in ways that deepen rather than diminish our connections with one another.

In this era of technological advancement, there's a pressing need for schools and educators to embrace the transformative potential of digital technologies while maintaining the interpersonal foundations of effective teaching and learning. This includes leveraging virtual education opportunities to improve access for learners, regardless of their geographical location or personal circumstances, while ensuring these digital spaces foster genuine community and connection.

By focusing on Digital Futures, our aim is to understand how digital technologies can fundamentally reshape education while equipping learners with the skills to navigate the digital landscape critically and creatively. This approach seeks to bridge the digital divide, transform learning experiences, and prepare students for a future where digital competence and human connection are equally integral to personal and professional success.

Provocations:

The focus for discussion in this session was centred on the following provocations:

- *"How can we leverage AI and emerging technologies to fundamentally transform educational experiences while ensuring equity of access, strengthening human connections, and developing critical digital citizenship?"*
- *"What balance of virtual and in-person learning creates the most resilient and accessible education system for all learners, and how might this vary across different communities and contexts?"*



Presenters



Ian Zhu

Ian Zhu is an inclusive education innovator. He is the co-founder and CEO of SchoolJoy, an AI-powered education management platform. The platform supports schools by reducing busy work while improving student outcomes and bringing much-needed relief to teachers and administrators across the country.



Michael Barbour

Michael is Professor of Instructional Design and Director of Faculty Development for the College of Education & Health Services, Touro University California. He has been involved with K-12 online learning in a variety of countries for well over a decade as a researcher, teacher, course designer and administrator. Michael's research focuses on the effective design, delivery and support of K-12 online learning, particularly for students located in rural jurisdictions.



Sandy Brown

Sandy is Chief Government Affairs Officer at Network for Learning. He creates teams and systems to innovate and deliver new ideas,

systems and strategies. He thrives in complex, ambiguous environments, and works best moving across boundaries: from public to private; from the centre to the margins; from ideas to execution.



Te Rina Leonard

Te Rina is chief executive of the country's biggest school, Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu, formerly the Correspondence School. She is unashamedly optimistic about the potential of people, especially young people, to create powerful positive change in our world. Te Rina says "I love working with other people to challenge the status-quo and create alternative ways of seeing and being in the world that leads to a collective improvement for all."

Session Summary

The speakers in this theme presented a comprehensive exploration of the integration of technology, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), within the New Zealand education system, drawing on the perspectives and expertise of several key stakeholders. The discussion was anchored by Derek, who framed the session by highlighting the urgency and complexity of adopting new technologies in education, especially given limited time and resources. Derek identified two primary focal points: the opportunities and challenges presented by AI, and the evolution of virtual and online learning, both of which have been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Derek referenced a recent initiative involving a chatbot, developed by one of the presenters, which engaged approximately 80 participants and provided valuable feedback for ongoing research, with its creator being one of the



presenters. He also noted the involvement of Sandy Brown from N4L (Network for Learning), who commissioned research specifically around AI to establish a strategic roadmap for its integration into the New Zealand education system, addressing the current lack of direction in several educational domains.

The conversation transitioned to Ian Zhu, based in Silicon Valley and founder of SchoolJoy, who provides a detailed analysis of AI's current and potential roles in education. Ian Zhu emphasised that while AI is often used to expedite traditional pedagogical processes, true transformation requires leveraging AI to fundamentally reshape educational experiences. He outlines the progression from substitution and augmentation to genuine transformation, cautioning that technology should not merely replicate existing practices but should enable new forms of learning and connection.

Ian Zhu introduced the concept of generative AI, which uses text prompts to generate text, media (images, video), code, websites, and human software, with a particular focus on voice AI, allowing real-time conversational interactions with AI agents. He underscores the importance of robust privacy and security measures, ensuring no identifiable student data is exposed to AI models, information is scrubbed, end-to-end encryption is used for voice data, and strict protocols govern AI interactions, preventing access to unrestricted web content. Ian illustrates practical applications of voice AI, such as a companion for learning to use ChatGPT, competency-based interviews, and simulated patient interactions for nursing students. He also highlighted its potential as a coaching tool for educators, serving as an innovation and implementation coach, enabling practice of instruction delivery, and assisting with high-stakes conversations like teacher-parent conferences. He demonstrated an AI Ethics Debate simulation, which explores the societal implications of hyper-realistic voice AI, balancing the opportunities for skill development against risks such as deception and misinformation. Ian advocates for strong regulatory guardrails while

recognising the transformative educational benefits of these technologies.

Michael Barbour offered a systemic perspective on the evolution of distance and virtual learning in New Zealand. He traced the historical development from Te Kura's over century-long legacy to the 30-year history of Virtual Learning Networks and the five years of disruption experienced from COVID-19. Michael critiques the persistence of traditional educational structures and language, even amidst technological disruption, and calls for a reimagining of the educational ecosystem. Drawing an analogy to the health sector's use of unique National Health Index (NHI) numbers, Michael proposed a model where each student is assigned a singular, sacrosanct identification number, unlike the current inconsistent Ministry IDs, enabling personalised, lifelong learning pathways that transcend institutional boundaries. In this model, the teacher's role shifts from content delivery to that of facilitator, coordinator, assessor, and in some cases, traditional teacher, supporting student agency and choice. Michael identified funding mechanisms as a significant barrier to this vision, noting that current 'all or nothing' systems are rigidly tied to institutional enrolment rather than individual learning trajectories, hindering student-led learning choices.

Te Rina Leonard, representing Te Kura, provided practical insights into the implementation of flexible, resilient education models. She reported that in 2024, Te Kura served close to 10,000 full-time young adult students and nearly reached 31,000 overall, with significant regional expansion since 2013. Te Rina emphasised the importance of diverse learning modalities, including sophisticated online, recorded, and community-based experiences, tailored to individual student needs and preferences, embodying the principle of 'anyone anytime anywhere'. She highlighted Te Kura's commitment to equity, providing digital devices and connectivity to students who lack resources, and supporting learners in challenging circumstances, such as those affected by



conflict in Ukraine or natural disasters like Cyclone Gabrielle. Te Rina advocated for a learner-centred approach that prioritises real-world engagement, recognising the importance of personal relationships and psychological support, and fostering resilience and adaptability.

Sandy Brown from N4L concluded by addressing the infrastructural and policy challenges of scaling digital education. He outlined N4L's role in providing secure, standardised connectivity to all New Zealand schools, with every school sitting on their network. N4L manages significant cybersecurity threats, blocking approximately 50 million cyber security incidents annually and filtering 70% of a billion emails as spam, while also ensuring equitable access to technology. Sandy stressed the necessity of centralised procurement and management to achieve economies of scale and maintain high standards of security and reliability, particularly in regions

lacking technical expertise. He raised critical questions about how to balance centralised and community-based approaches, maintain agency, and structure the system to leverage digital futures effectively while maintaining social cost efficiency.

In summary, the session highlighted the multifaceted challenges and opportunities associated with integrating AI and digital technologies into New Zealand's education system. The discussion underscored the need for strategic vision, robust infrastructure, regulatory safeguards, and a fundamental shift towards learner-centred, flexible, and equitable educational models. The perspectives offered by the participants collectively advocated for a future-oriented approach that harnesses technology to enhance human connection, foster innovation, and ensure that all learners have the opportunity to thrive.

SUMMARY OF TABLE DISCUSSIONS

The Digital Futures discussion addressed the urgent need to thoughtfully integrate artificial intelligence and virtual learning technologies while maintaining educational equity and human connection. Participants recognized that rapid technological change presents both transformative potential and significant risks, requiring purposeful implementation with robust guardrails and a clear vision that prioritizes human flourishing over technological adoption for its own sake. The conversation emphasised moving beyond applying new technology to serve old educational models toward genuine transformation of teaching and learning.

Barriers and Roadblocks

Digital transformation faces substantial systemic obstacles beginning with inadequate funding for technology infrastructure and meaningful professional development. Traditional school structures, particularly rigid timetables and subject-based compartmentalization in secondary schools, were seen as incompatible with flexible digital learning approaches. Self-governing school systems create further barriers through "patch protection," where institutions resist collaborative innovation to maintain competitive advantages.



Knowledge and capability gaps compound these structural challenges. Teachers lack sufficient training and support for AI and digital integration, while educational leaders demonstrate limited systems thinking about digital transformation. A significant policy vacuum exists around emerging technology implementation, compounded by inadequate professional development opportunities for meaningful upskilling across the education workforce.

Cultural and mindset barriers create resistance from unexpected quarters. Fixed mindsets appear among both digitally native learners and traditional educators, accompanied by anxiety about rapid technological change and its implications.

Equity and access concerns present fundamental challenges to inclusive digital futures. The digital divide creates unequal access to technology and high-speed internet, while AI systems often fail to reflect diverse perspectives and values. Safety and privacy concerns about data security and student protection are compounded when parents feel excluded from digital learning conversations, creating barriers to necessary whānau engagement.

Assessment and qualification systems struggle to adapt to digital realities. University entrance expectations maintain pressure for traditional assessment methods, while conflicting messages about NCEA's online versus exam-based assessment create uncertainty. Recognition systems struggle to validate virtual and AI-assisted learning, and professional standards frameworks for digital competency remain underdeveloped.

Environmental and ethical concerns add complexity to implementation decisions. The significant climate impact of AI systems and data centres conflicts with sustainability goals, while questions arise about whether AI can genuinely uphold Te Tiriti and indigenous values. Deeper concerns about technology potentially replacing

human connection and creativity highlight the need for ethical implementation that serves educational rather than purely commercial interests.

Opportunities for Progress

Despite these barriers, digital futures offer compelling opportunities for educational enhancement. Personalised learning represents the most immediate benefit, with AI enabling truly individualised learning pathways and adaptive assessment that adjusts to student needs in real-time. Virtual learning creates flexible scheduling for anytime, anywhere access, while digital tools accommodate diverse learning styles more effectively than traditional approaches.

Professional practice transformation presents significant opportunities for educators. AI can handle routine administrative tasks, freeing teachers for meaningful human interaction, while providing sophisticated support for curriculum design and resource development. Virtual networks enable new forms of teacher collaboration and professional learning, with AI tools supporting critical reflection and professional growth in ways previously impossible.

System-level innovation shows promising scalability, with virtual platforms already reaching over 30,000 learners through initiatives like Te Kura and VLN. Collaborative networks allow schools to share resources and expertise digitally, while dual enrolment enables students to access specialised courses from multiple institutions. These approaches create economies of scale particularly beneficial for small schools and niche subjects.

Assessment and curriculum revolution becomes possible through authentic digital portfolios and real-world problem-solving approaches. The shift from content delivery to competency development aligns with digital capabilities,



while technology enables diverse ways to demonstrate learning through creative expression. Continuous evaluation can replace high-stakes testing with ongoing, meaningful assessment.

Community and whānau engagement can be strengthened through transparent digital communication platforms that improve school-home connections. Shared learning experiences where families learn alongside students about technology, combined with digital consultation and feedback systems, create new partnership opportunities. AI systems trained on local community knowledge and values can honour cultural contexts while expanding access.

Global connectivity opens unprecedented opportunities for international collaboration, enabling students to connect with peers worldwide and work on authentic global challenges. Virtual learning breaks down geographical barriers for cultural exchange while preparing students for digitally integrated workplaces that define their futures.

Policy Recommendations

Realising digital futures potential requires comprehensive policy transformation beginning with foundational framework development. A national digital strategy must connect AI, virtual learning, and educational transformation within a coherent vision. Clear ethical guidelines for responsible AI use in education, robust privacy and security policies developed with student and whānau voice, and environmental standards for educational technology can provide necessary guardrails.

System-level support demands coordinated government leadership of digital transformation across education, with adequate funding for infrastructure, training, and ongoing support. Systematic professional development for teachers and leaders must be supported by collective advisory groups including students,

educators, and technologists to ensure grounded decision-making.

Equity and access assurance requires deliberate policy intervention to ensure all students access necessary technology regardless of background. AI systems must reflect New Zealand's diverse communities through cultural responsiveness requirements, while comprehensive safety frameworks protect young learners online. Programmes helping families engage with digital learning can bridge the digital divide at the community level.

Assessment and qualification reform must modernise NCEA to integrate digital assessment and recognise virtual learning, while creating flexible qualification routes using technology. New frameworks for digital literacy and AI fluency, aligned with university recognition of digital learning, can create coherent pathways for students.

Research and development infrastructure should establish innovation hubs for educational technology research and development, with systematic impact measurement of AI and virtual learning effectiveness. Platforms for scaling successful digital innovations, supported by international collaboration to learn from global advances, can accelerate beneficial transformation while avoiding predictable pitfalls.

The discussion revealed that digital futures in education demand thoughtful integration that serves human flourishing through technology rather than allowing technology to drive educational purposes, requiring coordinated policy, professional development, and community engagement to realise transformative potential while maintaining equity and connection.



4: REDEFINING SUCCESS

This theme focuses on recognising and nurturing a broader set of future-enabling capabilities beyond traditional knowledge-based metrics. It emphasises the need for education systems to evolve, incorporating diverse forms of assessment that capture the full spectrum of student growth and achievement. Such as shift involves practical challenges of transitioning from established success metrics to more holistic ones. One specific challenge will be allaying the concerns of stakeholders who value traditional measures.

This approach aligns with research-backed frameworks that integrate academic knowledge, cognitive skills, and social-emotional capacities. It also resonates with the OECD's Future of Education and Skills 2030 project, which aims to equip students with competencies to tackle unforeseen societal challenges and use yet-to-be-invented technologies.

By embracing alternative assessment tools and methods such as micro-credentials, rubrics, and progressions, we can move beyond one-size-fits-all testing and exams. This shift allows for a more personalised, nuanced and comprehensive evaluation of student capabilities, including critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and innovation. It also includes building rich portfolios of evidence that showcase learning across all aspects of life to support a more holistic view of student development and success.

Provocations:

The focus for discussion in this session was centred on the following provocations:

- *"How might we create assessment systems that honour both traditional*

academic measures and future-enabling capabilities while remaining equitable, accessible, and meaningful for all learners?"

- *"What processes could involve students, parents, iwi, and communities in co-creating definitions of success that reflect diverse cultural values and aspirations while maintaining educational rigour?"*

Presenters



Sandra Milligan

Sandra is Executive Director of Melbourne Metrics at the Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne. She directs several research partnerships with school networks and organisations working to develop Learner Profiles for their students. She is lead author of 'Future Proofing Australian Students with New Credentials' report, outlining methods to reliably assess and recognise the level of attainment of general capabilities.



Bill Lucas

Bill is Professor of Learning and Director of the Centre for Real-World Learning, University of Winchester. He is a researcher, writer and



educational thought-leader. His model of creativity is now in use in more than 20 countries across the world. Bill is co-chair of the new PISA 2022 Test of Creative Thinking and co-author of the recent Durham Commission Report on Creativity and Education.



Sarah Martin

Sarah is Principal at Stonefields School. She is an educational 'provocateur' who thrives on problem-solving, conceptualising solutions, developing and implementing strategy, maintaining change momentum, building individuals' and team capacity, and challenging teachers' and leaders' mindsets and thinking. As an experienced school leader, she has significant expertise to draw upon, and a strong desire to improve outcomes for all.

SESSION SUMMARY

This session brought together multiple international voices - including representatives from New Zealand, Australia, England, and beyond - to discuss the evolving nature of assessment in education and the urgent need for systemic reform.

Bill Lucas from the UK, whose extensive remarks framed the session, opened by presenting a historical and conceptual overview of assessment practices, emphasising that current approaches rooted in traditional examinations are increasingly inadequate for capturing the full range of learner capabilities. Bill argued that a shift to an expansive education model is

imperative, one that situates the learner at the centre of a local, place-based, and globally interconnected ecosystem. He highlighted transformative trends in formative assessment, strength-based approaches, and the incorporation of digital tools such as learner profiles and digital badges in systems across New Zealand, Scotland, and Australia. Bill also underscored the challenge of embedding creative and critical thinking alongside traditional academic competencies, noting the critical role of teacher assessment literacy and the persistent gap between policy ideals and classroom realities.

Sandra Milligan then contributed a complementary perspective, drawing on her extensive experience in the Australian educational context. Speaking from South Australia, she detailed initiatives that emerged from collaborations among schools to address the constraints of standardised testing. Sandra described innovative work with transferable learning competencies, stressing that formative, teacher-led assessment programs are most effective when rooted in the everyday practices of schools. She presented examples of assessment frameworks that encapsulate social, intellectual, and practical skills - including reading, writing, creative thinking, and collaboration - all supported by digital platforms. The discussion addressed the development of metrics that are robust enough to be adopted at departmental, school, network, or system levels. Sandra's account included specific case studies and technological interventions, such as a learner self-report tool currently being piloted in Scotland alongside projects in Australia that leverage digital badges and real-time dashboards to capture student progress and engagement.

Further enriching the dialogue, **Sarah Martin**, principal at Stonefield School, reflected on her personal journey that began with school failure due to traditional testing regimes. Sarah advanced the discussion by emphasising the need for assessments that do no harm. She



stressed that the prevailing examination system often produces a narrow and detrimental view of student success. Drawing on her own experiences as well as collaborative work with multiple schools, she detailed how her institution is developing innovative, strength-based assessment tools.



These include systems such as the Kōtahi Whānau tool—designed to measure parent engagement and partnership—and engagement sliders that promptly record student feedback. Through the use of real-time data visualisation via dashboards and a commitment to continuous improvement, Stonefield School's initiatives seek to create a more holistic picture of students' progress. Sarah underscored that these approaches are not intended for political accountability but rather to empower learners to

understand and take charge of their educational journeys.

During the question-and-answer session, participants raised important issues concerning consistency and fairness at the community level. Both Bill and Sandra affirmed that assessment frameworks could indeed be adapted to entire community clusters (such as the New Zealand construct of Kahui Ako), provided that stable leadership and consistent professional learning are established within schools. The discussion also touched on bridging the divide between progressive and traditionalist perspectives, with an urging to harness AI in a manner that enhances formative practice rather than replacing human judgement.

Overall, the session served as a robust forum for reimagining assessment. The speakers collectively argued for a system that integrates formative assessment, digital innovation, and teacher professional learning to produce educational outcomes that truly reflect the strengths, creativity, and holistic capabilities of all learners. The discourse emphasised that change must be driven from the grassroots—by practitioners and schools—instead of relying exclusively on top-down policy initiatives. This comprehensive, internationally informed dialogue lays a solid foundation for ongoing collaborative efforts to reform educational assessment for the challenges of the twenty-first century.



SUMMARY OF THE TABLE DISCUSSION

The discussions around rethinking success revealed a complex landscape where educators and stakeholders recognize the urgent need to redefine achievement beyond traditional academic measures while confronting significant systemic barriers. Participants identified a fundamental tension between educational values and assessment practices, highlighting the disconnect between what schools truly value—creativity, collaboration, and human skills—and what assessment systems actually measure. The conversation centred on transformative opportunities for learner agency, community engagement, and holistic development that honour diverse definitions of success and capability.

Barriers and Roadblocks

The path to redefining success faces entrenched systemic obstacles rooted in assessment architecture limitations. Nationally available assessment tools are not only limited but sometimes actively damaging to student wellbeing and learning. NCEA entry requirements maintain traditional measures despite many students not pursuing higher education, while siloed development approaches create assessment systems that lack ecosystem-informed perspectives. University entrance expectations perpetuate narrow definitions of success, compounded by fundamental disconnects between different levels of the education system that undermine trust and coherent reform efforts.

Knowledge and capability barriers constrain progress significantly. Limited professional development leaves teachers and leaders with insufficient assessment capability, while the absence of shared vocabulary prevents meaningful cross-setting communication about

alternative approaches to success. Teachers lack expertise in innovative assessment methods, and inadequate contextualized assessment resources limit implementation of more holistic approaches.

Cultural and community barriers create additional resistance to change. Political agendas generate noise and distraction from educational priorities, with communities often influenced by political rather than educational readings of success. English-medium dominated policy creates limited accessibility for assessment tools in Te Reo Māori and other languages, while narrow political focus on international rankings overshadows broader measures of student flourishing. Fear of change reinforces attachment to traditional practices even when they fail to serve student needs.

The values-practice disconnect presents perhaps the most significant challenge. Schools genuinely value creativity and human skills but operate within assessment systems that prioritise traditional STEM subjects and standardised measures. Students internalise narrow academic metrics as definitions of their worth and capability, while false binary thinking creates artificial divisions between traditional and progressive approaches. Limited language accessibility compounds these issues, restricting opportunities for culturally responsive assessment.

Capacity and resource barriers further constrain transformation efforts. The lack of real-time reporting software limits technological infrastructure for innovative assessment, while time-intensive requirements of meaningful assessment approaches strain already stretched educators. Resource limitations prevent development of contextualised tools, and changing leadership personnel creates instability that undermines consistent implementation of assessment reforms.



External pressures create additional constraints through public accountability systems that limit innovative approaches and political accountability that constrains educational innovation. The narrow focus on international rankings reflects a reductive political view of success that ignores the diverse capabilities and aspirations of learners and communities.

Opportunities for Progress

Despite these barriers, significant opportunities exist for meaningful progress toward redefined success. Immediate implementation opportunities include developing collective efficacy by uniting stakeholder voices for coordinated action and utilising existing frameworks and metrics as starting points for broader change. Successful models like Stonefield School approaches offer proven examples for scaling, while digital portfolio tools provide technological leverage for evidence collection. Resource-sharing networks can create collaborative platforms for sharing assessment innovations across schools and communities.

Systemic innovation opportunities centre on developing common language and architecture for assessment that moves beyond traditional limitations. Network collaboration can build shared metrics and approaches while implementing real-time, contextual assessment that responds to student needs. Graduate profile development offers pathways for creating inclusive frameworks that capture diverse capabilities, supported by sustained advocacy for assessment reform beyond standardised requirements.

Community-centred transformation presents the most promising pathway for sustainable change. Enhancing student agency in assessment processes empowers learners to define and demonstrate their own success, while broader community engagement involving public services, libraries, and museums expands

possibilities for authentic assessment. Co-created frameworks developed with schools and communities can ensure local relevance, while strengths-based approaches implement appreciative, asset-focused methods. Meaningful parent and whānau involvement enables families to participate in defining success for their children.

Professional development and capacity building create foundation opportunities through comprehensive assessment literacy programs that develop teacher and leader capabilities. Data literacy enhancement builds skills for interpreting and using assessment information effectively, while cultural responsiveness training supports indigenous models and broadens language accessibility. Leadership development focused on systems thinking and change management capabilities can drive sustainable transformation.

Policy and system reform opportunities include implementing flexible reporting systems that capture whole-person development and creating alternative pathways that don't rely solely on traditional metrics. Cultural responsiveness support can enable contextualised, locally relevant tools, while adequate resource investment in real-time assessment technologies provides necessary infrastructure.

Policy Recommendations

Realising redefined success requires comprehensive policy transformation beginning with assessment reform frameworks that move beyond standardised requirements toward contextualised, culturally responsive tools. Flexible reporting systems must capture whole-person development rather than narrow academic measures, while alternative success pathways establish routes that honour diverse capabilities and aspirations. Investment in indigenous assessment models can support authentic cultural responsiveness.



System support and coordination demand systematic professional development investment for assessment and data literacy, supported by real-time technology resources that enable innovative approaches. Language accessibility must be broadened across different languages and cultural contexts, while policy-values alignment ensures that frameworks reflect genuine educational values rather than political agendas. Improved cross-system coordination can build trust and coherence between different levels of the education system.

Community engagement and participation require enabling parent and whānau involvement in defining success metrics for their children and communities. Assessment transparency creates openness in processes and criteria, while support for local variation allows community-specific approaches within common frameworks. Cultural value recognition acknowledges diverse definitions of success, supported by genuine

community co-creation of assessment frameworks.

Professional development and capacity building must provide comprehensive training for teachers and leaders in assessment capability, combined with data literacy programs that develop skills for meaningful interpretation and use of assessment information. Cultural competency training in responsive assessment practices, leadership development focused on systems thinking, and network learning communities can create sustainable capacity for ongoing innovation.

The discussion revealed that rethinking success demands courage to challenge entrenched systems while building new approaches that honour diverse definitions of capability, achievement, and human flourishing within educational contexts that serve all learners and their communities.





5: LEADING FOR TRANSFORMATION

Overview

Leading for transformation requires educational leaders with the mindset and disposition to act as systems thinkers, and to recognise that their decisions, at any level of the system, have ripple effects across schools, communities, and the broader education system. This theme emphasises the concept of "leading from the middle," a deliberate strategy that bridges top-down and bottom-up approaches to change. Leaders operating in the "middle"—whether as school leaders, middle managers, or district-level influencers—play a pivotal role in connecting policy with practice, aligning system priorities with local needs, and fostering coherence across all levels of education.

This approach highlights the importance of relational trust, collaboration, and shared ownership in driving transformational change. By balancing leadership within schools and at the system level, leaders can ensure that their efforts support learners, teachers, and schools in meaningful ways. Leading from the middle also emphasises culturally responsive practices and inclusive leadership, particularly in contexts like New Zealand, where honouring Te Tiriti and other cultural frameworks is essential to creating equitable and sustainable systems of learning.

This theme set the scene for participants to explore how to develop personal dispositions, strategies, and theories of action that enable them to lead transformational change while navigating the complexities of their own contexts. This theme encouraged leaders to reflect on their influence across levels of the system and identify actionable ways to ensure alignment between their leadership practices and the ultimate goal of supporting all learners.

Provocations:

The focus for discussion in this session was centred on the following provocations:

- *"How can educational leaders effectively 'lead from the middle' to drive transformation while balancing system requirements, local needs, and diverse cultural perspectives?"*
- *"What specific leadership practices build the relational trust necessary for transformational change, and how do these practices shift when working with different stakeholders across the system?"*

Presenters



Martin Westwell

Martin is Chief Executive of the Department of Education, South Australia. He has worked extensively with education systems and other organisations in using evidence to inform policy, practice, innovation and impact in education. In 2018, Martin received the prestigious Australian Council for Educational Leaders' (ACEL) Gold Medal, awarded for the most outstanding contribution to the study and practice of educational administration and leadership.



George Philhower

George is the Eastern Hancock Schools Superintendent in Indiana. George is driven by a vision where every student and staff member wakes up eager to go to school each day. He believes this is possible when everyone feels safe and valued, has opportunities for success, engages in meaningful work, plays and learns with friends, and is supported by caring adults. He is currently working on an innovative plan to create a state-wide connection of micro-schools in Indiana.



Maurie Abraham

Maurie has recently retired from his role, after 10 years, as Foundation Principal at Hobsonville Point Secondary School. He is now supporting leaders to have a strong moral purpose and to have the personal courage to see and take opportunities to transform their schools. By being warm and demanding these leaders will champion student agency, wellbeing, equity and strong relationships in environments where powerful learning occurs and where staff and students thrive.



Dale Bailey

Dale brings a wealth of perspective from his diverse roles shaping the lives of young New Zealanders. As Tumu Whakarae | CEO for Te Uru Amokura Springboard Trust, his unwavering commitment to high-quality, lifelong learning across Aotearoa has transformed countless educational journeys. Recently honoured with an MNZM for his outstanding contributions, Dale demonstrates how visionary leadership can elevate education from merely adequate to truly exceptional.

SESSION SUMMARY

The session focused on the future of educational leadership and transformational change, featuring contributions from international and local experts. **Martin Westwell**, Chief Executive of the Department for Education in South Australia, provided a comprehensive overview of systemic transformation within his jurisdiction. He emphasised the necessity of clear strategic choices, noting that while many initiatives may be valuable, prioritisation is essential due to limited capacity. Martin highlighted the importance of shared inspiration among staff, students, and families, advocating for authentic engagement with stakeholders, particularly students, whose voices were central to shaping the system's direction.

Over 12,000 South Australians, including students from diverse regions, contributed to the development of a purpose-driven strategy focused on equity, excellence, well-being, and the cultivation of effective learners. Martin underscored the need for a balance between system-wide coherence and local flexibility,



enabling schools to adapt to their unique contexts while maintaining alignment with overarching goals. He also addressed the integration of indigenous voices, specifically referencing agreements with the Anangu people of Central Australia, and the recognition of cultural learning within the education system as a means of advancing equity.

Dr. George Philhower, Superintendent at Eastern Hancock School District in Indiana, USA, discussed the barriers to transformational change, particularly the “curse of knowledge,” where leaders assume shared understanding that does not exist. He introduced a framework based on four core promises: joy, connection, growth, and success. George described intentional practices to foster joy and connection, such as district-wide celebrations and the creation of magical moments for students. He detailed the district’s shift towards growth-oriented teacher evaluation and the establishment of the Indiana Microschool Collaborative, a publicly funded, statewide initiative enabling the creation of micro-schools in non-traditional settings. This initiative aims to reimagine education by building new learning environments from the ground up, with multi-age classrooms and innovative pedagogies, supported by partnerships with organisations like Getting Smart.

Local perspectives were provided by **Dale Bailey**, representing Tu Uru a Makura Springboard Trust, and **Maurie Abraham**, who reflected on his experiences at Hobsonville Point Secondary School.

Dale highlighted the challenges of performative politics and the need for strategic leadership at the school level, advocating for curiosity, the incorporation of wider perspectives, goal simplification, and evidence-based progress. He stressed the importance of moral purpose and the necessity of change to address persistent inequities in the system, referencing the enduring challenges of Māori and Pasifika achievement,

remote and low-income communities, and emerging issues such as neurodiversity and student well-being.

Maurie reinforced the centrality of purpose, values, and beliefs in driving transformation, drawing on both international and local thought leaders. He described Hobsonville Point’s dual pathways of academic and personal excellence, the development of “Hobsonville Habits” as key dispositions, and the alignment of school practices and recognition systems with these values. The school’s approach to prize-giving, which foregrounds personal and values-based achievements alongside academic success, exemplifies its commitment to holistic education.

Collectively, the session underscored the imperative for educational systems to be purpose-driven, inclusive, and adaptive, with leadership that activates all stakeholders—students, teachers, families, and communities. The integration of indigenous perspectives, the intentional cultivation of positive school cultures, and the willingness to innovate beyond traditional models were identified as critical to achieving meaningful and sustainable transformation in education.





6: STUDENT PANEL

One of the highlights of the conference was hearing directly from young people about their experiences of school and their hopes for the future. The student panel spoke with honesty and energy, giving us an invaluable window into what really matters for learners today.

“No one really knows what the future will look like — so we need skills to adapt, not just knowledge for exams.”

A strong theme was uncertainty about the future – especially in a world shaped by rapid technological change and artificial intelligence. The students reminded us that no one can fully predict what lies ahead, which makes it all the more important for schools to focus on building adaptable skills like collaboration, empathy, resilience, and critical thinking.

“When teachers actually know us and care, it makes all the difference.”

Relationships with teachers were described as central to learning. Students deeply valued teachers who took time to understand them, who were approachable and supportive, and who created safe spaces to ask questions. Trust and connection, they said, make all the difference.

They also highlighted the importance of learning environments that are engaging, flexible, and relevant. Impact Projects, cultural activities, and opportunities for real-world problem solving were singled out as powerful experiences.

“Impact Projects let us work for our passion and do something real.”

These moments of passion and purpose not only made school more enjoyable but also helped students grow confidence and self-management skills. At the same time, students acknowledged the pressures of traditional assessment models and the challenges of fitting their own interests within structured timetables.

The panel also spoke candidly about everyday school life – from the need for more engaging PE options, to the impact of peer pressure around social media, to the value of simple things like accessible bathrooms and meaningful break times. These practical details, they said, affect how safe and supported they feel at school.

Looking beyond the classroom, students expressed strong hopes for a future that is fair, sustainable, and people-centred. They spoke about wanting a “green world,” where the environment is cared for, and a society where kindness and justice matter more than competition and money.



Alongside these hopes, they also voiced anxieties about war, climate change, and whether technology might close off future opportunities.

“We want a green world, a fair world — where people care about each other more than money.”

Perhaps most striking was the way students saw education as a shared journey with their families and communities. Some described positive experiences of parents being involved through digital platforms and reflective meetings, while others admitted they sometimes held back from sharing because they feared being judged. These stories highlighted how important it is to foster open, trusting communication between students, families, and schools.

Taken together, the panel painted a picture of education that is at once hopeful and cautious: hopeful about the possibilities of new ways of learning, and cautious about whether current systems are fully preparing them for what lies ahead. Their message to us was clear: keep relationships at the heart, nurture the whole person, and ensure learning equips them not just for exams, but for life.





7: PANEL DISCUSSION: WHERE TO FROM HERE?

The final panel conversation featured three speakers who provided their perspectives on the three key questions that guided the table conversations following each of the theme speakers:

- What are the **opportunities** we should be considering here? (drawing from your experience as change leaders where might we start, what sorts of things could we be doing at a school or system level – the things that are in our respective ‘locus of control’ etc.)
- What are the **roadblocks and barriers** to change you see, and how might we seek to mitigate or address these?
- What sorts of **policy recommendations** should we be making in order to ensure support for system-level transformation that is both scalable and sustainable?

The panel convened a discussion focused on the future directions of educational transformation within various settings, including schools, government agencies, and professional learning organisations.

Panel members



Anthony Mackay

Global education strategist Tony Mackay operates at the intersection of policy, innovation, and leadership across continents. His unique

vantage point as an expert advisor to the OECD and multiple prestigious global networks gives him an unmatched perspective on how local educational innovations can scale to create systemic worldwide impact.



Virgel Hammonds

A dynamic catalyst for learner-centred education, Virgel Hammonds has spent over two decades proving that education systems can truly put students at the heart of learning. As Aurora Institute's CEO, he brings unparalleled expertise in forging unlikely partnerships and reimagining education paradigms that serve all learners, not just those who thrive in traditional settings.



Jeff Wetzler

Education visionary Jeff Wetzler isn't satisfied with incremental improvements—he's reimagining school from the ground up. As Transcend's co-founder and co-author of "Extraordinary Learning for All," Jeff brings insights from his global perspective as a Hillary Fellow to challenge our fundamental assumptions about what learning environments can and should be.



Panel Summary

The panelists, each recognised for their contributions to large-scale and sustained systemic change, were asked to share insights on how their experiences and perspectives could inform future strategies, particularly in driving collective innovation through platforms such as Ed Rising.

Tony Mackay opened the discussion by emphasising the vital role of Ed Rising and Future Makers as conveners for collective action, providing a catalyst for taking work forward collectively and reinforcing initiatives. He stated that the first step forward is to establish a shared purpose for a system of learning focused on human flourishing, encompassing economic prosperity, social cohesion, and individual and collective well-being. Drawing on international experiences, including learning initiatives in Australia and OECD scenarios for the future of schooling, Tony identified several key challenges: redefining success and broadening learning recognition; integrating well-being and agency for holistic learning (cognitive, social, emotional); reimagining the educated profession and learning environments (formal, non-formal, informal); creating multiple, career-connected pathways for young people, especially at transition points; and developing governance arrangements closely aligned with learning. To address these, he proposed four major transformational shifts: 1) a purpose-driven system; 2) learning that opens up possibilities; 3) future-focused teaching enhanced by technology; and 4) learning grounded in place, where context truly matters. He also underscored the importance of establishing prototypes and fostering partnerships across the system.

Following Tony's remarks, **Virgil Hammonds** provided an introduction to the Aurora Institute's work, drawing on his extensive background in convening diverse stakeholders, including innovators, educators, researchers, policymakers, community members, and learners. Virgil recounted the organisation's

recent announcement of a merger with the Learning Accelerator, highlighting how this unification aims to leverage shared leadership models and emphasise a hyper-inclusive approach in the design of learning experiences, believing they are "stronger together" to scale innovation. He stressed the importance of drawing upon both local strengths and international insights, citing a systems leader's quote: "It's important to seek the shores beyond your shores," to dismantle persistent structural barriers ("load-bearing walls") in education and put the learner at the centre. Virgil also noted that modern challenges require multi-stakeholder dialogue that includes voices from across the learner spectrum, from early childhood to post-secondary education, and argued for intentional policies that integrate community resources with formal educational processes to validate non-traditional competencies and create more equitable futures.

Jeff Wetzler then contributed by advising school leaders to begin from a strengths-based perspective, quoting former President Bill Clinton: "There's nothing wrong with us that can't be fixed by what's right with us." He urged educators to reconnect with existing strengths within their communities and to prioritise the lived experiences of learners, suggesting mechanisms like student voice surveys, as young people are "experts in their own experience." Jeff highlighted the significance of community-based design, where the collective insights of educators, students, families, and other community members drive innovation. He argued for an expansive conception of community, recognising that educational challenges require collaboration beyond schools, involving sectors like healthcare, transportation, housing, and after-school centres. He also noted that existing models from New Zealand and globally can accelerate progress, advising educational leaders to visit or study them. Finally, Jeff stressed that leadership is crucial and not limited to formal positions, advocating for "learner-centred leadership" that prioritises what is best



for the learner, even if it means dismantling existing routines.

The discussion further evolved as a participant raised a query regarding the practical realisation of the outlined transformation within schools and systems, asking "what does this actually look like?". In response, Jeff reiterated the value of demonstrable models, noting that seeing innovative learning environments in action—whether through live sessions or videos—can validate and inspire change, as "you can't dream what you can't see." Tony expanded on this by discussing the fundamental redesign of learning environments through different views of time, space, and people, challenging the traditional "grammar of schooling." He highlighted the complexity of teaching diverse cohorts, such as those with a four-to-six-year cognitive development difference in a single classroom, and the need for collaborative teams. He also specifically mentioned the self-determination and self-governance of First Nations people in crafting their ways of thinking and learning, and the potential of hybrid and community-anchored pedagogies. Virgil reinforced these points by

emphasising the need to invite people, especially policymakers, to witness these innovations in action, as they often create policies without seeing the reality. He also shared the Aurora Institute's first critical point: "students are empowered daily to make important decisions about their learning experiences, how they will create and apply knowledge, and how they will demonstrate their learning," stressing the importance of youth voice and extending this empowerment to educators as learners.

Throughout the session, the panel underscored the significance of engaging a broad array of stakeholders in co-designing an education system that is resilient, inclusive, and truly responsive to the evolving needs of all learners. Their comments collectively point towards a future in which the education sector is marked by purposeful collaboration, adaptive leadership, and systemic flexibility—a future in which policies and practices are directly informed by the authentic experiences and aspirations of learners and educators alike.





8: DRAWING IT ALL TOGETHER

The EdRising convening identified a clear mandate for systemic transformation in education, moving beyond political cycles toward a sustainable, inclusive, and future-focused approach. Delegates consistently emphasised the need for a unified vision that builds on existing strengths while addressing fundamental barriers to change.

The ideas captured here have been synthesised from delegate feedback at the EdRising convening. These ideas are intended to serve as the foundation for ongoing conversation and collaborative activity and will be refined through continued engagement with our growing network of change champions.

OPPORTUNITIES: BUILDING OUR MOVEMENT FORWARD

1. Leverage Existing Strengths and Networks

- **Harness sector expertise:** Utilise the wealth of knowledge and experience already present in our education community
- **Build on the 2007 curriculum framework:** Embrace and enhance this reliable platform rather than replacing it
- **Create network of ambassadors:** Establish regional hubs and online networks to amplify reach and impact
- **Share success stories:** Develop platforms to showcase effective practices and innovations already happening

2. Transform Assessment and Measurement

- **Expand success metrics:** Move toward real-time data on competencies, wellbeing, and holistic achievement

- **Review assessment approaches:** leverage international development to adopt new assessment practices
- **Validate field initiatives:** Build collaborations between research communities and schools to evidence what works

3. Centre Indigenous Knowledge and Perspectives

- **Learn from Kura Kaupapa Māori:** Apply successful indigenous models more broadly across the system
- **Embed Te Ao Māori perspectives:** Integrate Māori worldview as fundamental to all educational approaches
- **Address colonisation impacts:** Acknowledge and actively work to counter ongoing effects of historical injustices

4. Mobilise Community Voice

- **Strengthen whānau engagement:** Create meaningful opportunities for family and community input in the co-construction of learning activity.
- **Establish youth panels:** Regularly gather student voice through structured processes
- **Include marginalised voices:** Ensure Māori, Pacifica, and other underrepresented groups are central to decision-making

5. Embrace Innovation and Future-Readiness

- **Navigate AI thoughtfully:** Ensure technology serves humanity rather than replacing human connection
- **Create space for innovation:** create the environment in which schools are able to confidently make best use of the freedoms they have to innovate.



- **Focus on future competencies:** Develop skills and capabilities students will need, not just subject content
- **Promote Learning Grounded in Place:** building on the 2007 curriculum emphasis on developing a local curriculum

ROADBLOCKS: CHALLENGES WE MUST ADDRESS

1. Political and Systemic Barriers

- **Political polarisation:** Tug-of-war debates that prevent cross-party consensus and undermine long term planning
- **Short political cycles:** Constant policy changes that undermine long-term planning
- **Reactive policy development:** Lack of coherent, proactive future-focused vision for education
- **Politicisation of education:** Risk of movement being seen as political rather than educational

2. Capacity and Capability Constraints

- **Professional development gaps:** Insufficient support for teacher and leader capability building
- **Leadership challenges:** Many young/new principals lacking experience and confidence
- **Time-poor educators:** Teachers under high levels of stress and strain
- **Fragmented system:** Lack of coordination between different education sectors and organisations

3. Resource and Structural Limitations

- **Funding shortfalls:** Insufficient resources forcing difficult choices about priorities
- **Assessment expectations:** Avoid increases in standardised testing requirements that limit innovation

- **Administrative burden:** Risk of increasing compliance requirements that distract from core educational work
- **Missing voices:** Underrepresentation of key stakeholders in decision-making processes

4. Cultural and Trust Issues

- **Lack of buy-in:** Insufficient trust and engagement from communities and staff
- **Resistance to change:** People unable or unwilling to see themselves as part of transformation
- **Cultural inclusivity gaps:** Current approaches not adequately bicultural or inclusive, and the reasons for this not sufficiently understood
- **Fear of innovation:** Lack of capability and confidence around new approaches, particularly technology integration

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: CREATING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR CHANGE

1. Establish Long-Term Vision and Governance

- **Mechanisms to coherence:** leverage current and create new ways to bring educators, iwi, learners, and researchers together to envision the future
- **Advocate for cross-party long-term plan:** Ensure continuity beyond political cycles
- **Establish a clear basis for education policy:** Focus on a broad evidence-base for collaborative decision-making
- **Build from existing foundations:** Enhance rather than replace successful current frameworks



2. Embed Treaty of Waitangi Principles

- **Underpin all policy with Treaty obligations:** Acknowledge indigenous rights and perspectives
- **Ensure bicultural governance:** Meaningful partnership in all education decisions
- **Address ongoing colonisation impacts:** Identify and proactively counter historical and current disadvantages
- **Learn from indigenous success:** Apply Kura Kaupapa Māori models more broadly

3. Transform Professional Development and Leadership

- **Comprehensive PLD framework:** Robust support for teacher and principal professional learning
- **Leadership capability building:** Specific support for new and emerging leaders
- **Collaborative networks:** Encourage peer learning and knowledge sharing
- **Innovation permissions:** Create policy environment that encourages experimentation

4. Enable Community and Student Voice

- **Systematic consultation processes:** Regular, meaningful engagement with all stakeholders
- **Student voice frameworks:** Structured approaches to gather and act on learner perspectives
- **Whānau engagement policies:** Support meaningful family and community participation
- **Local curriculum flexibility:** Allow adaptation to community contexts and needs

5. Resource Innovation and Sustainability

- **Alternative funding models:** Explore innovative approaches to resource distribution
- **Reduce administrative burden:** Streamline requirements to focus on core educational work
- **Support innovation spaces:** Fund experimentation and pilot programs
- **Long-term investment:** Commit to sustained support for transformation initiatives.

MOVEMENT ACTIONS: NEXT STEPS FOR COALITION BUILDING

Immediate Actions (0-6 months)

- **Develop clear mission articulation:** Create compelling narrative that galvanises support focused on agreed vision and purpose
- **Build inclusive network:** Reach out to missing voices and underrepresented groups
- **Establish communication platforms:** Use online tools to maintain connection and momentum
- **Create action plan:** Identify specific priorities and accountability measures

Short-term Actions (6-12 months)

- **Organise follow-up convening:** Continue conversations with improved format for deeper engagement
- **Develop advocacy strategy:** Coordinate approach to influence policy makers
- **Build regional networks:** Explore things such as local hubs and ambassador programmes
- **Create resource repository:** Develop shared platform for tools, research, and success stories



Medium-term Actions (1-3 years)

- **Establish Education Futures Council:** Work toward independent policy advisory body
- **Pilot innovative approaches:** Support schools in trialing new methods and sharing learnings
- **Build research partnerships:** Connect practitioners with researchers for evidence building
- **Develop alternative assessment models:** Create examples of authentic, enabling assessment

Long-term Vision (3+ years)

- **Achieve system transformation:** Implement coherent, inclusive, future-focused education system
- **Embed sustainable practices:** Ensure changes survive political cycles and leadership changes
- **Model for others:** Demonstrate successful approach that can inspire other jurisdictions
- **Continuous evolution:** Maintain capacity for ongoing adaptation and improvement.
- **Realise System Transformation!**

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR COALITION WORK

- **Do No Harm:** Ensure all actions support rather than undermine educational outcomes
- **Transformational Not Transactional:** Focus on fundamental change rather than quick fixes
- **Inclusive and Bicultural:** Centre Treaty partnership and marginalised voices
- **Evidence-Based:** Ground all advocacy in research and proven practice
- **Collaborative:** Work as network of aligned organisations rather than new entity
- **Future-Focused:** Prepare learners for tomorrow's challenges, not yesterday's solutions.

CALL TO ACTION

This summary represents the collective wisdom of education leaders, practitioners, and advocates who refuse to accept the status quo. The transformation of our education system requires sustained effort, collaborative vision, and unwavering commitment to our learners' futures.





CONCLUSION

The EdRising Convening successfully created an engaging, high-quality professional learning experience that participants found valuable and energising. While technical and structural improvements are needed, the strong foundation of relevant themes, quality participants, and effective discussion formats provides an excellent base for future events. The call for more culturally grounded, locally relevant content alongside better integration of wellbeing themes offers clear direction for continued development.

The Convening discussions reveal remarkable alignment around the need for fundamental transformation in education that centres authentic relationships, community leadership, and holistic approaches to learning and development. This transformation represents a fundamental shift from industrial-age education to community-centred, relationship-based learning ecosystems that honour Treaty obligations and dismantle colonial structures.

While the challenges are significant, the opportunities for integrated transformation are compelling. Success depends on clarity of vision, sustained commitment to authentic partnership, adequate resources for genuine engagement, and policy frameworks that enable rather than constrain local innovation. The recommendations provided offer concrete pathways for both practitioners and system leaders to contribute to this transformation while maintaining focus on the ultimate goal: educational systems that serve the flourishing of all learners within their communities.

The foundation has been laid through these discussions. The next phase requires translating this shared vision into coordinated action that can create lasting change for learners, communities, and society. The path forward requires sustained commitment to working across traditional boundaries—between themes, between stakeholders, between institutions—to create coherent, comprehensive approaches that honour the complexity of educational transformation while maintaining focus on practical action.





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