

Barriers to access

A research study initiated late August 2006 at Auckland War Memorial Museum

BACKGROUND

In the course of preparing Education reports for the Trust Board 110 Auckland Primary schools were identified where we had not seen a class visit us in the last three to five years, in a few cases substantially longer than that.

Staff felt that they had a reasonable idea about why this might be the case but it was agreed that a survey be conducted to try and establish some of the background to the situation.

METHODOLOGY

A survey was devised involving 20 questions in 4 groups. The four groups were related to Logistics, Information, Costs and Programmes. Each group of questions which were largely YES/NO in nature was followed by a summary statement that asked for a rating on how important the issue was on a 1 to 5 scale.

The survey was printed and posted out to the 110 Principals in early October 2006. About 20 replies were received quite quickly. Schools were rung and email reminders were sent several times through to Christmas 2006 and by mid January 2007 a total of 46 replies were in hand. A response rate of better than one in three was considered to be pretty satisfactory.

Results were tabulated and analysed directly in a Spreadsheet format. When analyzing the results questions left blank by the respondents (not always the Principal) were not included in the totals for averaging purposes. In the few cases where summary questions were left blank these were completed based on the responses given to the questions compared to other respondents.

Results were tabulated for the complete set of 46 respondents and separately for schools in the decile 1-4 range and schools in the 5-10 range (the few private schools signaled decile 99 by the Ministry were included in the upper set).

RESULTS

There are 410 Primary schools in Auckland and a further 60 schools which have both Primary and Secondary pupils. The bulk of these composite schools are Private or Integrated schools. These schools and by far the majority of Secondary schools send one or more classes to the Museum every year.

The distribution pattern of schools in Auckland is by no means linear; there are larger numbers of decile 10 than any other rating and the next highest is decile 1. Further analysis shows that the distribution of these schools is also far from random and certainly not any normal distribution. The low decile schools are predominantly in the west and south. This needs to be taken into account when looking at some of the data.

There are large numbers of decile 1 and 10 and a reasonably even distribution in between. If anything a hole in the middle is apparent. Closer analysis by area however shows a quite different pattern with Manakau showing very high numbers of low decile schools and a peak out of the pattern at decile 10 due to the Howick schools. North Shore by contrast has very few low decile schools. Examination of those who have not visited from different regions needs to be viewed with this in mind.

By and large the higher the decile rating the lower the number of schools in the “unseen” list BUT this does not take into account the number of such schools in the whole population. The standout are a large number of decile 7 schools and there is no apparent answer at the stage for this.

When looking at the distribution of “unseen” schools across the different TLAs the pattern does not exactly correspond to the numbers of seen schools in each region. Worth noting that for Rodney, Franklin and Papakura the percentage of “unseen” schools is about 30% of the totals, corresponding one suspects to the distances and associated costs. That percentage is even worse if you look at Primary schools alone (the focus of this study).

COMMENTS ON SURVEY RESULTS

In general the order of barriers in decreasing order of importance is

COSTS > LOGISTICS > INFORMATION > PROGRAMME

This is not a great surprise, one would have guessed costs but it is pleasing to note that the nature of the programmes is not a major issue.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Given that the survey was aimed at Principals it might be unfair to be concerned about the extent to which we would appear to be almost absent from the radar of these Principals. Having said that it is worth noting that more than a dozen of these schools were seen in the last couple of months of the year triggered one assumes by the interest shown in their status. One direct result was that we have garnered a lot of additional email addresses, many of them in person to the Principal. The lack of awareness of the enews and the website were worrying; the lack of awareness of the calendar of programmes posted directly attention to the Principal is frankly alarming. When 40% of the lower decile group say they have not seen it quite clearly the office is a serious information filter. For each question in this set the lower decile schools show less awareness of information than schools from the higher decile group except for the website awareness which is quite a surprise.

COSTS

The average costs for transport (for schools not seen) is in excess of \$7 per student. If the school opts for a paid programme at \$3 a head the total to be collected rises to \$10 or more for the day.

Of serious concern it should be noted that around one third of Principals (assuming **they** completed the survey) were unaware that self-guided visits were FREE for students and for their accompanying adults. More than three quarters were unaware that by the school paying an \$80 Membership fee per year they can discount all fees by \$1 per student per programme. A Membership drive would appear to be well overdue perhaps. Travel costs from the Rodney schools averaged \$12pp, Franklin and Papakura \$9pp, Manukau \$7.50pp, North Shore \$5pp and Auckland City \$4pp.

PROGRAMMES

It would appear that for the low decile schools the style of programmes is less of a barrier. It may be that we should read this the other way round. For the higher decile schools the style of programmes is not so attractive or is more of a barrier. Lower decile schools appear to prefer museum staff to lead the programmes more frequently than their high decile colleagues. The possibility of joint planning of programmes is evidently more attractive to lower decile schools. Interestingly, a reasonable degree of joint planning [negotiation of learning outcomes is a required feature of LEOTC based programming.

LOGISTICS

Over half the low decile school report problems in finding enough parent helpers to accompany trips; more than twice as much of an issue as their higher decile colleagues. This

is clearly an area where we can do something to assist. Although lack of spaces to each lunch and take breaks is mentioned specifically by a number of schools, the facilities do not appear to be a problem in most cases. Making bookings does not appear to be an issue and the awareness of the range of ways in which bookings can be made is quite high. The possibility of extending opening hours has a little more appeal to higher decile schools, possibly related to a distance factor – this deserves a little more analysis. A number of schools commented on the availability of programmes at times that suit them. The concept of free choice appears to be live and well. We do probably need to remind them about the logistics at our end of having several different programmes run in one day. Transport issues other than cost relate to the difficulties of many bus companies having to depart from the museum by 1.30pm in order to ensure they get back to school in time for the three o'clock bus runs. Effectively this means there is a three and a half hour window to make the visit. By the time lunch and a morning tea break are taken this is three hours. Logistical support would seem to be important in this regard.

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