

THE TALE OF THE AMALGAMATION OF KINDERGARTEN WAIRARAPA AND UPPER HUTT KINDERGARTEN ASSOCIATION



Kindergarten Wairarapa



Upper Hutt Kgtn Assn



October 2005, presentation to NZK Presidents and Managers' Meeting.

Rimutaka Kindergarten Association

We weren't really sure what people would like to know about the amalgamation and we appreciate for some of you that it may be quite irrelevant to the issues that are on top for you right now - therefore we hoped by telling the amalgamation as a story we will be able to hold your interest:

In some ways it feels premature to be standing up as the whole process of the amalgamation is not yet complete - in fact I wonder if it ever will be sometimes! However let the story begin, for all intents and purposes we now operate as the Rimutaka Kindergarten Association whilst UHKA and KWI sit in the background going through their wind up processes. Our favourite type of stories are never all tied up neatly at the end - there is always some room for interpretation and expansion of the mind at the end - and our story is very like that.

Let me introduce the characters to you

The Characters

- The Children
- The Teachers
- Parents/Committees
- The Boards
- NZEI
- MoE
- Management/Administration Staff
- Legal people

The theme of a story is the "point" - the "reason"

Theme of the amalgamation:

The theme of the amalgamation was the bringing together of UHKA and KWI in order to combine the best of both Assns in order to further enhance our vision of the delivery of quality early childhood education to the Upper Hutt and Wairarapa communities.

Now let me introduce you to the plot

Plot of the Amalgamation:

- Upper Hutt and Wairarapa Management began to have informal discussions about ways in which the two Associations could work more closely together. The Wairarapa were struggling to maintain a working board and Upper Hutt began to explore ways with the existing President and Senior Teacher as to how Upper Hutt could support Wairarapa. Everyone very quickly became aware that the two Associations were replicating documents, policies and the like on both sides of the Rimutaka hills.
- Both Associations had 10 kindergartens and were seeking to operate with the ideal of the provision of quality affordable early childhood experience through kindergarten for the children and families of their communities
- Each of the boards began to discuss whether they would like to formalise some of the informal links that we had begun developing
- A working party was established with representation from each side of the hill to assist with this process
- The working party recommended after exploring various options - including a Management Contract, Take Over, Formation of new
- The Working Party recommendation was the formation of a new Association
- Both boards were supportive of this recommendation and a Steering Committee was established to consult with all stakeholders on the proposal to amalgamate KWI and UHKA. Steering Committee was made up of teacher representative from each Association, two Senior Teachers, elected parent representatives from each Board and UHKA's Executive Officer
- Consultation and advice with all stakeholders commenced under the direction of the Steering Committee
- Consultation included but was not limited to Parents/Committees, teachers, Ministry of Education, Lawyers, Accountants, NZEI, Inland Revenue Department

As you know stories have a crisis/complication. Ours was issues that arose throughout the consultation process

Complication - Consultation

- We began our consultation with the teachers because of their long standing relationship with the Association and because in many

ways it potentially had the biggest and most long term impact on them. For this reason the consultation with teachers was extensive and thorough so that we took as many teachers as possible with us. The teachers highlighted issues that they felt would impact on them eg travel, could they be transferred to the other side of the hill. They also understandably wanted answers to questions such as the operation of the new Association - would their teacher aide hours be cut, how would kgtns be funded? etc At times some of the teachers became frustrated as they sought to have questions answered that there just were simply not answers to - unfortunately at times this meant that the teachers felt we were withholding information from them.

- consultation with Parents/Committees was reasonably straight forward - essentially what they wanted to know was, was the kgtn going to be the same for their children following the amalgamation. Parents/Committees were keen to know if they would have representation from both regions on the board.
- Consultation with the NZEI and the MoE was incredibly time consuming. As the two parties to the employment agreement it was necessary to spend significant amounts of time with them working through all the contractual obligations of the amalgamation.
- We used the services of EMA for advice on the restructuring process and how it would affect existing admin/management staff.
- Through this time we also began to seek advice from our friendly lawyer and auditor/accountant on how the process would be managed from a legal perspective.
- We began to realise the huge administration load as we considered the transfer of everything over to Rimutaka - at one point we even considered changing the process to a "take over" but we felt to do so would compromise the integrity that we seeking to build into the process

As the characters grappled with these issues the following resolutions began and continue to emerge

Resolutions

- Teachers - Eventually the issues were able to be worked through with the teachers through formal and informal discussions
- It was agreed that if the amalgamation went ahead then the existing practices for each Association would continue until consultation had occurred - in reference to teacher aides etc

- Parents/Committees - the constitution states that three elected representatives from each region make up the board. The Constitution following consultation was written in a way that sought to "honour" the best of both existing Constitutions.
- NZEI and MoE- We came to a very amicable solution to the employment agreement issues with the development of a Protocol for the transfer of teaching staff. I travelled with John O'Shaughnessey at high speeds around the two regions presenting to teachers how the amalgamation would work for them regarding their employment agreements. This worked really well.
- IRD - accountants came up with solutions as to how the assets etc could be transferred most simply including the great GST question.
- We had to employ the administration staff for more hours to cope With the increased work load - we are very grateful to their willingness to work the extra time
- However, despite the lengthy and at times fraught process that this consultation brought when we finally put the concept of an amalgamation to the vote - formally for Parents/Committees and informally for staff we had overwhelming support for the concept. This vote was designed for people to indicate their support for the concept - and provided the confidence to move forward to public meetings which were required to begin the process of winding up the existing Assns and form the new
- It was agreed that teachers could choose the name of the new Association. Firstly they were asked to forward possible names for the Association - these included Wrapperupper (a play on Wairarapa and Upper Hutt) Tararua, Rimutaka Valleys and Rimutaka Kindergarten Association . A vote was then taken with the staff and Rimutaka was the most favoured option.

All stories have a conclusion and the beginning of happy endings

Conclusion

- Two Public Meetings as required by the Incorporated Societies Act were then held in each of the regions in order to:
 - begin the wind up process
 - appoint a liquidator for each Association
 - form the new Association and adopt the constitution
 - elect an interim board to begin the business of Rimutaka

Attendance at these meetings was reasonably low, however we decided to read this generally people were happy with the concept or else they would have been there

- A date was set to begin operating as Rimutaka as the 30th March 2005. To acknowledge the wind up both Assns held functions to mark the end of the old and celebrate the new - UH teachers dubbed the UH one Chaos in the Park - very aptly!

Rimutaka Board commences

- The Rimutaka Board began by appointing management staff, passing policies, writing the charter etc, overseeing the transfer of the teaching staff and the like
- Ran the inaugural AGM for Rimutaka and new board with representation from both regions appointed
- Each kgtn was invited to present a painting and statement of their vision for the new Assn. These paintings now hang in the Assn offices and we have brought along a couple of examples to show you.

When you have become so involved in a story you want to know what has happened to the characters:

Epilogue

- Children - they remind us what the amalgamation was really all about and we are confident that the children are receiving exposure to increased opportunities as the teachers from both regions are developing into a "community of learners"
- Teachers - to the best of our knowledge are happy with the amalgamation - however impending decisions regarding how kgtns are funded from Assn and allocation of teacher aides could change this
- Parents/Committees - business seems to be happening as usual. We are endeavouring to meet with stakeholders such as Parents/Committees in regard to kgtn funding in the next few weeks
- Management - we are still considering ourselves a work in progress with the following outstanding matters to address:
 - funding, teacher aides, professional development, best use of Senior Teacher time

Overall we are pleased to have amalgamated but are aware of the long journey still in front of us as we seek to address both the external changes that all Associations are facing and continue to set up our internal processes.

Sometimes we question the decision to form a new Association and wonder if it would have been much simpler for one Association to have taken over the other - but the other side of this is would we have had the "buy in" from stakeholders particularly Parents/Committees and teachers if this had occurred.

However, we are now very aware of the 'theme' of the amalgamation and are increasingly excited about the:

- possibilities
- challenges
- and the realisation of the character's dreams and visions