

## NZ Aotearoa New Zealand: Slowing the Sun for Human-Centred Change

### Opening & Framing

- Philly (Philippa), from Albany Senior High School, explains that in Aotearoa New Zealand it is **tikanga** (cultural etiquette) to open formal gatherings with a **karakia** (blessing).
  - She uses the **Māui and the sun** story as a metaphor: amidst relentless policy noise, educators need to **“slow the sun”** to stay focused on what matters—human connection, community, and preparing young people for their futures.
  - She cites the whakataukī: **turn and face the sun and your shadows will fall behind you**, positioning this as a guiding idea for educators globally.
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### 1. Stonefields School – Vision, Breakthrough, and Agency

- Hope Griffin, principal at Stonefields School, presents the school’s vision structured around four **“vision rocks”**:
  - **Building learning capacity** – growth mindset, identity, resilience, wellbeing.
  - **Collaborating** – kindness, perspective taking, working towards shared outcomes.
  - **Making meaning** – curiosity, inquiry, creativity through a clear learning process.
  - **Breakthrough** – identifying strengths, mastering passions, and contributing to community.
- **The Breakthrough Challenge:** This is a structured opportunity for learners to pursue passions, physical challenges, and social impact, co-created by the Student Council:
  - **Passion Project** – pursue an area of personal passion (e.g., designing and producing a recipe book).
  - **Physical Challenge** – set and meet significant fitness/physical goals (e.g., continuous running/biking, achieving 70 continuous skips).

- **Social Impact** – make a positive contribution to community and environment (e.g., gardening, creating a times-tables card game for younger learners, leading a Filipino *parol* lantern workshop).
  - Students who completed the challenge received the first **Breakthrough Challenge leadership pins**, signalling student agency and leadership as central to the school culture.
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## 2. Birkdale Primary School – Community-Led Bicultural Vision

- **Context & Challenge:** Principal Natasha describes a diverse community with long history, including the first—and still only—full immersion **Te Reo Māori** language unit in that part of Auckland. The challenge was to **unite and repair** a fragmented school without diluting either the English or Māori pathway.
  - **Community Engagement and “Power-Sharing”:** They ran extensive community engagement, meeting parents at the school gates, holding meetings, and running focus groups with students.
  - **Crucially, they shared the sensemaking:** A representative group (parents, teachers, board members) met for a “sort and synthesise” day. Natasha emphasizes: **“the people who sort the data control the narrative”**—so they deliberately shared that power.
  - **Outcome:** The community co-constructed a **single graduate profile** for Birkdale that is authentic to both pathways and reflects **bicultural Aotearoa**, uniting the school around dispositions and capabilities.
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## 3. Albany Senior High School – Relational, Futures-Focused Secondary

- **School Structure:** ASHS (Years 11–13) is known for:
  - **100-minute lesson blocks** to allow deeper learning.
  - A **project-based learning block** mid-week (impact projects).
  - **Tutorial** – a 100-minute pastoral/home-room class where tutors act as learning coaches, supporting executive function and goal-setting.

- **Community Views on Success:** For incoming Year 11 families, parents did **not** primarily define success in narrow academic terms. They emphasized: **Happiness, safety, confidence, belonging, agency, and positive contribution to community.**
  - **Flattening Hierarchy:** Teachers are addressed by first names (e.g., “Philly”), which led to more genuine, human relationships while still maintaining **high academic expectations.**
  - **Student Perspective (Olivia):** A graduate credits her experience with **Link Online Learners (LOL)**, a global youth network where she collaborated on a podcast called ***This Global Life***, connecting her ASHS “impact project” to a global network.
  - **Student Perspective (Abby):** Highlights the importance of first-name relationships, and gaining leadership and work experience through programmes like **Gateway** and the **Youth Emerging Leadership Programme.**
  - **Closing Reflection:** Relationships plus high expectations create a compelling culture that sees teachers and students as **“full people.”**
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#### 4. Final Reflections and EdRising Themes

- Philly ends with the whakataukī: **“He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata.”** (What is the most important thing in the world? It is the people, the people, the people.)
  - The three schools converge on themes of: **Clarity of purpose, Student agency, Community co-ownership, Rethinking structures, and Digital and global connections.**
  - This aligns with the **EdRising** New Zealand initiative which recently explored themes including **Leading for equity and agency, Community-led transformation, and Redefining success.**
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#### Key Entities & URLs

##### 2.1. Schools

- **Stonefields School:** <https://www.stonefields.school.nz>
- **Birkdale Primary School:** <https://www.birkdaleprimary.school.nz>
- **Albany Senior High School:** <https://www.ashs.school.nz>

## 2.2. Programmes and Initiatives

- **Breakthrough / Breakthrough Challenge (Stonefields School):** <https://www.stonefields.school.nz>
- **Graduate Profile (Birkdale Primary School):** <https://www.birkdaleprimary.school.nz>
- **Link Online Learners (LOL):** <https://www.linkonlinelearners.org>
- **This Global Life (Podcast):** <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/this-global-life/id1517066121>
- **Forum of World Education:** <http://www.oecd.org/site/forum-world-education/>
- **YESfest:** <https://yesfest.org>
- **Gateway Programme (NZ):** <https://www.tec.govt.nz/funding/funding-and-performance/funding/fund-finder/gateway>
- **Blues Charitable Trust – Youth Emerging Leadership Programme:** <https://theblustrust.org>
- **EdRising (New Zealand):** <https://edrising.net>
- **FutureMakers:** <https://www.futuremakers.nz>

## 2.3. Cultural and Arts Organisations

- **Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra:** <https://www.apo.co.nz>