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TO: HEADS AND PRINCIPALS
BUSINESS MANAGERS

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UNDERSTANDING THE ACADEMIC IMPERATIVES OF A SCHOOL'S STRUCTURE AND THE LINK TO FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

We are very fortunate to be in the centre of what might be called **the perfect storm**.

The challenge for Heads and Business Managers is whether to sit tight and weather the storm or seek a way forward that will see us ahead of the storm before it finally settles down, if it ever does.

Well, what is **the perfect storm**.

The perfect storm, as I see it, is the dynamic between curriculum reform and the challenge to deal with it from both an academic and financial perspective. Let me elaborate.

Education is a progressive 'moving feast'. We bumped along over several decades accepting the norm that a solid education based around well-established principles of core academic offerings would be sufficient for primary and secondary school education. This is not to say that progress was not made in education reform throughout the 1970's to the 2000's, but the progress was stifled by both academic and financial challenges.

- Curriculum reform has been challenged to a degree by political interference and entrenched academic views.
- Financial reform has been challenged by policy driven funding outcomes and measurement of outcomes against entrenched educational structures.

The reality of the expansion of technology in education is surfacing as an exploding volcano.

The expanded use of technology in education is challenging the norms of education.

- We must never lose control of the use of technology but, at the same time, we need to embrace its good and allow it to expand our horizons.
- You can never compromise good pastoral care or the values good teachers bring to the education process, but you must be open to the benefits of the use of technology in education.

How does this impact the financial outcomes of a school?

At the moment we are using measures of financial performance that are based on traditional norms.

- We use student teacher ratios as a measure of efficiency. These are, in the main, based on old traditional structures and norms.
- There is an ever expanding need for learning support and enhancement that is confusing the measurement of the delivery of education to the students we are educating.
- There is often a traditional view of the amount of teacher aide support we have in our schools that should be reviewed.

If you are a progressive school and measuring the financial performance of your school using traditional benchmarks, you may be obstructing the correct view of your operation in these progressive times. For example, you need to unpack your academic structure so that you are comparing your performance with an appropriate comparable ethos and educational philosophy that is driving curriculum delivery.

- Attribute classroom teachers as teachers.
- Attribute direct learning support and enhancement as specialist support, although some is related to curriculum delivery. You need to know the correct interpretation.
- Look closely at teacher aide definitions and need.
- Understand IT support as opposed to IT delivery.
- Understand administration support and whether that is direct academic administration support or general administration support.

If you merely allow traditional benchmark performance to be used as a measure of how you are performing it may constrain your ability to perform as a school. This is not to say that traditional benchmarks are not helpful. They are, but they need to be interpreted and enhanced. I encourage Principals and Business Managers to understand the key differences between education delivery and support and realise that the structure of each will change as IT plays a larger part in curriculum delivery into the future.

If we are to make decisions about the financial performance of our schools we need to measure the structures and performance against traditional as well as progressive based benchmarks and key performance indicators.

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