

# Principal's Column

*Brent Gray*

Collaboration is the 'in-word' in education at present. The Oxford Dictionary states that this means: 'The action of working with someone to produce something'. Many schools will argue that the practice of collaboration is alive and well in what happens within their staffrooms and classrooms and with their parent and wider communities. Schools know they always have aspects of each of these areas of collaboration that need more work than others and strive to do the best they can for the people at the centre of our work – your children, our pupils.



Collaboration in a school community relies on relationships being trustworthy – clear and communicative, with the ability to be challenged while the integrity of all parties remains intact. Why should they be challenging? So that we continue to better ourselves in order to raise the achievement levels of our pupils in a caring, supportive and progressive learning environment.

An example of this at Mt Somers Springburn School at present is our work in the ALL (Accelerated Literacy Learning) Project. The aim of this project is for the school to develop the teaching and learning programmes so that we are not just moving student achievement, but accelerating it. This means we have had to take a good look at our teaching practice in literacy, challenge some of our current practice and look at what we can do to involve our pupils and their parents in raising expectations of them as learners and us as teachers. For us this meant involvement in professional learning development, careful consideration of current and future classroom programmes and having staff who are reflective practitioners with informed pedagogical understandings about educating children. From here we can go about developing programmes, informing parents of why, what and how we are going about it so that we can all collaborate in order to achieve the same outcome – higher achievement levels for pupils.

As well as the learning within the school setting, we are looking forward to the learning across schools that might be achieved through collaboration as part of learning clusters of schools across Mid Canterbury. If informed teacher practice is just one result of such planned collaboration, then we can only look forward to our children's achievement levels continuing to rise.