

Welch, Linda (2003)

Rangitikei College - can the tide be  
turned?

Primary Industry Council  
Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme 2003

Lincoln University

# RURAL HIGH SCHOOL ROLL IN CRISIS

How Rangitikei parents perceive their local  
College and the effect this has on their  
choice of Secondary School

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rangitikei College provides free High School education with transport, for 11 contributing Primary Schools surrounding the township of Marton. Disappointingly, three 45 seater buses with limited standing room only, plus many private cars, pay to transport their children to larger neighbouring Secondary Schools in Wanganui, Feilding and Palmerston North.

Many small rural towns may be suffering the same fate, and Principals are quick to site the blame on such causes as glossy marketing, perception problems that 'bigger is better', along with perceptions from the Community (refer article 'Dominion Post, 23 April 2003).

I decided to conduct my survey to find out what influenced Marton parents' choices when it came to selecting a High School.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Investigate what influences Marton parents' decisions on High School selection.
2. Survey why parents choose/did not choose to send their children to Rangitikei College.

I designed a survey form, with the approval of the Principal of Rangitikei College, and then asked Principals of nine contributing Primary Schools to distribute them to every pupil in their Year Seven and Eight. This accounted for 305 pupils. I received 100 forms completed.

## CONCLUSIONS

The main conclusions drawn are:

1. 76% of parents pay little attention to glossy **advertising brochures**.
2. Listening to **your child's opinion** was a major 71% influence.
3. Reading the **academic achievements** of Schools rated 66% as a major influence.
4. Expecting **strict school discipline** rated 79% as a major influence.
5. The need for **sporting opportunities** rated a strong 67%.
6. **Attitudes of School to general behaviour** (e.g. bullying, truancy) a resounding 88% agreed this was a major influence.
7. **Visible student behaviour**, 73% strong major influence.
8. **Word of mouth**, scored 51% major to 44% minor. Not everyone is easily swayed.
9. Only 26% of parents saw **free transport** as a major influence.
10. The **size of the School** was equally divided at 46% as a major and minor influence.
11. Principals are often mistaken about how parents and students perceive their school.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

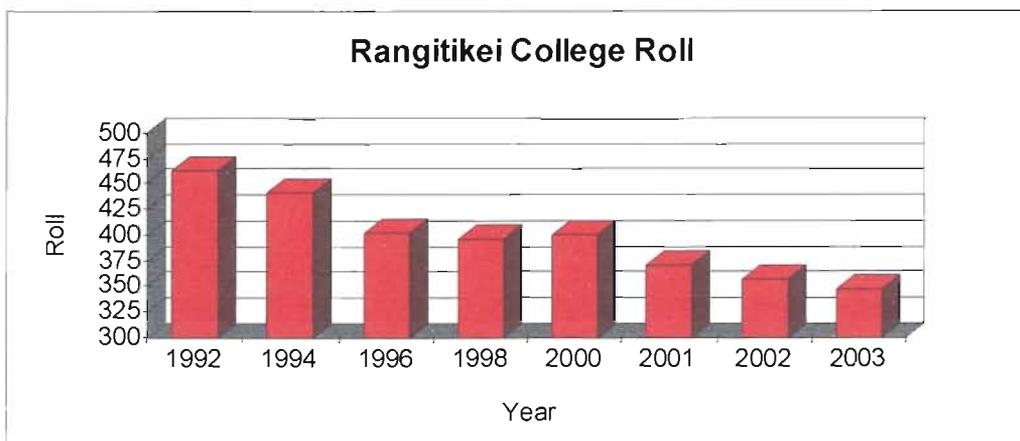
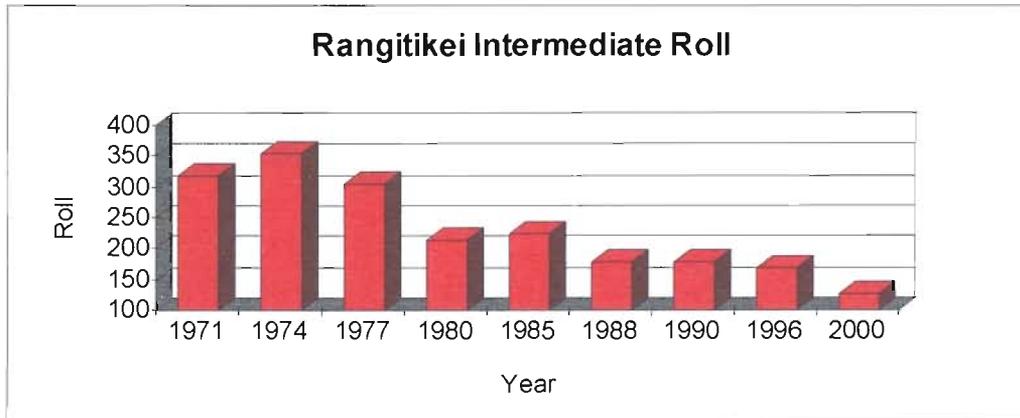
1. Do not exclude Private Primary Schools from your enrolment invitations.
2. Present your Principal and your staff as a vocally strong and united team, especially when you invite prospective parents into your school.
3. Increase emphasis on sporting teams. Hire specialist sports persons to coach and train students.
4. Involve senior pupils in public, as this provides a positive window to be viewed.
5. Involvement of past pupils helps create pride and some examples are as guest speakers, school functions/fundraising and tree planting.

## INTRODUCTION

The township of Marton (population 4767), is nestled into alluvial soils providing excellent returns for the strong agricultural rural community. Marton is situated 38 kilometres south east of Wanganui and 45 kilometres north west of Palmerston North (see map - Appendix C). Both cities boast strong traditional Schools, Technical Institutes and Massey University is located in Palmerston North. Within its own boundary, Marton is amply supplied with 9 primary Schools, 1 private Boys School, 1 Catholic Primary School, Turakina Maori Girls Secondary School, Nga Tawa Diocesan School for Girls (state integrated) and its own Rangitikei College, and up until 2001 an Intermediate School.

### **Background**

As a result of the restructuring of the commercial and major retail outlets in the mid 1980's, many businesses in Marton downsized or closed. Interest rates soared, farmers laid off staff to be replaced by casual labourers. Marton's population in 1986 of 5381 decreased slowly to 5271 in 1996 to its present 4767 in 2001. Some school rolls were also reflecting the drop in population, but perhaps we should also consider what happened to Rangitikei Intermediate and its impact on parental choice, within its short life of 29 years. The township had been forced into the construction of Rangitikei Intermediate in 1971, despite the parents severe opposition, with a handsome opening of 320 pupils. Interestingly, in an interview on National Radio a leading English Educationalist, Ruth Stratton conveyed that "Intermediate concepts are doomed to fail due to the major upheaval within a child's infrastructure. At this vital stage of their development, they can't aspire to be 'top dog' within two short years, thus losing their momentum." (National Radio, 26 August 2003). In the years leading up to Rangitikei Intermediate's demise, many parents had already decided to avoid it, and sent their children to nearby Huntley School for Boys, or else organised transport to integrated Primary schools out of the township. This was the start of the separation of local schooling from the Marton community. Parents seeking upper primary education out of Marton, continued the trend with their choice of secondary schooling. Rangitikei Intermediate's roll continued to decline steadily, over the next 29 years to close in 2000 with a roll of 126.



This Intermediate closure led to three Marton Primary Schools retaining their Year 7 & 8 classes (formerly Form I & II). One contributing Primary School had decided to recapitate 6 years earlier. The Rangitikei College has continued to decline steadily as seen in the graph. In 1992 there were 463 pupils, which has slipped to its present roll of 340 pupils. What has contributed to this trend? Despite the mixed feelings associated with the loss of Rangitikei Intermediate at the time of my survey, I sent 305 forms to cater all Year 7 & 8 children attending local Marton Schools. The results showed a majority of students were going to continue their High Schooling out of Marton. The ratio being 45% Yes to Rangitikei College, 49% No to Rangitikei College and 6% had not decided.

## **PURPOSE OF THIS SURVEY**

Help Rangitikei College reverse its falling role.

By identifying factors influencing parents choice of a Secondary School, and presenting it to the Rangitikei College Board of Trustees, it will hopefully enable the Principal and his staff to focus on what they can actively change to alter perceptions of their School.

## **MAJOR FINDINGS**

Parents are not swayed by the periphery. Their focus is strongly on School's high expectations of:

- A. Attitudes of School to general behaviour (e.g. bullying, truancy) - 88%.
- B. Strict school discipline - 79%.
- C. Visible student behaviour - 73%.
- D. Academic achievement - 69%.
- E. Sporting opportunities - 67% (surprisingly).

Many parents who already support Rangitikei College with their children's education, stated often that the School could improve standards with more attention paid to the above details. Likewise, many parents deciding not to use Rangitikei College, voiced deep concern for their perception of low discipline and behaviour standards not being enforced. Thus compounded by the massive result of 'visible student behaviour' displaying 73% major influence.

Surprisingly the 'sporting opportunities' was very visibly supported (67%) with statements claiming "sports teams help to create pride in a School and school culture". Some parents stated that "rugby and cricket were not valued at Rangitikei College". These facts caused a reaction at the meeting with the Rangitikei College Board of Trustees, as their perception of the value of sporting opportunities was presumed to be of minor influence.

## **LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS**

When I distributed the surveys to contributing School Principals, I had no input as to the emphasis they would place on these survey forms being completed and returned by the due date. Although, I did a short interview with the local free newspaper 'District Monitor', to inform the public of what I was hoping to achieve with their involvement (District Monitor, 5 June 2003).

I have no previous experience with conducting surveys and collating information. Perhaps doing this the long way, definitely gave me insight into the emotive factor within each survey form.

My assumption was by doing a survey I would have figures presented in graph form, but the amount of accompanying comments proved the survey concept to be limited. Therefore I presented the comments with my own overview to provoke discussions and raise awareness of many intangibles.

My typing skills were extremely tested and I thank Jo Sherwin who helped type and present my project with flair.

## THE SURVEY 'DISCUSSION'

I rang Principals from the seven closest Primary Schools surrounding Rangitikei College to inform them of my Kelloggs Rural Leadership challenge and inquired about pupil number in their year seven and eight classes. All contacted schools were extremely positive, as they too felt there was a definite 'perception problem' with Rangitikei College. I proceeded to distribute the survey forms (Appendix B) to such Principals with an explanation note (Appendix A) attached to each survey form for parents/caregivers to read and hopefully participate in. All survey forms had an envelope enclosed and a request to return forms by June 27th. I merely invited Principals to act as a collecting agency over the next two weeks, and was pleasantly pleased when 100 of the 305 forms returned as I had absolutely no influence over this.

<b>Contributing Schools were</b>	<b>Total Year 7 &amp; 8 pupils</b>	<b>Return rate</b>
Huntley School for Boys	25	16
Huntermville Consolidated School	52	17
James Cook School	58	10
Marton Junction School	40	14
Marton Primary	81	24
South Makirikiri School	29	14
St Matthews	<u>20</u>	<u>5</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>100</b>

When the forms were divided into parents deciding to send/not to send their children to Rangitikei College, I was delighted to see I had captured a very balanced reply, which made my survey more valuable as far as providing a balanced presentation for the Rangitikei College Board of Trustees.

<b>Yes</b> to Rangitikei College	45
<b>No</b> to Rangitikei College	49
<b>Not sure</b>	6

## ANALYSIS PROCESS - OUTCOME

As mentioned earlier under 'assumptions', I was motivated to involve the written comments because of their value, adding to the more statistical evidence. This proved to be the overriding strength when I presented it to the Rangitikei College Board of Trustees at their meeting on 21st October 2003.

Presenting pretty graphs with supporting percentages was one thing, but then to quote comments from the survey forms to back up the parents choices was my real ammunition. Many comments reflected honest evidence especially from the parents/caregivers of present day Rangitikei College students. This meant it was not easy for the Principal, his staff and the Board of Trustees to shake it off as silly perceptions.

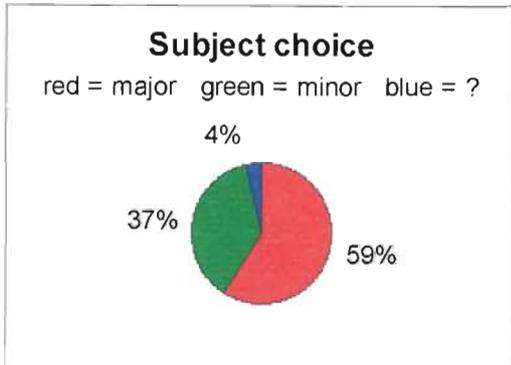
I presented it in an unbiased way, collating all comments that accompanied each decision. But at the conclusion of my presentation of the survey, I made suggestions that hopefully would lead to changes in the way Rangitikei College presented itself.

## Kellogg Rural Leadership Course

### High School selection survey May 2003

What influences you in selecting a suitable High School?

1. **SUBJECT CHOICE** 59% of parents saw this as a major influence when deciding their choice of college.



**Survey comments:**

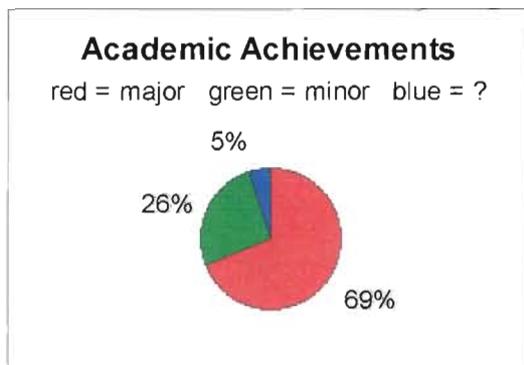
Most common subjects are usually available.  
 Rangitikei College option choices are narrow.  
 Children can always do a course through correspondence.  
 A broad range of subjects provides growth.

2. **ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS** This rated strongly. 69% major, 26% minor. Since the implementation of NCEA, all results are published thus it is very easy to compare any school results in New Zealand. Headlines in the local newspaper, *Wanganui Chronicle* dated May 31st 2003 '**Seven district schools dip out on NCEA**', do nothing to attract pupils. Rangitikei College results showed a 57.1% pass rate. The majority of surrounding high schools scored very differently.

NCEA level one passes - Nga Tawa 98%

- Wanganui Collegiate 88.9%
- Wanganui High School 77.3%
- Wanganui Girls College 63.6%
- Palmerston North Boys High 74.7%
- Palmerston North Girls High 84.7%
- Feilding High School 57.4%

*Dominion Post June 9 2003*



**Survey comments:**

Rangitikei College has low expectation levels.

Average students get lost in the system.

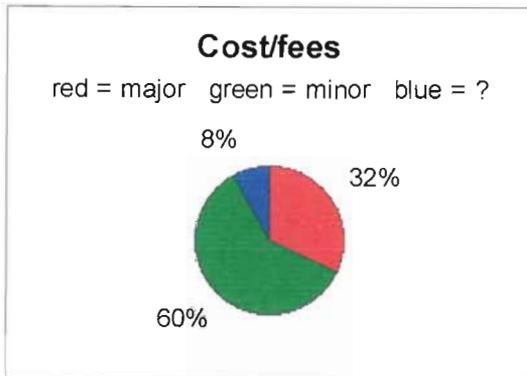
Academic achievements are too low.

Maori students get preferential treatment, students at the school feel there is one standard for Maori and one for the rest of the school.

Why does the PE teacher take one maths class and why does that class consequently fail maths exams?

There should be equal learning opportunities for high and low achievers.

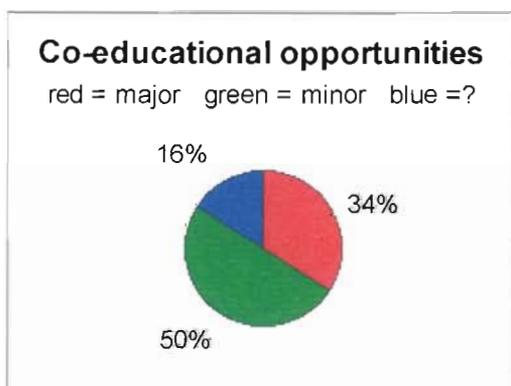
3. **COST/FEES** 60% felt this was a minor influence, not a real problem.

**Survey comments:**

Parents felt they couldnt afford any other option.

The fees are reasonable.

4. **CO-EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES** Half the surveyed parents did not find this a major influence. Interestingly 16% couldnt decide.

**Survey comments:**

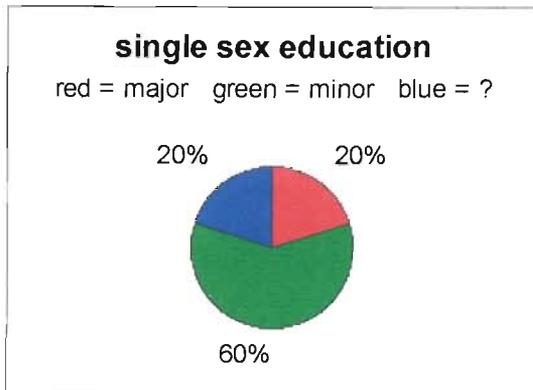
Pleased that Rangitikei College offered well rounded co-ed schooling.

Their children were pleased to attend a college with boys and girls, they could maintain friendships.

Much more natural to be mixed because thats how life is!

Convenient to have brothers and sisters at the same school.

5. **SINGLE SEX EDUCATION** Interestingly 60% consider this a major influence and once again a high 20% were not sure of their decision.



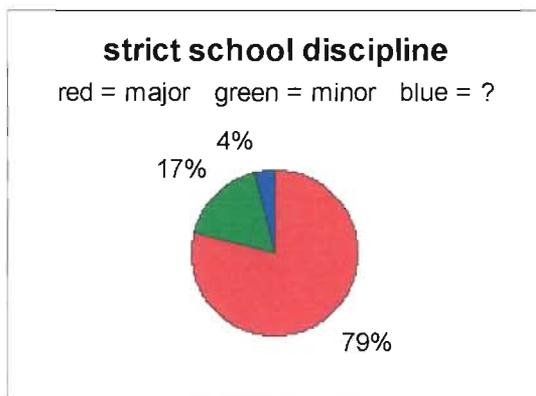
**Survey comments:**

Single sex school's academic results, are worth considering carefully.

Students focus on school and activities and not, the opposite sex.

Prefer single sex secondary school offering, as a boarding option.

6. **STRICT SCHOOL DISCIPLINE** Majority of parents show this as a huge priority - 79%.



**Survey comments:**

Often unacceptable behaviour was not dealt with or handled well (*this was commented on by many parents*).

Children need to learn respect.

Seeing pupils in a school uniform doing things they shouldn't, has a lasting impression.

Changes in leadership can affect school discipline drastically. It's only as good as whoever is there at the time.

Good kids are self-disciplining.

Have appreciated communication from Rangitikei College in regards to discipline.

Moral values and general behaviour of students benefit greatly from strong discipline.

I feel children need strict discipline - it does not happen at Rangitikei College though.

Children need to learn respect, a problem of today's society.

A safe environment is very important.

Other high schools offer zero tolerance to unacceptable behaviour.

Strict school discipline should cover uniform, behaviour, respect not only in school but wider community.

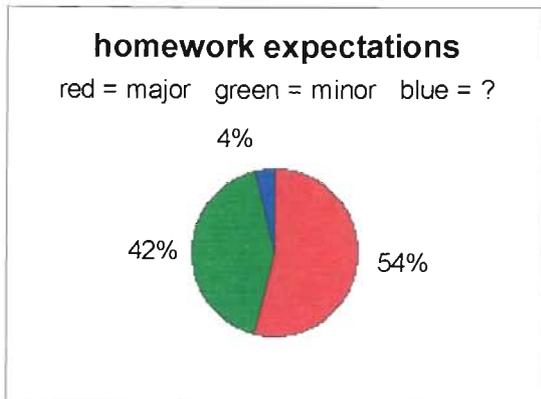
Need for strong boundaries.

Discipline ties in with high expectations which are enforced/reinforced.

Rangitikei College sets its behaviour and discipline expectations far too low.

Rangitikei College discipline is improving.

7. **HOMEWORK EXPECTATIONS** This was surprising in that it was fairly evenly matched as a minor 42% or a major 54% influence. Many Rangitikei College students are visibly seen working in business outlets after school, some examples are in local supermarkets, bookshops and clothing shops.



**Survey comments:**

To achieve academically homework needs to be done and commended by teaching staff.

Effort at home should be as important as effort at school.

Builds life long work/study habits.

Must not just be a fill in.

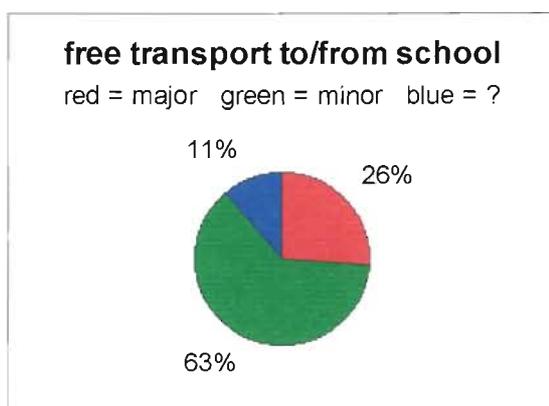
Homework teaches responsibility of time.

Six hours learning a day is enough.

Children should be on detention if homework is not completed.

Homework is the responsibility of the student and their caregivers, not the school.

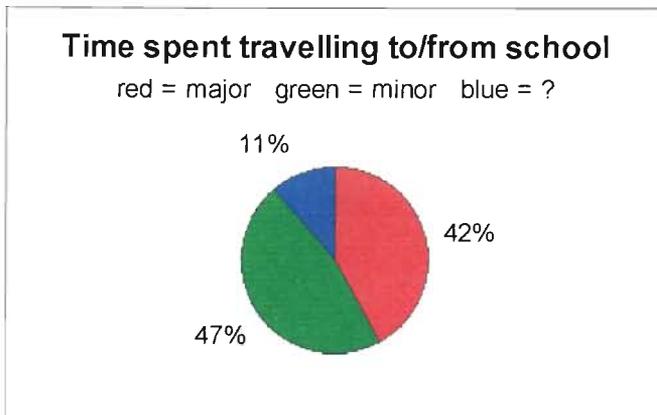
8. **FREE TRANSPORT TO/FROM SCHOOL** 63% saw it as a minor influence which indicates an ability to be very mobile when choosing a school. Lack of a High school bus from some rural parents indicated a preference for boarding school facilities.



**Survey results:**

Free transport convenient when both parents work.

9. **TIME SPENT TRAVELLING TO/FROM SCHOOL** This weighed in very evenly at 42% major to 47% minor.



**Survey results:**

Close to home - good for children to walk/bike to school.

Traveling out of Marton to schools involves leaving at 7.30am and returning 4.30pm. That's too long a day.

Traveling provides time for misbehaviour and major peer influence.

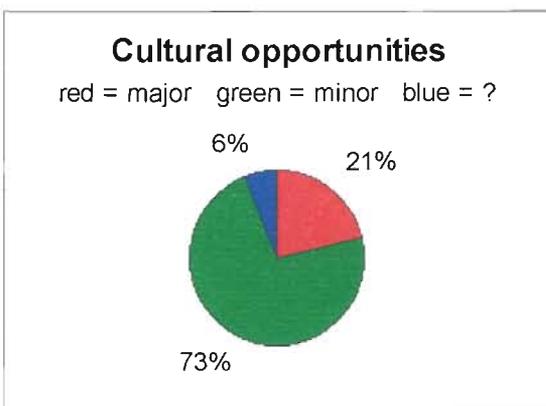
Traveling interferes with outside activities.

For full involvement in school life without spending day and night traveling - boarding has to be an option.

Parents work in Wanganui so transport to school there is not an issue.

Would prefer child didn't spend so long traveling.

10. **CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES** (e.g. Kapa Haka, International Students) Overwhelming support for it being a minor influence. Interestingly two out of the three comments came from parents of Rangitikei College children.



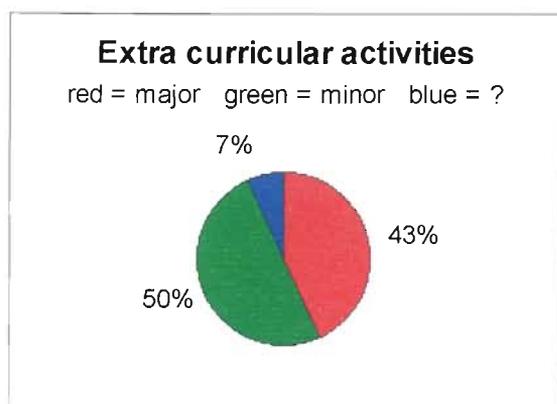
**Survey results:**

Being Kiwis, I think too much emphasis is put on cultural activities.

Too much emphasis on anything Maori.

Cultural opportunities provide an excellent insight into foreign students education and life.

11. **EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES** (e.g. speech, drama, debating) Pretty even voting - 43% major to 50% minor.



**Survey results:**

Provides children with confidence.

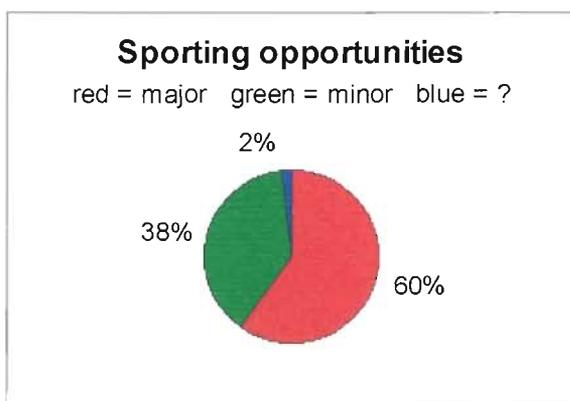
Great to provide these options for individual.

These activities help shape our students for the future as leaders.

Inter-school and wider opportunities to compete and absorb experiences.

Not as important as education.

12. **SPORTING OPPORTUNITIES** A winning majority of 60% as a major influence compared to 38% minor and 4% not sure. Rangitikei College may be limited as to what sports it can provide due to pupil numbers, but this issue brought out very strong comments from many parents.



**Survey results:**

A major factor. Not interested in a school that cannot provide coaches and organised sports teams.

Important for children who excel in sport.

Attention to coaching and team development through all ability areas. High schools should provide enough choices for all to find something they can 'have a go at' and take skills beyond school.

If a child has choices in sporting activities they are more likely to participate.

Children must learn to play as a team.

Sport helps create pride in school and school culture. I feel schools ignore this to their peril.

Rugby and cricket at the school is weak and I don't feel the school values these two sports enough to do something meaningful about it.

Sport is central to creating a positive school tone.

Sport provides greater opportunities and facilities.

Sports are a huge part of my children's lives.

Opportunities and coaching for all students not just the best is significant.

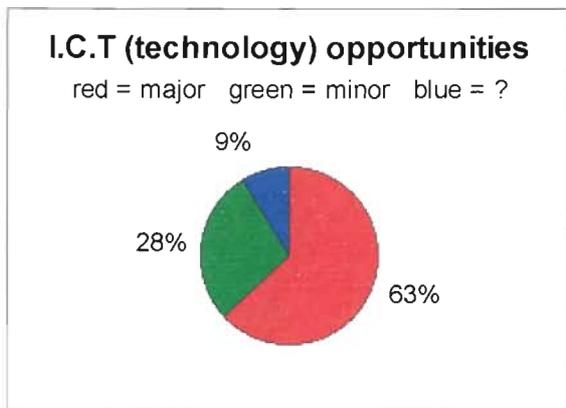
Lack of teams for grading is a disadvantage.

Keeps children fit and they must work as a team.

Children are at the school to learn - there are always sporting groups outside school.

Students must attend practices, and parents can support the games.

13. **I.C.T (TECHNOLOGY) OPPORTUNITIES** The majority of parents, 63% saw I.C.T as definitely a major influence compared to 28% minor and 9% not sure. Rangitikei College opened its new technology suite earlier this year, providing fabulous computer access and staff have upskilled at ongoing courses.



**Survey results:**

Rangitikei College offers an extensive ICT programme.

Its the way the world is developing.

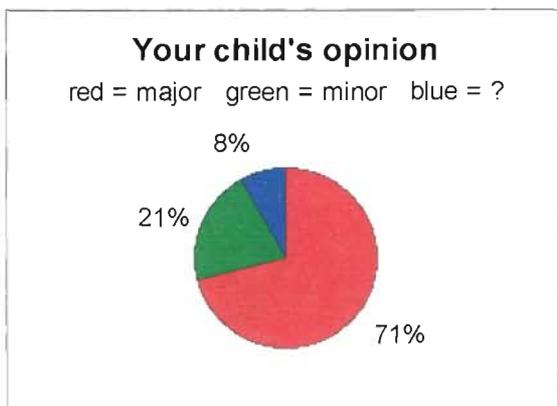
Good facilities are essential.

A balance between technology and basic 3 Rs but exposure and opportunities to develop computer savvy and other ICT resources is important.

Future occupational opportunities can be experimented with at this age.

Rangitikei College technology is of a very high standard.

14. **YOUR CHILD'S OPINION** Parents must really value their children's opinion. A huge 71% displaying the major influence compared to 21% considering it a minor influence and 8% not sure. Any opportunity to influence, including visits, manual training and technicraft from surrounding primary schools, provide a window of impression.



**Survey results:**

What my child sees of the college at manual (behaviour, attitude) has made him feel very anti Rangitikei College.

Technicraft would be a great way for Rangitikei College to influence potential 3rd formers. This is not used positively.

Children are led by peer pressure which sadly has come from their parents who are suffering from the same problem.

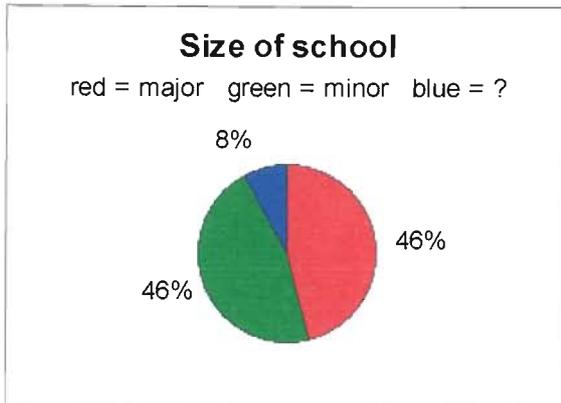
You should listen to what your child wants within reason.

A child should voice an opinion on her/his choice of High School education.

Children can develop at any school if they are so inclined, therefore their opinion is very important.

Our child has friends going to Rangitikei College, child needs to be happy too.

15. **SIZE OF SCHOOL** Rangitikei College has a cosy roll of 340 pupils, and the voting was equally shared for major and minor, both scoring 46% with 8% not sure.



**Survey results:**

More children means more money the school has to use.

Smaller classes means more time for children who struggle.

Class sizes are a major influence.

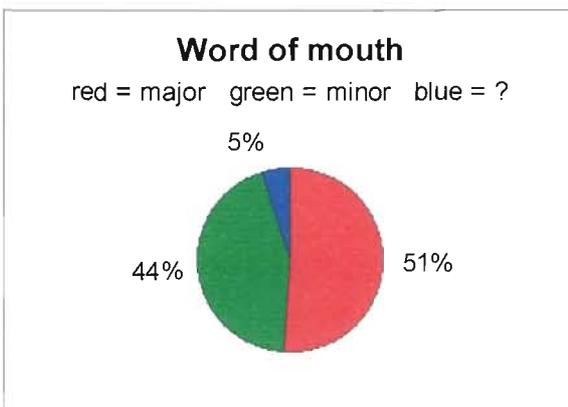
Going from a school of 100 to a school of 1000 has a major impact on a student.

More children means more teachers and subject opportunities. Size of class is a consideration if your needs a lot of help.

At Rangitikei College, the teachers actually know the children.

Small schools offer a 'too sheltered' environment.

16. **WORD OF MOUTH** Only 52% considered this to be a major influence, compared to 44% minor and 4% not sure. Often word of mouth is perceived as being a large influence.



**Survey results:**

Everyone has or knows good and bad for every school.

Listen - but will make my own decisions and choices.

You cant always rely on gossip. Especially in small towns like Marton.

Far too bigger problem at the moment.

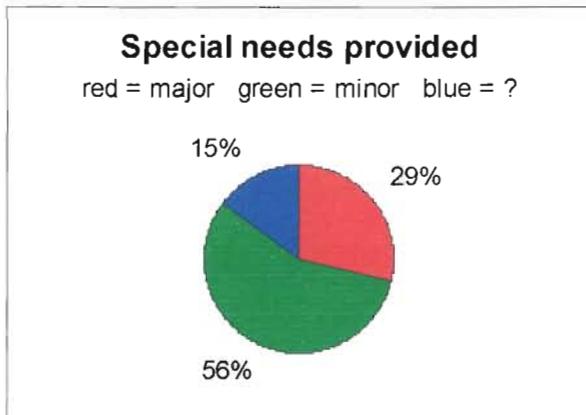
All opinions are different.

You could get influenced the wrong way if you listened to someone with a vendetta.

Word of mouth is more important than brochures.

Opinions of other parents adds to impressions, more than brochures.

17. **SPECIAL NEEDS PROVIDED** Only 29% considered this a priority compared to 56% minor influence. A substantial 15% were unsure. Several surrounding high schools offer extra tuition (free) during lunch times and after school - even on weekends, especially leading up to exams.



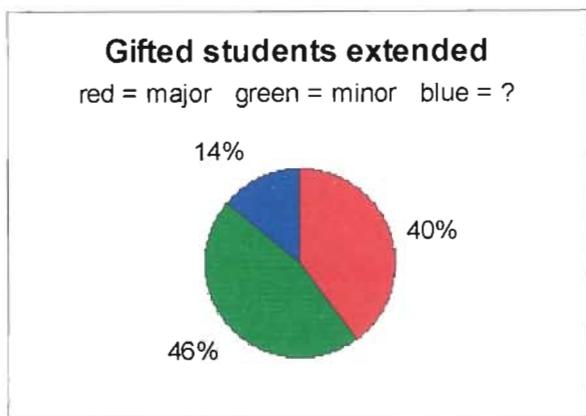
**Survey results:**

Would be a major if this applied to my child.

Special needs are vitally important in a school.

(Many said it was) 'not applicable'.

18. **GIFTED STUDENTS EXTENDED** A fairly even distribution, 40% major to 46% minor influence with 14% unsure.



**Survey results:**

I'd expect that in any school.

Most important.

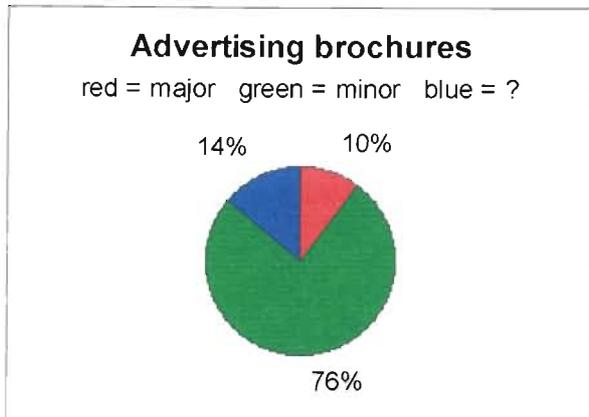
Definitely, why should they be put with children who do not want to learn.

They should have extended classes.

Children who are capable will extend themselves.

Challenges keep them interested.

19. **ADVERTISING BROCHURES** Obviously parents pay little attention to fancy presentations, preferring to be influenced by other factors, reflected in these percentages. Major only 10%, minor 76% and 14% unsure.



**Survey results:**

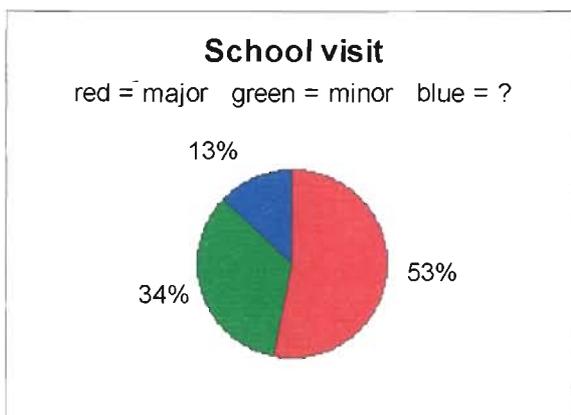
Anything can look good in a brochure.

How much a school has to plough into glossy advertisements is not relevant. I would be more interested in appropriate use of funds to further the childrens' facilities.

Rangitikei College has a few white lies in theirs.

Only a glossy image.

20. **SCHOOL VISIT** This must create a significant impact with 53% major influence, 34% minor and 13% not sure. Very strong views came across in this box.



**Survey results:**

Its great to see facilities offered.

Very important to get 'feel factor' for attitudes and expectations of teachers and students.

Great opportunity to see and read for yourself whats going on.

What you see is like an attitude or a standard.

Liked the openness of the staff and students.

The 'Taster Day' offered fun interactive activities for the students.

Particularly important to meet teachers in classrooms.

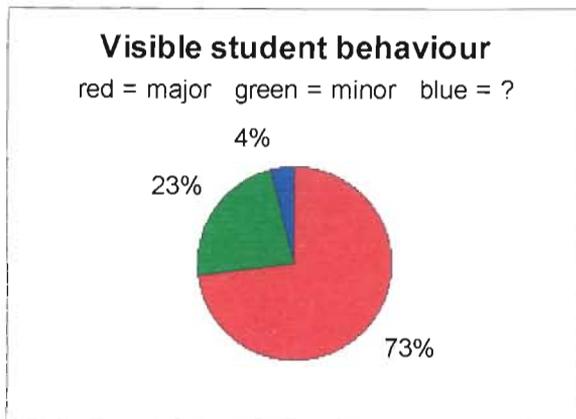
If a school visit makes me consider the school to be unsuitable than I would seriously.

Pretty chaotic at Rangitikei College, I know some people were put off.

Most important for Headmaster to come across well at these.

It is frustrating having some open days in February and others not until June, especially if you're considering a boarding position.

21. **VISIBLE STUDENT BEHAVIOUR** A very strong impact for the majority of parents. 73% major and 23% minor, 4% unsure. Clearly a window which offers everyone an insight into the type of behaviour that is acceptable to each school, easily identifiable by the school uniform.



**Survey results:**

Its off putting when you see slob & foul mouthed kids in uniform.

Attitude of the students reflects on the school.

Do not like to see poor student behaviour but realize it happens at all schools to some extent.

People are surveyed by this.

Public have low tolerance of unsociable behaviour, i.e. spitting, swearing and smoking.

Dont want my kids to be related to a school known for students behaving badly in public.

Rangitikei College have scruffy looking children down town.

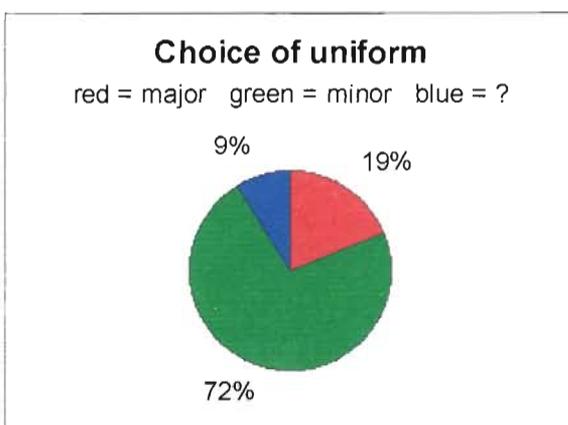
Shows if they are comfortable in their environment.

This has major impact on decision making.

Not impressed with the local student behaviour.

Seeing how students behave inside and outside of the school can give valuable insight into their attitudes towards their school and general behaviour.

22. **CHOICE OF UNIFORM** Despite many negative comments to date identifying a school with its students uniform and behaviour, this appeared not to be a huge influencing factor. 19% major, 72% minor and 9% not sure.



**Survey results:**

Helps with costs, everyone on a par.

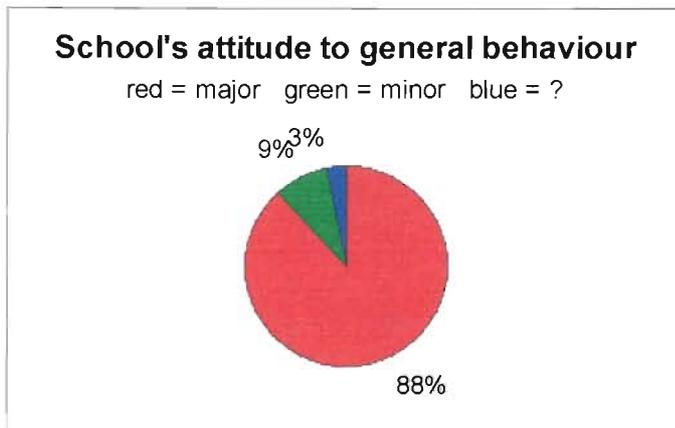
Its only an outside cover.

Strict uniform code preferred.

Never mind choice of uniform, more of influence to us was the schools expectation and enforcement on how it is worn.

Some kids look smart, easily identifiable.  
 As long as cleanliness and tidiness is upheld in wearing it.  
 Sensible choices required and standards adhered to.  
 Public schools have a slack attitude. Not strict enough on regulation.  
 Must be affordable and tidy.  
 Should be abolished.

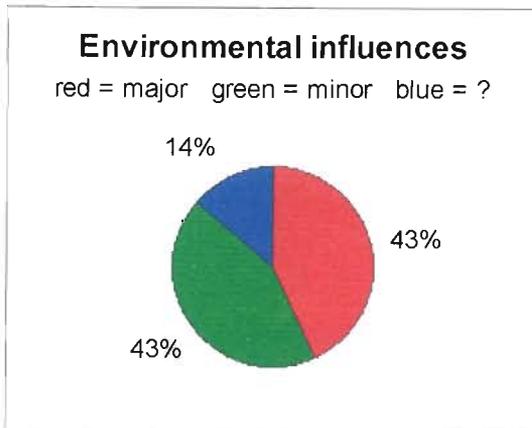
23. **SCHOOL'S ATTITUDE TO GENERAL BEHAVIOUR (e.g. bullying, tuancy)** A resounding 88% agreed with this major influence. A mere 9% ruled it minor and 3% were unsure. Due to very open coverage and publicity of any type of bullying, parents and children are very aware of its impact and implications.



**Survey results:**

Come down hard on it. Expect school to take strong stand.  
 Education covers both intellectual and social skill and as I see it a partnerships between parents and teachers to ensure children understand what is/is not acceptable.  
 I would expect to be contacted if my children were not attending school.  
 I prefer zero tolerance.  
 The Principal leads from the top in these areas.  
 Proper disciplinary options need to be strongly in place to deal with such behaviour.  
 Teachers at Rangitikei College are all approachable. Like the fact that parents are notified if the child is absent.  
 Attitudes of the school to what is acceptable e.g. uniform not worn properly, coloured hair, jewellery.  
 Safety of all students is paramount.  
 Many parents stated that 'no child should get bullied'.  
 Heard there is a 'big bullying problem' at Rangitikei College.  
 Sometimes bullying happens on bus trips to school.  
 Attitudes of school must show respect to teachers. Its in the high expectations being enforced and reinforced.

24. **ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES/GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION** A very even 43% for both major and minor with a substantial 14% unsure. A large number of parents stated they had no other choice than to send their child/ren to the closest college, it was convenient for them to walk/bike there.



**Survey results:**

Problems getting to and from school make other colleges impossible.

Time issue.

Unnecessary traveling undesirable.

Like the fact they can walk to school.

Depends on your situation and if there is an obvious problem there or not.

**QUESTIONS**

I asked four questions at the conclusion of my survey to get the feel of numbers of possible Rangitikei College students.

1. Do you currently have children at Rangitikei College?

**results:** Yes - 30 No - 70

3. If your child/ren are currently at primary school, do you intend to enrol them at Rangitikei College?

**results:** Yes - 45 No - 49 Unsure - 6

Knowing that my survey only received 1/3 of possible replies, we can multiply all figures by 2/3 to get an idea of future flow.

Presuming that approximately half of the surveyed parents have children in Year 8 (Form II) then Rangitikei College can expect at least an increase of  $23 \times \frac{2}{3}$  pupils for each of the next 2 years, from contributing primary schools.

This shows a proposed annual increase of approximately 69 children from a possible 151.

**CONCLUSION**

Rangitikei College has a huge potential resource on its doorstep. 305 potential students for 2004/05. My final question in the survey asked parents 'What was the major influence for their decision to choose/not to choose Rangitikei College as their child's future school. Perhaps these survey comments will offer insight as to what most directs their choice.

**Survey results: (parents answering yes)**

Transport to college. \*\*\*\*\*

Believe Rangitikei College programme and discipline is improving.

Good to attend small community based school, where contact is easy. \*\*\*

Problems effectively dealt with. \*

Our two children are in top classes so have good teachers.

Feel there are 2 standards at the college - 1 for Maori and 1 for non-Maori.

Mixed school.

Good subject choices. \*\*\*

Cant afford any other option.

Past pupil myself.

Taster day was great.

Small school. \*

Happy with quality of teaching staff.

My child's personality and work habits suit Rangitikei College.

Option choices are limited.

Uniform needs tidying up.

Discipline on unacceptable behaviour needs work.

Positive visit.

Classroom behaviour and expectations have deteriorated over recent years.

Sporting and academic results make Rangitikei College our second choice.

Christian Principal and 3rd form dean.

Atmosphere was good.

Happy with discipline.

Children already attending are doing fine.

Rangitikei College offers small classes - more personal education.

Rangitikei College far better resourced than larger schools such as PNBHS and Feilding Ag.

**Survey results: (parents answering no)**

Rugby and cricket at Rangitikei College is weak. The College does not value these sports enough to do something meaningful about it. Sport is central to creating a positive school tone.

Single sex option preferred. \*\*\*

Our third child is very sporty and Rangitikei College could not offer the teams and coaching (particularly cricket and hockey) that we would like provided so he can reach his full potential. Had their sport been stronger we would not hesitate in sending our son there as we have been pleased with the results our other two children achieved at Rangitikei College.

Opportunities for tertiary study.

Disappointed with the 'open evening'. No speech from the Headmaster.

Lacking in strength on high academic expectations. \*\*\*\*

Lacking in discipline. \*\*\*\*

Lacking in tolerance of unacceptable behaviour.

The school did not appear as professional as others. \*

A child is not encouraged to step out of their comfort zone at Rangitikei College.

Siblings already at another school. \*

Poor exam results published. Low academic rating. \*\*\*\*\*

Feilding Agricultural High School offers more subjects.

Perception of Rangitikei College as a Marton citizen. \*

Visible student behaviour of Rangitikei College students in Marton. \*\*\*\*\*

Experienced incident where a teacher walked away from student, indicated no discipline.

I went there and my 3 kids went.

Distance too great - will board children. \*\*\*\*\*

Impressed with ideals and attitudes of staff and principal of FAHS.

Better sporting opportunities. \*\*

Want a school with strong discipline. \*\*\*

Low level of expectations at Rangitikei College.

Chose a school to match our high standards of expectations that is consistent and accountable.

I know at PNBHS unacceptable behaviour is dealt with, appears not to be handled well at Rangitikei College.

I have seen students in school uniform smoking on tennis courts at morning interval.

Want my boys to benefit from full culture immersion.

Not alot of positive Maori role models at the College.

With so many (probably good) students heading out of town, what is the quality of those remaining? \*\*

A perception that I believe, is Rangitikei College sets its behaviour and discipline expectations far too low. \*

Rangitikei College students look sloppy and rough - damn shame. \*

If Rangitikei College was a no-tolerance school we would reconsider.

Fewer subject choices at higher levels.

Working at the school and seeing the attitude of the Headmaster to many major happenings, such as sexual discrimination and sexual abuse towards female staff members.

Poor behaviour particularly in junior classes at year 9 and 10 level.

Set a standard and stick to it. Other schools do and Rangitikei College would do well to take notice.

### **SURVEY RECOMMENDATIONS (to help Rangitikei College boost its student income)**

- The 'Taster day' was an obvious success, as is your liaison day to contributing schools with your current pupils. Huntley School for Boys appear to have been overlooked in both cases. Is this a missed opportunity with a roll of 41 day boys and at least one boy confirmed for entry to Rangitikei College in 2004?
- Open days or evenings you organise are a great opportunity to influence parents on your strengths. Many parents noted that the Principal did not speak and perhaps there is an opportunity here to change the format, to be seen as a strong united team.
- Many parents commented on lack of sporting opportunities and the low value Rangitikei College appears to put on rugby, cricket and hockey. If sport is central to creating a positive school, could you consider hiring specialist sports people, like you have with your music department (which is often featured in the local paper for excellent achievement). Perhaps employ well known sport personality to coach some teams. Can Sport Wanganui offer assistance?
- Students uniform and behaviour, needs united front in and out of school.
- Involvement of senior pupils in public, provides a positive window to be viewed.
- Involvement of past pupils helps create pride towards a school e.g. planting trees, visiting speakers, and invitations to view changes.

## REFERENCES

District Monitor "*High School survey*" June, 2003 pg 4.

Dominion Post "*Rural Schools learn to fight for pupils*" April, 2003 pg A9.

Dominion Post "*Pass marks.....how Secondary Schools fared*" June, 2003 pg A7.

National Program Talkback Radio "*Intermediate School problems!*" Ruth Sutton, 2003.

Wanganui Chronicle "*Seven district Schools dip out on NCEA*" May, 2003 pg 2.

## APPENDICES

Appendix A - Survey explanation letter

Appendix B - Survey form

Appendix C - Map

Linda Welch  
Warren Road  
R D 2  
MARTON  
Ph: 06-3276507

Hello, my name is Linda Welch and as part of my Kellogg Rural Leadership course at Lincoln University, I have to undertake a study in my rural community, that may or may not lead to change.

Considering the problem facing many rural High Schools of falling rolls, I have decided to investigate what influences Marton parents decisions on where to send their children to High School. This questionnaire will remain anonymous and strictly confidential, there will be an opportunity to review the results which will be advised via your school's newsletter. Please place your completed questionnaire in the envelope provided and return it to school by June 27th.

Thankyou, I appreciate your assistance.

Linda Welch

## Kellogg Rural Leadership Course

### High School selection survey May 2003

Please answer each question by ticking the box that best describes your decisions.

The box below each question is available for any comments you wish to make about each particular topic, I would appreciate your personal comments as this would greatly assist in getting as true a picture of your opinions which will make my survey more meaningful.

What influences you in selecting a suitable High School?

major  
influence      minor  
influence      not  
sure

Subject choice  Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic Achievements  Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cost/fees  Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-educational opportunities  Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Single sex education  Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strict school discipline  Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Homework expectations  Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

major influence      minor influence      not sure

Free transport to/from school Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Time spent traveling to/from school Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cultural opportunities e.g: Kapa Haka/International Students Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extra curricular activities e.g: speech/drama/debating Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sporting opportunities Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I.C.T (technology) opportunities Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your child's opinion Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Size of school Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Word of mouth Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Special needs provided Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	major influence	minor influence	not sure
Gifted students extended Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advertising brochures Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School visit Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visible student behaviour Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Choice of uniform Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attitudes of the school to general behaviour e.g bullying, truancy,etc Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental influences/geographical situation Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. Do you currently have children attending Rangitikei College?      Yes       No
2. If not, what High School/s do they attend? \_\_\_\_\_
3. If your child/children are currently at a Primary School do you intend to enroll them at Rangitikei College?      Yes       No
4. What was the major influence for your decision?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your time.  
Linda Welch

