

# Once upon a time...in 2017

Home / 2017 / February / Opinion piece / Once upon a time...in 2017



One of the great things about our Christmas and summer holidays being rolled into one, is the opportunity to take a break from our everyday routines, sit back, and have some space to think. We educators find ourselves in the unaccustomed situation of having time to reflect — and to allow ourselves the luxury of proactive (rather than reactive) thinking.

Time with family and friends, and the consideration of new goals (resolutions) for a new year can also be springboards for bigger-picture thinking — about our work, our society, and the world we are developing for future generations. I've been doing just that, and would like to share my ponderings with you...

We are in the privileged position of helping to shape young lives, and that means that alongside providing our young learners with relevant tools, processes, and strategies to engage in new learning, we need to support them to develop the wisdom to use these well. (This might be thought of by some as an old-fashioned word, but the time for its renaissance has arrived).

In New Zealand we are fortunate to have a [curriculum](#) that allows for values (deeply-held beliefs) to be woven through school experiences. Students come to understand the social importance of enacting responsibility alongside rights; of practising [manaakitanga and whanaungatanga](#). They are supported to take ownership as they authentically apply these principles and values. This learning comes through their exposure to experiences and ideas — some directed towards them; some sought by them; some that they have come across unexpectedly — formally and informally.

Once upon a time, we educators deliberately designed specific opportunities for our tamariki to discover, to grow understanding, and to form their identities, around such values. We 'wove spells' of teacher-directed planning to keep our children within safe (though perhaps stifling) boundaries that kept us and them comfortable. But in this new, exciting, beckoning, expanding digital learning environment where we encourage student agency and foster

independent and collaborative exploration of terra incognita (unknown territories) via the internet, we also need to acknowledge that, in the words of the early maps, 'Here be dragons'. We have a responsibility to furnish our young people with awareness of possible pitfalls. We need to help them to predict, recognise, and avoid the modern-day monsters of the information highway, so that they can bypass the highway robbers of false information, potential time-wasting purposeless screen time, and the dangerous quagmire of negative social media.

We need to find ways to help our akonga/learners to make the best of digital aspects of their lives, whilst independently and automatically:

- recognising the signs of 'fake news'/ false websites/ biased information/viral emails etc
- bursting out of the social media and search engine filter bubbles that only give them more of what they have already experienced, and trap them in a limited digital world
- breaking free of the tyranny of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and applying their personal filter as to what is worth spending their time attending to
- finding joy, satisfaction, and balance in real and digital/virtual world activities
- keeping the human experience in focus rather than automated/robotic 'convenience'
- becoming wise enough to work towards a collective better world, whilst nurturing their own needs and aspirations

... and of course, we don't have a magic wand to do all this. But we do have each other.

So — let's pull together, modelling how to use our traditional and digital networks safely and effectively, in the best ways that we can learn how, and weave those positive spells. If you're not sure where to start, why not contact [CORE Education](#)? We've been doing some thinking....

Safer Internet Day:

You can join in a [discussion](#) about internet safety on the Virtual Learning Network (VLN). [Safer Internet Day](#) is 7th February 2017.

A few resources:

- Other relevant blog posts by [James Hopkins](#), [Chrissie Butler](#) and [Tessa Gray](#).
- See [CORE's 5 top tips for a safer Internet](#)
- Download an [A3 poster of CORE's 5 top tips for a safer Internet](#)
- Learn more at the '[Establishing Digital Citizenship in your school](#)' workshop in Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin
- More [resources from Netsafe](#)



## **Sue Bridges**

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