



NEXT Champions

Giving encourages giving. On top of the generosity of our founders we are also privileged to have many other generous New Zealanders giving NEXT their time, expertise and experience to help achieve our goals in education, the environment, and strategic philanthropy. We call these people our Champions – they are a critical part of how NEXT works to provide more than just financial support to for-purpose organisations.

We are extremely grateful for the Champions contributions, and we know the organisations they each support feel the same way. In this series we profile some of our Champions and discover what makes them tick . . .



INTRODUCING

MARGARET BENDALL CNZM

Margaret Bendall is a lifelong educationalist, spending much of her career in teaching and leadership - in the development of national frameworks to guide teaching, learning and school leadership in Aotearoa New Zealand, and as a secondary school principal. In recent years she has been a mentor for other principals and school leaders. Her experience has made her come full circle – she is now a strong advocate for the importance of the first 1,000 days of life and was an important influencer for NEXT, encouraging investment in early years education.

“I advocated for philanthropic investment in the crucial early years during my time with NEXT; babies and small children are learning more and faster than most of us imagine, and their learning must be nurtured attentively and with love if they are to be lifelong learners.”

1. What is your relationship with NEXT and how did that come about?

When NEXT was launched I was working for the University of Auckland, in partnership with Ako Mātātupu Teach First NZ, to establish a new pathway into secondary teaching, focused on schools in poorer communities. The establishment of Ako Mātātupu Teach First NZ was supported by a Plowman family trust and through that connection I was invited to join NEXT's original Advisory Group.

2. What are the ways that you engage with the Foundation and with the wider NEXT community?

Initially I was an advisor to NEXT, as the organisation explored the education landscape. We sought to identify projects with the potential to impact on the significant challenges Aotearoa New Zealand faces, as our education system strives to maximise the potential of all our diverse learners to grow into capable, contributing and confident citizens.

I was for a time actively involved on behalf of NEXT in the Rotorua-based project, Ngā Pūmanawa e Waru, and later, until the end of 2021, I chaired regular meetings of NEXT's Waka Kaihautū, the talented people NEXT asked to work alongside and support the leaders of each of the education projects selected for funding, and did so willingly.

3. Why do you engage with NEXT?

NEXT is optimistic and idealistic, driven by wanting the best possible future for this land and its people, and business-like in supporting people in selected projects to work towards their goals. I respect Bill Kermodé's leadership.

I wholly support NEXT's stated commitment to partnership. Working together in mutually respectful partnerships to advance education projects, both educators and business people can learn from each other and achieve shared goals. Over the years since its launch, I've admired NEXT being open to learning, both in education generally, and in the context of working alongside Māori.

4. What has changed for you as a result of your relationship with the Foundation?

I've met some fine people with a wide range of experiences and expertise, genuinely altruistic people who are more than willing to give their time to making progress towards challenging ideals. I've valued the opportunity to work alongside them.

5. Has NEXT influenced your behaviour in regards to generosity and making a difference in the world?

I very much admire the Plowman family's generosity in setting up a foundation in which good and capable people

are entrusted with spending down capital over a fixed period of time. The model enables serious, immediate investment, and so empowers many people to give their time to seeking knowledge and understanding about the needs of the community they live in, now, in order to make informed decisions about where investment can have the greatest impact for a better future.

6. Has NEXT supported you to make a difference in your own areas of passion or interest?

I had a career in secondary school education and leadership, but we now know that the ability to learn with others and from others must be developed much, much earlier than at school. So I advocated for philanthropic investment in the crucial early years during my time with NEXT; babies and small children are learning more and faster than most of us imagine, and their learning must be nurtured attentively and with love if they are to be life long learners.

As I've begun to step back from my most recent professional work, mentoring school leaders, I've had more time for my own voluntary work in this early years space. I am passionate about strengthening the knowledge and skills of parents and whānau to support our smallest citizens during the crucial first years of their lives, as they develop and grow both cognitively and socially, through love and through language. I'm now involved with the Plunket and Storytime organisations.

7. What's one learning in strategic philanthropy for you?

Effective strategic philanthropy is led by wise, flexible people who accept complexity rather than seeking to simplify, especially in education. In collaborative, trusting partnerships around shared goals, both philanthropists and those they support can learn from each other.

8. What is the future you dream of for NZ for generations to come?

We are a nation of people who know and care for our country, the land and the people. We understand our nationhood as uniquely bicultural, and on that foundation we welcome new New Zealanders, valuing their diversity. We treasure children, all children, and invest in making sure all of them are supported from the very beginning of their lives to ensure they can maximise their potential. Collectively, they are our future. We focus on building connections and partnerships based on respect for each other and openness to learning.

*Ēhara tāku toa i te toa takitahi, ēngari he toa takitini
My strength is not as an individual, but as a collective.*