

## NEW ZEALAND – THE SECONDARY FUTURES PROJECT

New Zealand has a national education system. In 2002, the Ministry of Education along with a newly elected government was interested in developing a broad-ranging discussion about what secondary schooling would be like in twenty years. Secondary Futures began after a strategy briefing by the Ministry of Education to the government highlighting the need to work with the schooling sector and the community to generate dialogue about the purpose and direction of secondary schooling. At the same time, there was a desire to focus the professional debate around the issues of quality teaching, student outcomes, and diversity issues. There was general consensus among education sector stakeholders that thinking about the future should be done in a structured approach and that this would be helped through participation in the OECD project. The timescale for the New Zealand's project covers a period of twenty years.

Secondary Futures helps New Zealanders create a vision for secondary education by:

- *Creating space* to contemplate the future
- *Providing tools* to resource thinking about the future
- *Sharing trends* for the future direction of New Zealand society
- *Sharing information* about possibilities to make more students more successful
- *Eliciting people's preferences* in relation to the future of the New Zealand education system
- *Supporting change* by taking information out to others.

### Process design

The *Secondary Futures Project* was conceived by the New Zealand Ministry of Education and various sector stakeholders. New Zealand took a unique approach to group composition by appointing four *guardians* with high profiles in the fields of tertiary and Māori education, business innovation, education leadership, and sporting achievement whose role was to protect the integrity and autonomy of the process. They were responsible for creating a space for dialogue by protecting the process from short-term policy and industry debates, a role foreseen to develop as the guardians use their national profile to create networks and to install confidence in the project. They were aided by a small *secretariat team* as an autonomous group from the Ministry of Education. The secretariat provided the guardians with access to research and information resources and to administrative support. There was also a *touchstone group* comprised mainly of NGOs that functioned as a reference group and a conduit to key education sector organisations.

Participation of culturally and professionally diverse groups has been encouraged and the debate on schooling widened to include new voices and participants. The major challenges include determining the

best method of data collection for research and to use to effect change at local, national, and regional levels.

Like the original process that designed the *Schooling for Tomorrow* scenarios, the *Secondary Futures* project has a critical desk-based aspect. The New Zealand government is interested in promoting futures projects in different sectors such as the labour market, immigration, sustainable business, biotechnology, and information and communications technology. The Secondary Futures project is working with these other projects on trends and values through which to analyze the context and opportunities for schooling in the future.

### ***Character Narratives and Preference Matrix***

The focus of the Secondary Futures programme was on learners twenty years from now. The New Zealand group viewed the OECD scenarios as an opportunity to “leap into the future” and as a tool for group discussions. The scenarios were modified however, into frameworks that were accessible to New Zealand audiences (see box). The new scenarios used plain language while seeking to be faithful to the originals. Narratives of the various scenarios were developed that helped participants “walk in the shoes” of New Zealanders of the future.

#### *Step 1: Interview with a Citizen from 2025*

Futures literacy is promoted through a simulated interview with a citizen from 2025. This activity introduces participants to futures language and approaches and allows them to brainstorm on what the future might look like.

#### *Step 2: Original Scenarios and Role Playing*

The New Zealand research group determined the “status quo” scenario was counter-productive to futures thinking by focusing people back to the present when the goal is to free them to imagine, having considered whether leaving this scenario out distorts or invalidates the responses to other scenarios. In the end, four of the OECD Scenarios were adapted into frameworks that included concepts and key components that were interpreted in language that would be more accessible in a New Zealand setting.<sup>1</sup> They were described as: Social Centres, Focused Learning Centres, Networked Learning Society, and Individualised Choices.

A set of five roles or personas, each of whom had a name, is developed - a learner, a learning facilitator/teacher, a parent, an employer, and a community leader/school administrator – and applied to each of the scenario frameworks. Narratives are then developed for each persona that allows participants to experience the future space; within each narrative, details of place, age, ethnicity, and family composition are included.

<b>Secondary Futures Scenarios</b>
Social Centres. Many learning and personal development aims
Focused Learning Centres. High value on information and knowledge

<sup>1</sup> The ‘Status Quo’ and ‘Meltdown’ scenarios were not used for reasons given earlier of wishing to avoid catastrophic futures or those which focus people back to the present.

Networked learning society where education is fully incorporated.

Individual choices. A personalised model of learning in which individual choices shape what and how we learn.

### *Step 3: A Preference Matrix*

Workshop participants then use a preference matrix in order to elicit prioritised preferences for each framework and determine a hierarchy of desirable features of schooling options.

### *Step 4: Dialogue*

The final step is an open dialogue about the future of education that draws on the experiential lessons from the previous stages.

## **Further Developments after the Early Design**

In the period since the Toronto conference, New Zealand's Secondary Futures project has made significant progress both with the development of resources for conducting a futures focused conversation on possibilities for education, and with the organisation of information communicated as part of this conversation.

### ***1. Conducting the conversation***

#### *Participants*

Secondary Futures is charged with having a wide-ranging conversation, bringing in a range of voices, especially those not traditionally heard, into the debate shaping education policy. The Guardians and staff of the project have run workshops and addressed conferences all around New Zealand, predominantly in the education sector, and with youth audiences, as well as engaging with the business and community sector.

A number of workshop formats have been devised, to accommodate participants' needs. The optimum format takes place over a three hour period, and gives participants sufficient time to start exploring preferences for the future of schooling.

Secondary Futures has collected formal written feedback from over 900 participants in workshops, and engaged with hundreds more.

#### *Disengaging from the present*

Secondary Futures considered feedback from the Toronto conference around selecting only the re-schooling and de-schooling scenarios from "Schooling for Tomorrow" as the basis for discussion, and omitting the "status quo" scenarios. Pilot workshops held locally confirmed the earlier view that conditions in New Zealand were right for exploring alternatives to the bureaucratic school systems. The motivation behind the "status quo" scenarios, where "dissatisfaction does not reach the level where it precipitates real change"<sup>2</sup> was largely redundant for the New Zealand context.

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<sup>2</sup>" 'Unique Creation' – Possible futures Four scenarios for 21<sup>st</sup> century schooling," Riel Miller, Tom Bentley, NCSL, Nottingham, 2002

A new activity, creating an epitaph for secondary education, has been introduced at the beginning of workshops. Participants are asked, “If secondary education died tomorrow, what would be its epitaph?” This provides a springboard for participants to disengage from today and acknowledge the desirability of exploring new possibilities. Overwhelmingly, epitaphs gathered from those working within the education sector, express negative perceptions of the current system. By reflecting on attitudes towards the current system and sharing these responses, participants are motivated to engage in a wide-ranging exploration of possibilities for the future.

### *Contemplating the future*

As part of the process of creating possibilities for education in the future, workshop participants requested help to first imagine a plausible future. While Secondary Futures is not in the business of predictions, the project has conducted extensive STEEP analysis to ensure that all discussions regarding the future are grounded in plausible and credible trend information. From this scanning, a range of tools has been developed to stimulate thinking about what New Zealand might be like in twenty years.

A series of timeshift card has been created. These identify social, technological, economic, environmental and political snapshots twenty years ago and today – then prompt participants to think about how that trend might evolve in twenty years’ time (see appendix 1). These are predominantly a visual resource, servicing the project’s mandate to bring a range of voices, including youth and a range of ethnic groups and people with low levels of literacy into the debate shaping education policy.

Statistical trends, such as those around New Zealand’s changing demographic profile, have been converted into a series of “possible” and “probable” trends cards (see appendix 2). A series of “wildcards” have been created to suggest potential side-swipes that might impact on the future of schooling (see appendix 3). Having considered possibilities for the future of New Zealand society, participants are then invited to consider what a school leaver might need in order to be successful in this world.

### *Deficiencies of the “frameworks”*

Further trialling of the scenario frameworks Secondary Futures developed prior to June 2004 suggested two fundamental flaws in the effectiveness of such detailed stories as a resource for futures thinking conversations.

- The first was that reading the framework was too time-consuming in workshops. There was also potential to exclude participants, on the basis of literacy, from the Secondary Futures conversation.
- The second was that the frameworks were too detailed to allow participants much scope for *imagining* the future. All imagining had been prescribed.

### *‘Reversioned’ scenarios*

A series of ‘snapshot’ scenarios, derived from ‘Schools as Core Social Centres’, ‘Schools as Focused Learning Organisations’, ‘Learning Networks and the Network Society’ and ‘Extending the Market Model’ but summarised and adapted for New Zealand audiences, were produced. Known as the Blue, Red, Yellow and Green scenarios (see appendix 4), these bulleted scenarios allow participants sufficient

information to imagine what each schooling experience might ‘look’ like, and to take on the role of learners, teachers, parents, education and community leaders.

### *Key questions*

To create a vision for secondary education, broad questions need to be asked about the nature, purpose and form of secondary schooling and about the values and preferences New Zealanders have for the future. Independent research commissioned by Secondary Futures identified three key questions, posed in the context of twenty years hence:

- What is the purpose of secondary education?
- How can secondary education best enable young people for their futures?
- How could learning happen?

These questions provide an essential component of the research methodology for the evolving needs of the project.

## **2. Data collection**

- **Key themes**

Having analysed hundreds of responses to the key questions, five clear “themes” have emerged that are fundamental to New Zealanders’ vision for secondary education in the future.

These themes are:

### **a) ‘Students first’**

This theme explores student-centred learning, what it might look like, and what it would mean for organising and delivering secondary education in the future.

Schooling moves away from a ‘one size fits all’ model, and places the goals, aspirations, and context of each student at the centre of delivery.

In this vision, a student’s dreams and talents are pivotal and defining; students articulate and lead their learning goals.

### **b) ‘Inspiring teachers’**

This theme investigates the re-definition of ‘teacher’, moving away from the traditional role as leaders who transfer knowledge, to teachers as mentors, guides and facilitators working alongside learners.

In this vision, more partnerships would occur and teachers would become more flexible, professional specialists.

### **c) ‘Social effects’**

This theme explores how future secondary education can enable each student to achieve whatever outcomes are best suited to their context; who they are and where they come from.

The outcomes of secondary education are multiple and layered. Success does not refer solely to academic outcomes. ‘Social’ outcomes are at least as important.

In this vision, secondary education enables young people to participate, to contribute, to succeed – as citizens, as part of the economy, as members of families, or part of communities.

**d) ‘Community connectedness’**

This theme investigates preferences around how schooling and the community might connect in the future.

Learning is more connected to the people and places outside the immediate school environment and harnesses all the resources of the community.

In this vision, families, parents and industry and community leaders are all potential sources of knowledge, inspiration and role models who could enhance learning opportunities.

**e) The place of technology**

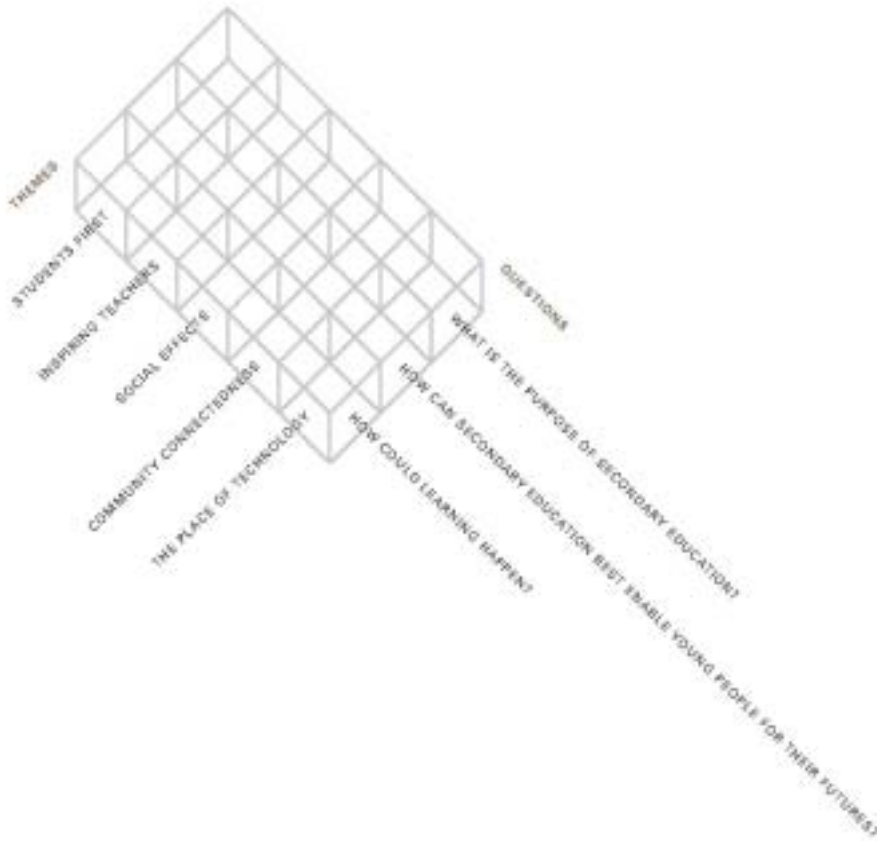
This theme examines preferences regarding the role of technology in future education.

There is no doubt that technology will be influential in the organisation of schooling, though opinions about its impact range from optimism, to deep uncertainty and fear. Young people, for instance, worry that a technology-centred learning environment may come at the expense of social interaction.

- **The matrix**

The conversations conducted in 2004 were based on three key questions. From analysis of the hundreds of responses to these questions and the issues raised by participants five themes have emerged. The themes and key questions have been combined by Secondary Futures into a three-dimensional matrix.

# MATRIX



This matrix provides the structure for ongoing conversations, investigations and analysis in 2005. It is intended that the matrix will provide a framework for organisation and analysis of the complex and multi-layered data which arises from our conversations.

The matrix will also serve as a virtual filing cabinet – an online repository for information gathered during the course of the Secondary Futures conversation, and as a reservoir of stimulus material to sustain and drive the conversation over the next two years.

### 3. Other projects

- “New schools” project

Secondary Futures has initiated a project bringing the leaders of newly formed schools together.

Often, the freedom of a new site or new staff provides opportunities for these leaders to be innovative and work differently with learners. Yet a new site or staff are not necessary conditions for these changes. Secondary Futures is collecting stories from these schools and shares them with other schools, so they can consider how they might apply in their own communities. Barriers to change are identified, so that these might be addressed and obviated in the future. Secondary Futures then facilitates the exchange of this information with the state agencies that are in a position to dismantle these barriers.

- Supporting Futures thinking capability

Secondary Futures is working with futures projects in the state sector to build futures thinking capability across a range of sectors.

#### **4. Feedback and reflection**

As a result of extensive trialling and testing in 2004, Secondary Futures now has a toolbox of resources which can be used to systematically assist people to explore possible futures, the implications for education, and their preferences for schooling in the future. The process and tools developed by Secondary Futures are effective at developing capacity across a range of groups and sectors, including government, community and education, and building basic futures literacy. This capacity building has been acknowledged by all who participated as both necessary and valuable in their current work.

Overwhelmingly, feedback from participants in workshops has endorsed the value working with Secondary Futures to think about a distant future, the methodology, and the resources developed to stimulate rigorous imagining.

*“What have we learned?”*

*We’ve learned that there’s a lot of interest in our work.*

*That with help, people can think seriously about the future.*

*People we’ve worked with are starting to think outside the box they traditionally think in, extending their own networks, and working alongside others to think about how to get the best for students.*

*And some are starting to take an in-depth look at some future possibilities.”*

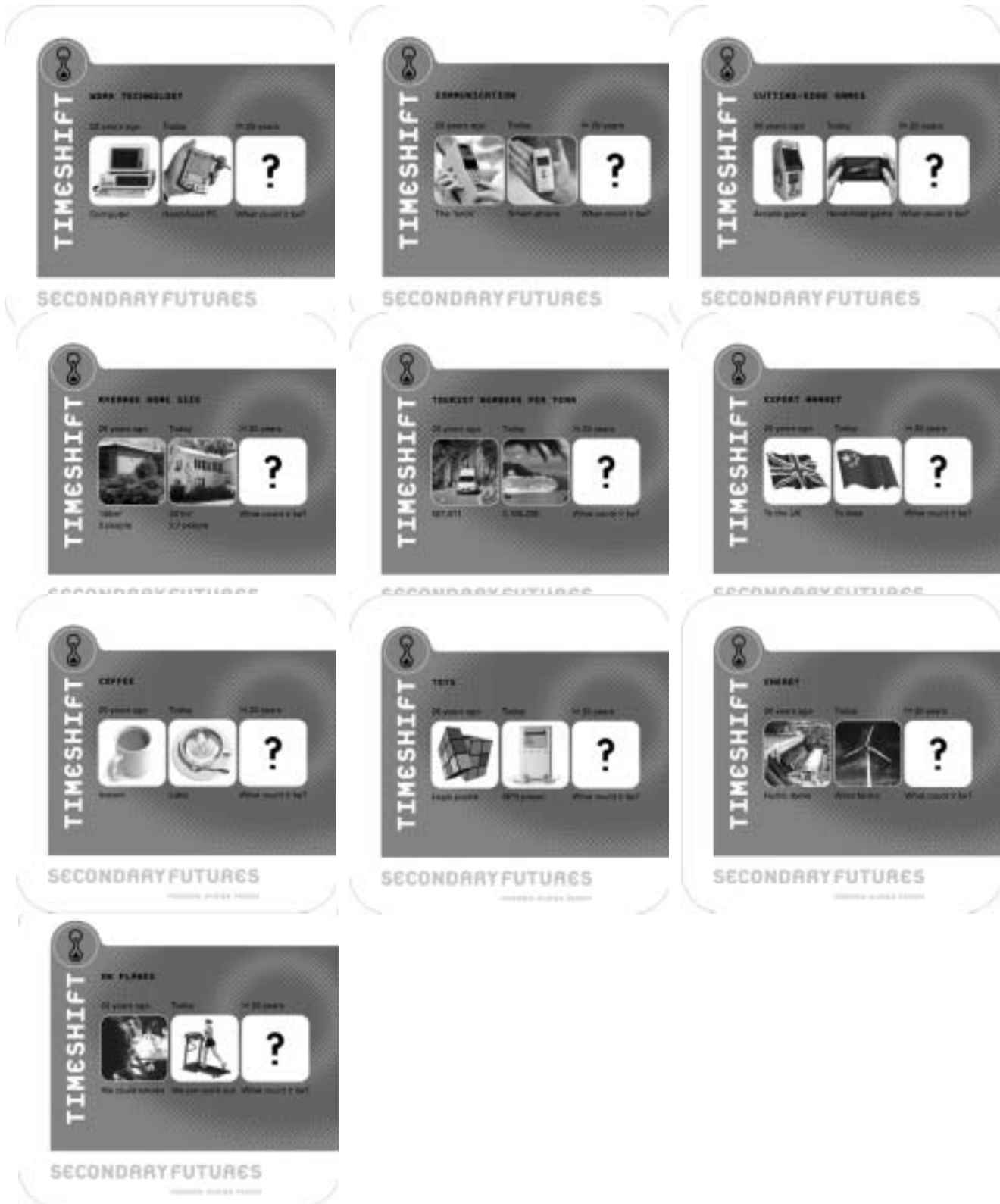
Mason Durie

Chair of the Secondary Futures Guardians, November 2004

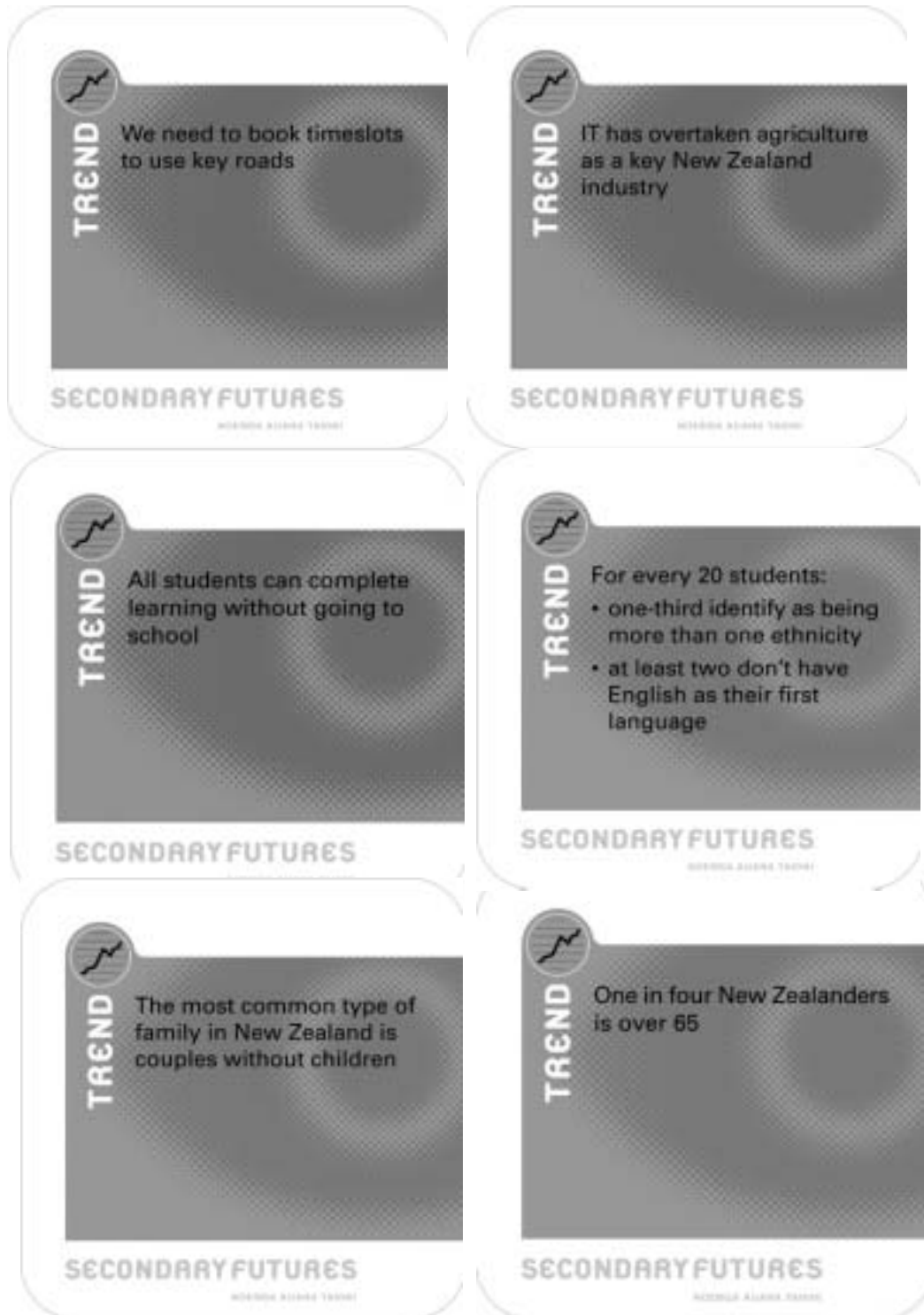
Secondary Futures has commissioned an external evaluation of the project’s methodology and effectiveness to be conducted over the next three years. A report for stakeholders on how Secondary Futures has worked in 2004 is available on our website – [http://www.secondaryfutures.co.nz/downloads/End\\_of\\_Year\\_Report.pdf](http://www.secondaryfutures.co.nz/downloads/End_of_Year_Report.pdf)

Appendix 1

Timeshift cards



Appendix 2  
Possible and probable trends cards



Appendix 3  
Wildcards



**WILDCARD** Internet is wiped out by a worldwide virus

**SECONDARY FUTURES**

WORLDWIDE EPIDEMIC TALKING



**WILDCARD** Energy costs close unheated schools in July and August

**SECONDARY FUTURES**

WORLDWIDE EPIDEMIC TALKING



**WILDCARD** Internet is wiped out by a worldwide virus

**SECONDARY FUTURES**

WORLDWIDE EPIDEMIC TALKING



**WILDCARD** Unbearably hot summers close schools in February and early March

**SECONDARY FUTURES**

WORLDWIDE EPIDEMIC TALKING



**WILDCARD** Earthquake cuts Wellington off from the rest of New Zealand. Education budgets are diverted for its rebuilding

**SECONDARY FUTURES**

WORLDWIDE EPIDEMIC TALKING



**WILDCARD** Worldwide epidemic kills 10% of the population each year

**SECONDARY FUTURES**

WORLDWIDE EPIDEMIC TALKING

## Appendix 4 Scenarios



### SCENARIO

- Learning is deep, demanding and often specialist
- Learners have access to state-of-the-art facilities through partnerships with tertiary and other organisations
- Decision-making is led by learning professionals with expert advice from others
- There are substantial funds available for all aspects of schooling
- Learning professionals constantly research and experiment with ways of learning, and will often move in and out of teaching

### SECONDARY FUTURES

HOENGA AUANA TAIOHI



### SCENARIO

- Learning is organised around interests, communities, cultures and values
- Learning happens in pods, generally organised by small groups and individuals
- Networks of learning pods share responsibility for making decisions, within a national framework
- There is no need for investment in public facilities; instead, funds support access to technology
- There are many types of learning professionals, though the lines between teacher and learner, parent and teacher, education and the community, are blurred

### SECONDARY FUTURES

HOENGA AUANA TAIOHI



### SCENARIO

- Learning is based on choices and priorities of learners, parents and employers. They use advisors and commercial indicators to decide who to learn from
- Students can learn from a range of providers at the same time, on one or many sites
- Small public education agencies make sure learning providers operate fairly
- Funding and rules allow a range of new and established providers to operate
- Learning professionals work full-time, or part-time, depending on the work available

### SECONDARY FUTURES

HOENGA AUANA TAIOHI



### SCENARIO

- Learning emphasises academic and non-academic goals, such as values and citizenship, equality
- Schooling happens in one place though each site can be organised differently. The whole community uses facilities and services as a "one-stop shop"
- Decisions about learning and the site are shared by the community, supported by national systems
- The state and the community pay for high quality buildings and services to stream equally
- High status professionals work with others in the community to help students learn

### SECONDARY FUTURES

HOENGA AUANA TAIOHI