



PARK HOUSE SCHOOL

It started with a blog. I never thought it would come to this

To misquote the title of the 1982 Hot Chocolate classic, it started with a blog.

My weekly Park House School Headteacher's Blog to be precise, this one entitled 'A Challenge' posted on 16 April 2026...

<http://www.parkhouseschool.org/Blog/A-Challenge.aspx>

In typically tangential style it explores the relevance of James Kerr's Legacy, which reflects of the high performance culture developed by the New Zealand All Black, to a successful approach to learning at school.

This in turn was based, as the blog describes, on a series of pre-exam assemblies in which I exhorted students to respond to the academic challenge, symbolised by the Haka, lying ahead.

In doing so, I referred in both assembly and blog to five of the factors and behaviours which Kerr identifies as

being central to the All Blacks sustained high performance culture over time:

- **Sweep the sheds** - no one individual is bigger than the team or too important to do the basics; to continue to learn and take responsibility for their own performance
- **Follow the arrowhead** - team must push in one direction, with all united behind a common vision
- **Champions do extra** - a focus on incremental improvement, the creation of a continual learning environment in which you constantly find little things to do even better, or differently
- **Keep a blue head** - consciously developing an optimal state in which you are fully focused and performing to your best ability in a high stakes setting
- **Leave the jersey** in a better place a sense of pride and responsibility in the deeper and wider cultural significance of high performance

It was reference to the fourth of the factors on the list which started off this exciting journey.

Out of the blue - no pun intended - on 7 October 2019 I received the following email:

I am contacting Park House as we noticed on your website, from a previous blog, an interesting initiative you were introducing regarding helping pupils to maximise their potential and achieve excellence by embracing the lessons learned through the book Legacy. One of the founding partners, Dr Ceri Evans, of our company, Gazing Performance Systems, worked with the New Zealand All Blacks and introduced the Gazing concept of Red Head Blue Head which Legacy talks about. Red2Blue is a simple, practical framework which helps people to recognise when they are feeling overwhelmed and off task, and to develop the mental skills to move back into the blue, feeling more in control and on task. Red2Blue continues to be adopted by New Zealand. Also more recently we have worked with the Namibia team as part of their World Cup preparations, whom New Zealand played yesterday. Teams with very different expectations in terms of performance but connected through the Red2Blue concept and language.

Legacy is widely read book, and has lead to Gazing working with a number of different organisations that have read Legacy and wanted to learn more about Red2Blue. Since Gazing started twenty years ago, we have worked with organisations in business, sport, the military and emergency services. We have also facilitated a number of programmes in schools, introducing Red2Blue to both teachers and pupils. Most recently we worked with pupils ahead of exam

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periods, helping them think clearly and to not feel overwhelmed when it came to sitting the exams.

It would be great if we could discuss how this initiative went, and perhaps introduce you a little more to Gazing and Red2Blue? Would you be available for a call to discuss a little more?

The rest as they say, is history.

A series of phone calls, followed by meetings at school and in London ensued between myself and Martin Fairn, Founding Partner and Chief Executive Office at Gazing Performance Systems.

As we got to know each other and found out more about our respective organisations, the synergies were evident. Backtracking momentarily, Park House School's culture and ethos builds on the



values and behaviours associated with sport and high performance and is central to our vision for the rounded personal development of our young people - so the 'fit' was perfect.

In early December, a member of staff attended a Re2Blue Coaching Certification workshop and returned enthused and energised about the model's potential in an educational setting.

By the beginning of January 2020 a plan was agreed. Gazing would work with the school to develop a unique, incremental programme designed to build and develop mental resilience across a large group of students.

Following on from introducing Red2Blue to students the aim was to facilitate workshops with all teachers, providing a more in depth introduction to Red2Blue

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which can help develop them within their own role as well as supporting the students with their mental skills. Once the initial workshops were completed, we would suggest a Red2Blue certification for a group of students and selected teachers to lead the further development and application of the model. The certification will really help to integrate Red2Blue into the day to day at Park House and how the role of mindset supports the implementation of the overall Park House vision.

Crucially, then, this would ultimately become self-sustaining as our initial cadre of school-based Red2Blue coaches would train and inspire the next generation.

The plan was also predicated on a creative wider business partnership model in which revenue generated from a promoted series of corporate sessions in the local community would help to fund the school-based programme.

We were about to excitedly launch.

And on 23 March the world changed.

Of course there was no alternative but to pause programme implementation. However, it was certainly no reason to abandon it. Far from it, in fact, as it was rapidly becoming clear to the school's leadership that the whole school community could benefit from an input designed to build resilience as families strove to rapidly adapt to the challenges of educational lockdown and remote virtual learning.

The result was a the development of bespoke webinar, facilitated by Martin and Red2Blue Coach Bede Brosnahan, for all students, parents and staff on 14 May. This is how it was presented to that school community in my weekly updates:

Working Under Pressure

'Red2Blue' was developed to support the mindset needed to perform at high level under great pressure. As we are now experiencing a time when our everyday working environments have been turned upside down and normal set routines are no longer possible, the pressure and associated anxiety are palpable.

In this webinar we will be positioning 'Red2Blue' as a framework to support your mindset and deal with the pressure of the Covid19 situation. It will focus on helping you and your colleagues to build the resilience needed to not only manage your current situation and your feelings around it, but also refocus your attention on the critical tasks and helpful activities linked to resetting and moving forward.

The response was outstanding, with one parent's comment capturing that of many:

'Thanks so much for yesterday's webinar. It was so timely and has really helped us to think together as a family about what we can consciously do to control our situation'.

So, moving forward, we are now very much 'keeping a blue head'. Waiting for the educational as well as wider landscape to settle a little before we decide on exit steps and when and how we re-launch.

We'd now also be delighted to **leave the jersey in a better place** by working with partners who would like to **follow the arrowhead** and sweep the sheds with us as we look to establish a unique approach to performance and personal development for our young people and across the wider community in the 'new normal' through **Red2Blue**. Never has the need be greater than now.

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Derek Peuple

Headteacher, Park House School
June 2020



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