“Innovative learning environments and the effective approaches to pedagogy”

10 Assistant or Deputy Principals are chosen to attend the NASDAP study tour each year. In 2017 the tour was organised by Elizabeth Craker from CORE education. Pip Woodward was the representative of the NASDAP Board. We visited four schools that had all made significant shifts to the way they organise teaching and learning and as a result to the experience of students and teachers in the schools.

1. Hauraki Plains College
2. Papamoa College
3. Te Puke High School
4. Paeroa College

Before the tour I was hoping to improve my personal knowledge and skills to effectively lead the curriculum change we are undergoing, tailor professional learning that is a driver for curriculum change and devise a programme of transition and induction that prepares staff capability and readiness for Innovative Learning Practice at Aotea College. I was expecting to report on:

1. PLD required to support curriculum change
2. Transition and Induction for existing and staff into an ILE

As the tour progressed I realised that these two points are only part of the most pressing need for our school. I found the focus to be leading change and establishing innovative collaborative, integrated 21st century learning - where the learners are at the centre. This requires a collaborative change management process to develop the structure and mindset to enable curriculum development, integration and enhanced collaboration between staff, staff and students and staff and management.

Each of the schools have taken slightly different approaches but also had some key things in common.

1. They have empowered collaborative teacher leadership of a learning community where learning is integrated in authentic learning. This has improved the ability to put the learner and learning at the centre.
2. They have strategies to maintain subject expertise in preparation for senior schooling, and for NCEA success, but the junior school all had multiple teachers for different learning areas collaborating in learning hubs.
3. Teachers and students have more control and responsibility to organise the way they use time, space, teacher expertise, technology, pedagogy and other resources to meet the needs of the learners.
4. Smaller mentoring groups replace traditional form classes.
5. The have taken different approaches to structural change. For all the change has involved some hard times but were enthusiastic about their progress.

An effective learning community provides the following opportunities for children.

1. Opportunity to practice skills - often enhanced by one to one technology where students can practice the skill at their own level through personalised software.
2. Authentic and integrated learning experiences. This involves a shift to teachers teaching the students how to learn, problem solve, think critically and apply skills in cross curricular projects.
3. Targeted interventions: Small lectures, workshops and peer tutoring for a specific group of students with a learning need. For example: Writing or Reading workshops.
4. Inquiry learning - all schools identified this as an area for further improvement.
5. Providing a structure where learning area integration and collaboration is automatic.
6. Students have say over the direction and method of the learning
7. Close mentoring of the students, their learning pathways and progress.

In order to do this the schools had made structural changes, and had:

1. 3-5 teachers collaborate in the design of integrated learning for core subjects in hubs of 80-120 students.
2. Moved teachers into cross curricular staff rooms based on the hubs
3. Provided time for the teachers to work together.

Provided units for the responsibility of leading the learning in a hub. The units for the responsibility came from different sources:

1. One school set up with a hub leader role from the start
2. One school restructured to move middle leadership of curriculum from HODs to hub leaders.
3. One school involved HODs (called leaders of learning as leaders) of the hub system)
4. One school aligned the hub initiative with their Community of Learning and used the Teacher in School responsibility to provide the equivalent of an MU to each hub leader.

All people we spoke to explained the steps they had taken and answered questions. I was particulary interested in the schools that did not start in an Innovative Learning Environment (ILE) but had made the change curriculum to and moved into an ILE. One of the schools - Papamoa was a new school that opened as an ILE. Hauraki Plains had changed curriculum delivery but did not have a new physical environment. Te Puke and Paeroa had new ILE for their junior school.

I appreciated the way that each school was open with the steps they took to develop curriculum delivery and the successes and failures along the way. I am going to outline a possible sequence for curriculum development in preparation for an Innovative Learning Environment:

1. Sharing of examples of different curriculum structures, a decision need to be made in term two the year before implementation
2. PLD collaborative inquiry and self directed inquiry time so teachers can trial new strategies.
3. HODs discussing the changing roll as leaders of integrated and holistic learning.
4. Discussion of improved teaching of the front end of the New Zealand Curriculum
5. SLT and external expert develop models of collaboration and innovation in our ILE for staff discussion.
6. Leaders of curriculum deans and HODs design potential models to combine curriculum leadership of the dispositional and learning area curriculum.
7. Use of teacher only days to study innovative practice and design curriculum innovation.
   1. The whole staff watch the most likely to succeed and then link the Vision, Values, Principles and Key Competencies to their learning area.
   2. Cross curricular groups sit together to design potential units that they could collaborate on.
   3. PLD inquiry progress is shared in workshops with a focus on learning to learn
   4. Models of learning inquiry introduced with time to apply this to existing units.
   5. Teaching strategies for the dispositional curriculum
      1. Mentoring
      2. Developing relationships
      3. Developing individual and collective identity
      4. Facilitating restorative meetings
      5. Developing resilient learners
      6. Learning to learn
         1. PLD inquiry workshops and progress
      7. Learning inquiry process - schoolwide DEDUCE/Learning to learn
      8. Developing relationships
      9. Developing individual and collective identity
      10. Facilitating restorative meetings
8. Models are presented to staff and aspects of the models are trialled.
9. TLIF application (aligned to the development of collaboration models) for trial groups (two sets of learning hub teachers) developed for 2018 June start. Due March 2018
10. Parents and community invited to workshops on Innovation and collaboration. Close contact with community maintained to address myths around ILE and to involve community in the transition.
11. A consultation on a graduate profile should also be considered.

This sequence is a starting point. The curriculum design will be a collaborative and iterative process responding to staff and students, skills, needs and priorities.

