

NASDAP Educators Tour Report

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The Core Education/NASDAP Educators tour proved to be a fantastic opportunity to view the way curriculum changes have been implemented in a range of schools. The tour also focussed on the way modern/innovative learning environments have assisted schools to make these changes. Of particular interest to me was the development of independent learning in the senior students who had engaged in inquiry based and collaborative learning. As the tour progressed I became more interested in how some of the models and spaces could be adapted for a learning support centre at Havelock North High School.

The schools visited presented variations on a collaborative learning model. Hauraki Plains College arranged their junior school according to Learning Hubs while Papamoa College used the term Learning Commons. Paeroa referred to the junior classes as junior teams. In general, the concept of shared planning and teaching spaces was common between these schools.

Physical Space



Many of the classes had larger student numbers than a convention class with multiple teachers operating in the same workspace. The spaces we visited were mostly recently constructed or refurbished buildings. The large learning commons seen at Papamoa represented perhaps the most significant departure from the standard cellular classroom. The commons were long spaces with standard sized classroom spaces branching off from the main area. These classrooms had the facility to be opened into the main area in some places and the glass walls ensured visibility throughout. Furniture was varied and this was particularly noticeable at Paeroa College where the learning space hosted furniture of numerous heights, sizes and colours. As a science teacher I found the layout of the science facilities in many of the schools lacking. Some of the schools had decided to position the laboratories as part of the

learning hub/common. This seemed as though it would create issues for teachers around the availability of equipment. The laboratories also seemed smaller than many current school laboratories.

Teacher Collaboration

There appeared to be a shared move amongst the schools towards collaborative teaching and planning. As a direct consequence of collaborative teaching, teachers were expected to work together to respond to the learning that had taken place each day. This was particularly evident at Paeroa College and was discussed at Hauraki Plains. The leadership of the curriculum had to some extent been devolved to the teams of teachers who worked

together to develop suitable teaching programmes. There was an acknowledgement that this created a need for more meeting times between teachers and several of the schools identified this as a challenge. Another challenge that the various SLT's mentioned was the difficulties created when the combination of teachers had not been considered carefully enough or when unproductive combinations arose. This accentuated the need for careful planning at the outset. Amongst the many positive aspects mentioned was the self-confidence that teachers developed once their initial concerns about being watched by other teachers had subsided. The schools discussed the transparency that existed around professional practice which appealed to me. Most of the schools had adopted a similar arrangement for the physical space occupied by the SLT. This consistency clearly helped to reinforce the ethos of transparency, shared best practice and collaboration.

Learning/Activity

The schools visited shared not only refurbished physical spaces but also a change in ethos with regard to curriculum delivery. Papamoa College had adopted an inquiry model in years 9 and 10 where students developed an inquiry topic throughout the year in addition to traditional subjects. The constraints of NCEA in senior years were apparent in each of the schools as they are around the country. Despite the inquiry focus in junior school, senior classes adopted a more structured and assessment driven focus. Hauraki Plains College's semester approach offered the most interesting variation from the norm with the first semester covering internal standards and the second semester externals. This resulted in a number of students opting to leave school temporarily following the first semester once the available credits had been attained.

How this could be applied to Learning Support at HNHS

We have an opportunity to restructure our learning support area in 2018. As a direct result of the Educators Tour we will be exploring alternatives to the existing model. Currently our LS classes operate in the same way as other year 9 and 10 classes. The difference is that the same teacher takes the groups for English and Social Studies in the same classroom. In 2018 we may look at refurbishing an existing double prefab to create an ILE. The new Paeroa College classrooms offered the most inspiration in this regard. An alternative approach to curriculum delivery will be explored with the possibility of the class remaining in the ILE with teachers working collaboratively as we saw at Papamoa and Paeroa. We hope to be able to maintain this structure for 'core' subjects with students still engaging in 'option' classes with the rest of the cohort.

In summary the Educators Tour has sparked a possible change to an area of our school that has operated in its present format for some time. The physical spaces visited and the collaboration that existed between teachers was exciting to see. We are enthusiastic about experimenting with some of these concepts in the near future and I thank NASDAP and Core Education for the opportunity to take part in such a valuable learning experience.