**2017 Bay of Plenty NASDAP Study Tour**

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**Inquiry Focus:** How did the School Leadership Teams successfully implement changes to school wide pedagogy.

*Definitions of common terms used:*

*Modern Learning Environment: A large open space with break out areas. The space is shared by multiple classes. There is a variety of different learning areas within the space.*

*Integrated Learning: Students are learning concepts via a context or project which incorporates skills from multiple learning areas.*

*Single Cell: Subject material taught in isolation by specialist subject teachers.*

The four schools visited had changed from the traditional 20th century physical and/or organizational structure of a secondary school, resulting in a shift of the pedagogy in each school.

Hauraki Plains College (yrs. 9-13) is a school over 100 years old. The learning spaces are on the whole traditional but the organizational structure of the school has undergone and is still undergoing changes to best meet the needs of its students. The school has developed some onsite trades courses and the junior school has been organized into two learning hubs with an integrated leaning program.

Papamoa College (yrs. 7-13) is a 6 year old purpose built school with modern learning environments throughout. The school is organized into “Learning Commons” where a maximum of 4 classes are taught with four different subject teachers in a modern learning environment. The senior school years 11-3 still operate as single cell classes. The timetable is 3 x 100 min periods each day.

Te Puke High School (yrs. 9-13) was partly modernized in 2013 with the majority of buildings being a modern learning environment. The school is organized into “Learning Pods” with up to three junior classes taught with three different subject teachers. The senior school years 11-3 still operate as single cell classes.

Paeroa College (yrs. 9-13) has recently redeveloped the junior school into a modern learning environment. Content is taught using themes that the junior teachers plan together. The senior school years 11-3 still operate as single cell classes, but has a real focus on skills rather than subjects.

**Part 1: The reasoning behind the changes**

When meeting with the schools, the Principals discussed the reason behind the change to a modern learning environment with an integrated learning approach. Two Principals gave very sound reasons based on the learning needs of their students and effective pedagogy. The driving force of the other schools appeared to be a need to match the way the majority of their contributing Primary Schools were teaching. I was looking for some links to research or evidence of best practice as reasons for driving the changes.

***Reflection 1:*** When deciding upon major change, the reasoning must be sound and be backed up with research. The key question “How will this improve student learning” needs to be asked. It would be difficult to sell change to staff and the wider school community without sound justification. As a teacher, I would not be satisfied if the management decided to introduce significant change in the school using the premise that we need to match the contributing schools. I would be looking for evidence that the changes best suit the learning needs of adolescents who have different needs. Therefore, it would be very important to have clear convincing reasons to give when embarking on significant change.

**Part 2: Structural Changes**

All four schools have made significant changes to their traditional school timetables.

Papamoa and Te Puke structure their day with three 100 minute sessions.

Hauraki Plains and Paeroa run a two-semester year programme.

All four schools have also made significant change to the school’s middle management structures. Some of them major

Hauraki Plains has established Hub Leaders for the junior school and Learning Pathway Leaders.

Papamoa has a director of Inquiry, but still has Heads of Departments.

Te Puke has Leaders of Learning based on the Learning Pathways in the NZ curriculum.

Paeroa has replaced Heads of Department with Subject Advisors, who advise teachers on subject matter but have no control over the junior curriculum.

These changes have moved the focus from the individual subject silos driving the school towards integrated and contextual learning. The traditional role of the *Head of Department* has changed*.*

All schools had changed their emphasis with timetable construction. Junior school teacher combinations were sorted first and senior classes allocated last. It is more common in schools for the senior specialist teachers to be allocated to senior classes first and then the junior classes allocated the “left over teachers”.

The process each school used to achieve their changes varied from one extreme to the other. Here are some of the methods used.

1. All positions of responsibility in the school redistributed via the PPTA process.
2. Redistributed existing staff but deliberately filled any vacancies with young staff or Primary trained staff that could be molded to fit the school.
3. Used the strengths of existing staff to help shape the school model and modify as staffing changes.

Two of the four schools mentioned that these changes have been difficult and resulted in some staffing loss. But took the perspective that this is an unavoidable consequence of change. Any teachers who are not in favour of the pedagogical shift within the school should move on. Some schools had staffing loss that was directly attributed to the changes and ill feeling still existed in the school.

***Reflection 2:*** Making major changes to the traditional “hierarchical “structure of a school can cause staff significant grief, insecurity, feelings of personal loss and loss of mana.

Therefore, the process of change needs to be clear and the majority of staff need to have reached a point where they have adjusted their thinking around pedagogy and are convinced that the school is moving in the best direction to improve student learning outcomes and their own professional development. Staff also need to be consulted and be given a voice in the change process.

Mark Osborne sums this up nicely in his paper, Inviting Innovation, Leading Meaningful Change in Schools.

*A crucial part of successful change leadership is avoiding an approach which leads to change being “done to” people, and embracing an approach which empowers and enables people to contribute to, and to see themselves in, the change they are bringing about. 1*

Although it is important to implement change, we need to always keep in mind that staff, like student are not a homogenous group. Some will cope well with change and some won’t.

Some more advice from Mark Osborne.  *One of the first steps in supporting people with change is to identify whether they are experiencing that change as technical\* or adaptive\* because different support structures are required for each.* 1

Therefore, we need to have support structures in place for those who feel the pressure of change. Staff are human, with feelings and put a tremendous effort into their jobs often at the expensive of their families. Putting undue stress on staff with a fast pace change and job insecurity is not good for staff wellbeing. Managing the change in a consultative way over a generous time frame will get result in more settled staff and ultimately better buy into change. This will ultimately make the change sustainable.

**Part 3: Timing**

The process of change was not quick in any of the schools. Most took a year to discuss, readjust and implement the change.

***Reflection3***: To implement major change a time period of a year is needed. A term for SLT to form a sound proposal, a term for consultation and refinement with staff and then two terms for planning and professional development.

**Part 4: Sustaining Change**

All four schools had to increase time for teachers to meet and plan the integrated learning approaches.

Papamoa College: The Common’s teachers need to meet each week either before or after school, and there are also learning area meetings. When the school first opened, the beginning of the school year started with a directed professional development programme for all staff. Now a more individualized programme is developed to suit staff’s needs.

Te Puke High: Starts the year with three teacher only days for Pod teachers to meet and discuss students and the programme. The Pod teachers hold many meetings especially when designing themed units. The school has very few staff meetings and only two briefings a week because teachers meet and plan in the mornings. There is a whole school PLD once a week after school.

Paeroa College: Starts the year with team bonding to confirm the ethos of the school and build relationships between staff. It is expected that teachers meet in their free periods to plan the junior courses and also hold afterschool meetings to do this. Each term teachers are given two meeting days to plan.

All schools emphasized the need to match staff in the common learning areas well. A mix of strengths is vital.

It is important that Senior Management model change. The SLT team at Te Puke did this well with a shared open office area.

***Reflection 4:*** Teacher workload is a major concern for all teachers. Any change that is implemented will cause an initial major workload increase that needs to be planned for. Sound professional development will be needed, but also substantial time for planning. If the time and PD is not sufficient teachers will revert to old methods.

To sustain the change “something needs to give” and all four schools indicated that an increase in the meetings for planning had to be matched with a decrease in other meetings. Overall this is a good situation, as planning meetings between teachers will have a better outcome for student achievement than regular full staff meetings that often become administrative rather than pedagogical.

**Where to Next:**

Change is inevitable in schools as we learn more about how adolescents learn and new technology develops. It can be achieved in a way that utilizes the existing strengths of staff. At least a year is needed to plan, convince, consult and develop.

I believe that developing an integrated programme is important as is co-operation between subject teachers. I can see the value of working in a classroom with others. Currently like many other schools, we do not have the ability develop modern learning environments. However, physical space does not have the highest impact on student achievement, co-operation between teachers, relationships between teachers/student, mentoring and a shift in mindset does. It is not impossible for teachers to plan units of work together linking subject material, we just need to provide time and PD. As this is already being modelled at my school with a year 11 group, it makes perfect sense to expand this to other year levels in a graduated process making use of the expertise we are currently building within the school.

**Questions:**

With the subject departments becoming less important, and teachers becoming more generalized “jack of all trades” in year 9 & 10, will this have a negative effect on specialist subject knowledge given to students. Will junior students gain an adequate background knowledge as they move through to the senior school?

*References*

1. Inviting Innovation, Leading Meaningful Change in Schools, Mark Osborne, Core Education set 2 2014.
2. Heifetz, R. A., Linsky, M., & Grashow, A. (2009). The practice of adaptive leadership: Tools and tactics for changing your organization and the world. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press.

\* Technical challenges/change—problems that can usually be implemented using the organization’s current structures and procedures. No big impact on people here.

\*Adaptive challenges/change—these forces require significant (and often painful) shifts in people’s habits, status, role, identity, way of thinking

*Footnote:*

The ability to look at four different schools and at the same time meet and “chew the fat” with other AP/DP’s was invaluable. There were many practices in each of the schools that I can see as useful in my own school. I congratulate the leadership teams of Hauraki Plains College, Te Puke High School, Papamoa College and Paeroa College for having a clear vision for their schools and taking the bold step forward. Thank you for allowing us into your schools and taking time out from your very busy schedules to talk with us in an honest way.