

**Sabbatical Leave
Project**

Term 4 2008

VERN STEVENS

**Principal
Selwyn Park School
Dargaville.**

SABBATICAL REPORT VERN STEVENS

Focus: Active Schools Programmes in Selected Schools

Purpose:

To gauge the effectiveness of Selwyn Park School's Active Schools' Programme against programmes of selected schools in the region from Bay of Plenty to Northland, using observations of programmes in action and interviews with Lead Teachers and Principals.

Introduction:

Selwyn Park School took up the 'Active Schools' Programme' in the second half of 2005, when this initiative was first offered by Team Solutions in Northland. We have attempted to implement the programme and philosophy with varying levels of success.

I opted for 'Active Schools' early on, and I did so hoping that it would lead back to the Fitness/Skills approach of the early 90's which, in my opinion, was the result of a very workable Physical Education Curriculum.

The rewritten Health and P.E. Curriculum of the later nineties left me unimpressed then, and it continues to do so, mainly because of its lack of emphasis on aerobic content, little demand for skills teaching and self discipline and a huge emphasis on health, meaning that schools could easily justify that they were covering Physical Activity by taking Health lessons.

In 2007, I was able to employ a Teacher Aide who had, as one of his tasks, to organise and supervise various activities during lunch breaks. This fitted alongside our normal physical skills and fitness lessons, taken by classroom teachers. The employment of that Teacher Aide made the difference we were looking for when we took on the P.D. in 2005.

The purpose of me visiting schools from Bay of Plenty to Northland was to find out why these schools took on the P.D. and also to find out if there were any other "dinosaurs" like me out there who felt that "the baby was thrown out with the bathwater" in the mid nineties and if so, attempt to establish some guidelines that may be useful for schools who are wanting a more rigorous approach to P.E.

I also wanted to see and hear what other schools were doing to gauge how effective our programme is and to find out what other initiatives schools have undertaken to provide for 'Active Schools' with the intention to review our practice against my findings.

School Visits:

1. My intention was to visit between 15 and 20 schools from Waikato to Northland. I made contact with these schools in two ways:

- (i) In Northland, I made contact through Team Solutions, who rolled out the programme in Tai Tokerau;
- (ii) In the other regions, I made contact through the Regional Sports Trusts who all have 'Active Schools' Co-ordinators.

A lack of response from one region meant that I was unable to make contacts there and I would have tried a different tack. However, an enthusiastic response from Sport Bay of Plenty meant that I "cast my net" further south.

I also contacted four schools in Auckland and while their responses were positive, I was only able to make personal contact with one as co-ordinately my trips south with the other school schedules just did not fit.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank most sincerely, all the schools that I contacted, for their positive and supportive responses and, in particular, those twelve where I had the great pleasure of visiting and speaking with Principals, Staff and children.

2. Visits with Principals, Lead Teachers and/or teams lasted anything from one and a half hours to half a day. During most of these visits, I was also able to observe P.E. programmes and/or 'Active Schools' Programmes' in action.
3. Although my focus on these school visits was "Active Schools" on every occasion, my discussions covered a wide range of issues around education in general and at every school I either picked up a gem that I thought I could use or was able to offer advice. I found the school contacts uplifting and these visits and the motivation gained were possibly the most valuable part of my sabbatical.

Findings:

My sabbatical took place in Term 4, 2008. The sampling of 12 schools means my findings are a mere snapshot of what has, and is happening with the 'Active Schools' Initiative'.

The findings are a summary of the Questionnaire (see attached) I wrote and sent out prior to my visits to enable the schools to get a clear idea of what I was going to be asking them. These questions also gave a good focus for discussion and something to come back to when (as inevitably happened) we drifted off on some other tangent.

1. Schools in this study took up the P.D. at varying times between Term 3 2005 to Term 1 2008.
2. Reasons for them being involved in the 'Active Schools' Initiative was wide and varied and some indicate to me that some schools were looking for P.E. programmes. I visited 12 schools and here are 13 different reasons:
 - (a) Wanted children to get more active in community;

- (b) School could see how it would align with 'Health Promoting Schools' and 'Fruit in Schools';
- (c) Part of SCPAP (Schools' Community Physical Activity Project) contract, so it fitted;
- (d) A challenge from E.R.O.;
- (e) P.E./Health focus
- (f) To continue with work already happening in P.E., Sports, Fitness programmes;
- (g) P.D. to update people with how and what to deliver to a class;
- (h) To reassess school wide philosophy in sports;
- (i) Liked the sound of it;
- (j) The need to have a broader more inclusive P.E. programme
- (k) To highlight the need for more physical activity in overall school/class programmes.

3. Most schools thought that the P.E. gave them a workable direction to take with 'Active Schools'. These are some comments:

- (a) "Yes and without P.D. would not have done an Action Plan."
- (b) "Yes – from Strategic Plans to goals to Health Team to full school on same page. Fantastic!"
- (c) "Workshops/training has provided a clear direction".
- (d) "Good P.D. with a variety of activities/techniques/skills".
- (e) "Yes. Sport Northland were excellent partners, so supportive in a holistic way".
- (f) "Yes – community based – really positive".
- (g) One school felt that the Sports Trust facilitated the P.D. but that the school came up with the workable direction.

Three schools also commented about an obsession with assessment. This seems to be a recent addition to the programme.

4. My next question was based on my premise that 'Active Schools' was being used as a way to organise school P.E. programmes. While my study has shown that this is not always the case, only one school commented this appears to be schools who have recently taken up the initiative.

In response to the question: **"Has the P.D. resulted in significant changes to the way P.E. is organised within the school?"**

"No – because that is not what 'Active Schools' is about."

Another school said: "Not aware of any significant P.E. changes as our focus is primarily physical activity and building a positive culture." This particular school has community volunteers co-ordinated by their health team during breaks to enable the 'Active Schools' philosophy to happen.

Most other schools indicated that they were using 'Active Schools' as the base for their P.E. programmes and although this was not the original intent, it is very understandable. Remember, 'Active Schools' popped up because Trevor Mallard, Minister of Education, decided that schools better do something about the child obesity statistics and made a comment about all

school children having an extra half hour of physical activity a day. When the sector responded and asked where in the school day this extra 30 minutes was to come from, the response was “break times and ‘Active Schools”.

The next two questions asked about barriers that inhibited carrying out the full intent of ‘Active Schools’ and enablers that enhanced the delivery of ‘Active Schools’.

BARRIERS	ENABLERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Staff attitudes (where to fit it in) * Not enough celebrity coaches to visit * Negativity of one older staff member * Other timetable commitments * Not all staff through P.D. * Student commitment to Dynamo leaders * Change of facilitator * Staff resistant * Disagreement over curriculum intent * Changing mindsets on how to teach P.E. and Skills – programme to be used * Equipment availability before school and at intervals * Teacher employed after P.D. was completed * Teachers who are still not confident and are inclined to miss structured P.E. lessons * Crowded curriculum * Staff perceptions re Literacy versus P.E. and making it fit space, equipment, time * Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Good facilitators * Dynamo leaders (school leaders) * Active School leaders team * Purchasing of fun game equipment * Health team Wow! * Lead teacher enthusiasm * Health team parent enthusiasm * Funded Lead Teacher * Supportive Facilitator * Teachers open to P.D. * Resources given and Facilitators * Enthusiastic staff * High level of students involved in ‘out of school’ sports * Strong tradition of sport and P.E. in school * Walking school bus * Invasive games – not just sports * Fitness programme * Excellent P.E. equipment & lesson resources * Sports equipment in classrooms * Big P.E. budget * Sports leader with Management Unit who focuses on maintaining programme and liaising with parents/coaches. * Supportive Senior Management * Strong H.E.H.A. philosophy * Great facilitators * Inclusiveness of the programme – kids/staff/community * Senior children leading/helping * Excellent facilitators

It seems, from these responses (both positive and negative) the one ingredient that will enable schools to advance with ‘Active Schools’ whether they are doing it as extra physical Activity, or as their P.E. programme, is attitude, i.e. the attitude of:

- the facilitators
- the teachers
- the students
- the community.

During my discussions with the personnel involved in the schools, this programme advances successfully when the attitudes of each of these groups is positive, particularly when the facilitators, the teachers and the pupils are “on the same page”. When the community buys in, that appears to be hailed as the “cream on the cake”.

One school commented that the surveying of parents is a big focus but that they perceived it as a waste of time really.

Another point schools made was regarding the assessment requirements that are now creeping into the programme.
 “Assessment P.D. will not happen as it is too much work for teachers”.

Both of these issues, i.e. consultation and involvement of parents/community and the assessment requirements were not part of the programme my school took up in 2005. It appears that ‘Active Schools’ has morphed “hooking up” with the Healthy Eating push to be a more holistic programme along the lines advocated in the Health and P.E. Curriculum.

My next question touched on funding and asked if implementing ‘Active Schools’ had created a shortfall.

Responses indicated that generally, the P.E. and P.D. Budgets had covered any increased expenditure and that the various Sports Trusts had also come up with funding to cover teacher release. A couple of schools had used Management Units or Teacher Aides in creative ways to have someone overseeing the programme. One school had raised funds specifically through making their Cross County a “Fun Run”.

The next point asked about sustainability, i.e. whether and why programmes had either thrived or fizzled.

Most schools felt that the programme was thriving because of staff/children buy in and the enthusiasm of their facilitator.

Those schools that had had a change of facilitator or who had stopped having facilitator support, did not indicate failure, but were more circumspect in their comments.

My next request was for schools to bullet point their journey from start to where they are now with ‘Active Schools’.

Most schools had planned to look at getting their children more active and sought out the P.D. A couple were approached and decided that they had space within their P.D. programme to take on 'Active Schools'.

From this point, those schools have followed divergent paths – some adhering to the pathway of getting children more active at break times, setting up health teams, getting communities involved, becoming involved with SCPAP and Physical Activity leaders. Others have used 'Active Schools' to enhance their actual P.E. programme and basically used 'Active Schools' P.D. to freshen and re-motivate staff with new ideas and approaches.

Another group have entered into the project and are wondering why, as what is happening is not what they thought they had signed up for, and although they were still positive, I feel little will come of it for these schools.

My last question, "**Do you feel that taking up the 'Active Schools' Initiative' was a worthwhile direction for your school to take?"** required a simple "Yes/No" sort of response and schools were then asked to make a comment.

Thirteen schools replied in the affirmative, none indicated a negative response and two ticked the "sort of" box.

Comments from the schools who thought that 'Active Schools' had produced worthwhile results:

- P.E. lessons have not changed!!! (Not sure if they should have)
- 'Active Schools' has really pumped the physical activity and positive culture in the school;
- Has helped us review our programmes i.e. how and what we are teaching;
- Bonus exposure to different sports and specialist contacts has been a benefit to students;
- Helped us to focus on our direction and has given us some strategies for the future;
- Worthwhile ongoing commitment to physically active school, staff and students;
- To improve and make a more balanced programme which is inclusive;
- This is what our kids need and it provides balance in the school day;
- Very positive undertaking;
- Has been a team building success because of people involved;
- Fits with school and community;
- Physical Activity leaders goes well with Year 6 students.

The two schools that responded by ticking the "sort of" box commented:

- Worked well alongside the SCPAP contract but don't think it would have sustained itself;
- I believe all schools should opt for SCPAP P.D. (if it is offered again). Much more worthwhile as P.D.

IN SUMMARY:

Was I able to gauge the effectiveness of my school's 'Active Schools' programme' against programmes of selected schools, using observations of programmes in action and interviews with Lead Teachers and Principals? In short – “Yes”.

During my sabbatical visits, I was able to observe and speak with personnel from a wide range of schools, i.e. city schools with rolls of 600 plus to small three teacher country schools, and a range of decile ratings from 1 to 9.

In making a judgement as to where Selwyn Park School sits, in comparison to the fifteen schools I visited, are on their journey with 'Active Schools, I can honestly place us at just above the mid-range.

All schools I was involved with are giving it a shot. Some are doing remarkable things way beyond what I expected to find – they have added to and expanded the programme, and are to be applauded for that. Others are taking bits and pieces out of the programme to fit with what they perceive they need in their school and likewise, are to be applauded for that.

In reviewing my school's programme and making of changes, it is really about “back to the future”.

The main resources used will be “The Kiwi Dex Manual”, “The Fundamental Skills Manual” and Sport Northland personnel.

To continue the 'Active Schools' theme, I have taken actual duty responsibilities off one of my teachers – his job is to co-ordinate lunchtime activities using our School Councillors as Physical Activity Leaders. Added to this, of course, are the usual winter sports coaches who come in from the community to coach the winter codes. The teacher in charge will also oversee these activities and hopefully iron out the usual teething problems.

On wet days, when we are unable to work outside, the senior school will use our Hall to give the children an intense indoor workout (and I don't mean watching the “Jump Jam” video!!) during the usual P.E. time. The Juniors will use the Hall in the half hour before lunch for a similar workout.

Did I find Dinosaurs out there like me, who felt that “the baby was thrown out with the bathwater” with the introduction of the Health and P.E Curriculum of the mid-nineties? Yes I did, so that was heartening.

These Principals, felt that Mr. Mallard's reaction to finding out about the large numbers of obese children was understandable and that 'Active Schools' was an attempt to some extent right the wrongs of the curriculum.

To what extent the 'Active Schools' programme has been successful in making a difference, cannot be gauged by looking at the information I have

gathered, but it would be fair to say that in the schools I visited, the children were involved in physically active programmes and that the programmes varied widely depending on the enthusiasm and expertise of the people involved and the school culture.

My sincere thank to the Principals of the following schools and their respective staff members who warmly welcomed me into their schools and very happily shared their thoughts on 'Active Schools; and P.E. programmes as well as a plethora of ideas on Education in general:

Kerikeri Primary	Paul Lindsay
Kaikohe West Primary	Barbara Ward
Morningside Primary	Dave Prchal
Whangarei Heads Primary	Lil Ogle
Tirimoana Primary	Peter Kaiser
Forest Lake Primary	Geoff Turner
Morrinsville Primary	Carolyn Osborne
Marian Catholic	John Culham
Apanui Primary	Brian Robinson
Kawerau North Primary	Ray McGuire
Thorndon Primary	Shelly Bremner
Nukuhou North	Margaret Berboom

My thanks also to the panel who select recipients for sabbatical study leave. This has been an extremely motivating and rewarding experience. The opportunity to visit schools and speak with Principals and Teachers has been invaluable P.D.

Many thanks also to the Selwyn Park School Board of Trustees for their support, my D.P. Glenys McEvoy and A.P. Jenni Harsant, for ensuring the smooth running of the school in my absence.

I would also acknowledge the assistance given to me by Team Solutions (Lana Wolfgram), Sport Waikato (Kim Burkhart) and Sport B.O.P. (Belinda Dibben) in recommending and approaching schools for me to visit.

VERN STEVENS

ACTIVE SCHOOLS RESEARCH PROJECT

Questionnaire Participant Information Sheet

My name is Vern Stevens. I am Principal of Selwyn Park School in Dargaville. I am conducting this research as part of my Principals' Sabbatical Leave. I have chosen this topic because of three reasons:

1. My school was one of the initial group of schools in Northland to take up the 'Active Schools' Professional Development and I am interested to observe the journey other schools have taken and to see where they are now in terms of the 'Active Schools' Initiative;
2. Even though my school opted for 'Active Schools' early on, I did so hoping that it was a lead back to the Fitness/Skills approach of the early 90's which, in my opinion, was the result of a very workable Physical Education Curriculum. The re-written Health and P.E. Curriculum of the late 90's left me unimpressed and it continues to do so. I am working to find out why your school took on the P.D., if there are other dinosaurs out there like me who feel "the baby was thrown out with the bath water" and if so, attempt to establish some guidelines that may be useful for schools who are wanting a more rigorous approach to Physical Education.
3. This research will also enable me to gauge how effective my school's programme is by giving us information to review against.

For this project I have selected schools who have been part of the 'Active Schools' Professional Development initiative. I will be interviewing P.E. Lead Teachers/and or Principals in approximately sixteen schools from Northland to Waikato.

I would appreciate your assistance in taking the time to work with me to complete the questionnaire/interview. All information collected will remain confidential and there will be no participant identification recorded during this research.

Thank you very much for your time and help in making this study possible. If you have any queries please contact me. Details provided below.

VERN STEVENS

vern@sel-pk.ac.nz

Phone: (09) 439-8888 (work) or (09) 439-6294 (home)

Mobile: 027-503-4535