



SABBATICAL REPORT

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Sabbatical period (Term 2 – 3 2018)

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Enhancing Boys Achievement

Acknowledgements

Having the time to refresh, relax and read (the 3 R's) has been much appreciated and the most extended break from the profession I love since beginning my teaching career in 1989. Of course, there is the professional reading, discussions with colleagues and in my case the opportunity to attend the International Boys Schools Coalition (IBSC) conference, held at Southport School on the Gold Coast.

None of this would have been possible without the support of my board and the Ministry of Education who approved the sabbatical request. Most importantly however I want to acknowledge all those in my school who have led with excellence in my absence, I have full confidence in their abilities to continue to grow the learning culture in our school.

I would also like to thank the many Principals, senior staff and students that I have spoken to and have shared their insights into what makes an effective learning environment.

Background

My school like many others have struggled to find the 'magic formula' that is the secret to achieving sustained high achievement success for our boys. Small comfort for me that this situation is not unique to our school or area. We owe it to our boys to keep exploring ways to give them the best possible chance to succeed. That is what this investigation was all about.

Concerns over boys' achievement have been around for a long time. Prior to the introduction of NCEA in 2002 at Level 1, achievement of boys had been identified nationally as a concern

A summary of 6th form certificate results from the 80's and 90's clearly illustrates the gender gap in secondary achievement taking on some significance.

Table K2.1

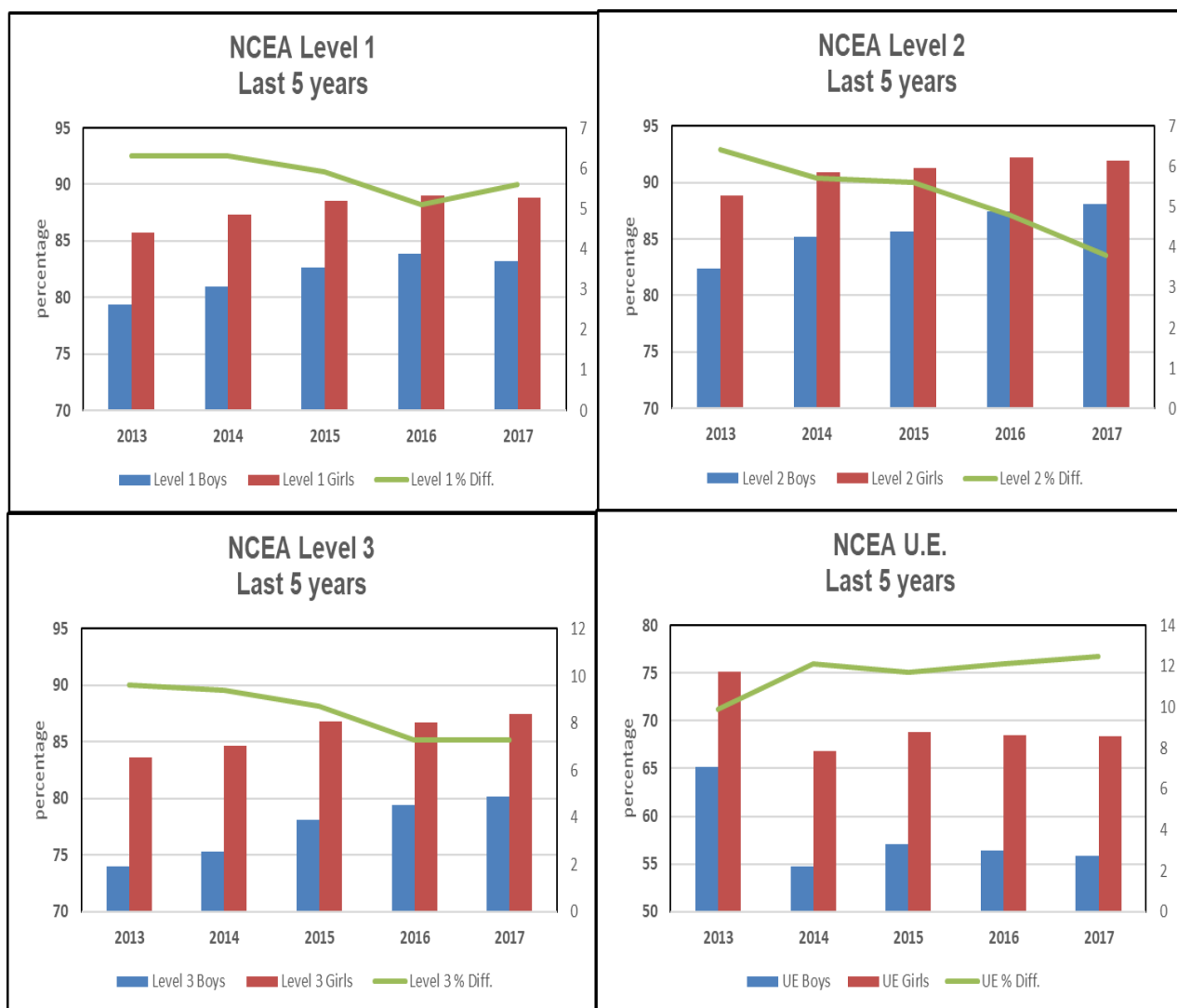
Proportion of school leavers with higher qualifications, by gender, selected years, 1986-99

	6th Form Cert. or higher		Bursary or higher	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1986	45.2	48.1	11.6	10.0
1991	63.5	69.2	21.1	23.4
1996	59.0	66.5	17.8	22.0
1999	61.9	70.2	17.2	22.5

Ministry of Education: The Social report 2001 – Knowledge and Skills

When NCEA was introduced in 2002, it was seen as a way to ensure that the wide range of skills and competences demonstrated by students was taken into account and recognized. Since its introduction, there have been several improvements and modifications. The full history of NCEA can be found at: <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/understanding-ncea/history-of-ncea/>

So, what impact has NCEA had on the ‘achievement gap’ at secondary school level? Approximately 20 years after the data above was recorded, the gap exists across all levels as is illustrated below (NCEA – Participation based, current year)



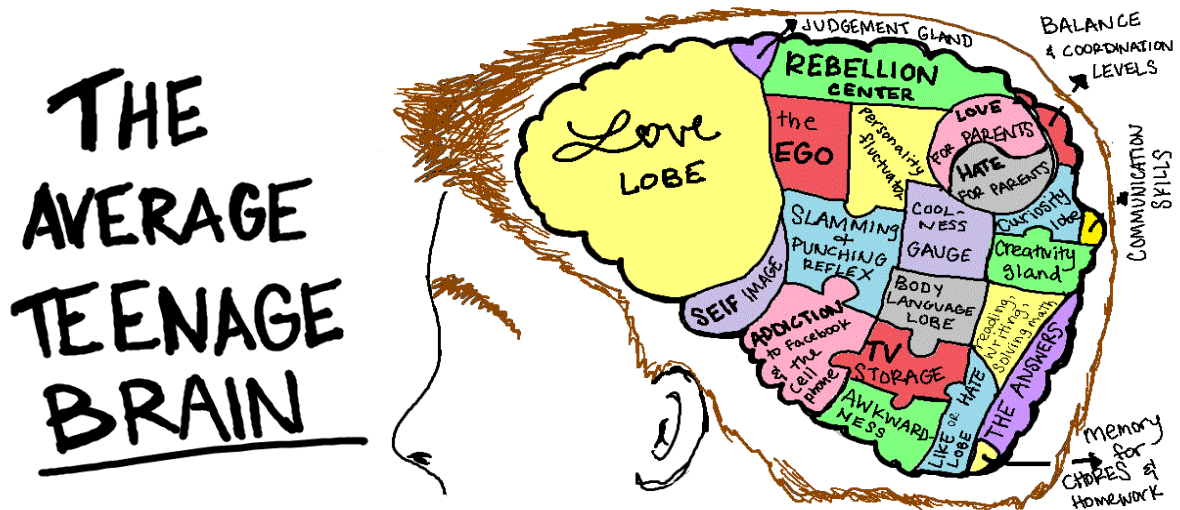
<https://secure.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/stats/provider-selected-report.do?reportID=1320795>

At my school, this picture is mirrored across the board. This was the reason for investigating what other schools are doing to achieve higher success rates for their boys.

What do we expect – they are teenagers right??

The Teen Brain

The rational part of a teen's brain isn't fully developed until the age of 25. Teens process information with the amygdala, this is the emotional part. There is much research around the development stages of the human brain. But what about the gender differences in this development?



It is often said that during the teenage years, they are 'under construction'.

"Scientists and psychologists have long known that there are differences in development between girls and boys and that girls' language development, specifically reading and writing, is generally about one to one and a half years ahead of boys'."

https://www.salon.com/2015/01/03/teen_girls_have_different_brains_gender_neuroscience_and_the_truth_about_adolescence/

However, these same scientists state that it is dangerous to draw conclusions about differences in brain function based on gender. Why is this? It is because there are also anatomical and physiological differences between adolescent girls and boys. For example, a boy's brain is generally 6-10 % larger than a girl's, there is some evidence to suggest at the same time female adolescents have more connections between the hemispheres of the brain.

Many schools have had the opportunity to listen to Nathan Mikaere Wallace¹ including ours. Nathan holds an M.A. in Education and Counselling. As a lecturer at the University of Canterbury's College of Education he spent 11 years teaching tertiary level human development. Nathan was also the lead educator and national coordinator at the Brainwave Trust, working with 30 other neuroscience educators.

¹ http://wikieducator.org/Professional_Inquiry/Nathan_Mikaere_Wallis

Nathan walked us through; an introduction to the structure of the brain and the overall relevant research findings, brain-based tips for successful parenting, and the role of hormones and how these relate to practice. However, one of the unintended outcomes of his presentations in some quarters has been to validate a lack of success based on the 'underdeveloped brain'.

This perception has I believe, unconsciously in the minds of some teachers led to accepting lower achievement based on this research (this was an issue discussed with a number of schools and a common challenge – deficit theorizing). Understanding brain development, and how this impacts on student emotions, decision making and maturity is important. It allows the teacher to design activities and lessons to best meet the needs of these students (the differentiated classroom). It also helps to develop an empathy for our students and assist in developing real and relevant relationships with them (the key to pastoral support).

The key messages that Mr Mikaere-Wallis highlighted to me in relation to not only boys but teenagers as a whole were that:

1. The frontal cortex (frontal lobe) which controls cognitive skills and our ability to communicate, judgement and emotions is for many teenagers 'out to lunch'. It is this time when it is essential that we act as the guide, confidante, significant adult to lead our students through this time and help them develop a set of core values to help them grow through these years. It is at this time when I believe that working closely and developing partnerships with our parents and whanau is essential for our students and their continued growth.
2. For teenagers the parietal lobe (visualizes spoken language) is a powerful influence in determining their pattern of behaviours. The language we use when speaking to students can either hinder or support neural pathways. Negative language, instructions based around a "no" or "don't" does not release cortisol. We need to support cortisol growth. We do this by changing the language we use with our students to be explicit about what we want them to do, rather than what not to do. For example, instead of saying "don't slam the door", perhaps say "please shut the door quietly". Using prosocial language will lead to prosocial behaviour. This is not a 'magic bullet', Mr Mikaere-Wallis estimates that it takes about 90 times for an instruction to develop new neural pathways. But if we don't start then it will never happen. We need to be consistent and positive in our language to students. This to me is one reason why a strong pastoral structure and approach is essential.

A Question that arose

Are we creating the deficit thinking by identifying and targeting these students? Are we creating the ceiling?

The schools where the difference between boys and girls achievement were minimal or non-existent, did not have programmes for boys, they targeted students based on data not gender – a sensible approach. For these schools:

“What works for all, works for boys”

International Boys School Coalition Conference 2018

This was an opportunity to meet with over 600 teaching professionals from around the globe in a celebration of boys’ education. The venue, The Southport School on the Gold Coast provided a fantastic backdrop, to the many key note addresses and workshops. The guides, all boys from the school were a credit to themselves and the school as they ensured we all arrived at the appropriate venues at the correct time.

There were a larger number of key note speakers and workshops, the quality of which spoke volumes for the quality of the teaching profession worldwide. However a couple of the workshops that grabbed my attention were:

1. Using Student Voice using Student Wellbeing

The focus was on using a range of data sources, including student voice and external measuring tools to assess wellbeing. From there they worked with students (broken down by year levels) to work on strategies to support improvement. There was also a focus on the transition periods, identified as times of particular stress.

They also had a tool to measure the effectiveness of these strategies. View the presentation here:

https://www.theibsc.org/uploaded/18AC_WorkshopPresentations/Block1_CraigTimmms_Using_Student_Voice_to_Shape_Student_Well-Being.pdf

2. The Lure of the Screen

This looked at how boys and girls communicate differently and how the electronic age is changing the face of communication.

The presentation was a precautionary one about the dangers of over exposure to technology, its impact on students and learning. The key message is that schools and parents need to monitor and manage usage to support children. View the presentation here:

https://www.theibsc.org/uploaded/18AC_WorkshopPresentations/Block4_Abigail_James_The_Lure_of_the_Screen.pdf

3. Future Global Citizens

I enjoyed this presentation, based on an Indian school model. The school introduced projects to develop 'the leaders of tomorrow'. They identified 8 leadership characteristics and developed a programme around these. View the presentation here:

https://www.theibsc.org/uploaded/18AC_WorkshopPresentations/Block6_Kathika_DasguptaHandout.pdf

NB: I really enjoyed the analysis of Sarthak's writing – very interesting!

There were many interesting presentations and presenters. The focus of conference was on boys', however I found the programme and presentations relevant for my school environment. There was a strong focus around:

- **School student leadership** - providing opportunities to lead with training
- **Aspiring to achieve** - setting and communicating high expectations of students and teachers
- **School culture and values** – developed and embedded through a strong pastoral approach

For a more in-depth look at the conference programme and resources, refer to the conference website:

<https://www.theibsc.org/conferences-events/2018ac>

So - What could we do differently at our school?

This is based on my belief and supported by many of the schools that I visited and presentations at conference. My initial focus was on boys' education, however I am suggesting two changes (refocusing) that we could employ that would impact on all students including our boys.

1. Reinvigorate our pastoral system/approach

One of the key messages that I heard, both from New Zealand Principals and conference delegates was the need to focus on building relationships with students and their whanau. The key to this in the schools where boys were succeeding on a par with girls (or beyond) was a strong pastoral system. All bar one of these schools had a Vertical House class approach. This was mooted at our school and will be introduced for the 2019 year.

I believe that this could be the catalyst for a refocusing on the power of this relationship with students.

Dr David Fincham² – Senior Lecturer, Catholic School Leadership¹, examined a model in which a school sets out to combine pastoral and academic concerns by establishing a vertical (House) system. Whilst acknowledging that pastoral care implies something more than the setting up of a formal organisation for management purposes, he proposes that academic and pastoral concerns can in fact be integrated effectively through a vertical system.

Why would/should we introduce this vertical structure?

1. We currently have a horizontal system – there is a need to change. By changing the structure, we are signaling both to students and staff that what we are doing will be different.
2. This model is based around the concept of tuakana – teina³. The principle is that the older tuakana guides and supports a younger teina. This is a form of relationship that is common in whanau. It is the development and fostering of this relationship that will support the school values of our school. It is not a power relationship, one depends on the other. There is no room in this partnership for the tuakana to whakaiti (put down) the teina.

² <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13632434.1991.10384452>

³ <http://tereomaori.tki.org.nz/Curriculum-guidelines/Teaching-and-learning-te-reo-Maori/Aspects-of-planning/The-concept-of-a-tuakana-teina-relationship>

3. Senior students can mentor junior students and provide both academic and pastoral support. Identified mentors can be given the opportunity to train. This is a key leadership opportunity and could be offered to all new prefects.
4. Peer support leaders are grown within each house class and it could become an expectation of them as they transition into the senior school. I still believe that formal training for these students in the peer support programme is necessary.
5. As well as the above, providing additional opportunities for students to lead, particularly in the older age groups in a range of ways.
6. Helping to build a greater sense of community with increased interaction between year levels.
7. Allowing students to observe the school journey through other students before it is their turn

In addition to this there is of course the other aspects of any pastoral care system that are still valuable and key to building strong pastoral relationships with our students and their families. These include:

1. Ensuring that every student in the school is known and has at least one significant adult to relate to or talk with
2. Establishing, and instilling, a strong sense of belonging incorporating the school values
3. Providing parents/carers with a familiar point of contact at the School, primarily the House Teacher.
4. Increased school and house spirit

Effective pastoral care encourages the development of genuine and effective relationships between each student and his/her house teacher. Having daily contact with the student over a five-year period, the house teacher is in an ideal position to get to know them and their parents/guardians very well, and also to share in their growth, maturity, and general development over this period of time.

THE ROLE OF THE House Teacher.

A **House teachers' role** is central in both caring for students and, crucially, monitoring their progress both academically and socially; encouraging involvement, commitment, and high standards of work and behavior.

The key to the success of this new pastoral structure is the development of a sound structure and role description for our House Teachers/Academic Leaders.

What to include in the Role Description?

There has been staff consultation around this role, at the time of writing I have not seen this. However I believe that this role needs to include:

The Basics:

- Taking attendance (checking non-attendance, following up on absence with whanau)
- Checking uniform, discussing uniform expectations
- Pass on any notices/information necessary
- Talking to students, building relationships
- Communicating with parents/whanau

The Necessary:

- Tracking and monitoring academic progress and having regular discussions with students – being the *Academic Leader*
- Teaching our expectations around attendance, punctuality
- Modeling and teaching the 4R's
- Fostering and developing mentor relationships in class
- Fostering a pride in the school and personal performance

We need to further develop the "Culture of Care".

What is an Academic leader?

- Tracking student data and having regular discussions collectively and individually about this data with students
- Ensuring students are aware of where they are at
- Setting achievement goals with students
- Discussing possible pathways

This aspect of the pastoral role was seen as the key to raising overall achievement in a number of high performing NZ schools. Schools where male achievement was on a par with female achievement

Why we should change when morning House Time is?

Absence is an issue around house time. When I approach students about this, the most common excuse is *“it’s only house time”*. Time to call their bluff. My suggestions:

1. Begin the day with period 1
 - Encourage more getting to school on time, they do not want to miss curriculum time
2. Have House time after period 1 and make it longer (just a thought, may not be seen as useful – could take this out of pm lessons)
 - Encourage more focus on relationships, developing relationships
 - Eliminate the excuse *“I came late because it was only house time”*
 - Have more discussions around pathways and careers
 - The House Teacher as the *academic leader*, having discussions with students on a regular basis and monitoring their class (some at BHS do this now)
 - Reading groups for juniors – could use senior **role models** if Vertical House classes
 - Better access for Deans, as more students will be present at House Time
3. Have Assemblies once per fortnight (timetabled)
 - Provide certainty for house classes and teachers with time to work on values education and academic monitoring
 - Have a focus on values and expectation at assemblies (extend what is done now)
 - Always find something to celebrate (achievement, culture (school), contribution)
 - Student led as much as possible, however keep a formal focus and structure

Questions

1. How do we teach values around punctuality, attendance, class requirements?
2. How do we embed and teach the school expectations and culture (4 R’s)?
3. Who leads possible house competitions or House activities to support spirit?
4. When would we work as a staff to develop a programme to deliver during extended house time?

To Do

1. Develop a House Teacher Role Description to meet the new structure
2. Develop with staff learning activities to deliver in the House time around values and expectations

A good read regarding pastoral care structures and how different stakeholders view this role in a school.

http://www.anglicanschoolsaustralia.edu.au/files/chris_pitt_-_develop1.pdf

Another UK article:

<https://theday.co.uk/blog/form-time-manifesto>

2. Investigate opportunities to share good practice

Many of the schools spoke about raising the expectations of their staff, promoting high expectations and good practice in schools and recognizing the expertise already available in schools. This led to a discussion about the value of one-off external PLD delivered to schools. Most agreed that in general this was not a good approach to promote long-term change, however at times could be the catalyst to change. So what practices could we reinvigorate explore to share good practice in our school?

a. Continue with the 'browsers'

- Non-threatening – positives only
- Can be short - about 10 minutes
- Provides evidence against the PTC's for both observed and observer
- Can be planned or off the cuff – promotes open door practice
- No preparation needed by either party
- Can focus on particular students when choosing who to browse

Perhaps the addition of an opportunity to make a suggestion or recommendation would be a valuable addition and make this tool even more useful.

For example:

Two positive aspect of this browser were:

A suggestion/recommendation/have you thought about

BROWSER OBSERVATION SHEET

YOUR CODE:

TEACHER OBSERVED:

CLASS:

DATE:

PERIOD:

SOMETHING POSITIVE I SAW DURING THIS OBSERVATION WAS:

Limitations:

- Constructive criticism (recommendations, suggestions) is a useful tool for professional growth. Perhaps add the opportunity on the form?
- Can't always get to see the class of first choice (not a big issue however)
- Need to choose the time of the period that is useful. This is when an earlier discussion with the teacher could be helpful.

The browsers provide an opportunity to have a discussion with another teacher around practice and your observations of that practice. This dialogue is a way to share good practice and have open learning conversations in a non-threatening way. The fact that there is a document (browser form) as an outcome for both parties does also provide evidence to support the practicing certificate for both in terms of 'showing leadership'.


b. Introduce ‘Pineapple Charts’ as a professional development tool

Professional Development (PD) is an essential ingredient in developing a high-quality teaching staff. This model does not employ your usual one-off whole staff approach. Whilst I believe that there is a place for this type of universal development (depending on the focus), especially around education law, policy and significant structure changes, a more personalised approach using our own ‘experts’ will deliver more long-term benefits for our teachers, build a learning culture and therefore benefits for our students.

What is a Pineapple Chart?

‘A Pineapple Chart is a system that allows teachers to invite one another into their classrooms for informal observation. The chart is set up in some location where teachers go on a daily basis: the teacher’s lounge, the copy room, or wherever teacher pigeonholes live in your school. On the chart, teachers “advertise” the interesting things they are doing in their classrooms, activities they think others might want to observe. The activities could be as complex as a science lab, a history simulation, or a Skype session with a school in another country. Or they could be as simple as a read-aloud or a lesson on badminton.

The chart represents one week of school. Along the top, five columns are labeled Monday through Friday. Along the side, rows assigned to various chunks of each school day. In a middle or high school, these would be class periods. In an elementary school, the rows could be divided by hours or half-hours.

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
1		Taylor: Reciprocal Learning			
2	Hughes: Socratic Circles			Silva: Video Editing in iMovie	Silva: Video Editing in iMovie
3		Vasquez: Ellis Island Simulation	Vasquez: Ellis Island Simulation		
4	Turner: Impressionism		Miller: Frog Dissection	Miller: Frog Dissection	
5				Wilson: Measuring heart rate	

*When a teacher sees something on the chart she (or he) is interested in, she goes to that classroom at the designated time, sits down in an out-of-the-way spot, and watches. That's it. No note-taking is required, no post-observation conference, no write-up. Just a visit. She can even mark papers or catch up on email if she wants, paying closer attention when the moment calls for it, but getting work done in the meantime. She can stay for five minutes or a whole class period. The key word here is **informal**, and it's the best way for teachers to learn lots of skills and techniques just when they need them.'*

<https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/pineapple-charts/>

c. Teaching Inquiry Groups

'Since any teaching strategy works differently in different contexts for different students, effective pedagogy requires that teachers inquire into the impact of their teaching on their students.'

(Ministry of Education, 2007b, page 35)

The fundamental purpose of the Teaching as Inquiry cycle is to achieve improved outcomes for all students. The cycle is an organising framework that teachers can use to help them learn from their practice and build greater knowledge.

Although teachers can work in this way independently, it is more effective when they support one another in their inquiries. We all have basic beliefs and assumptions that guide our thinking and behaviour but of which we may be unaware. We need other people to provide us with different perspectives and to share their ideas, knowledge, and experiences.

In 2018 teachers worked in 'Inquiry Groups' based around identified general areas that needed further development (Boys, ICT, Maori, Literacy). These groups have been provided some time to meet and share their inquiries, although the template for the inquiry was left to the individual (maybe an area for discussion).

Looking Ahead

For 2019 this approach will continue. The SLT group will discuss how to provide the time to ensure that there is a real opportunity:

- For valuable discussion
- For sharing ideas and strategies around the school focus
- For building powerful collaborative relationships amongst teaching staff

Back to Boys Education

a. Possible Boys strategies identified as working

Even though my focus moved away from boys and strategies started at them, there were however some strategies that were trialed at various schools to promote the achievement of boys:

1. Senior boys (year 13) read to and with (role model) the identified year 9 students in small groups. Suggested reading a book in a series to encourage students to get the next in the series. Some year 13 boys did need prompting but it is successful. Parents of junior students have given positive feedback. This occurred in Form time 4 times a week for about half of each term. This I believe could be easily incorporated into a vertical pastoral unit and further supports the model of senior mentors and guides in the pastoral unit (tuakan-teina).
 - Choose Year 9's with good Mathematics/Poor English, easiest to make improvements. Poor Literacy overall – need more support to encourage them to read.
 - Once a term group's get together to share food and discuss a book that they have read.
2. Year 10 boys were invited to read to the local kindergarten on a weekly basis. Students identified not necessarily leaders but would enjoy the opportunity. This has been very successful. Boys enjoyed it. They come out of one class a week. This gave these boys confidence in their own reading ability, provided practice in a non-threatening environment and built relationships with the early childhood centre.
3. One Principal identified that it is important to get 'early runs on the board'. Find some way to celebrate and acknowledge success early, this assists to get buy in from students, particularly boys. All students want to taste success and we have to assist them to make this happen.
4. Courses that were found successful with boys included coding and primary industries. Further investigation into 'boy friendly' courses would be beneficial.

b. The Impact of Digital Technology

Whilst this was a focus of the sabbatical, each school had very different approaches to the use of technology in a classroom, from a 1-1 culture to a student choice regarding a device or whether to use technology at all.

- BYOD friendly is still the most common regime in schools
- Some schools dictate what device students can purchase
- Some limit devices to a certain specification
- One school became a BYOD school in 2013, but many teachers have reverted to 'chalk and talk' as they have observed boys becoming more engaged through this approach (interesting!)

There has been little evidence to support differences with regards to achievement of boys versus girls at secondary level. Differences in use however do exist, this is primarily thought to be a result of competitive gaming with boys spending significantly more time playing computer games.

Other differences are more due to other factors, including socio-economic status, ethnicity, pedagogy and classroom management, the last two within the teachers sphere of influence.

Becta's How do boys and girls differ in their use of ICT⁴? – Survey undertaken in 2008 is a comprehensive investigation into ICT as it relates to boys' vs girls. Whilst it highlights differences in specific areas, gaming, access and leisure, it also is clear that overall differences are not significant across the board.

There is no doubt that the 'digital age' is here to stay. If we are to prepare our students for tomorrow the new need also to embrace the tools of a modern learning environment. I believe that New Zealand schools generally have only touched the surface of the digital environment. This is due to the cost of change, but more importantly, the speed of change that can be maintained by our staff. This changing pedagogy is still a challenge, many who embrace the digital world are stymied by the 'pen and paper' nature of the qualification system. Promises of change are slow in being realized.

I believe more than ever, our teachers play a pivotal role in ensuring that there is a balance between 'traditional' learning and new pedagogies. We need to provide the environment to make this happen.

⁴ http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/8318/1/gender_ict_briefing.pdf

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