

SABBATICAL REPORT

This sabbatical was taken during Term III 2008, but, in fact, began one week prior to the end of Term II with special leave of absence so that I could attend The Art of Leadership course at Harvard University.

The sabbatical was carried out in collaboration with Terry Collett, the Principal of Mount Maunganui College, with the intention of sharing the new learning and our responses during the sabbatical and supporting each other to implement change on our return.

The professional learning aspects of the sabbatical comprised the following:

- Art of Leadership course at Harvard University, Boston, which concentrated on leading schools to improve student achievement.
- Building Learning Communities Conference run by Alan November in Boston, USA, which concentrated on the use of Web 2.0 tools to restructure the teaching and learning relationship so that learning is more relevant to the 21st Century.
- Visit to the MET School in Providence, Rhode Island, USA, to explore alternative curriculum and facility structures that support 21st Century learners.
- Visit to Knowsley Educational Authority in Knowsley, Liverpool, UK, to explore alternative building design that supports 21st Century learning.
- Visit to the National University of Singapore High School of Maths and Science to investigate the philosophies and practices of a newly built school targeting a specific curriculum area.
- Visit to St Andrews School in Singapore which is a newly-built school and whose principal is currently Head of the Singapore Principals' Association to discuss recent developments in Singapore secondary education.
- Visit to North Rockhampton High School and Calamvale Community College and the Queensland Department of Education to explore innovative curriculum models.

The important refreshment and regeneration part of the sabbatical was spent in Barcelona, Northern Italy and Rome and in Penang.

The major themes of the sabbatical were:

- Ideas for a relevant 21st Century curriculum
- Role of Web 2.0 tools in the 21st Century classroom
- Learning spaces for a 21st Century school
- Role of the Principal in moving towards a 21st Century school.

Summary of Learning

The main outcomes from the Art Of Leadership course at Harvard University were around what factors make a school an effective organization for the 21st Century learner.

- Lorraine Monroe and Jeff Howard both promoted the need for schools, principals and teachers to have high expectations of their students, to have a strong sense of care for every child, to have clear performance targets for every child and for teachers to be personally resilient. They also spoke of the importance of students and teachers being provided with clear and simple structures.
- John Collins, whose main presentation was about a simple school-wide writing programme which leads to improved student achievement, identified the three factors that were present in

all successful leaders in any field. These are: **time** (they worked long hours and had done so for a long period of time), **feeling** (they had a passion for their work and people) and **focus** (they could identify the one thing they were trying to do). He claimed if you displayed only the first two you were a workaholic, and if you displayed all three you were effective.

- Roland Barth identified factors that made learning more likely (novelty, risk taking, stress, need to learn, responsibility to others, expectations, challenge) and asked why classrooms do not include these factors.
- Kim Marshall emphasized the importance of principals observing teachers in action every day and providing regular feedback. He provided templates for observing and providing feedback which can be accessed at www.marshallmemo.com, (click on Bio/Publications, and scroll down to the article on Development of Rubrics).

The Building Learning Communities conference in Boston focused on the use of Web 2.0 tools in the 21st Century classroom. This is hosted by Alan November and is held annually. It was an outstanding conference which provided very practical workshops on how to use Web 2.0 tools such as blogs, wikis, podcasts, RSS and other social networking tools to make the curriculum and classroom more relevant for the 21st Century learner.

I came away from this conference with a clear picture of how the use of these tools could assist teachers to make the pedagogical shifts necessary for the 21st Century classroom. These tools allow for genuine and timely collaboration within the learning experience and allow tasks to be authentic and the results to be published to a real audience. Students, using these tools, work in teams, solve problems and develop critical thinking skills. As the conference progressed I came to the view that teachers need to use and allow their students to use the full range of Web 2.0 tools in a co-ordinated way. The results of my thinking in this area can be found in a [wiki](#) I have created for my staff on these tools.

The visits to the MET School in Providence, Rhode Island, and the National University of Singapore Maths and Science High School, two presentations at the Building Learning Communities Conference by Bob Pearlman of the New Technology Foundation which operates New Technology High Schools (www.newtechhigh.org), and the visit with David Roscoe at the City Learning Centre in Knowsley, Liverpool, revealed a similar model for the 21st Century school. This model has at its centre differentiated learning with students working with mentors to develop their own Independent Learning Plan based around real life issues and problems which the students see as authentic and relevant to them. Teachers act as facilitators to help them experiment, explore and excel. Students don't do stuff they already know and are involved in small group discussion and peer tutoring. The work students do has a strong research focus with an emphasis on authentic publication and presentation.

The visits to the schools made it very clear that the physical learning spaces and the atmosphere created by them make a big impact on the learning approach and motivation of teachers and students. These schools had flexible spaces which were suitable for large and small group and individual learning and students and teachers had full access to the Web and Web 2.0 tools.

It has become clear to me that one of the biggest barriers for New Zealand schools to becoming 21st Century learning institutions is the mid 20th Century buildings we are asked to do this in. We can provide all of the IT infrastructure and expose teachers to new pedagogy, but we will be held back until we can rebuild our schools. This is happening in Knowsley, where David Ruscoe is leading a project to reduce the district's 10 secondary schools to 7 and have all 7 completely rebuilt.

The visit to Australia with four of my teachers from the Aspiring Leaders Group gave all of us the opportunity to see some innovative curriculum models in action. Both Calamvale Community College and North Rockhampton High School were attempting cross-curricula models in the junior school. The visits there and the time with the Assessment team from Education Queensland were valuable. During the trip we were able to bring the thinking from the wider sabbatical and from the Aspiring Leaders Group work over the previous year together and to prepare a plan for Opotiki College which will have us moving towards a full cross-curricula approach for all Year 9 and 10 by 2012.

Planned Developments for Opotiki College Arising From The Sabbatical

- Create a How To wiki to introduce staff to the possibilities of Web 2.0 tools.
- Work with Aspiring Leaders Group to support all staff to create class wikis and/or blogs in 2009.
- Draw up plans for redesign/refurbishment of school within existing foot print, after confirming classroom allocation, and seek feedback from staff.
- Plan for the formation of 40 Learning Teams of 13-15 students to replace Tutor in 2010.
- Pilot a Year 9 class in 2010 based on differentiated learning and cross-curricula problem solving and authentic publication.
 - A group of teachers from the Aspiring Leaders Group will trial a Blueprint/New Basics unit with their common class in 2009.
 - Two Year 9 classes will be combined in 2010 and all core will be taught in a cross-curricula fashion with their 4 teachers working collaboratively within a homeroom situation.
 - All Year 9 and the original Year 9 in Year 10 will follow the above approach in 2011.
 - All Year 9 and 10 will follow the above approach from 2012.
- Implement a programme of regular principal observation and feedback of all teachers from 2009.
- Implement the John Collins school-wide writing programme and accompanying lesson structure.
- Develop a template to ensure alignment of junior programmes with the New Zealand Curriculum, the Opotiki College Curriculum and appropriate pedagogies for the 21st Century. This will also ensure alignment with the values espoused in our Mission and Vision which can be described as our 3 R's – Rigor, Relevance and Relationships with an overarching theme of Inclusiveness.
- Identify the best learning conditions for students, staff and parents of Opotiki College and publish and display these and incorporate them in all classes.

My thanks and gratitude go to the Ministry of Education for awarding me the sabbatical, to the Opotiki College Board of Trustees for supporting my sabbatical, to the Senior Leadership Team at Opotiki College for continuing to skillfully run the school true to our kaupapa, and to the members of the Aspiring Leaders Group who willingly accepted extra responsibility and in supporting the leadership of the school have strengthened leadership throughout the school

Maurie Abraham
Principal Opotiki College
September 2008