

Report on sabbatical

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Focus of sabbatical; “decreasing disengagement”

My focus was to investigate the various initiatives being trialled by schools to re-engage students in the 15 to 19 year old age group range whose engagement in schooling was minimal or waning

Acknowledgements;

I wish to acknowledge the Ministry of Education for its funding of the sabbatical. Principals I spoke to overseas were unanimous in their envy of the New Zealand scheme. No other country I visited had a similar scheme.

I am grateful to the Board of Trustees of Papanui High School who supported me wholeheartedly in my plans, and to the Senior Leadership team at Papanui who so capably covered for me while I was away.

I am also grateful to the large number of colleagues at Auckland and Canterbury Universities and at the Ministry of Education in Wellington who provided me with contacts at the planning stage of my sabbatical.

And, of course, I thank my Principal colleagues both in new Zealand and overseas for their willingness to host me in their schools and to share their experiences so freely and openly.

Methodology

I visited co-ed schools in Auckland, Wellington, Carlisle Pennsylvania and the UK. I was also able to spend time with a number of officials from various English LEAs, from the Curriculum and Qualification authority, and from the Department of Children, Young people and Families.

I provided each school I visited with the following background paper and focussing questions

BACKGROUND PAPER AND FOCUSSING QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL VISITS; AT PAPANUI HIGH SCHOOL, DESPITE

- **HAVING IMPROVED OUR NCEA RESULTS SIGNIFICANTLY IN THE LAST 5 YEARS**
- **HAVING CHANGED THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE SCHOOL TO THE EXTENT THAT WE NOW HAVE AN ENROLMENT SCHEME TO CONTROL NUMBERS WISHING TO ATTEND**
- **HAVING RECEIVED A VERY FAVOURABLE REVIEW FROM ERO EARLIER THIS YEAR WHICH COMMENDED THE SCHOOL FOR THE QUALITY OF ITS TEACHING AND THE WAY THE SCHOOL WAS MEETING ALL STUDENTS' NEEDS**

WE STILL HAVE A SIGNIFICANT MINORITY OF STUDENTS IN THE 15-19 YEAR OLD RANGE WHOSE NEEDS WE ARE NOT MEETING.

THE STUDENTS ARE "DISENGAGED". THE HALLMARKS OF DISENGAGED STUDENTS ARE

- **THEY ARE NOT INTERESTED IN THEIR STUDIES AND SHOW MINIMAL FOCUS OR WORK OUTPUT**
- **THEY MAY HAVE ONE OR TWO SUBJECTS IN WHICH THEY ARE INTERESTED. USUALLY THESE SUBJECTS WILL HAVE A LARGE PRACTICAL COMPONENT**
- **THEY WILL HAVE NO CLEAR IDEA OF A CAREER DIRECTION**
- **THEY MAY BE DISRUPTIVE IN CLASS AND IN THE PLAYGROUNDS. THEY ARE OVER REPRESENTED IN THE DISCIPLINARY SYSTEM. THEY RECEIVE FREQUENT DETENTIONS AND STAND DOWNS. ALTERNATIVELY THEY MAY BE PASSIVELY OBEIDENT, ATTEND ALL CLASSES, BUT ACHIEVE VERY LITTLE.**
- **THEY MAY HAVE HIGH RATES OF ABSENTEEISM OR SPOT BUNKING**
- **THEY WILL OFTEN SEE "GOING ON A COURSE" AS THE SOLUTION TO THEIR DISENGAGEMENT AT SCHOOL REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THE COURSE IS OF ANY BENEFIT TO THEM**
- **THEY WILL LEAVE SCHOOL AT THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY USUALLY WITH NO QUALIFICATIONS. OFTEN THEY WILL FAIL TO FIND EMPLOYMENT**
- **THEY WILL NOT BE "HOOKED IN" TO THE WIDER LIFE OF THE SCHOOL THROUGH CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND WILL FEEL LITTLE SENSE OF PRIDE IN, OR ALLEGIANCE TO, THE SCHOOL**

FOR EACH SCHOOL THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WILL BE ASKED

1. WHAT EVIDENCE OF DISENGAGED 15-19 YEAR OLDS DID/DO YOU HAVE IN YOUR SCHOOL?

2. WHAT INITIATIVES HAVE YOU DEVELOPED TO DEAL WITH THEM?

THESE MAY INVOLVE

CURRICULUM CHANGE

STRUCTURAL CHANGES,

LINKS WITH OTHER PROVIDERS OR BUSINESS,

**NEW APPROACHES TO COUNSELLING AND CAREERS GUIDANCE
OR ANY OTHER INITIATIVE**

- 3. WHAT BARRIERS DID YOU HAVE TO OVERCOME TO IMPLEMENT THE INITIATIVES?**
- 4. WHAT EVIDENCE DO YOU HAVE THAT THE INITIATIVES ARE REDUCING DISENGAGEMENT?**

WHAT OTHER IDEAS HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THAT YOU WOULD CONSIDER TRYING?

At the conclusion of each visit I wrote a summary of the visit including; a brief description of the school and an outline of the strategies being employed to reduce engagement. The UK section of my report contains a great number of acronyms and requires an understanding of the UK system. I have not tried to describe the UK system in this report. An excellent summary coverage of the UK secondary schooling and assessment system is contained in John Grant's 2008 sabbatical report which is on line at leadspace.

I also included a section called "other random observations" in which I noted points of interest which were not part of the focus for my sabbatical but which could have implications for my own school

Notes on visits

Onehunga High School

Decile 4. Roll 1400. 40% Pasifika, 27% Pakeha, 20% Maori
Principal; Deidre Shea

Disengagement and the drift to "courses" out of school have been severely reduced by the school's determination to provide individual pathways for as many kids as possible.

Primarily this is done through the various academies

1. Services Academy. One of 6 academies set up with MSD funding (the PM has just announced that a further 8 will start next year) in 2006. There are 4 others in Auckland. MSD target is that 80% of students will move to the services or to employment . This target is difficult due to the recession but will be more realistic once the economy picks up.

Two 6 month courses per year with 20-25 in each. First course is only for Y13 and 14. Second course, which starts at midyear, is for 12 and 13.

Selection criteria is fairly rigorous and students need to pass a medical, academic (need level 1), fitness, Police and age (must be 17 at point of graduation) test to gain entry. There is a range of students in courses; Some top academics who want to join the services but most are average to below students. Students wear a different uniform to the rest of the school. Demand is so great that 2 year 11 classes will be offered as pre-academy courses next year.

In a typical 25 period week students might do the following periods; maths 4, English 4, ICT 2, PT 5 (this is fitness based), Services knowledge 3 (rank, drill, ironing, sewing etc), Careers unit standards with services focus 3, automotive/first aid 2. But the programme is flexible and includes some week long camps. There is some flexibility and some students are only involved in part of the course.

Has full time director Tony Coughlan who was the ex HOD science. He has a military background. tcoughlan@ohs.school.nz

2. Construction academy. This is a full time course which was the model on which the service academy was based. Students spend 50% of their time on practical projects. The rest involves 1 class of construction maths, 1 of construction English, 1 of construction business and some PE. Students can gather enough credits to gain NCEA level 2.

The Practical work might be round the school (covered walkways, a fale, pizza ovens, outdoor tables etc) or in community projects (sleep outs sold locally, play areas and sand pits in local schools).

The academy received seeding funding of \$200k from Fletcher construction who still give valuable mentoring. The academy is staffed by 2 tech teachers with construction backgrounds.

The academy is overviewed by a Trust Board which also overviews the Business school (see below). The board consist of the Principal and various business representatives who enjoy the involvement with the school. They meet 4 times a year

3. Business school. Set up with shares gifted by a highly successful old boy. Shares generate about \$80k per year. Students choose business courses as part of a full time course ie they're not full time in the business school.

Entrepreneurial focus is very strong. Eg they organise the bi-ennial hall of fame dinner where 3 or 4 ex students who have succeeded in business are honoured.

Students organise funding, sponsorship, catering (in conjunction with food and hospitality courses) etc. It is now a big occasion.

The new tertiary high school run by Stuart Middleton on the MIT Manukau Insitute of Technology) campus will be interesting He has promised that he will only take students who are potential AE students. They will start as earl as year 11. Local principals are worried about the affect on their roles

Other random observations

- School uses a 4 period before lunch, 1 period after lunch programme. It has reduced bunking because students find it easier to handle 1 period after lunch
- Art dept was about to hold its second art exhibition and sale at the local community centre which was in the middle of the shopping centre. A very popular occasion each year.
- 2 full time nurses are funded by the Auckland DHB. They do a full medical assessment of every pupil. This funding is decile based
- The school funds 2 full time sports coordinators because it realises the importance of sport to the students
- Open walls to toilets to reduce vandalism and graffiti!!

Massey High school

Decile 5, roll 2400, 41% Pakeha, 23% Maori, 20% Pasifika, 13% Asian
Principal Bruce Ritchie

Massey has just collected an excellent ERO review which praised the way it uses data and national and international research to shape school development. Underpinning many of the innovations is extremely rich data on student achievement. A staff member has a 0.8 time allocation for this purpose.

A strength of the school is its **Academic counselling (AC)** ;

AC grew out of Bruce's research in the States and in Europe. In the States a school of the same size as Massey would have 10 full time academic counsellors whose function is to monitor and plan the career and academic pathway for every student.

This could help explain the fact that most students in the US stay at High school until they graduate (community expectations will be another factor)

Ac's aim is to raise academic achievement; It has 3 linked strands

- An event involving parents (PSP)
- AC sessions for students with the Deans
- Target setting initiative

Parent school partnership for student achievement (PSP); A 25 minute interview between the form teacher and the parents and student. Form teacher gets one feed back and one feed forward item from each subject teacher. The parents do not see the subject teachers and feedback shows that they prefer to have contact with only one person (attendance rates at these evenings are 75% cf 25% in the old system. The letter home to parents, the phone call from the form teacher, and the conference on the night are carefully scripted to help form teachers. The PSPs take place at the beginning of term 2 on Thursday pm, Thursday evening, and all day Friday. The school closes while they happen. Parents are sent a letter telling them to ensure they can get time off work to attend the meetings. During the PSPs a crèche is set up, food provided and displays on careers and option choices are running in the hall. **The PSPs are rigorously focussed on Academic progress..** There is one other "normal" parent-teacher evening held during the year.

Academic counselling sessions; These are carried out by the Deans (2 at each level) who are released from 1 class for this purpose. Students meet with their deans individually (year 11-13) or in small groups (9-11) 2 or 3 times during the year. Students complete a long and medium term Personal Education Plan at the beginning of the year and/or prior to the meetings. They discuss performance to date, what they need to achieve, how they can do this, subject choices, future career and study plans. Records of the interviews are kept on the database. (see templates for the plans in the appendix)

Target setting; All data is analysed and whole school, and individual student, targets are set annually. Targets are set by Student Achievement Manager on the basis of historical NCEA data (school) and MidYIS results (individuals)

There is clear evidence to show that all 3 components of the Academic Counselling process are having positive impacts on student achievement. Staff and parents are very satisfied with the process

Other random observations

- 3 netball courts astro-turfed at a total cost of \$60k
- Hospitality courses are popular. About to set up an academy at level 3 which will do level 3 HSI standards. Classes prepare food gratis for the Auckland city Mission
- Sports academy is a one line course running at every level. Students concentrate on improving their individual skills rather than coaching others. At senior level assessment is by achievement standards so the more able students who are wanting to go to university can gain the requisite number of credits
- Toilets, as with Onehunga and Otahuhu were open to public view. South island weather may preclude this method or reducing vandalism!

Appendices; "Academic Counselling at Massey High School" report

Otahuhu College

Roll 1440, decile 1, 70% Pasifika, 16% Asian, 12% Maori
Principal Gil Laurensen

Curriculum initiatives to better meet the needs of the students include

- Carpentry and fine furniture option at year 13. Some large projects are completed in the outdoor covered section of the new technology block. Assessment is by ITO Unit Standards
- New Zealand Certificate in computing, has totally replaced TIM. Students start on level 2 in year 11 and complete level 2 in year 12. There are some compulsory elements in the course. NZC computing is a very popular course
- The school is considering setting up a services academy with an emphasis on the Police
- The careers advisor uses STAR courses both at the MIT (Manukau Institute of Technology) and a number of PTOs (see appendix)
- Horticulture is proving popular (as it was at Massey)
- A very experienced Gateway co-ordinator manages 65 gateway placements

Appendices; 2009 careers calendar showing all careers events and STAR funded courses.

Hauraki Plains college (Ngatea)

Roll 640, decile

Principal Ngaire Harris

It is very obvious that all the school improvement at HPC is data and research driven. Ngaire has a Masters in education and there is a strong synergy between the charter, the strategic plan, the school improvement targets and professional development. The metaphor of the river journey permeates all school vision. David Hargreaves "four deeps and nine gateways" is used as a model (see website)

Some years ago an analysis of data showed that only 15% of HPC students went to university but the curriculum in the senior school was really focussed on meeting their needs....what about the other 85%?

The response was to create the **8 line timetable**. Students at all levels work on 8 subjects. In the junior school it mirrors the 8 essential learning areas.

In the senior school it means that students take 8 subjects with a maximum of 14 credits per subject. They have 3 periods of a subject per week. It means that a greater range of senior subjects can be offered. Teachers only teach the units which engage kids and they are encouraged to design new courses (for example at year 12 there is a course called “book club” which is a mixture of English and History.) Construction Trades course on a double line at year 13 level is a popular course and students do the national Certificate in Building and construction for which the school has accreditation.

The timetable was revised this year to allow for some double lines in those subjects which are most popular with students (art, building and construction, agriculture). Some core subjects are also double lined eg maths at year 12 is taught in 2 lines; one for stats, one for calc.

Guidance is provided by River guides who run each river group. Each horizontal group has no more than 14 students and meets for 20 minutes each week (in the 25th period) as well as 2 short check-ins at other times. Everyone has a river group, including the principal, the caretaker, the EO, the office manager. All material used in the river groups is provided for the guides and they cover such things as career planning, credit watch, and various aspects of the school’s charter which link to the principles and values of the curriculum. Non teaching staff like the involvement. All the students I spoke to knew exactly how many credits they had. An academic dean has been appointed with a 0.6 time allocation. She monitors student performance and works with the river guides and the deans and the careers advisors. The school has 70 Gateway placements.

Other random observations

- The junior reports are based on credits gained in the key competencies. They prepare students for the NCEA system (see appendix)
- The year 13 common room is a converted hay barn

Albany Senior High School

The school only has a roll of 200 at the moment because it’s starting at year 11. it is expected to have a roll of 1400 when full. It is decile 10.

ASHS is the first senior college to be funded by the Govt in NZ. They will move on to their purpose built new campus next year.

The school has a crystal clear philosophy and all aspects of the school’s life reflect that philosophy. The purpose of my visit was to accompany my Assistant principal who was gathering information about their use of open source software to manage the impressive IT in the school. However there are many aspects of the school which will serve to reduce disengagement by students

- The school is unquestionably student centred
- The “impact” programme which enables students to spend one day per week following their own learning passions
- The “commons” idea. Teaching takes place in large open plan areas where there are 5 classes being taught at the same time. Staff and student performance is being constantly indirectly quality controlled
- The free availability of top end IT hard and software. IT is an integral part of the learning environment

- Tutorials of 100 minutes a week ensure that students' achievement and career pathways are monitored closely.
- The physical environment is modern and exciting
- Staff regularly and effectively engage in reflection on their learning

Appendix; prospectus

Tawa College

Roll 1450, decile 9, 25% Pasifika/Maori, 70% pakeha
Principal Murray Lucas

Spent time with Rachael Martin, the director of learning support. She oversees the SPEC courses in the school. SPEC used to be ASDAN. SPEC is NZQA approved and is aimed at providing the framework for a holistic programme for students towards the lower end of the academic and behavioural scale. There is one course available from SPEC for OORS students and one for mainstream. At Tawa it is a one line course at years 12 and 13. Next year it will also be offered at year 11 and the year after, at year 10. The key outcome of the courses is that students gain ownership of, and empowerment through, their learning. There are 4 levels of course and the last three can earn credits towards NCEA in the core generic areas. They have a strong focus on the Key Competencies.

Resources are available at www.spec.org.nz. The teachers guide is \$100 and the student booklets about \$25 each. The "key competency development; student record" looks well worthwhile.

Rachael feels that the course, because of its student driven nature and flexibility meets the needs of some seriously disengaged students better than the more traditional transition classes or employment skills courses.

The school meets student needs at senior level by offering extensions of some popular courses to a further line on the timetable. Eg drama is offered with stagecraft, music is offered with technical music

Other random observations

- The covered waiting area outside the canteen looks modern and attractive
- Linda Stockam of the MOE is doing some interesting work supporting middle managers in the Wellington area

Porirua College

Roll 600, decile 1, 75% Pasifika, 20% Maori
Principal Suzanne Jungerson

The school is currently being totally rebuilt. 4 or 5 new Learning Communities are being constructed. Each LC has about 5 classrooms (including 1 science lab) and a central commons area. Glass is used extensively in an attempt to deprivatise practice. All junior students will have all their classes taught in the LC (apart from specialist art, PE, Technology etc) and a representative of each of the core learning areas will be in each LC ie there is stability of staff and stability of students.

Each LC will have its own unique charter which spells out the values and expectations of that LC. Senior students will not be able to do all their learning in one LC because of the need to specialise.

One LC (te ara hou) was set up as a trial and there were very positive results in terms of improved attitudes learning and behaviour. A teacher who “lost it” before a couple of students later apologised to the whole LC and was supported in his apology by the 2 students he had abused.

Porirua College has identified learning as a major problem for the students. Data showed that the majority of students had no understanding (beyond asking the teacher) of how to go about learning. They have a school wide goal of “building powerful learners” and they intend to do this by developing the staff as “learning coaches”. Each staff member will have about 14 students to coach. Staff are encouraged to support school wide learning initiatives.

Eg 1. The school had identified “noticing” as an important part of learning. Staff were encouraged over a 2 week period to complement students who “noticed”

Eg 2. Students entered a school wide contest to design a “what to do if I get stuck” poster.

In 2010 the students will not start until 9.30 and they will finish at 3.30. Staff will start at 8.30 and will spend the first hour working collaboratively in Learning Community groupings. This will almost certainly lead to a greater integration of subjects although it is intended to let this integration happen naturally rather than to mandate it.

Naenae college

Roll 700, decile 3

Principal John Russell

The principal is leading the school through a process of change aimed at building a strategic direction and developing a professional learning community with the capacity to achieve its goals. (see appendices; “curriculum exec”, “staff workshop”)

A great deal is going on but the focus is on the junior school.

Naenae is using academic counselling similar to the PSP at Massey. Attendance at the form teacher-parent interviews was 95% at year 9 and 75% at year 13. The school was closed for one day to allow the interviews to take place.

The Principal and his team are carrying out systematic reviews of the four major faculties with a view to ensuring that their teaching is genuinely student centred.

Project-based learning is seen as a way to engage senior students (cf construction and alumni dinner at Onehunga, Impact at Albany). Students react positively to the authentic nature of this sort of learning. At Wainuiomata College students present an annual fashion parade for which they do all the preparation. Students troll through the NZQA website to identify applicable unit standards against which they can be assessed.

Other random observations

- John Russell has been involved in advising the Minister re trades academies. The new model will most likely work as follows. If a student participates in a

trades academy his/her EFT (about \$10000) will be transferred to the academy. The academy will then buy services from the school to complement the student's programme (eg maths or English classes, or sports participation). In essence it is a voucher system.

- Naenae use section 27 agreements extensively instead of stand downs. These can be negotiated by the Deans. They have used about 35 this year. See appendix; "Education Act 1989; Section 27 agreement
- To support the school's literacy programme the Principal asks students in line for a suspension to write their own incident report. This needs to be couched in suitably formal language.

Wellington Girls College

Decile 10, roll 1200?

Principal Julia Davidson

As 80% of students move on to university most students' needs are being met by the current curriculum.

Of interest to Papanui is their remodelled library. This is open plan with movable shelving and flexible spaces which can cater for 3 or 4 classes. There is a cocooned-off quiet area. The library has about 25 computer workbooks which students can borrow to use when they are in the library. This obviates the need for a great number of space eating PCs.

Wellington East Girls College

Roll 988, decile 8. 52% Pakeha, 15% Pasifika, 15% Maori

Principal Sally Haughton, Deputy principal Ann Greenaway

The school, under a new principal, has developed an ambitious and all-encompassing strategic plan whose goals include curriculum change. This will come later. Up till now they have challenged the disengagement issue through;

- Identifying and listening to, student voice. This is done through surveys
- Focussing on providing opportunities for student leadership. Students are given many opportunities to lead in the school. All prefects apply for a specific role on the prefect team. Each position (there are 22 of them) has a specific written job description and has a staff member attached and are supported by student committees. Students are interviewed for the positions.
- A "futures" class runs at years 11, 12, and 13. It uses the SPEC programme.
- Academic counselling is focussed through form teachers. Form teachers have four 25 minute slots with their classes each week. They use data to mentor students' progress and are an important part of the careers counselling programme. They are moving towards a Personal Education plan for all students, along the lines of the schoolsplus proposal
- At risk groups are overviewed by a member of the senior leadership team who have a specific role in engaging the parents of those groups. An AP is responsible for each of the Maori, Pasifika, and African groups in the school
- Period 25 is used by seniors to pursue personal interests eg stage challenge, choirs, scholarship classes, sports etc.

- A Pasifika homework group runs after school on Tuesdays. Students have to sign up for the programme in advance and they are provided with food. About 15 students regularly attend.

Other random observations

- The Principal's nominee receives the equivalent of 1 class release to do her job. She is supported by the deputy principal
- Why do we not share the results of our credit watch survey with each individual student?
- The Governance Manual and Policy Framework provides a very useful document for Board of Trustee members (see appendix)

Dickinson College, Carlisle , Pennsylvania

Dickinson is a prestigious liberal arts college offering undergraduate courses across a range of disciplines. It has a strong international focus. The College offers on fully funded scholarship placement to a Papanui student each year. The College has about 2500 students.

The President, Bill Durdon, and his wife Elke, are keen for the Papanui connection to continue. He was interested in our fee paying student programme and suggested that we set up a partnership with Dickinson whereby our fee paying German students could be encouraged to come to Dickinson once they had finished their Gymnasias in Germany. The College would offer a fee-free semester to those students who were taking a GAP year between school and university. They would rely on the recommendation of Papanui to select their students.

This could be a good marketing tool for Papanui as German students would gain the opportunity to get an english experience in 2 english speaking cultures.

Dickinson High School, Dickinson, Pennsylvania

Roll; 1500

Contact; Angela Warner, school counsellor

Dickinson has 7 full time counsellors in the school, one of whom has special responsibility for students with extreme behaviour needs. Counsellors do no teaching and are not required to have been teachers. The school also has a Principal for each of the 4 levels in the school as well as an overarching principal. The school also has a social worker who really specialises in attendance.

The other six counsellors divide the school into 6 alphabetically. They case manage the kids in their groups. Their roll is to overview the progress of the students during their years at the school. This involves initial placement in their classes and over-viewing the course selection process each year. Counsellors see each of their 280 case load at least once per year. Angela indicated that more than 50% of her students only require 1 meeting per year. As the students become closer to graduation a large part of her role is to assist students in getting into the university of their choice; and Counsellors are the first point of contact for parents in the school. There are no form teachers as we know them although teaching staff carry out some administrative tasks. Counsellors try not to be disciplinarians and serious matters of discipline will be handled by the Principals. Counselling Programmes for seriously damaged students are often out sourced from the school.

Counsellors are fully trained and are required to have a Masters of Counselling Education. This involves career training as well. In some schools there can be tension between the counselling and teaching staff around jurisdiction issues. Some schools also use their counsellors for some admin tasks such as time tabling or exan organisation. Counsellors' pay is about the same as teachers'.

A comparison between the amount of academic counselling time given at Dickinson and Papanui is interesting

Papanui; 5 deans with teaching release totalling	1.6 FTTE
1 junior head of school	0.4
1 full time, 2 part time guidance counsellor	2.0
1 career advisor and head of senior school	0.8
Additional careers staff	0.8
TOTAL	5.8 FTTE
 Dickinson; 7 counsellors	 7.0 FTTE

Southfields College, Wandsworth, London

Roll 1420, decile 1 equivalent, 70 nationalities in the school, 80% of the students are ethnic minorities on special needs register

Contact; Jacqui Valin (Principal), , David Holt (Director of Community)

A fascinating school with a real sense of direction and commitment to the community. But it is 1 of 2, out of 10, schools in the LEA which is non selective. Its adjacent community is middle class (the English rugby centre lives there) and none of their kids come to the school. All of the students come from the estates which are some distance away. Ironically the local parents are big users of the community programmes the school runs. The school has just received an "outstanding" Ofsted report and is held up as a beacon of excellence. The Principal's wall has photos of visits from Tony Blair and Frank Lampard

The school does a good job of keeping students engaged and at school by

- Breadth of curriculum. Southfields is a specialist sports school and offers a range of sports subjects and has good facilities which its sports status generates. The school uses the BTEC courses a lot. BTECs in music technology, IT, design, and media are particularly popular while the Multi craft option provides City and Guilds qualifications for at risk 14-16 year olds. BTECs meet the needs of the students because they allow for flexibility and students can experience success at 5 different levels. BTECs are able to mesh in with the GCSEs. Teachers are very cynical about the Diploma initiative announced by the Govt because the Diploma requires students to commit to one focus area and many do not want to. Also Diploma courses require schools to be working in consortia with other providers and this creates logistical difficulties and inter-school rivalry which can lead to gang problems. The conservatives have indicated that they will remove the Diploma if they are elected next year. The school does collaborate with other schools in the use of its catering, IT and construction shed resources. The others school's collaboration make these resources viable.
- Focus on basics for 11-13 year olds. Literacy and numeracy are seen as essential. A teacher was sent to NZ to look at teaching phonics!

- Quality teaching. The school is accredited as a Graduate Trainee provider. They train teachers on site. They love the system. Graduates train full time for one year at the school. There were at least 2 adults in most of the classes I observed and the atmosphere was positive. The staff were extremely young and this was because the school can appoint the very best of each year's graduates. All staff are used to, and respond to, appraisal and on-going professional development. A member of the SLT has been appointed specifically to overview the Graduate Trainee programme.
- Community cohesion. The school has HUGE outreach into the community and its facilities are being used all the time by a range of groups. The school can be physically divided into main school and community areas and there are also some "shared use" areas. This is all organised through the City Learning Centre (CLC) which is the only responsibility of an SLT member. Examples of community use I observed included ; a fitness centre (run along the lines of a corporate gym), parenting courses, a crèche, ESOL classes, foreign languages, IT courses, and birthday parties for kids (about 6 per weekend) on the school site and run by trained students who are paid. The school has its own bouncy castle! All these activities engage students and their families in the school.
- Close monitoring of students. The school has a range of mentoring programmes to ensure students are kept on task. The SLT have a green, amber and red card system for all year 11s. An after school programme is organised one day a week for all amber and red students to attend and they all do; topics covered include; independent learning, setting targets, career pathways, dealing with stress, time management, revision skills etc. The school also has a fulltime person appointed through the national Connexions programme. She focuses on the NEET students. The school has 3 IAP (independent action plan) days per term. The school is closed and students meet with their tutors (about 60% of parents attend).

South Thames Community College, Wandsworth, London

Roll 20,000. about 2000 of these are in the 16 -19 year old range

Contact; Gail Walker, Curriculum director for 16-19 year olds and apprenticeships.

The College is very impressive as it is brand new and has state of the art facilities in a large 4 storey building which is soon to be enlarged with the addition of further space provided by renovations to an old school next door. The College has particular strengths in music technology, hair and beauty, performing arts, and construction.

Essentially the college is like our polytechs. Clearly the issues which are standing in the road of good polytech-school relationships in NZ are the same in the UK. Schools are required to shift funding with their students to the tertiary institution and they are reluctant to do so. Schools also raise issues of safety during the transit to college and of safety at the institution.

The links between schools and the College are very limited. In the 14-16 year old range only 28 students from 4 schools regularly attend from school (in the hairdressing and health areas) although some also attend short taster courses.

For the 16-19 year olds the situation is similar to NZ with students reluctant to cut the umbilical chord with school. There are no fees for all students up to level 2.

Gail does not believe the new Diploma system is working because of rivalry for funding between schools and colleges and because at 14 students are not ready to

commit to a specific area of focus. Up and down the country uptake of the diplomas has been slow. A diploma, in contrast to GCSEs or BTECs, is an “all or nothing” qualification. A student needs to pass all components to gain any qualification while a student sitting GCSEs will gain credit for the ones passed. She pointed out that BTECs have considerable standing with parents and young people.

In line with the Government’s NEET objectives there are considerable mentoring and counselling programmes in place. Students all have an ILP.

Gail alluded to the Wolverhampton experiment where considerable money was injected to facilitate co-operation and collaboration between all the learning providers in the community.

Inspire, Hackney, North London

Contact; Robin Childs

The Hackney Borough in North East London is one of the most deprived urban areas in Britain. There are considerable social issues and there are 80 languages spoken in the borough.

In Hackney the LEA is known as “The Learning Trust”. There are 11 secondary schools in the borough including a couple of academies and 2 6th form colleges.

Every borough in the country is required to have an Education Business Partnership (EBF). Usually they are part of the LEA and can vary in size. Their primary role is to forge connections with businesses and to establish work experience opportunities for students. ALL year 10 students in the country are required to do 2 weeks work experience and this requires a great deal of cooperation from businesses. The EBF in Hackney is run by “Inspire” which has a staff of 5 or 6. Inspire has recently been visited by Paula Bennett, the NZ Minister for Social Development.

Hackney was involved in the pilot programme for R4W (ready for work) which was designed to provide a pathway for students who were excluded, NEET or in danger of disengagement. The R4W has subsequently been subsumed by the nationwide foundation Learning programme which is aimed at 14-16 year olds in the above categories. The programme targets basic skills in literacy, maths and ICT, social skills, work readiness and considerable work placement. It is aimed at those who are unlikely to get GCSEs but some students may well go on to do GCSEs after completing the Foundation programme. Again the theory is that some of the students’ needs will be met by the FE (further education) Colleges (cf polytechs) but financial and other issues are not allowing this to happen as well as it should (cf Wandsworth)

The secondary schools in the Borough have agreed upon a Common Time Table. This means that the core components of all students’ courses are taught in schools on the same 3 days. This means that students and schools have 2 common days per week when students can, in theory move to other schools or to other providers without missing any of their core. All year 10s are freed up on Monday and Wednesday, all year 11s on Tuesday and Thursday. This is very useful for the collaboration required by the Diploma system and could lead to a better use of schools’ resources.

Cardinal pole School, Hackney. Catholic co-ed. Roll 1100

Contact; Sue Kerrigan, DP.

Sue has worked closely with Inspire and listed the following programmes they had put in place to reduce disengagement.

- A special “engagement option was created for the 12 most at risk students in the year 10. They do the foundation learning programme and have 1 day per week on work experience in either construction, motor mechanics, or health care. Inspire teaches the class for 1 line all year
- Connexions have a person in the school for 2.5 days per week. She does individual interviews and group work
- Assertive Mentoring programmes for all year 11. largely done by SLT but some other staff involved. This is a kind of “no bullshit” academic counselling. It is not part of pastoral care!
- “Audits”. This is the name given to parent teacher meetings. Parents only meet the form teacher who has all the data on the student. Good data is vital. Parents of students whose attendance or behaviour is an issue are invited in for a “surgery”.
- The 30 students in the school who are at greatest risk of disengagement are placed on PEPs which are negotiated with parents.

Sue was highly dismissive of the Diploma initiative because of logistical and funding issues and because of the “all or nothing” approach.

Meeting with Kate Moore. Now an education consultant, Kate has formerly worked for the NQA at a senior level and has been heavily involved in curriculum development. She also worked for OFSTED. In particular she has written reports on the key stage 3 developments and on the various engagement initiatives throughout the country. Her major area of work has been in the domain of the 14-19 year old engagement. She has also been at the forefront of the development of the vocational education developments. Early in her career she was a teacher at the school which has now become the City Academy in Islington (see later report). She thinks Academies are doing a good job but they are destined to succeed because of their large funding, successful leaders, and student selection policies (robin had earlier related a story from the Learning trust where Academies were requesting that a student be moved from their school because they “did not meet the character of the school”!) She believes there is considerable merit in the Diploma development but acknowledges that there are many problems and that the political uncertainty about their future could well doom them. She feels that the education developments in the Wolverhampton area are a model of cooperation and are worth looking at. There are a number of reports on engagement available “on line.” The publication “insights from Diploma Pathfinders” (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 2007) gives useful insights into the diploma development.

Leigh Stewart and Ann Edwards have been teaching in the Shropshire area for 20 years. Leigh is currently at a comprehensive in Wolverhampton, Ann in Shrewsbury. Leigh’s school is part of the Wolverhampton initiative where diploma implementation is being aided by communal time tables. Each school teaches its “core” on Monday Wed and Fri, so Tues and Thurs are used for students to work on their elective courses such as the diplomas. There is considerable movement on these days between schools and between providers, Transport is not a problem because the mass transit system is efficient and the schools involved are reasonably close. Mini vans are also used. Leigh was able to give me examples of students who were learning in 2 or 3 different institutions. It is possible for a student to gain 5 or 6 GCSEs from one

diploma area (able academic students not involved in diplomas gain about 10-12 GCSEs).

Ann's school, in a different city, has not yet begun to implement the diploma system but the school provides plenty of opportunity for work place learning. Because there is no communal time table this can lead to problems with students falling behind in their traditional courses.

A central impediment to the engagement of students through a wider more authentic curriculum is the League Table scenario. Central to the league tables is student performance in English and Maths. All students are required to sit GCSEs in these 2 subjects and if they fail to pass them their passes in other subjects do not count towards the school's overall pass rate. Thus a student might pick up 5 GCSEs in diploma or BTECHs but these subjects will not be counted if they fail to pass English and Maths. The outcome of this situation is that schools focus on English and maths at year 11. A school whose maths and English results fall below 30% (?) for 2 years in a row will be placed under special measures or may even be closed.

Birmingham. Hosted by Marion Hobbes who is now the Assistant Director of the schools' improvement project. She is employed by the Birmingham City Council's LEA. Birmingham has 70 secondary schools over 30 of whom are part of the 'Black country challenge' ie they were close to being under special measures a couple of years ago. The number is now far fewer. Birmingham is the biggest LEC in the country.

Marion was amazed by the number of support staff in British schools . there is almost a ratio of 1 teacher to 1 support person.

Arthur Terry school, Birmingham. A large (1600) school in a reasonably affluent suburb. 70% of the students go to university. They have no NEET (not enrolled in education, employment or training) students. The Principal, Christopher Stone is highly regarded and is a National leader in Education (NLE) a title given to exceptional leaders who have outstanding OFSTED reports. NLEs are appointed by the national college of Principals in Nottingham.

The school had a positive tone to it and in many ways was like a good NZ school. The buildings were new and spectacular and had been constructed in partnership with private enterprise. The owners of the buildings and the land make some money by hiring the facilities to the community and even to the school after hours.

Chris had been appointed by the Board to bring about change in the school and he did this ruthlessly and effectively by introducing a "no excuse culture" involving local accountability and comprehensive values. Staff who were unable to adapt to the new direction of the school left.

Arthur Terry now works in "federation" with Stockland Green school, a failing lower class school about 5 miles away. This arrangement has been negotiated by the LEA and Stockland school has no choice but to comply. Essentially the good practice in Arthur Terry is being brought into Stockland. Arthur T's Deputy Principal has taken over the reins at Stockland. The schools now share a common board. Staff of the 2 schools are collaborating frequently.

Arthur Terry also has an every Child Matters team (ECM). This is the equivalent of a pastoral care team in NZ but includes non teachers such as an ex policeman, an ex mental health worker and an ex nurse who are paid support staff wages.

The London Academy in Islington.

The Academy idea was driven by the Labour Government and was designed to turn around failing schools in poorer areas. Academies receive some private funding (a minimum of 2 million pounds) and significant additional government funding. They are characterised by new buildings (The London Academy is just completing a 35 million pound new building programme).

Academies also receive a new Principal (Head teacher) who has a proven track record of running a successful school who is given substantial authority to bring about change and to hire and fire staff. There is a lot of debate nationally about Academies because it could be argued that students in them get an advantage that other disadvantaged kids do not get. In many ways, because of their extra resourcing and the quality of their leaders, they are fated to succeed

Ann Palmer, the Principal, is an impressive woman with a high local and national profile. She has been in the school for 1 year and a third of the staff have left in that time. She has poached senior staff from her previous school to bring about change. This was the school that featured in the Pink Floyd song “we don’t need no education”. It was the school that Tony Blair was referring to when he said he would not send his kids to the local school.

There has been a great deal of change in 1 year. Results have risen and absentee rates which were very poor are now at the national average. The school now has 4 times as many children applying for a place than there are places available. The school however is not like a mini grammar school. The students are classic “inner city” kids and security is tight.

Ann maintains that gaining greater engagement from the students has been brought about by strong systems, absolute consistency, effective teams and unequivocal communication.

She is adamant that the school is about learning and teaching and that it is not a social support agency. She says it used to be called “the hospital”

Partnerships are vital; they have 2 main ones

1. The school is adjacent to the “city” of London which is the business centre of town. The school has established links with the city “corp” and there is a great deal of sponsorship (getting these partnerships is a prime role of the Principal). When the 6th form part of the school gets going Ann wants all senior students to be able to gain professional work experience overseas.

2. The local university has brought into a big partnership with the school. The “step up to the city” project ensures that students gain experience in the university environment The university’s teachers link with the teachers in the school. The university offers FE placements to all the school’s students.

Other points of interest

- The school runs a “skills force” class at year 10 and 11 for students who are “potentially NEET” This involves 2 days work-experience per week. The other 3 days are spent studying the core subjects. Connexions are involved and students are guided towards apprenticeships.
- One “learning mentor” is attached to each year level. This is not a teacher and they work along side the AP in charge of each level. They are very hands on and deal with much of the stuff Deans and Guidance counsellors do in NZ

- The school uses Learning Conferences twice per year. (cf Massey High School). The school stops for these and they are conducted by form teachers who are provided with excellent data
- There are 5 heads of faculty in the school and they each have an administrative assistant to take the load off. They, for example, organise the learning conferences. There is a full time data manager in the school

The Leigh academy, Kent

Roll 1500. A specialist technology academy.

Executive headmaster (CEO) is Frank Green who is an NLE.

The school, as the Leigh technology college, was one of the first specialist schools when it opened in 1997. It became an Academy in 2007 and had 38 million pounds spent on buildings. Its buildings are spectacular. (see photos). The open plan nature of the college and its 3 storied structure with large plazas give it a vibrant feel.

Being in Kent, there are 8 Grammar schools in a 10 mile radius and they take all the most able students. The school has federated with (ie is taking over) another academy not far away. 94% of students gained A*-C in 5 subjects in GCSE last year although the figure falls to 47% if the compulsory maths and English results are included. The inclusion of these stats is a constant bone of contention for the non Grammar schools. The school is divided into 4 vertical schools of about 370 with a principal for each school.

The school has a real focus on technology, business and performing arts and there is a strong belief that learning needs to have an authentic context.

Tony Ryall, the head of Brunel school thought an important part of the engagement of students came through the vertical form system which is working effectively. Form tutors had been moved from a focus on pastoral work to a focus on academic counselling. The school closes for parent/tutor days 3 times per year. 90%. The vertical form groupings mean that students have “nowhere to hide.” 90% of parents now attend. Tutor group programmes throughout the year are highly structured.

Frank Green explained that Academies receive their funding directly from central govt and are therefore free of intrusion from the LEA. Legally academies are independent schools. They are state funded independent schools. He has a great deal of authority and all staff are on individual contracts. There is no union in the school. All teacher salaries are bulk funded in England.

Most classes in the school have 60 students in them with 3 teachers present. Class periods vary from 45 to 100 minutes. Much teaching takes place in the “learning plazas”

Engagement in the senior school is fostered by the provision of a range of courses including A levels, Btech and diplomas in ICT and Engineering.. Each year a careers and work related AUDIT is carried out by the head of careers. All departments are required to identify those areas of their courses where students are being given “authentic” learning opportunities. Gaps in subject areas are identified and HODs are given support to link their programmes to the real world..

Connexions are heavily involved in the school.

The highlight of the engagement year for all year 12s is the academy business challenge. Based on “the Apprentice”, this involves all y12 students being taken off-

timetable for 2 weeks. Local businesses are asked to come up with a problem that they would like solved and the students, in groups of 6, have 2 weeks to come up with the answer. Contact; Ajay Attra, Head of careers and work related learning aat@leighacademy.org.uk

The school also has international work experience links, through local companies, in India and China.

Conclusions and Executive summary

1. There is no “silver bullet” to solve the problem of disengaged students. It is clearly an issue for all schools in all countries. The problem is being exacerbated at the present time by the World economic recession which is increasing unemployment and causing students to stay longer at school.

In New Zealand the disengagement problem is particularly acute as our poor standing on the OECD tables of students leaving school with no qualifications shows. There is no doubt that, as a nation, we need to urgently take steps to address the “tail” in our achievement.

Schools and Governments are attempting to address the problems in a range of ways.

2. “Academic Counselling” is gaining a good deal of momentum. Although applied in different ways in different schools, Academic Counselling is based on the following premises

- Students respond to close monitoring and mentoring. They enjoy the fact that someone is taking a close personal interest in them. Often that person will be consistent for their time at school
- Academic counselling has an unremitting **academic** focus. Pastoral care or social issues which might be impacting on a student’s performance are not the central domain of the academic counsellor and responsibility for dealing with those issues will be passed elsewhere. Academic counsellors will work with students to closely monitor their progress, to identify areas where the student is under achieving or struggling, and to put in place measures to overcome those difficulties.
- Expectations of student performance will be consistently high. It is simply not an option for a student to disengage. Many schools had very clear mission statements along these lines and school culture was aligned accordingly.
- Parental involvement in the student’s school progress is vital. Increasingly the traditional parent-teacher evening where a parent saw 5 or 6 teachers for a very limited time, is being replaced by a “Learning conference” involving the academic counsellor, the student and the family. The school is closed for these conferences and there is a high expectation that parents will attend. Schools report an 80-90% attendance rate (compared to a 25-30% rate with the traditional meetings. Most schools still ran one traditional evening per year as well but there was a feeling that these would be phased out.

- In depth training is given to the academic counsellors and the programme for each contact with student or parent is carefully scripted. Academic counsellors played an important role in the development of a career plan for the student. If the academic counsellors are form teachers form groups are kept very small

3. Good data on student's academic progress is vital. Data on student progress needs to be up to date, consistent across the school, readily available, and focussed on academic progress. The mass (mess?) of data available on each student is a problem in every school but schools where the data was able to be used effectively to feed forward to the student has efficient, consistent and focussed data gathering systems. Often a data specialist was employed to overview this.

4. Engagement was increased for students when they perceived that the curriculum was relevant to them. Usually this meant that the curriculum had strong links with the world outside school.

This took place in a number of ways;

- Work experience was seen as an important feature in year 10 at English schools with all year 10 students receiving 2 weeks' work experience during the course of the year
- In new Zealand the use of academies (Services, business, building and construction) meant that students were able to focus on their main area of interest and to prepare themselves more directly for a career in that area
- Authentic learning opportunities are provided as often as possible for students. One school conducted an annual "audit" of programmes where all departments were required to identify the authentic learning opportunities available to students in each of their courses. If there were none the HOD Careers helped them establish some. Other schools had a range of programmes which required students to be working on community based projects which were seen as useful and relevant by and for the local community. This gave a greater sense of ownership of their learning to the students.

In the UK there was considerable local and central Government support for creating the business-school links. Principals saw the creation of business-community links as a central part of their job.

5. Creating links with other learning providers was a clear way to increase relevance and engagement for students. However it is evident that some of the impediments that exist in New Zealand in this area are equally strong overseas; concerns re funding, logistical problems of moving students around or of multi-place study, inter-provider rivalry, variable student buy-in etc.

However where these problems are overcome student engagement is liable to be much more substantial. Of particular interest is the growing practice in England of schools in a local area collaborating on a partial communal time table. Often schools agree on 2 days a week when the schools will offer no "core" classes. This means that students can study at another school or institution on those days without missing out on their learning in their home school. This enables schools in an area to pool resources more and to offer a wider curriculum choice as additional students from another school can make an under-subscribed course viable.

The Diploma system in England, although far from having wide spread popularity and support, has had the effect of further increasing this collaboration between schools.

Schools are required to be able to demonstrate partnership relationships with other schools before they are allowed to offer the diploma.

The specialist school programme in England provides more opportunities for in depth engagement for students. Such programmes could well work in the larger centres in new Zealand.

6. Something that clearly does NOT help in increasing engagement is the highly competitive “league table” environment with an emphasis on achievement in the basics of numeracy and literacy. The professionals I met were unanimous in their view that league tables were counter productive to engagement because they forced schools to narrow their curriculum and to “teach to the test”, thereby making school less interesting for marginal students.

7. Staffing factors; a number of staffing practices may have some impact on engagement;

- There are far more support staff in evidence in English schools. In some schools the ratio of teaching to support staff was almost 1:1. Although this could have something to do with the fact that teachers’ salaries are bulk funded in the UK, the outcome is that there is usually more than one adult in every class.
- The additional support staff carry out many of the functions undertaken by teachers in new Zealand. I often heard principals say that they wanted their teachers to concentrate on teaching not on tasks which support staff could do.
- In all schools I visited there was a visible presence of “willing amateurs” who had received some in school training to carry out roles that, in new Zealand, a trained teacher would be expected to fulfil. This also relates to guidance and pastoral work.
- A number of schools were involved in their own school based teacher training. This is an idea which is being talked about in new Zealand. All the schools involved were enthusiastic about the idea because it gave them a ready supply of new teachers at the end of each year who were already familiar with the culture of the school. It also added to the number of adults in classrooms.

8. Students are unlikely to be engaged if they are in a “failing school”. The UK system identifies underperforming schools far more quickly than in new Zealand and measures are put into place to rectify the situation. The idea of a “successful” school working with or taking over a “failing” school is not common practice in New Zealand and the concept is usually met with deep suspicion. However the outcomes of this type of intervention in the UK has sometimes been positive. The problem for New Zealand is that the time between a school starting to fail and a programme being put into place to rectify the situation is often too long. It could be argued that the greater centralisation of data and the pass/fail nature of Ofsted reports facilitate the process of aiding failing schools and thus preventing total disengagement of students.

9. Clearly good pedagogy is central to engagement. Students were more engaged where teaching involved up to date use of IT by teacher and student, where classrooms were student-centered, and where pedagogy had been deprivatised by the

use of glass walls or common teaching spaces. The greater amount of ownership the students had over their learning, the greater the engagement.

10. All schools were searching for innovative new curricula. However there was far more in common than in difference and the core curriculum in most schools very much remains the same. There were some interesting variations in time table structures which were designed primarily to maximise students' access to their preferred courses.

Summary of interesting ideas

Abbreviations used. Onehunga (O), Massey (M), Hauraki (H), Albany (A), Tawa (T), Porirua (P), Naenae (N), Wellington Girls (WG), Wellington East (WE), Wainuiomata (WA), Dickinson (D), Southfields (S), South Thames (ST), Inspire (In), Cardinal Poole (C), Arthur Terry (AT), London Academy in Islington (I), Leigh Academy (L)

- Service academy O
- Construction academy and work in school and local community O
- Hall of fame celebration O
- Art sale in community O
- Open walls to toilets O, M
- Academic counselling M, H, P, N, D, S, C, I, L
- Assertive counselling C
- Learning conferences M, H, P, N, D, S, C, I, L
- Full time data analyst many schools
- Food prepared for city mission M
- 8 line time table with reduced credits H
- River guide tutor groups H
- Reduced numbers in tutor groups M, H, N, I, L
- "impact" programme A
- Variable length of classes A, L
- Open source software A
- "Commons" learning spaces A, L
- SPEC course T, WE
- "Learning communities" P
- Revised school day P, L
- Project based learning WA, O, L, A
- Section 27 use N
- Self written student discipline reports N
- Library design WG
- Student leader applications WE
- School wide PEPs WE
- Pasifika home work group WE
- Governance manual WE
- Guidance counsellors D

- Multi craft option and construction shed S
- Community links through City learning Centre S
- Fitness centre S
- In-school teacher training S, AT
- Birthday parties S
- Green/amber/red card plus after school programme S
- Local education business partnership In, C, I, L
- 2 weeks year 10 work experience all England
- Common time table C, AT, Wolverhampton schools
- “Connexions” careers services all England
- PEP for 30 most extreme students C
- National Leader in Education AT, L
- Multi-storey schools S, I, L, AT
- “No excuse” culture AT
- Non teaching staff use AT, I, H, D
- Partnerships with business and sponsors I, L, AT, A
- Partnerships with tertiary I
- Year 10 “skills force” class I
- Non-teacher-trained “learning mentor” I
- “Plazas” L
- School “federations” I, AT, L
- Vertical form classes L
- 60 students per class L
- “Careers and work audit” L
- Academy business challenge I
- International work experience I, L