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Report to BOT on Sabbatical term 3 2009

I was fortunate to be granted a Principals' Sabbatical for term 3 2009 and this was fully supported by the BOT. The plan was to visit secondary schools in New Zealand to look at good practice in four areas that were of interest to us at Matamata College. These four areas were:

- Transition Programmes for Senior Students – particularly those students who struggled academically and in some cases did not really want to be at school.
- How schools were using ICT to engage students and to change teacher practice
- The Revised Curriculum – how schools were implementing this and any innovative initiatives around this
- Student management issues – Pastoral Care – examples of things that were working well – particularly those practices that re-engaged the student in learning.

As a result of an ERO review of the school and our own self review of ERO's findings, my interest changed somewhat to also include:

- How schools were using data to track student progress and to raise achievement – at both senior and particularly junior level
- Staff Professional Development – how were schools using in-house Professional Development to change teacher practice in the classroom
- Literacy Programmes – how were schools managing to assist students with literacy (and numeracy) issues
- Restorative Practices – how far had schools progressed in the use of Restorative Practice throughout the school – particularly at the classroom level? I was also interested in any innovative student management and pastoral care practices the schools had introduced that were working well and that had changed the culture of the school.

The second focus of my sabbatical was to catch up with the Professional Reading around these issues and around effective school leadership generally. I had a number of books and journals that had come across my desk in recent months that I had not had time to read thoroughly.

I visited 16 schools throughout New Zealand. I selected schools that were similar to Matamata College either in location or in Decile Rating. Typically I would spend 2 – 4 hours in the school talking to the Principal and other key staff and often was given a tour of the school to see building developments and to see the College in action. Principals I met were most generous in sharing their ideas and also resources around planning, staff development, testing etc. I am most grateful for their time and willingness to share.

The following are some thoughts based on my observations when visiting these schools and also my reflections on how we might look to implement some of the ideas at Matamata College.

Schools visited:

Wairoa College	Tauhara College (Taupo)	Te Kauwhata College
Pukekohe High School	Waiuku College	Manawatu College
Horowhenua College	Kapiti College	Paraparaumu College
Ashburton College	St Bede's College	Rangiora High School
Tuakau College College	Cambridge High	Hauraki Plains
Mercury Bay Area School		

1. Use of Data

Every school I visited was using extensive and detailed analysis of data collected to review programmes and to improve teaching and learning in the school.

Senior Levels – all schools were drilling down into the school's NCEA results to focus on areas of the school's curriculum that seemed to be going well, ones that needed improvement and also as a measure of continual improvement school wide, department wide and teacher by teacher. Some examples of the depth of the data analysis used was staggering in its complexity and detail.

For example at one year 7 – 13 school the Deputy Principal produced an amazingly detailed booklet with every students' results broken down by standard and comparing internal results to externals; class by class comparisons; subject by subject comparisons; teacher by teacher comparisons and also historical data which tracked the results over the last three years to show any improvement or regression. The number of merits and excellences was also analysed and he also compared school practice exam results with the externals and graphed differences. Unit Standard results were also compared with Achievement standard results in each subject. A percentage pass rate for each subject at each level was also calculated and graphed and the results compared to other similar decile schools and the NZ rate overall. The results were also broken down by gender and ethnicity.

Every school I visited had, to different degrees, similar data on their NCEA results and were using it to analyse areas of the senior school curriculum that seemed to be working well and others that needed improvement. A few schools (like Matamata College) were using the MidYis value added tests to track whether students were performing at, below or above expectations and asking department HOD's to account for this in their annual reports. Some were doing their own "predicted" scores using the PA tests (or similar) sat at year 9.

I was interested in the follow up to this detailed data analysis. Most schools expected Learning Area Leaders (HOD's) to account for the results and to comment on them in

detail as part of their annual written report to the Principal and to use the analysis to set Learning Area improvement targets for the following year. This was usually followed up with an interview with the Principal and/or Senior Team member responsible for Curriculum and sometimes involved the person responsible for NZQA liaison. The results were sometimes used by every principal to compare the performances of teachers across the school and were sometimes used to set performance targets for teachers as part of the appraisal process. All schools I visited also used the data from one year to set school wide student achievement goals as part of their Charter annual plan section.

In most cases it seemed the Principals worked through the LAL's or HOD's when reviewing the results for each teacher and for each Learning Area. – He or she discussed the results for the Learning Area with the Teacher in Charge who was expected to then set departmental achievement goals for the next year after discussion and consultation with the rest of the teachers in the department. Teachers whose results seemed abnormal compared with the rest of the department were invited to explain the results to the LAL and perhaps incorporate achievement targets into next year's appraisal agreement.

In one smaller school the Principal interviewed each teacher along with his Curriculum Leader and asked each teacher to explain the results and to set improvement targets for the following year. He commented to me that this practice had had a profoundly beneficial effect on how teachers were accountable for senior students' success or not and he also said that the interview was a good chance to praise good work that teachers had done and to encourage them to keep on with the good work.

The point was that schools are using the detailed data analysis to focus in on areas of student performance and teacher practice in every learning area that seemed to need improvement and the more refined NZQA results that schools now get make it much easier for all teachers to review in detail their students' performances in NCEA compared to potential and compared with other students throughout New Zealand.

All the schools I visited were also using data analysis throughout the year to identify at risk students who needed extra work or special programmes (especially in Literacy and Numeracy). By the end of term two most of the schools had a pretty good handle on which students were at risk of not achieving and were able to put in place "remedial" programmes. These varied from extra tutorials, interviews with the student and the parents to set goals, mentoring schemes, homework centres, learning support assistance, compulsory after school catch up sessions etc. One school hired two part time Literacy and Numeracy teachers for the second half of the year to work with students who were at risk of not getting their Literacy and Numeracy requirements at level one in particular but also at level 2. These were paid for out of banked staffing. Another school identified students at the end of term one who had not gained the internal Literacy and Numeracy credits and they were given extra help to gain these. Some schools withdrew students from other subjects to give them extra Literacy and Numeracy help.

A lot of the schools had a “16+” mantra that was evident in posters around the school and also in newsletters etc. This mantra sets 16 credits at any one subject as the minimum – in fact it is a “pass” for that subject - and students are constantly made aware by subject teachers, group teachers and Deans how they stand with 16+ in each subject. In one school students were not allowed to study that subject at the next level unless they had gained 16+ credits. LAL’s and TIC’s were required to report to the Principal at the end of term 2 and at the end of the year on the % of students in each subject who had gained their 16+ credits (i.e. passed that subject), broken down into gender and ethnicity, and also a report on progress towards the departmental annual achievement targets.

Most schools had implemented systems whereby parents were notified whenever a student missed or failed an assessment or assignment - usually by letter or email and as part of this information about catch up opportunities or further assessment opportunities was included. Principals commented that this practice had made a difference because often parents of students in years 11 – 13 were in the dark about how their son/daughter was doing in assessments until reports came home and it was too late.

Some schools had appointed an “Academic Dean” who reported to the DP with responsibility for Curriculum and it was this Dean’s job to keep track of each senior student’s progress, to work with the Level Deans and to make sure follow up occurred and at risk students were identified and programmes put in place.

I was also interested in how schools tracked those students who had the potential to achieve merit or excellence grades. Most of the conversations I had were about the “at-risk” students but a number of schools did say that they identified and tracked the top-end students as well and monitored their progress. One school produced an Individual Learning Plan for each senior student based on their perceived potential relating to the baseline data or previous year’s results and were open about stating the expected levels of performance the school had for each student. These expectations were aspirational. The school also implemented regular checkpoints and followed up the under-performing students through Deans or through a teacher responsible for GATE students.

I was interested in who in the school managed all the data analysis. This varied – in some schools one of the Senior Leadership team did it, other schools used an Academic Dean, or level Deans to do it and in others individual LAL’s and TIC’s were expected to do the data analysis for their department. All Principals agreed that it was a complex and time-consuming job and needed someone with the skills and understanding of statistics and data analysis and interpretation to do it properly. Particularly as schools now require regular data throughout the year on a number of aspects of school operations – including attendance, achievement, school wide testing (PAT; AsTTle) etc. One large school employed a full time data analyst to produce the data for the school. All Principals gave some time and usually a Management Unit or two to the data analyst but all commented that the time was never enough. Most Principals tried to avoid doing the analysis themselves.

Junior School – as a result of our ERO review, I was interested in what data schools were using at years 9 & 10 (in our case) to track students' progress, to place them into classes and to report to parents about what level of the curriculum the student was operating at in each subject and how schools were collating and using this data in a meaningful way to show progress over the years. I was also interested in how the entry data on students was disseminated to teachers and how it was used by them to plan for differentiation and personalised learning.

Schools I visited were using a variety of assessment tools to track junior students. The most common were AsTTle and e-AsTTle (despite the frustrations schools reported on using e-AsTTle) and Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT) in reading vocabulary, Comprehension and Maths and Listening. Other assessment tools used were MidYis, STAR and TORCH reading tests and a few used their own devised test (especially in Mathematics) for class placement purposes. A number of schools reported that they had dropped MidYis because of the cost and the fact that it did not allow for close tracking through the year 9 & 10 years, unlike AsTTle and PAT.

It was a common pattern for students to be assessed using a tool such as AsTTle or PAT at the start of year 9 and again at the end of year 9 and then again at the end of year 10. Data was collated and reported to BOT and LALs and HODs were required to report to the Principal on students' progress broken down into key target groups (Maori; Boys) a couple of times a year.

I was also interested in how schools were assessing and reporting to parents on how students was performing against levels of the curriculum in the various learning areas .It seems that schools collect and report on Literacy and Numeracy data extensively but what about the other learning areas? As one of the ERO review team said to me "If a parent asked you what curriculum level their son or daughter was working at in Technology, what could you tell them?" It seemed most schools were requiring that teachers planning included reference to levels of the curriculum for each unit of work but as I did not see many examples of reports sent home to parents I am unable to comment on the extent to which these levels were reported to the parents of each individual student.

However, a couple of schools did have a generic statement on the junior reports that read something like:

" At year 9 most students in New Zealand would be achieving at level 4/5 of the curriculum.

At present your son/daughter is achieving at level (4) of the New Zealand (Social Studies) curriculum"

To be able to do this requires each Learning Area team to develop an agreed rubric of what a student should be able to do or know at each level of the curriculum so that teachers can make a professional decision based on assessment information about what level each student is achieving at. This would be an interesting Professional Development exercise for each Learning Area team. There are examples of these exemplars on TKI that can be used as a starting point.

One school then requires LALs and HODs to report after each reporting period the number of students at each year level achieving at each level of the curriculum for that Learning Area. This information can then be collated, graphed and reported to the BOT and a historical pattern can be followed in each subject area and each LAL or HOD has some hard data to report on student progress at the end of the year and can use this to set achievement targets for the junior classes.

Most schools commented that they worked closely with their contributing schools in the collection of data and were working towards being able to implement a seamless data system that tracked the students at least from year 7 but sometimes even earlier. One school was part of an “Extending High Standards across Schools” cluster that focused on all schools in the area sharing data that was centrally stored and shared by all the schools. All schools I visited relied heavily on information on students passed on from the contributing schools and were using, for example, the PAT and AsTTle data from year 7 & 8 to build up a comprehensive data- based picture for each of their junior students, and to target early, at- risk students and also students with the potential to achieve at a high level.

2. ICT

I was interested in the extent to which schools were using ICT to change teaching practice in the classroom and how schools were managing the accessibility issue. As expected there was wide variation of practice and I needed to spend a lot more time in classrooms to see to what extent teachers were using ICT to engage students.

Every school had a demonstrable commitment to the provision of computers. All had specialist computer laboratories and every principal commented on the huge financial commitment necessary to keep these computers up to date and serviced.

One school had used the recycled computers in small pods in each classroom – the school had used the opportunity when doing property work to convert unused spaces like corridors and other nooks and crannies into computer alcoves off teaching rooms. One or two schools were trialling COWs (Computers on Wheels) as a way of making computers accessible to students but all commented that these needed technical support in terms of booking in and out and checking and charging.

One school had just started a digital class at year 9. Students applied to be in this class and were tested for their proficiency in ICT. There were 30 students (mainly boys) in the class and there were 30 computers arranged around the room with student desks in the middle. Staff were invited to apply to teach this class in the core subjects and were expected to use a digital approach. The DP showing me the room commented that the students were highly engaged but it was too early to say how they were progressing academically compared to the other year 9 students.

This same school was intending to offer Movie Making as a year 10 option in 2010 leading onto Media Studies in the senior school.

Several schools (mainly ones with small senior rolls) were offering digital correspondence courses using video conferencing facilities and usually via a cluster (e.g. Coronet; OtagoNet) The Principals commented that it was a much better option than straight Correspondence School courses and it enabled the school to offer more senior options to hold onto its senior students. Common courses were in the Languages, Senior Sciences, Equine Studies and Marine Biology.

Most schools had a strategic IT committee that developed long term strategic plans for IT in the school and sometimes organised Professional Development for staff on the use of IT in the classroom.

3 Transition programmes for Seniors

I was interested in how schools provided for the learning needs of senior students who perhaps did not want a full academic programme and in some cases were at school for other reasons than gaining academic qualifications.

As expected there was wide variety in how schools provided for these students:

- All catered for them in one way via programmes such as Gateway and Youth Apprentice Schemes – sometimes Gateway was on one or two lines on the timetable and students did Literacy and Numeracy and 2 – 3 other practical options. Only one school had a separate Transition class as such - most schools developed ILP's for the transition-type students and catered for them within the timetable. Monitored by the Career's staff often.
- One school had Gateway as one line on the timetable and during term one bought in tutors (out of Gateway funds) to teach and assess the theory components of the Gateway programme. The students then did the practical component of Gateway in terms 2 – 4.
- Several Schools had established “academies” to cater for these students. Examples I saw were Agriculture; Trades, Armed Services, Hospitality, Music, and Sport Academies. One school was in the process of establishing a Performing Arts academy (Music/Dance/Drama). Typically these Academies were on one or two lines of the timetable and students chose them as part of their option structure. Some of these academies lead to National Certificate Qualifications (e.g. National Certificate in Agriculture) Some of the academies were a joint project with local Technology Institutes and local Regional Sports Bodies. Principals were creative in how they found funding and staffing for these academies.
- **Senior Options** – as part of my interest in Transition opportunities that schools offered seniors, I was also interested in the range of options available to senior students at the schools I visited. As expected this varied depending on the size of the school but all Principals agreed that they tried their utmost to keep senior subjects going, often with quite small numbers, in order to retain senior students. Sometimes this meant having to live with larger junior classes. Where subjects could not be taught, some schools were offering students Correspondence Courses and/or Video Conferencing lessons via networks such as Coronet and OtagoNet. Most schools

tried to provide supervision for the Correspondence students, sometimes with teacher aides or by having them attached to a teacher to whom they reported and by having Correspondence lessons on the timetable and roomed. All Principals I spoke to whose school used Video Conferencing were enthusiastic about it and said it was a much better option than straight Correspondence Courses. A few schools used Open Polytechnic Courses for senior students.

Two subjects that were offered in the schools that I visited that we do not offer at Matamata College were **Early Childhood and Motor Mechanics**. The Early Childhood option was offered at a couple of the bigger schools I visited and was popular with students who were contemplating Teaching or Nursing or Nannying as a career. Elements of the course seemed to be similar to what is offered in our Community Studies Programme at level 1 but the Early Childhood Course was a level 2 and/or 3 course.

Most schools I visited offered Motor Mechanical Engineering and it was a very popular option. A few of the schools had a specially designed Car Mechanical workshop set up with a pit or ramp etc. In this course the students obviously learned about car mechanics etc and tinkered around with car engines and motorbikes etc but they also were making miniature scooters as part of a nationwide competition and the teachers I spoke to said that the students were very enthusiastic about this project. STAR money was used in most schools to help fund this course. This is a course that I would like to see introduced into Matamata College at levels 2 & 3.

4. Literacy Programmes

I was interested in how schools catered for the students who needed extra literacy support to be able to cope with the secondary curriculum.

Practice varied. All schools had at least one teacher who had responsibility for Literacy support – either as the Specialist Learning Support Teacher or as part of their teaching programme (usually a Primary trained English Teacher) All schools also committed quite significant Teacher Aide resources to this department.

Typically the Literacy Resource teacher would pick up the at-risk junior students through referral or testing and either run small group or intensive one-on-one reading recovery type lessons with the student. Often teacher aides assisted with these programmes too. Just what intensive Reading programme was used seemed to vary from school to school. One school recommended the “Successmaker” programme which they said students engaged with and enjoyed and which could be administered and monitored by a teacher aide under supervision of the reading teacher. One large school had a specialist Literacy department with four reading teachers in it and a large number of teacher aides.

A number of the schools had implemented a variety of initiatives to support the reading programmes. One school had a boys’ literacy group using senior male

students to read with them and to them. Another used volunteers from the community to do reading mileage with the students. Another school focused on Boys' Reading and had posters around the school with male role models advertising the power of reading. One school had focused on improving writing at year 9 and had produced a Year 9 Writing Programme booklet that every year 9 student worked through as part of their English programme.

I was also interested in how schools structured their year 9 & 10 classes to best cater for the literacy needs of students. Again practice varied – often it seemed according to the size of the school. Smaller schools usually had mixed ability classes and students were withdrawn for extra literacy support (often they took literacy instead of an option). Some schools ran a homeroom year 9 class (sometimes year 10 also) and tried to hire Primary trained teachers to teach the core subjects to them in a cross curricular approach. Some schools had a Literacy Class at year 9 that was not home roomed but it was expected that the teachers would use a differentiated curriculum and focus in all subjects on a literacy based approach to teaching and learning. Sometimes there was a teacher with a management responsibility for coordinating this class's programme and progress. One school ran a combined year 9 & 10 homeroom class for students who had difficulty adapting socially to the transition from Primary to College – again staffed by two Primary trained teachers who covered the core curriculum with this group.

As mentioned above, all schools had some system in place to identify early the at-risk students in Literacy (& numeracy) at level one NCEA and put in place some strategy to assist these students to gain the requisite 8 credits in Literacy and Numeracy. A number of schools offered some of the internal Numeracy and Literacy credits at year 10 to give the students a head start coming into year 11. One school did this at the end of the year during the last three weeks and had extended it out to other subjects too to give some purpose to the end of year programme.

Most schools were implementing literacy-across-the-curriculum (LAC) school wide teaching approach through their in-house Professional Development programme. This was driven either by the Literacy or the Learning Support teacher often with the help of a literacy team representing the Learning Areas. There was an acknowledgement from most Principals that a successful school wide literacy strategy meant that every teacher had to accept and adopt a literacy based approach to their teaching rather than leaving reading recovery to the literacy teacher to fix. All Principals agreed that sustaining this LAC approach was a challenge. Most saw it as tying in with the need to differentiate the curriculum in every classroom, no matter what the structure of these classes.

5. Restorative Practices

In light of the extensive review of school-wide discipline and pastoral care systems currently being undertaken at Matamata College I was interested in how far schools had progressed in the use of Restorative Practice throughout the school – particularly at the classroom level. I was also interested in any innovative student management and pastoral care practices the schools had introduced that were working well and that had changed the culture of the school.

Every school had moved in this direction – as one Principal commented “we have been using Restorative Practice for Years for the “big stuff” to try and keep students at school” and every school was embarked on a journey to adopt a restorative culture throughout the school down to the classroom level.

Most were using the approach with senior teachers and Deans – one school was training 20 staff a year in Restorative Practice after training the SLT and Deans. Another school was in the process of building a Restorative Practice approach into its definition of what constituted effective teaching at this school.

Most schools were working towards using the RP approach at the classroom level through the use of “mini RP conversations” that staff were being trained to use effectively.

It was obvious talking to Principals and from my readings that the adoption of a Restorative Practice Approach cannot stand on its own – it involves a change in the culture of the school and a willingness by all teachers to accept that the development and sustaining of relationships is the key to a positive climate in the school. As one Principal said “It has to be Relationships first and then you can do something with the Learning in the school” And it is inextricably tied in with engaging the students through lively teaching of relevant, challenging and interesting lessons.

All schools were attempting to take care of the minor misdemeanours at the classroom level and deal with them before they became major issues. In most cases this involved constant Professional Development of staff in effective classroom management. Most schools ran detentions of some sort but these were most often reserved for use by Deans, HOD’s and SLT only and often were for persistent out of class misdemeanours such as truanting or lateness or uniform infractions or for relatively serious classroom misbehaviour that had got through to the Deans or SLT. Teachers were encouraged to run their own “detentions” or Departments ran their own on a team co-operative basis.

One school ran after school and Saturday detentions (run by SLT) for more persistent or severe misbehaviour and another school ran a “Community Service” in-school stand-down system whereby on one day of the week students spent time cleaning up the school and gardening etc supervised by a support worker who was paid out of SEI funding money. The school tended to use this instead of at home stand downs because it meant that the student was not alienated from the school, was “paying the school back “ for his/her misbehaviour and for many students a stand down is just a holiday and is what some of them aspire to. The Principal reported that the system was very effective, but she commented that she was fortunate to have the right person supervising the students – he was firm but fair and respected by the students.

Most schools I visited were more and more using in-school isolation and suspensions as a more effective discipline strategy than sending the students home where often they would not be supervised or would see it simply as a day or two off. Some of the schools had “isolation rooms” for this very purpose that were usually

situated close to the Senior Leadership Teams' offices. Sometimes these rooms contained a computer so that the student in isolation could be set meaningful work to do with minimum supervision.

All the schools used incentives and rewards to encourage positive work and behaviour (similar to our Achievement Recognition Scheme)

One school had developed a whole school package based on an American model that they developed with input from students, staff and parents that was moving the school from a punitive regime to a restorative one and used incentives and rewards to promote positive behaviour. The DP who was responsible for the programme implementation said it had taken two years to implement but it had had a profound effect on the tone and culture of the school and reduced significantly the number of stand-downs and suspensions this school used.

Other schools were trialling a points system using the pastoral care component of the Student Management System (KAMAR) and reported that it was working well. One school had developed a detailed list of possible offences and demerit points associated with each offence in an effort to get consistency across the school. (but the Principal emphasised that there was some flexibility in the allocation of demerit points) Students at this school could earn a reduction in their demerit totals in negotiation with Deans and SLT by meeting agreed behavioural and other targets (e.g. Daily Report Records) The school reported the demerit points to parents in letters and reminded them of the next level of intervention on the points scale.

Most schools operated some system of Removal- from -class system with a systematic follow up by Deans, HOD's or SLT. How this worked varied from school to school although most schools were trying to implement a system whereby teachers could refer students to the HOD or a colleague in the same department so that the HOD was aware of and played a part in dealing with misbehaviour in the classroom. Most often a student removed from class had to go through a mini restorative practice meeting with the teacher so that the relationship between the teacher and student was repaired before the student was returned to the class. Principals I spoke to emphasised the importance of this meeting because it gave the teacher the chance to say how she/he felt about the misbehaviour and it also forced the student to "front up" in a semi formalised setting . Allowing the student to return to class without fixing the relationship was counter-productive and increased the likelihood of the misbehaviour re-occurring.

One school ran a special removal room that was staffed by members of the SLT who did the follow up personally. Another school had a separate removal room that was staffed by staff volunteers. Whatever the set up, all Principals agreed that the follow up to the removal needed to be dealt with consistently and in a formalised fashion and that the relationship between the student and the teacher needed to be restored before the student went back into that class.

A number of schools I visited promoted the positive school values through posters and displays that were all around the school, including in every classroom. One school had used a teacher to photograph students around the school displaying the

school values and these had been used in the posters that were in every classroom. Another school had a photo of the Head Students with the school values listed alongside displayed in the school foyer and around the school. Some schools used a longer group time to teach the values of the school. Lesson plans were prepared (usually by one of the SLT) and all group teachers taught the programme. Other schools used the Health Education programme to teach the values of the school. All schools promoted the school values through assemblies, newsletters and their website.

A couple of schools were using the House System as a means to engender school spirit and positivity. One very large school had divided the school into six houses with a Dean and House Leader in each House responsible for the pastoral care of student in that house. Each House had to adopt a charity and find innovative ways raise the money to put towards the charity. A cup was presented to the top House and was keenly sought after. Students evidently enjoyed the competitive element of this exercise.

Most schools I visited had a strong inter-house competition running all year and included academic, sporting, service, cultural and social competitions and most recorded the progress in these competitions with a results board that was updated regularly. One or two were experimenting with incorporating behaviour points into the Inter-House competition . e.g. demerit points for detentions etc. One school had rewards for group classes that had the least number of detentions. One school had a system of lunchtime activities (clubs) organised and run by staff (not necessarily teaching staff) designed to occupy the students and keep them out of mischief.

I was also interested in how schools dealt with issues of students using or supplying drugs at school or coming to school under the influence of drugs. Schools I visited ranged from a zero tolerance policy whereby all students appeared before the BOT on suspension to schools where only suppliers or recidivists were suspended to appear before the BOT. Most schools (like Matamata College) had a system of standing the student down, having a formal meeting with the student and his/her caregivers (sometimes involving the Police and the BOT) and then allowing the student to return to school with conditions. These conditions often included;

- Random drug testing for an agreed period of time
- Drug counselling
- Close monitoring through daily report for a period of time
- Sometimes some community service

In some cases schools placed students in alternative education schools if they were unable or unwilling to pass a random drug test or, depending on their age, used section 71 to place the student on work experience.

I think that we are on the right track at Matamata College but the involvement of the Police in the initial meeting with the student and his/her caregiver would strengthen our process.

6. Professional Development

I was interested in any effective models of in-house Professional Development that schools had implemented that were making a difference in improving teaching practice and helping to change the culture of the school.

Several schools I visited were involved in the Te Kotahitanga project and every Principal spoke very positively about this initiative and the difference it had made to the culture and teaching practice at the school. I think Matamata College would benefit hugely from being a part of this initiative in the future and we should apply to join in 2011.

Most of the schools I visited were currently involved in several MOE PD projects such as Literacy; ATOL (Assessment to Learn) ICT; EHSAS (Extending High Standards Across Schools) Numeracy Project. Principals agreed that they were all of good value but the challenge was to sustain the initiative once funding was withdrawn and several Principals cautioned about over committing the staff to initiatives – there is the danger that they become “initiated out”. Roll over of staff also had to be considered and how the new staff coming into a school in year 2 or 3 of a project would be brought up-to-date. These initiatives had to be linked to a school’s strategic plan of course and thinking about our school’s strategic plan and the feedback from the recent ERO review I would like to school to join the ATOL and the Numeracy Project as soon as possible.

Most schools had a PD cycle for staff development that focused on the key strategies the school was focusing on to raise student achievement. Typical topics were ICT; Literacy Across the Curriculum; Classroom management (usually related to the use of Restorative Practice), Maori language and customs; Effective teaching strategies for Engaging Maori students; good practice in teaching boys; differentiating the curriculum; Implementing the Revised Curriculum; Assessment to Learn; The Revised Curriculum; NZQA issues.

Some schools had a late start or early finish to free up time for staff to undergo in-house PD. Schools with large numbers of bus students found this difficult.

One school had developed a PD strategy to move talk away from behaviour to learning. The teachers of each core year 9 & 10 class met regularly, lead by one of them nominated by the SLT, to discuss issues around the learning needs of the students in this class and to agree on common teaching strategies that worked. This learning team also examined the data for this class and discussed ways the data might be used to help differentiate the curriculum. These learning teams met every three weeks, minutes of the meetings were taken and Deans and SLT rotated around the meetings as support people. This is an idea I can see a lot of benefits in as it

should lead to a more coordinated cross curricular approach and tho the sharing of ideas about what effective teaching looks like for this class. And hopefully it would lead to teachers focusing primarily on effective teaching and learning, rather than behaviour.

Every school was moving to do more in-house PD and there was an acknowledgement that one-day courses more often than not do not change teaching practice in a school.

7. Other things of interest

- a. **Security Cameras** - several of the schools I visited had invested heavily in installing security cameras around the school. One school had upwards of 80 of them. These cameras were in every corridor and locker bay area, at the entrance to toilets, in computer rooms, in the senior common room, and all around the outside of the buildings, particularly in areas where students gathered. Some were also trained on the fields and tennis courts areas. The Principals said that the presence of cameras had had a marked effect on reducing vandalism and also on reducing the incidences of bullying and harassment in their schools. The cameras were not monitored live but could be checked if an incident occurred.
The cameras have to be good quality so that the images are sharp and clear.
- b. **Uniform** – I was interested that several of the schools I visited were in the process of putting the year 13 class back into uniform. Several of the schools ran their own uniform shop and also purchased stocks of shoes, socks and jerseys that were loaned to students who were in incorrect uniform. One school offered seniors the opportunity to wear a blazer and tie by hiring out the blazers at \$70 per year (students bought their own school ties) and the Principal commented that most of the seniors enjoyed wearing the formal uniform. Another school had its student leaders wearing blazer and tie to distinguish them. One school is putting its year 12 students into the senior uniform (i.e having one uniform for years 9 – 11 and another for years 12 & 13) The Principal believes that it will help the year 12 students feel like seniors and they will act and work accordingly.
- c. **Maori Students Achievement** – although not part of my original brief, I was interested in any initiatives schools were using to engage Maori students and to raise achievement. I was also interested in how schools engaged Maori parents and the community.

- As stated above, many schools were part of Te Kotahitanga project and this seemed to be making a real difference with Maori student engagement and success.
- Several schools celebrated Maori student success in academic, sport and culture with a Maori Achievement night celebration/awards evening. Several schools used a mentoring system to provide support and encouragement to Maori students at the senior level. All targeted Maori students through use of data and early intervention targeting at risk students. In one school teachers had travelled to maraes in the area to meet with parents as part of the reporting process.
- A number of schools had appointed a teacher with specific responsibility for Maori Student achievement (Maori Student Academic Dean) - more often it was a member of the SLT that had this responsibility as part of his/her portfolio.
- One school had enjoyed success in this area by creating a Level 1 & 2 Art programme that was aimed specifically at the interests and needs of the Maori students and included carving as one of its units. This had proved to be most successful. This school tied the Art programme into Kapa Haka and had formed an informal “Maori Academy” structure that was working well. Again the Principal stressed that having the right people in this academy was the key to its growing success.
- Some schools had established a bi-lingual unit to cater for the needs of the Maori students. Principals said that these were generally working well but were dependent on having the right teachers in them.
- A number of schools were encouraging Maori students to get their Level 1 NCEA Literacy credits through Te Reo. They were also ensuring that the students gained credits for their work in Kapa Haka.
- All schools required Learning Area leaders to report separately on the achievement progress of Maori students at each level and to include action plans in their annual plans for raising the achievement levels of Maori students. Some schools required Learning Area Leaders to submit a brief half year report on student achievement progress (including Maori Student Achievement) towards the Learning Area targets for the year.
- Maori Parent Support Group – most schools had an active Whanau Support Group which met regularly to support Maori students. One school had a separate year 9 Maori Parents’ Support group to help ease the transition into year 9. Most schools had active kaumatua and kuia who supported the school in a variety of ways.
- All schools had a separate Maori Achievement Section in the annual plan and student achievement targets.
- Most schools had a section in newsletters to report Maori Student successes. Some schools sent out a separate newsletter to Maori Parents highlighting Maori students’ success in academic, sport and culture 2 – 3 times a year.

d The Importance of teachers

My observations and discussions with the Principals I spent time with reminded me how important having the right staff doing things right in a school is. Any initiative I saw that was working well or any aspect of school operations a Principal talked about as a success came down to having the right staff. Teachers make the difference in a school and it reminded me how important the appointment of staff is. I was also reminded of the importance of a structured and targeted staff Professional Development programme that was closely aligned to the school's strategic targets.

Guy Claxton on this matter writes:

"We know what makes the difference is the demeanour of the teachers; not the values and beliefs the teachers espouse, but the ones that are embodied in how they talk, what they notice, the activities they design, the environments they create and the examples they set day after day. That's what a culture is. It's " What we act and talk as if we believed and valued round here". That is what students notice and that is what makes the difference.

Research confirms what we know; that a child's success depends much more on the teachers she has than on the school (and its demographics) she is enrolled at. And, as Barabara McCombs has shown, it is not what teachers are doing but what students perceive them as doing that is the critical factor. The culture is what they experience "up close and personal". (The Education Magazine of the Future, p 3)

e. Timetable

I noted that many of the schools had attempted to dispel the "cabbage class" stigma attached to Alternative English, Maths and Science classes at level 1 by simply labelling classes thus

101	Achievement standard classes level 1
102	Mixture of AS and US level 1
103	US only level 1
201	AS only level 2 (etc)

Thus it would be Eng103 instead of AE on the timetable

SP102 would be level 1 Sports Science with a mixture of AS & US

SP 101 would be a full Sports Science Achievement Standard course

SC103 would be the current PS option – full US Science course at level 1

The principals tell me it worked and it would be worth trying.

f Literature Review

- I. **“Integrating and Differentiated Instruction – Understanding by Design”** – Tomlinson & McTighe , ASCD, 2006
- II. **“Rethinking Homework – Best Practice that Support Diverse Needs – “** Vatterott, ASCD, 2009-09-23
- III. **“Never Work Harder than your Students & Other Principles of Great Teaching”** Jackson, ASCD, 2009
- IV. **“Leading Change in your School”**, Reeves, ASCD, 2009
- V. **“The Big Picture – Education is Everyone’s Business”**, Littky, ASCD, 2004
- VI. **“How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students”**, Brookhart, ASCD, 2008
- VII. **“School Leadership that Works”** , Marzano, Eaters & McNulty, ASCD, 2005

The Tomlinson and McTighe book is particularly powerful and I would like to be able to give every staff member a copy as it directly relates to one of our focuses for staff PD – differentiating the curriculum.

I found the Marzano et al book fascinating. In it the authors present their findings from a meta-analysis of 69 studies on effective leadership since 1970 and develop a list of 21 leadership responsibilities that have a significant effect on student achievement. Below is the table of these responsibilities arranged in rank order with 1 being a perfect correlation between the responsibility and students’ academic achievement:

Responsibility	The extent to which the Principal	Correlation
1. Situational Awareness	Is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses the information to address current and potential problems	.33
2. Flexibility	Adapts his/her leadership behaviour to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent	.28
3. Discipline	Protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time or focus	.27

4. Outreach	Is an advocate and a spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders	.27
5. Monitoring/Evaluating	Monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning	.27
6. Culture	Fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation	.25
7. Order	Establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines	.25
8. Resources	Provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs.	.25
9. Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment	Is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction and assessment practice.	.25
10. Input	Involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies	.25
11. Change Agent	Is willing to challenge and actively challenges the status quo	.25
12. Focus	Establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school's attention	.24
13. Contingent Rewards	Recognises and rewards individual accomplishments	.24
14. Intellectual Stimulation	Ensures faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture	.24

15. Communication	Establishes strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students	.23
16. Ideals/Beliefs	Communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling	.22
17. Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment	Is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction and assessment	.20
18. Visibility	Has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students	.20
19. Optimizer	Inspires and leads new and challenging innovations	.20
20. Affirmation	Recognises and celebrates accomplishments and acknowledges failures	.19
21 Relationships	Demonstrates and awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff	.18

The authors do point out that all of these responsibilities are important and that what is striking about the rank order list above is how close the correlations are in size. Twenty of the 21 correlations are between the values of .18 and .28. The authors also point out that the correlations for the top ranked responsibility, Situational Awareness, involves the fewest number of schools and the second-fewest number of students and comment that “Had a few more studies involving a few more schools been found, the correlation of .33 might have shrunk considerably.” (p63)

I recommend this book highly to other principals.

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Glenn Rowsell

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