MODERN LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Some findings related to a study of 26 schools throughout Northland, Auckland, Tauranga and Wellington, arising from a Sabbatical undertaken by Cleve Bloor, Principal of Maunu School, Whangarei in Term 2 of 2011.

Acknowledgements:

Alan Russek	Dargaville Primary School
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Luke Sumich	Summerlands Primary School
Jeanette Craig	Upper Harbour Primary School
Barbara Cavanagh	Albany Senior High School
Diane Lambert	Orewa Primary School
Viv Collins	Silverdale Primary School
Megan Bowden	Oteha Valley Primary School
Diana Patience	Ormiston Senior College
Jane Wallis	Te Matauranga Manukau
Veena Vohra	Mission Heights Primary School
Pelu Leaupepetele	Papatoetoe Central Primary School
Judy Morgan	Papakura Normal School
Maria Heron	Mangere Central Primary School
Kathy Dooley/Joe Govender	Mt. Richmond School
Sarah Martin/Kirsty Panapa/Chris Bradbeer	Stonefields Primary School
Cyrol Nevezie	Stanhope Road Primary School
Theresa Rosborough	Pillans Point Primary School
Craig Price	Selwyn Ridge Primary School
Bruce Jepsen/Sharron Adams-Davis	Te Akau Ki Papamoa
Dianne Paterson/Julie Henderson	Eastern Hutt Primary School
Barbara Hay/Gillian McPeake	Koraunui Primary School

Purpose of the Study:
To gather information on Modern Learning Environments to assist Maunu School and others who embark on refurbishing and remodelling programmes in their schools.

Background and Rationale:
The Ministry of Education have asked schools to consider Modern Learning Environments as an essential component of any property developments. Consequently, for those of us remodelling or planning new building, it is important to incorporate Modern Learning Environment aspects into whatever we propose.

Methodology:
Twenty-six schools were visited in the North Island with photos being taken of items of interest within the frame of Modern Learning Environments and discussions held with personnel regarding philosophies, funding, etc.

Some ideas to emerge from the visits:

- High levels of visibility from one room to another, including health/sick rooms.

- Shared spaces (whanau rooms)

- Professional Development rooms allowing for
    - staff rooms to be restful, lounge areas
    - place for staff to work on CRT's

- Shared office spaces for leadership team, as well as shared offices for teachers

- Furniture on wheels for more flexible use

- In-built shelving/whiteboards universal to all rooms
    - By building the furniture in, it can be included in 5 YA

- Use of deck areas which can also be sheltered by plastic blinds

- Enclosed cloak bays (ie. clothes, etc. stored in a cupboard with expelair to exterior)

- Hi Tech teaching stations instead of interactive whiteboards

- Wet areas outside teaching areas

- Single toilets and / or windows in toilets to prevent unsatisfactory behaviour

- Taps (in staffrooms) which distribute both boiling water and filtered cold water.

- Are library buildings still necessary?
    - With current technology available, should the books be distributed into pods or syndicates?

Included with this narration are photos taken of features of Modern Learning Environments in the schools visited.

To view photos visit this link:

Features of each school are as follows:

Feature	Picture
1. Dargaville Primary:	
Combining small rooms into useful shared workspace	1,2,3
Sinks removed from classrooms	2
Creative use of wall coverings	4,5,6
High level cross-flow ventilation	7,8
Exterior cloak bays	9
2. Otangarei Primary School:	
Extensive verandahs	1,2
Mud brick surrounds for garden plots	3
3. Kaitaia Primary School:	
Using carpet part-way up wall	1
Extending room into old corridor space	2
Board / Professional Development room	3
Outdoor space leading into playground	4
Marae / Whanau Room	5,6
Using 2 classrooms to make library	7,8,9,10
4. Kerikeri High School:	
Visibility between rooms	1,2
Large sliding doors to exterior	3,4
Alternative arrangement for computers	5
Shared office space for teachers	6
Courtyard – multi-purpose use	7
Common learning space	8
5. Kawakawa Primary School:	
Board Room / Professional Development Room	1
Built-in furniture in every classroom	2,3,4,5,6
Large doors opening onto decks	7,8,9
Visibility between rooms	10
6. Summerlands Primary School:	
Universal outdoor space shared between several classes	1
Large external doors	2,3,4
Shared teaching space	5
Library furniture	6
Security doors in hall	7
Electricals in floor	8
Professional Development Room	9
Stackable tables	10,11

Feature	Picture
7. Upper Harbour Primary School:	
Open plan Administration area	1
Tap fitting from which you get boiling water and filtered water	2
Being drawn to the entrance	3
Cloak cupboard with ventilation to outside	4
Visibility between rooms	5,6,7
Interesting furniture	8
Wet area outside classroom	9
Large opening doors to exterior	10
Resource / work area	11
8. Albany Senior High School:	
Shared office space for senior team	ASHS 1
Glass office for office worker (privacy + visibility)	ASHS 1
High visibility between all rooms	ASHS 1,3
Large, flexible, shared teacing/learning spaces	ASHS 1,3
Modern gtmnasium complex	ASHS 2
Use of electrical trays in ceiling to enable drop down leads	
Services exposed in ceiling (easy access – cost savings)	
9. Orewa Primary School:	
Spacious administration area	1
Large doors opening to exterior courtyard or verandah	2,3,4
Chequerboard for outside use	5
Modern hall	6
Good use of space when building into hillside	7
10. Silverdale Primary School:	
Setting of a modern school	1,2
Visibility into Health Room	3
Administration area with uninterrupted withdrawal area	4
Small kitchen in Administration area	5
Laundry fro washing sports uniforms, etc.	6
Visibility and proximity of resource area, library and I.T. suite	7,8,9
Shared space (office, computers)	10
Whanau space between rooms (wet area, art, reading, etc.)	11,12
Whiteboards sliding width of classroom	13
Shared teachers' working space	14
Professional Development room	15
Modern staffroom kitchen	16,17
Gathering, pick up area agter school	2,18
Turning indoor space into outdoor space by using roller doors	19

Feature	Picture
11. Oteha Valley Primary School:	
Library – excellent natural light and visibility to outside	1
Quiet reading room off library	2

Feature	Picture
Whanau room feeding up to 4 rooms – wet area outside room	3
Visibility from teacher office to classroom	4
Use of shade sails to increase working space	5
Shoe racks	6
Use of deck to increase work space – large doors to outside	7
Whanau shared working space	8
Visibility between rooms	9,10

12. Mt Richmond Special School:

Feature	Picture
Sensory garden	1,2
Sensory room	3,4
Food technology – living skills	5
Special needs bathroom with visibility to outside	6
Trees for Life programme	7,8
Clay working area	9
Covered outdoor area	10

13. Ormiston Senior High School:

Feature	Picture
High visibility	1,2,3,4
Flexible teaching/learning space	5
Modern technology rooms	6,7
Seminar / withdrawal room – high visibility	8,9
Large doors opening out to central courtyard	10
Different types of furniture	11,12,13
Being able to access power from any position within room	14
Central Courtyard	15,16
Science work room – students go next door to write up notes and discuss	17
Professional Development Room	18
Theatre	19
Staffroom	20,21
Central Administration area with high visibility	22

14. Te Matauranga Maunukau

Feature	Picture
'Street' design	1-4
Visibility into and out of staffroom	5
Teacher resource/work area	6,7
Work area of library visible to main library	8
Library furniture	9,10
Laundry and sink off health room	11
Ability to extend hall out under shade sail	12-16

Feature	Picture
15. Mission Heights Primary School:	
Administration desk	1

Courtyard design	2,3
Visibility	4,5
Flexible use of furniture	6
Shared office space	7
Wet area outside classrooms	8
Cloak cupboard	9
Ability to use covered area as extra teaching/learning space	10
IT – using a card system to log on to any computer	11
Bike shed	12
Flexible teaching space	13
Furniture on wheels	14,15,16,17
Ability to extend beyond the classroom	18
Staffroom – note the moveable kitchen furniture	19

16. Mangere Central School:

Highly visible administration area – both into and out of	1
Principal's office	2
Meeting Room	3
Health Room	4
Administration area plan	5
Children's reading area	6

17. Papakura Normal School:

Administration area with office area for uninterrupted work space	1,2
Fixed furnishings	3
Large doors opening to outside	4
Shared resource space for teachers	5
Raised garden	6
Kitchen – note bench on wheels	7,8
Alternative seating for staffroom	9

18. Papatoetoe Central School:

Professional Development room	1
Courtyard off staffroom	2
Moveable kitchen bench	3,4
High visibility	5,6,7
Moveable art trolleys	8
Parent information board	9,10,11
Laptop trolley	12
Library furniture	13,14,15
Teacher resources off library	16
Shoe rack	17
'Moving on upwards'	18
Gathering area for parents	19
A welcoming interview room	20

Feature	Picture
19. Stonefields Primary School:	

Shared office for Senior leadership team	1
Kitchen attached to administration area	2
Flexible teaching space classroom	3
Group teaching/learning space	4
Welcoming furniture into pod – for use of both students and parents	5
Looking across pod – note moveable furniture	6
Teaching station – instead of interactive whiteboard	7,8,9
Seating variation	10
Seating/grouping options	11
Staffroom seating options	12,13
Staffroom kitchen	14
Staff work area – no staff offices	15
Library furniture	16,17,18,19,20

20. Stanhope Road Primary School:

Mosaic seat	1
Large doors opening to outside	2,3
High visibility between rooms	4
Using natural light effectively	5
Uses of large whanau space between classrooms	6,7
Ability to open up between rooms	8

21. Pillans Point Primary School:

Extensive decking for indoor/outdoor work space – plastic blinds	1,2,3,4
At end of deck, cupboard for storage instead of steps down	5,6
Library utilising natural light and sunken area for class/group work	7,8,9
Outdoor storage of bags, etc.	10
Garden plots	11
Interesting seating around trees	12

22. Selwyn Ridge Primary School:

High visibility	1,2
Storage of 'big books'	3,4
Outdoor play area for juniors using extensive decking	5,6
Studio	7,8,9
Map of pod showing common areas	10

23. Te Akau ki Papamoa:

Map of pod showing common areas	1
Wet areas	2,3
Withdrawal area	4
Teachers' work area	5
Broadcasting studio	6,7
Use of prefabs	8,9
Professional development room	10
Visibility to health room	11

Feature	Picture

24. Eastern Hutt Primary School:	
High visibility and use of bench seating	1,2,3
Common space between rooms	4,5,6,7,8,
Storage of bags, etc.	9,10
High visibility and raised planters	11,12,13,14
Raised planters	14,15
Junior block – note low windows	16,17,18,19,20

25. Koraunui Primary School:	
Visibility from administration area into Principal's office	1
Reaource/work area	2
Kitchen 'island'	3,4,5
Teacher's work area/board room	6,7
Large folding doors	8
Use of deck for flexible use	9,10,11
Shared space	12,13
Different way of providing bench space (NB ends curved to save space)	14
Exterior notice board	15,16
Mosaic tiles on administration desk	17

26. Ferguson Intermediate School Upper Hutt:	
Plan of 8 classroom pod	1,2
Looking into shared learning space	3,4
Use of large doors to exterior space	5,6
Whiteboard / shelving in each classroom	7
Wet area in shared learning space	8
'Small group' learning space which can open up into shared learning space	9,10
'Syndicate resource room'	11
Single toilet and changing room	12,13

Implications:

It is important for schools contemplating renovations or new buildings to familiarise themselves with ways in which their buildings can meet the requirements of Modern Learning Environments. Architects have varying ways of meeting these requirements and the more we know the more we can utilise the ideas that abound in our schools.

However, there is one major limiting factor – MONEY. There is a significant difference between new schools and renovated ones, when it comes to the level at which they can include facets of Modern Learning Environments.

One very interesting implication of a 'Modern Learning Environment' was demonstrated in one school, where a corridor had roller doors at each end thus creating an 'outdoor' space. This has implications for available space within some schools.

Whether schools continue to use libraries in the traditional sense of a library, could have major implications for the use of space within schools.

Benefits:

The high visibility of modern classroom blocks is very useful from a point of children working independently, yet not always out of vision of the teacher. Similarly, there was more than one principal who mentioned how much easier it was to see what was occurring in classes, therefore improving knowledge of the teaching/learning situation.

Flexible learning spaces offered teachers and students the ability to extend their work areas, particularly the wet areas, which were out of the main classroom area in most schools.

Having furniture on wheels also enabled teachers and students to utilise this more effectively.

The high visibility, flexible learning spaces and shared work areas does have implications for staffing. Schools need to look at the characteristics they want their staff to have in order to enable the utilisation of the facilities to the optimum levels.

Conclusions:

Modern Learning Environments are seen at their best in the new schools, where design has not been complicated by existing factors.

The development of Modern Learning Environments within the remodelling process is hindered significantly by availability of funds.

If Modern Learning Environments are to be optimised, it is important to have staffs that see the possibilities offered within the designs and make the most of their opportunities to make the designs work for them and their students.

Modern Learning Environments is a goal worth striving for. While we have had some major funding issues in education through leaky buildings and the impact of the Christchurch earthquake, we must not lose sight of the end goal of developing excellent, exciting teaching/learning spaces.

Cleve Bloor
Principal
Maunu School