

2013 Sabbatical Leave Report

Building Learning Power

“To study and report on the process and outcomes of schools introducing the ‘Building Learning Power’ (BLP) programme, and to gather the knowledge and skills necessary to introduce and embed this into Whangaparaoa and Silverdale Schools on completion of the sabbatical study.”

July 2013

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1. TITLE AND FOCUS OF SABBATICAL

2013 Sabbatical Leave Report – Building Learning Power

To study and report on the process and outcomes of schools introducing the 'Building Learning Power' (BLP) programme, and to gather the knowledge and skills necessary to introduce and embed this into Whangaparaoa and Silverdale schools on completion of the sabbatical study. Outcomes from visits to U.K. schools, attendance at seminars, interaction with schools and research material are summarised in the final report.

2. AUTHORS AND SCHOOLS

Steve and Viv Collins – Principals of Whangaparaoa and Silverdale Schools

This sabbatical was the outcome of a joint application by Viv and Steve Collins, principals of Silverdale School and Whangaparaoa Schools respectively. They had slightly differing areas of interest, one based around improving teacher practice, the other around enhancing the student as a person, the common basic tenet being, that if successful, any programme (in this case 'Building Learning Power'), should result in student empowerment reflected in a clear and recognizable way in student behaviour, both at school and outside this environment and that teachers were central to the success of this programme.

The Sabbatical utilized the ten week period of Term Two 2013, from 6th May to 12 July 2013

in three parts –

- pre-travel, mainly carried out prior to the commencement of the sabbatical,
- the travel and school based observations, and
- the writing of the report

Pre-travel:

- Contact Professor Guy Claxton, to determine major associates, schools and institutions that are examples of this programme
- Organise schedule of visits, lectures and meetings which will support the gathering of sufficient knowledge to enable introduction into the two schools on return to New Zealand.
- Attend a conference related to Building Learning Power and extend the network of people engaged in the process.

Travel

- Weeks 1-6: Travel to UK to visit schools which have successfully introduced this programme.

On Return

- Weeks 7 & 8: Return; Attend NZ seminar, consultation with Guy Claxton, networking setup
- Weeks 9 & 10: Write up account of trip;
- Review and prepare Strategic and Annual Plans for 2014 incorporating BLP processes

3. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This sabbatical could never have been achieved without considerable support from others.

We would therefore like to acknowledge the following:

- a) those who approved the application through Teach NZ. It has been a remarkable experience and one we can only recommend in the highest possible way to others considering a similar venture
- b) the schools we visited and the staff who assisted. There is little doubt that each in their own way, made the sabbatical a success. In many cases we were indebted to the head teachers, who took time from their own schedules to make us both welcome and informed. As in New Zealand, principals / head teachers are busy people, and we felt privileged that they would welcome us as they did. Each had other tasks to carry out, responsibilities which paralleled our own, yet they did not stint on the time taken, or the personal interest they exhibited. Where the principal was not available, the Senior Manager of the school (with a special interest in BLP) supported us in their place. Additionally in many schools, teachers and support assistants took time to share what they were doing and how that was impacting on children. It has been a very special, warm and sharing experience made possible by the people in the following schools and we would therefore like to acknowledge:
 - a. Carolyn Weston, (Head Teacher), Guestling Bradshaw Church of England; School, Hastings / East Sussex
 - b. Mel Easter, (Head Teacher), Brixham School, Brixham, Torquay / Sussex;
 - c. Robert Cleary, (Head Teacher), Sandringham School, Newham, London.
 - d. Andy Moor, (Head Teacher), and (Steve Jevons), Deputy Principal, St. Bernard's Catholic School, Liverpool; Cheshire;
 - e. Mary Warren, (Assistant Head Teacher), Miriam Lord School, Bradford;
 - f. Debbie Marchant (Head Teacher), Eastway School, The Wirral, Liverpool;
 - g. Gill Makin (Head Teacher) and Bryony Meek, Briar Hill Infant School, Whitnash, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire;
 - h. Christian Hilton, (Head Teacher), Shipston on Stour School, Warwickshire;
 - i. Geraldine Fitzmaurice (Head Teacher), Caz and Dave, teachers, St. Thomas Abney School, Hackney, London;
 - j. Paul Fleming, Head Teacher and Marta Mariño Graña, Leader Key Stage Two, Tyssen Community School and Children's Centre, Hackney, London; Roll 452;
- c) The Learning Organisation (TLO), Bristol; to Alan Chambers for his welcome and sorting of things administrative, to Leeanne Day and Steve Watson – facilitators at TLO – for their great ideas and ways to support schools; and finally to Maryl Chambers, without whom a number of our visits and outcomes would not have been possible. When some of our originally organised schools were unable to meet as previously arranged, Maryl stepped in and found others. She facilitated meetings and enabled us to be part of what she had previously arranged for TLO, and welcomed us as though we were already a valuable part of that organisation. She helped us look at possible ways forward and shared information in ways that made it very clear why TLO is a key structure in the support and enhancement of Building Learning Power programmes in educational institutions in the UK. TLO rocks!!
- d) Professor Guy Claxton, who spent time providing advice and guidance and did not hesitate to encourage innovation and modification to suit each school individually.

- e) Our own Boards of Trustees and Staff who logistically made this trip possible through their belief in the Learning Power principles, and some financial support and by continuing to manage our schools effectively in our absence.

4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Building Learning Power was introduced to the authors during a seminar in New Zealand and the intent and purpose of what was outlined by Professor Guy Claxton at that seminar resonated strongly with both principals and who both came away from that seminar asking the question about what it was that created a fertile learning culture, and active and engaged learners in a school? We believed that BLP was a primary factor in doing this and this then led to the determination to find out more about Building Learning Power. Subsequently we made a joint application for a sabbatical to go to the UK and investigate the delivery and outcomes in schools who had operated BLP for a time.

Over the sabbatical we visited 10 schools across the UK talking about BLP (with head teachers, teachers, students and a number of other different school related personnel eg consultants, facilitators, support staff) and also observing the implementation and active learning in classrooms. The schools were a mixture of small and large primary and nursery schools in rural and urban settings throughout the UK. Twenty percent of the schools were non-BLP schools. Some schools had been operating BLP for more than 5 years and were facing changes as staff changed and moved on, while others had more recently begun the BLP journey.

We also spent some time with The Learning Organisation who facilitate the translation and implementation of BLP in schools in a systematic and considered way across a period of time in order to effect change in the learning culture in the schools.

We found that there was a marked contrast in the learning culture between BLP and non-BLP schools. Non BLP schools tended to be outcome oriented e.g. attaining good results on the SAT assessments with pressure and accountability key elements discussed by personnel, while BLP schools were clearly focussed on the learner and their ability to apply learning in any setting. The BLP schools showed children actively involved, initiating, persevering, collaborating, handling distractions, articulating and generalising in productive and energetic ways.

Schools that had developed BLP across time rather than leaping in, were more effective in their understanding of students as learners. They had taken time to absorb the pedagogy of learning and tease out the implications and what that meant for them both as learners and facilitators of learning. They also found that the common language used to articulate learning situations facilitated greater understanding and communication across all levels of the school – teacher to teacher, teacher to student, student to parent, teacher to parents, management to teachers, etc.

A further aspect that was common across the schools visited was the positive impact on all participants. This is best captured by the statement from the Bushfield Primary School headteacher who said, *“BLP isn’t quick or easy – it takes resilience! Teachers have to unlearn some of their old habits, and take time to consolidate new ones. BLP is actually as much a learning journey – one of individual and collective self-discovery – for teachers as it is for students.”* Schools were in agreement that if the school’s infrastructure did not support the implementation of BLP then at best it would only be

dabbled with and would fizzle quickly without any appreciable change in the learning culture occurring.

BLP appeared to be an inclusive approach that assisted all learners across a range of learning situations both within school and outside of school which went on long past the exposure to BLP. This was a recurring theme for students, teachers and principals alike with each participant becoming an active promoter of BLP in their new setting. Many made comments about the improved results in SAT's without these being the primary focus.

BLP was used in different ways in each of the schools but the sense and feel of the learning culture remained similar. Each school had taken time to celebrate student learning through their environmental displays about their learning journeys highlighting aspects of BLP with supporting evidence e.g. students' written comments on their learning, photographs of the learning processes, learning journals, and work in books, home learning, and artefacts.

The overall impression from head teachers, staff and students was that BLP had made a significant impact on how the school operated and how the participants within the school approached learning. Guy Claxton (June 2013) suggests that schools that have embraced BLP are "schools with attitude who display self-regulation, social harmony and epistemic mentality (the capacity to learn)." This was certainly evident in the schools we visited.

5. THE PURPOSE OF THE SABBATICAL LEAVE:

- a. To study and report on the process, effect and outcomes for schools introducing the 'Building Learning Power' programme.
- b. To make a limited comparison between non-BLP schools and Learning Powered Schools and review those schools who utilised the programme as a basis for the enhancement of the learning environments and cultures within their schools
- c. To gather the knowledge and skills necessary to introduce and embed this into Whangaparaoa and Silverdale Schools on completion of the sabbatical study.

In pursuing these goals, we intended to consider:

a. Teachers and effects on their practice

Upgrading the quality of teaching through the use of a variety of techniques, and overtly sharing of Learning Intentions and Success Criteria, was a major precept of the ATOL / AFL formative practice focus for schools and a major initiative throughout New Zealand in recent years. Amongst others, Hattie had suggested that improvement in the quality of teaching was the single most important factor in determining student success. Vygotsky also supported this recognition of the importance of teacher scaffolding of learning tasks through theories related to Zones of Proximal Development.

We understood that the UK system had been embracing formative practices and wanted to see what use of the ATOL / AFL practices were in place in the schools we visited, what effect these were having and whether these practices resulted in changes in student self knowledge and awareness and the links between formative assessment and Learning Power.

A further influence in our roles as principals was the focus on Teaching as Inquiry involving three key aspects:

- Focusing inquiry which was about what was most important from the perspective of where our students were at, their interests, and the local and national curriculum aspirations.
- Teaching inquiry which determined what strategies are most likely to help our students learn. This required teachers to establish priorities given the time constraints that students and teachers face. It was also informed by the practitioners' expertise and others experiences, and;
- Learning inquiry when the teacher investigated what happened as a result of the teaching and what implications this had for future teaching. This involved an evidence-based approach and incorporated reflective practices and high levels of communication and good relationships between teachers and students.

Each of the aspects in the process of inquiry was inherent in the Building Learning Power dispositions with engagement in reflecting on practices and subsequent direct impact on learning.

In particular we were aware that Professor Guy Claxton, Visiting Professor of Learning Science at Bristol University and Fellow of the British Psychological Society had developed the 'Building Learning Power' Programme which focused on student development through the use of four dispositions of Resilience, Resourcefulness, Reflectiveness and Reciprocity and, along with the criteria which make up each of these component parts, the teacher skills that assisted with this development. We therefore wanted to know, what difference supplementation with the Building Learning Power programme made, if any, in those schools that utilised it.

b. Students

It seemed to us that ATOL / AFL, set out to change teaching practice through a process that was structured and formalised, utilising rubrics and supervision. However, an equally important measure of success was found not just in the learning of students, but in improvements in their self-esteem, in positive changes in the learning tools they utilised and the ability to generalise these in other situations. These aspects were also an important part of our inquiry.

A BALANCE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

In the New Zealand Curriculum, 'ako' or a process of learning together, may be found when teachers implement an Inquiry model in their professional work. These are however, neither mandatory nor necessarily focused on changing the personal skill base of students unless this is part of the Inquiry investigation and subsequent action outcomes. In addition, while these teacher investigations could be motivated by personal interest they may also be a result of a wider policy-based requirement centred around a question of institutional interest rather than the student as a person.

The 'Building Learning Power' programme appeared to require a focus both on changed teacher practice and the development of the student as a person and unique learner, providing this opportunity by building on programmes related to teacher skill base as well as the empowerment of students, in learning and self-esteem. Balanced teacher practice appeared to be supplemented by student owned practices and skills that they could recognise, verbalise, utilise and practice. As well as teacher awareness and

improvement, students were assisted to see themselves not just as learners, but as people with a unique and generalisable set of skills that could be implemented in learning situations within and outside the formal education system.

6. RATIONALE, BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

i) Links to issues important to the school:

- a. Both of our schools have experienced significant roll growth over recent years, each now approximately 150 students greater than the previous year. With this growth has come the need for significant numbers of new staff plus a minimal number needed to replace staff turnover. This raises the need to ensure continuity of approach – either through staff professional development, or by ensuring the ethos of the school includes student belief in ‘The Whangaparaoa / Silverdale Way’; a belief that values each school’s student-centred learning, but more importantly a respectful sharing of skills and abilities through Ako, Rangatiratanga, Whanaungatanga, and Wananga, - reciprocity, self-determination, valuing family and association; and the sharing with and consideration of others. The BLP programme has the potential to support both teachers and students in their learning and interaction with one another to the benefit of both.
- b. Both schools have an identifiable community. In the case of Silverdale, this is largely as a result of being a part of a huge subdivision of several thousand sections of land and the building of a new school; at Whangaparaoa, the community has been generally well established in the past, but has recently been impacted by a significant number of English and South African emigrants, all looking to become part of some identifiable and valued community. Both schools have been faced with the enforced introduction of an enrolment scheme to restrict entry, a rule which has commonly impacted more on established residents than on new citizens arriving with currencies of higher value than that of NZ and consequently able to purchase housing in areas that suit rather than just taking what is commonly available. The BLP programme should build common understanding of school values and beliefs, and enable those at home to utilise these where appropriate and have matters of common interest with neighbours – i.e. to develop a learning community.
- c. Ethnicity. The values espoused by the BLP programme have a close fit with those to be found in Ka Hikitia, Tataiako, the Maori Curriculum for English Medium Schools, the early childhood curriculum Te Whariki and supporting documents. The communities of both schools are mainly European origin, making it imperative that school programmes support understanding and belief in the values espoused in the documents: Wānanga: participating with learners and communities in robust dialogue for the benefit of Māori learners’ achievement; Whanaungatanga: actively engaging in respectful working relationships with Māori learners, parents and whānau, hapū, iwi and the Māori community; Manaakitanga: showing integrity, sincerity and respect towards Māori beliefs, language and culture; Tangata Whenuatanga: affirming Māori learners as Māori. Providing contexts for learning where the language, identity and culture of Māori learners and their whānau is affirmed; Ako: taking responsibility for their own learning and that of Māori learners.

d. Improvement in Achievement Standards. While both applicants come from high decile schools, each has the unique challenge of significant numbers of high achievers, while enhancing the tail of underachievement described in recent PISA publications. Central to the improvement of those who find learning a challenge, will be the provision, practice and utilisation of student based techniques that promote improved self-driven learning. The BLP programme has the potential to support this school wide development in student empowerment.

ii) Links to the schools' strategic or annual plan

Over the last ten years, both Whangaparaoa and Silverdale Primary Schools have set a priority on strategic programmes that enable student participation and development. Each has been guided professionally by facilitators and consultants to schools in the field of students' writing, student empowerment and leadership practices. These programmes made clear the features students needed to engage in, in order to progress through each sub-level. Once students understood where to target their efforts, they began self-monitoring and in tandem with teacher support, they became deeply interested in self-improvement.

Later shared strategic programmes and cluster involvement related to Numeracy and ICT, Assessment for Learning, Leadership Practices and, latterly, Inquiry-based Teaching have added to the pool of professional understanding of students and teachers as learners.

Over this last year, our charters and strategic plans have incorporated elements of the development of teaching as inquiry to further lift the engagement of staff, students and our parent bodies in effective learning. This means our schools are well positioned to further develop school-wide approaches that build strong reflective practices into teaching and learning processes.

The sabbatical provided us with opportunities to investigate the practical applications of gaining further shift in the learning cultures of both our schools, particularly referring to the elements of the Building Learning Power.

iii) Links to personal and professional development.

a) The sabbatical allowed us to explore further our roles as learning leaders within our schools. We needed to continue to be seen to be active within what we espoused – to be open to new ideas, to ask questions of ourselves and our practices for the betterment of our students, to promote a culture of curiosity and to explore and investigate viable options for shifting student achievement that build on frameworks already in place.

b) The sabbatical also allowed us to continue to collaborate in an area that had clear links to initiatives we had implemented over the last 7 years. We have both worked intensively by initiating an IT cluster development within 5 local schools that focused on developing student empowerment through formative practice. This was followed by the development of an EHSAS Cluster (Extending High Standards Across Schools) which concentrated specifically on teachers' literacy practices subsequently enhancing both student

empowerment and student achievement. A further development was being part of a two year Experienced Principal's Programme which highlighted leadership practices and took us into the journey of exploring the Best Evidence Synthesis. The sabbatical aimed to add to and draw from the strength of both of our leadership capacities thereby impacting directly on two distinct and diverse communities of learners.

- c) From a personal perspective we wanted to be able to renew our enthusiasm for student engagement in learning; reduce the effect of 'rubbish' within our system and gain clarity around the learning of youngsters and building a repertoire of practical applications; and to take time to focus on people with passion, creativity and excitement for what matters in education – students and their learning.
 - d) Appropriately introduced and run, BLP has the potential to link to the values and key competencies that are seen as central to the current NZ Curriculum with a subsequent growth in self-awareness as a learner and a direct result in a shift in achievement for all learners.
- iv) Success for all - This is a clear message and driver for current educational policy. We wanted to see if schools who operated BLP had been able to develop further tools that could be implemented at the school level to ensure that all children became active learners. The specific focus on the learner and the learner's learning dispositions have proved to be beneficial in shifting student achievement in those schools that have implemented Building Learning Power. That is an attractive outcome for all students, parents and staff, principals and BOT's.

7. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

a) School Visits

Prior to travel and during the period spent in the UK, we organised visits to ten schools. This was a little more difficult than originally envisaged, since at times, the original organisation was unable to be proceeded with due to changing school commitments. As visitors, we had to rely at all times on the goodwill of principals, teachers and other contacts that became available. It became very obvious that networking was essential and we had to be prepared to be flexible since first arrangements did not always work out in practice. Nevertheless, the network was sufficient to ensure success in finding substitute schools where this was necessary and we were at all times welcomed and treated with considerable warmth.

It did become very obvious that we were seen as ambassadors for New Zealand and New Zealand education, even though this was not part of our brief. Our view of the New Zealand system was a constant source of interest, as was our mutual interest in theirs. One consultant was concerned that she had met another person from New Zealand who felt the sabbatical was an extended holiday and expressed this opinion openly to her.

It was also clear that this programme was being considered by a wide variety of educational institutions. Sometimes our revised visits were shared with staff from other places. In one meeting, we found ourselves discussing the merits of the BLP programme with staff from a university in the Netherlands, who were in the process of

setting up their teacher training department with a programme incorporating the BLP methodology. They were extremely motivated and excited about the possibility. They had brought with them a Principal and Deputy Principal from a Netherlands school, with whom they were collaborating in trialing BLP.

In a second case, we met with staff from a school in the Isle of Man. They had left home before 5.00am and flown to Liverpool to spend the day observing and taking notes on the 'where to next' issues they were facing. They were a wonderfully animated and enthusiastic group, even more buoyant because they were not subject to any real Ofsted / ERO type system and still found themselves able to be innovative rather than tied to the SATs testing model, which was having an extreme effect on all schools we visited in the UK.

In our visits, we were unable to ascertain deciles, since that system of school coding did not exist in the UK. Generally funding was tied into the number of free school lunches that were delivered at each school. Our judgments therefore are very informal based on Ofsted reports and included their system of Pupil Premium Support (Free school lunches) and assessment of Average in terms of these students.

b) A simple table demonstrating some of these aspects is as follows:

School	Roll	Age Range of those on Roll	Pupil Premium Support	Disabled / Special Needs	Ofsted Assessment	Comment
Guestling Bradshaw C. of England	207	4-11	Average	Below Average	Good	
Brixham Ch. of England	243	3-11	Below Average	Above Average	Outstanding	
Sandringham	936	3-11	Above Average	Below Average	Good	Prob. Very low decile equivalent; 30 different languages; 0.3 Km Roll catchment area
St. Bernards Catholic Primary	187	4-11	Above Average	Well Above Average	Outstanding	
Miriam Lord	480	3-11	Above Average	Above Average	Satisfactory	4 th lowest income area in UK. Decile equivalent probably extremely low
Eastway	285	3-11	Unknown	Well Above Average	Good	
Briar Hill Infant	268	4-7	Unknown	Below Average	Good	One third pupils from minority ethnicities
Shipston on Stour	400	4-11	Below Average	Average	Good	
Sir Thomas Abney	420	3-11	Unknown	Above Average	Good	High Polish / Black African / Black Caribbean ethnicities
Tyssen	452	3-11	Well Above Average	Above Average	Satisfactory	Black Caribbean / Black African / Indian ethnicities

c) Inclusion of pre-school under the principal's authority

It should be noted that without exception the schools visited all included nursery schools that operated within the oversight of the principals. Transition for students from the nursery school to the junior school appeared to be seamless in most cases as the children were already fully integrated into the operation of the school including the pedagogical base such as Building Learning Power.

d) Class Sizes

Classes from three year olds and above were all restricted to 30 maximum and once the number of students reached 30 the students were required to go to another class or if all full, then to another school in that Council. The placement of children in a different school was the responsibility of the education branch of the Local Authority which meant that sometimes a child had to be bused past their local school to another school community.

e) Influence of Local Authority

The education department in the Local Authorities had significant input into schools and often took an active role in ensuring standards were being met by on-going, in-depth visits to schools, principals and teachers. Several schools had Ofsted personnel, Local authority personnel and school-determined personnel reviewing programmes, and teaching and learning. Each came with different agendas and directions at different, or in some cases, at the same time. There was certainly a significant drive for schools to be rated as 'Outstanding' or 'Good', and for teachers to be rated in the same way.

From an outsider's perspective this appeared to create extreme levels of tension with a shift from a focus on student engagement and learning to a focus on attaining exam results. We observed schools and teachers who provided cram classes during holiday breaks, study breakfasts, and study clubs after school to achieve that end.

We were tentative about drawing any conclusions without checking our perceptions with school personnel but without exception there was a consensus that morale within the sector had often been at a very low ebb over recent periods in UK education. This meant that the impact of BLP often brought a school's focus back to student engagement and student learning.

f) Classroom Observations

Each of the schools visited opened their doors and allowed us to visit the classrooms. Generally, day to day activities seen in most schools were similar to what was occurring in New Zealand schools. However, there were always activities that related to Building Learning Power (and these varied from school to school depending on what the focus was at the time of the visit). Students operating in classrooms were frequently seeking to improve their interactions with others (collaboration), engaging in the tasks at hand and completing these (absorption, perseverance, managing distractions, relating to others), ensuring they were clear about the task (noticing, planning, questioning) and using a range of tools and groupings when completing tasks (flexible thinking). Quite regularly, the teacher would draw the students back together for a quick reflection on their particular disposition and whether they were implementing this successfully. It was considered important that reflection on learning was occurring all the time rather than waiting until the end of a session before making a judgement on how effective the students were as learners – learning could then be adjusted as and when necessary.

Children and teachers had a clear, shared understanding of what the disposition was and how that would be evidenced in their children's approach to learning. In the junior levels small characters were adopted by the school, exemplifying a disposition or characteristic. This gave students easily identifiable characters and characteristics that they could relate to. e.g. Rosie the resilient rhino; Max the resourceful rat; Tommy the reflective tortoise; George the collaborating giraffe; Ellie the planning elephant; cartoon characters exemplifying the characteristic under scrutiny; little lego characters that were created and named; hand puppets both animal based or people based.

As students got older these characteristics were absorbed into learning heroes taken from literature or real life.

The children who had displayed any of the characteristics under scrutiny were celebrated by having their photos displayed and a comment about how they were implementing the disposition. Other students took on the role of learning detectives and they looked for those students who were active BLP learners. These were also posted and applauded.



The ease and flow of the language of learning was a common characteristic in all the BLP schools. One young 10 year old shared with us that *"At his old school they never had anything like this (BLP) and this is just brilliant"*. Students felt empowered to take control of their learning and their learning situation. This empowerment was evident from the 4 yr olds to the 11 years olds we observed.

Classrooms were generally saturated with the processes of learning from wall displays, to activities, to work in books and in the interactions of the students with the teachers and with each other. The visual and verbal images and prompts gave a clear message to the students that their working on, their building of learning, was important, valued and worth celebrating. The comments both scribed and given, were explicit, timely and relevant and focussed on the processes involved and not the end product.

One aspect that interested the authors was whether there was a transfer from one learning setting to another. In some of the schools visited these same kinds of commentary (as mentioned in the paragraph above) on learning were carried into the playground with a range of activities dotted about the school environment and positioned so that students could all celebrate their learning journeys. There was also evidence displayed of students taking the BLP principles and working on these at home with their families.

g) Principal/senior staff discussions

Initial contact with the schools was made via emails which outlined what we were doing and what we would be interested in observing and discussing should the school be willing to allow us to visit. This met with a great deal of success and we set up an itinerary to cover the range and depth of schools we needed to visit. We were mindful of the very sensitive nature of what we would be observing and our clear responsibility to ensure that our conduct was at all times respectful and ethical.

In each school we met with either the head teacher or the head teacher and the identified drivers of BLP, and then visited the classrooms after discussing the questions below.

Some of the questions asked across all the schools were:-

Why and when did the school adopt the BLP approaches?

How had their journey begun and where were they at this moment?

How did they bring on reluctant teachers?

What PD was involved and how was it resourced?

Who determined the pace of implementation and how was that gauged?

What were the bouquets and the pitfalls?

What has been the impact on the school community – head teachers, teachers, children and parents?

How did BLP impact on teacher, children, parents and the Boards of Governors?

How did BLP fit with other programmes that were mandated eg formative assessment, SEALs (Social, Emotional and Academic Learning – a behaviour modification programme), and the SAT's (Standardised Achievement Testing)?

How was BLP woven into the fabric of the school and its vision?

How did you ensure that BLP was being implemented appropriately?

How did schools monitor the effectiveness of BLP?

How was BLP sustained across time?

8. FINDINGS

Detailed planning occurred outlining learning intentions, building the success criteria and incorporating the learning characteristic that would be focussed on during that lesson. Guy Claxton refers to this as split-screen teaching where the teachers weave together the 'what' that is to be learned with the 'how' it will be learned (The Learning Powered School Guy Claxton 2011, Pp88 – 92)

Discussions with the head teachers and relevant staff were unanimous in applauding the value-added aspects that BLP had given the school and themselves. None of them suggested it was easy but generally the implementation required them to reflect on their practices and what value they placed on fitting their students for learning in the 21st century.

Schools varied in their approaches as to how they ensured that BLP was being implemented appropriately. The commonality was that a decision was made that BLP was going to go ahead in the school. This had been at the instigation of the head teacher or a very active and committed teacher who had been involved with BLP, or like

the authors, had been to a seminar/conference that sparked the interest and had begun to make changes in their own sphere of influence, such as their own classrooms.

In other instances a small group of teachers became the drivers often within a syndicate level. As well as specific individuals, the whole staff were introduced to professional development related to what it meant to be an effective learner in their school. BLP was part of that consideration. Other schools made the decision to embrace BLP and used a facilitator to ensure that cohesiveness occurred. All schools were adamant that without senior managers, head teacher and community support (governors and parents), indeed a systemic support network, the programme would have floundered.

Schools we visited were at different points in their BLP journey. Some had been involved with the development in the school for up to five years and were at the point where they were grappling with fine tuning the learning progressions within each of the capacities

School-wide Input

We have already mentioned the importance of the whole school embracing the Learning Power journey and the positive response this had on the learning environment. Other activities that had proved successful were:

School Assemblies with a focus on Learning Power.

This was a time when students individual or group efforts were acknowledged. Some shared stories, some were awarded special Learning Power certificates, others shared reflection journals, art or comments their peers had made. Whenever a large group gathered together Learning Power was celebrated.

BLP days

These were days or afternoons when large groups of students got together to solve novel problems using Learning Power dispositions. Students took time during these sessions to have breakout reflective groups who commented on the learning taking place

Student led discussions

During our visits, students acted as BLP hosts, showing us particular aspects of BLP operating in their school. In some instances we were fortunate to be a part of students' council meetings where the students reflected on the impact of BLP on their lives both at home and at school. Without exception the students were articulate about the Learning Power dispositions and could relate these to specific aspects.

Parent workshops, Home learning, Newsletters

Parent as active partners in student learning and engagement were evident in most of the schools we visited and through a deliberate, planned approach were kept informed of BLP and what each team of students were involved in. This was provided through specific workshops led by students and teachers, home learning activities, school's newsletters and involvement in BLP activities such as BLP focus days. Managers and Team leaders felt that they could not have proceeded without the support of the Board of Managers and expressed that it was important that they were involved at the outset and clear about what the benefits for their students and teachers embracing this programme would bring.

Professional Development and Planning

All teachers were expected to be involved in an on-going professional development programme, and some schools provided this through their in-house experts, visits to other schools, attending area or national conferences or through purchasing a facilitator, such as The Learning Organisation, who would act as mentors within the school. Clusters of schools shared their planning, progressions and steps in their journey, developing shared resources and forums for discussion. Each school shared a number of ways in which they encouraged new staff appointees to come on board. One school required BLP knowledge and experience to be a part of their advertising for a new staff member.

9. IMPLICATIONS

We returned to New Zealand with renewed vigour for ensuring that BLP was the next step in our learning journeys in our own schools for several reasons:

- Students were fully engaged and self aware as learners. They were articulate and had clear rationale for why they operated as they did and could define clearly their next steps in their learning journey. They recognised that they were being given an opportunity to embrace learning opportunities without any fear of failure. In fact many of the students expressed the need for them to try and fail, and to keep on trying because that was an important aspect of taking their next steps in learning. They appeared to be empowered by the BLP framework.
- Not only were students empowered to change the locus of control, teachers and principals found a level of energy and excitement when they embraced Learning Power. It enabled them the opportunity to clearly identify where students were as learners and helped them understand how they could add to a child's toolbox of life-long learning skills. It also gave them the freedom to explore not only the richness of what a varied curriculum could offer but gave permission for them to be the fine educators and teaching practitioners they were. They felt more equipped to assist their students with the strategies for becoming strong and enabled twenty-first century learners.
- It allowed a school to develop a cohesive learning language understood and practised by all, that enhanced both student achievement and the appetite and capacity to engage in activities and structures that promoted a willingness to be curious and confident learners and teachers.

10. CONCLUSIONS

The sabbatical gave us the opportunity to immerse ourselves in other settings beyond our own and to look at what had happened in a number of schools who had been operating BLP across time. It gave us another lens as to how we could empower students and staff and provided us with opportunities to embrace BLP dispositions in order to develop resilience, resourcefulness, reflectiveness and reciprocity. It was a learning adventure worth undertaking.

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