PRINCIPAL'S SABBATICAL REPORT

Michael Harrison
Motueka South School
10th February to 17th April 2014

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank the Motueka South School Board of Trustees for supporting my request to apply for and take sabbatical leave and to my staff, especially Linda Beatson who acted as Principal in my absence.

Special thanks to my Principal colleagues for their generosity in terms of time and willingness to share their experience and knowledge and for the opportunity to look around their schools:

- Jason Miles, Kaiapoi North School
- Pene Abbie, Clarkville School
- Mike Anderson, Waimari School
- Richard Patterson, Maidstone Intermediate
- Leslie Murrihy, Amesbury School
- Janice Gulbransen, Nayland Primary School
- Paul Drummond, Tahunanui School
- Peter Verstappen, Wakefield School
- Don McLean, Hampden Street School
- Education Leaders Forum - Building 21c Learners Community
  - Clearview Primary School
  - St Margaret's College
- eTime 2013 Auckland School's MLE Tour
  - Elim Christian College (Junior Campus)
  - Stonefields School
  - Hobsonville Point School
  - Hingaia Peninsular School

Purpose:

To investigate modern flexible learning environments, including learning technologies and how they enhance 21st-century teaching and learning pedagogy in the NZC.

Research and investigate:

1. successful models of modern flexible learning environments;
2. reasons why MLE encourages a more open, flexible and facilitated approach to teaching and learning.

Background and Rationale:

Motueka South School has been awarded SPG (School Property Guide) deficiency funding. This funding will allow the school to implement significant property enhancements, initially addressing infrastructure, prior to the implementation of a development/building programme designed to modify the school's 1950's teaching/learning spaces over the next five to 10 years.

The majority of New Zealand school buildings were built between 1950 and the 70s. Since then, teaching practice and student learning needs have changed significantly. New technologies and building materials allow for new, vibrant and well connected learning spaces. The Ministry of Education states all students deserve to be taught in these new modern learning environments, and benefit from new teaching methods. They require schools to progressively upgrade teaching and learning spaces and to complete all upgrades by 2020.

The Ministry of Education's 'New Zealand School Property Strategy 2011 – 2021' sets the direction for state-owned school property, and in doing so will help ensure that property investment decisions target the needs of a modern education system. The strategy states:

- School environments influence student learning and teaching practice. Therefore, we need schools that have appropriate physical infrastructure, ICT and environments that support the learning needs of all students
- The school property strategy sets out the changes needed under three strategic goals:
  1. School property is well managed
  2. School property is fit for purpose
  3. A high-performing portfolio of schools

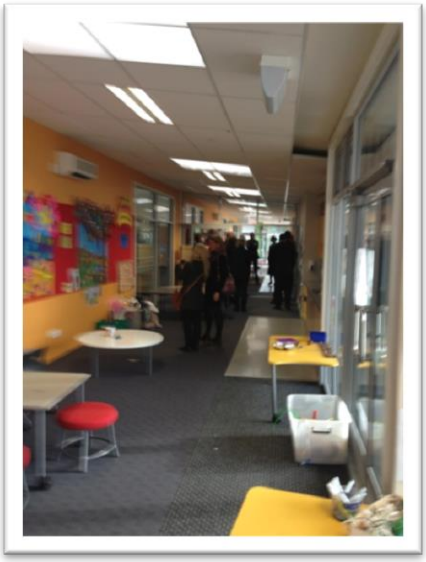
Methodology:

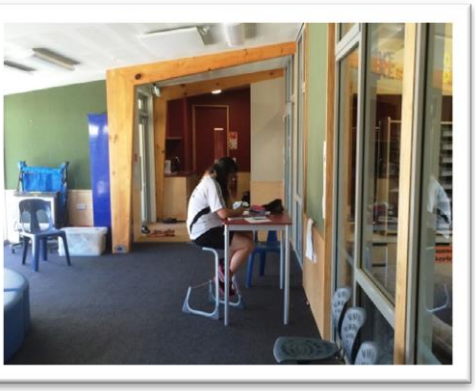
- Thirteen schools in Christchurch, Nelson, Wellington and Auckland were visited;
- Digital portfolio of 'remodeled' and 'new build' modern flexible learning environments developed;
- Discussions with personnel regarding philosophies, funding, etc.

Findings:

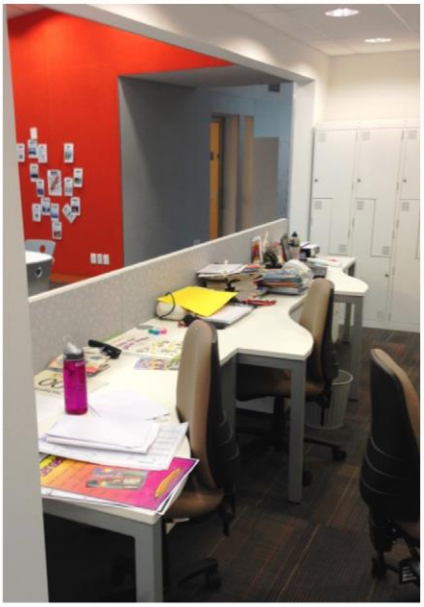
- **Paved and/or covered outdoor areas** offer opportunities to create great learning spaces.
- One of the key essentials is 'visibility'. Passive surveillance ensures teachers are able to remotely supervise a space provided they have high levels of visibility.
- The provision of fixed seating/platforms is also a valuable consideration.

- **'Break Out'** areas are being incorporated into designs. Schools are opening up corridors and cloakrooms to provide additional flexible space.
- 'New Build' schools have made significant use of floor to ceiling glass partitions (including sliding doors), creating transparency in teaching and learning.
- Break out spaces are important as they enable students to have quiet areas for individual work or group collaboration.
- High levels of visibility are important from one room to another.

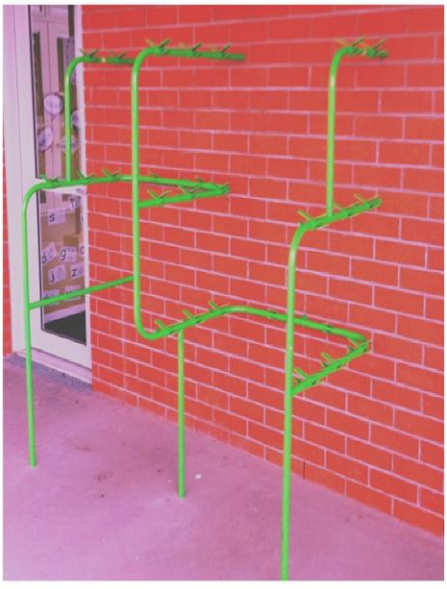




- **Shared staff areas** to maximize space:
  - Leadership/Management Team sharing an office and making use of a separate meeting room as required;
  - Teams of teachers sharing office/workroom areas, rather than a teachers desk in each teaching/learning space.



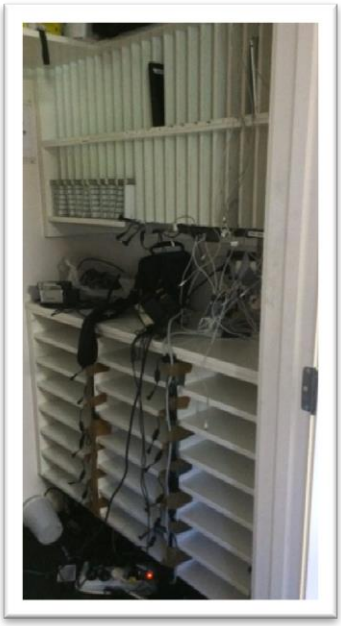
- **Cloak Bays** are being shifted out of what has traditionally been large areas. These spaces are now used as alternative teaching/learning spaces. Examples vary from school to school. Bag/Shoe cabinets or racks are being designed and erected under outdoor covered areas, placed in smaller areas or used as dividers within teaching/learning spaces.



- **Teaching Stations** that are versatile and technologically focused:
  - Interactive monitors;
  - Whiteboards;
  - Built in speakers;
  - Teacher storage and work area;
  - Provision for laptop/tablet storage and charging.

- **Superloos / Centralised Toilets** are being designed to reduce the number of toilet pans in schools. Many are now with glazing to increase visibility and reduce issues.

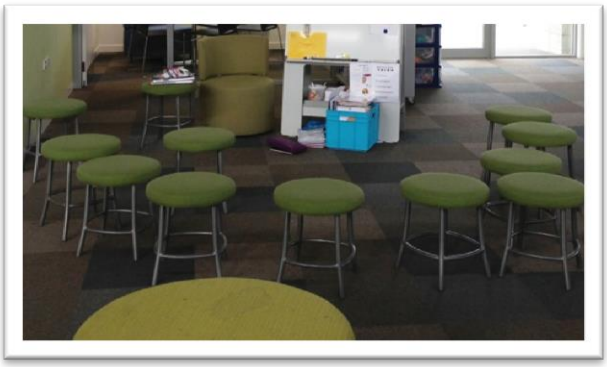
- **Device Storage**. With the move away from dedicated IT Suites school are introducing secure storage areas for school and student devices.



- **Staffroom designs** cater for:
  - functionality/flexibility;
  - relaxation;
  - meeting / professional development area / whiteboard walls;
  - connecting teacher workroom and resource area.

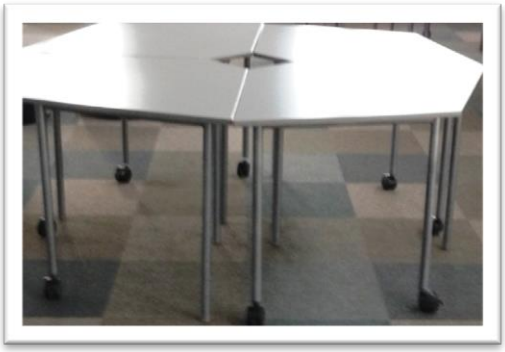
- **Wet/Technology Areas** separate to teaching areas ('break out' areas), maintain high levels of visibility.

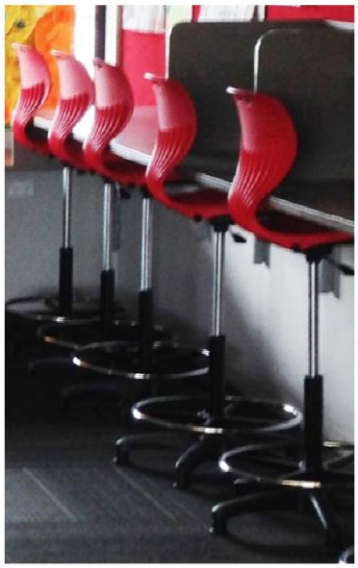
- **Furniture** and **Fittings** are modular and offer higher levels of flexibility and adaptability:
  - Soft seating, bean bags or floor cushions;
  - Greater use of clustering seating;
  - Horseshoe arrangements;
  - Furniture on wheels for easy mobility/reconfiguration;

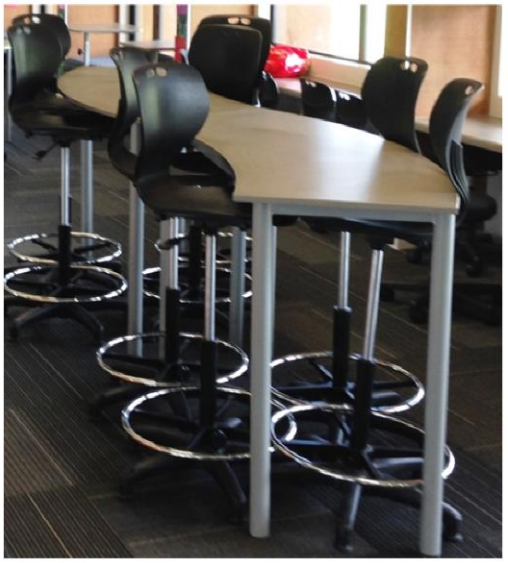
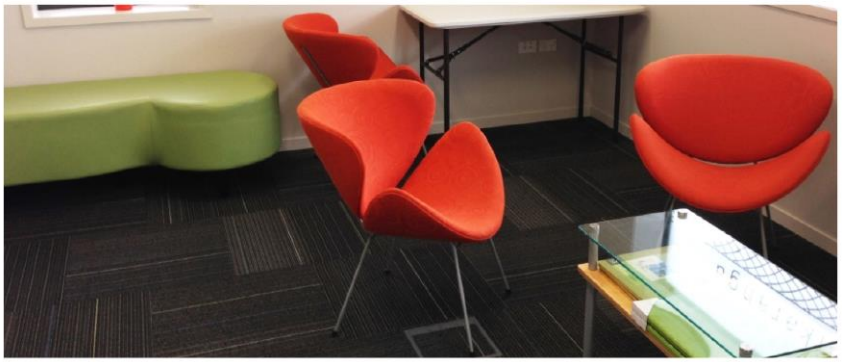


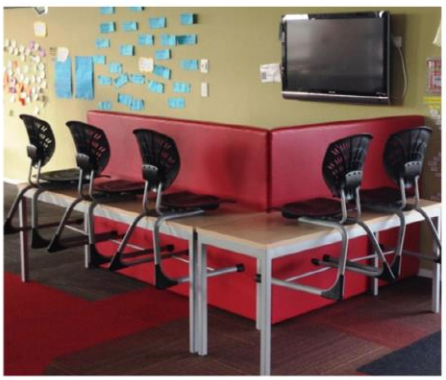
- Creating different learning areas using furniture to provide opportunities for students to work individually or collaboratively in small groups;
- Storage units can be used to define spaces as well as providing vertical and horizontal display space;

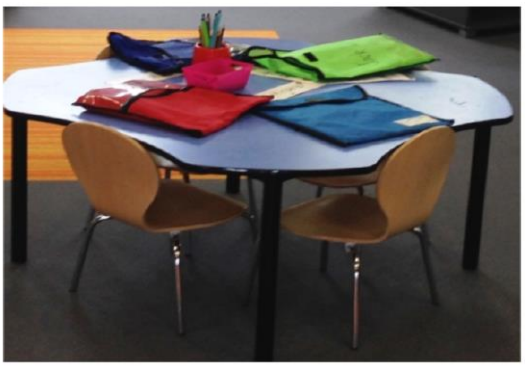
- Greater emphasis on providing durable and lightweight furniture;
- Modern furniture and fittings are used in all areas of the school, i.e., teaching and learning spaces, staffrooms, professional development and resource areas;
- Furniture layout/design matches students' individual learning styles, e.g., group tables and chairs, leaning tables, soft seating, bean bags, floor cushions, high benches and stools for children who prefer height.

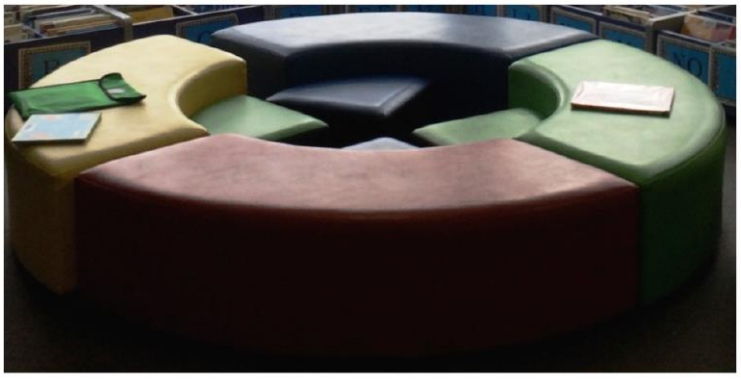


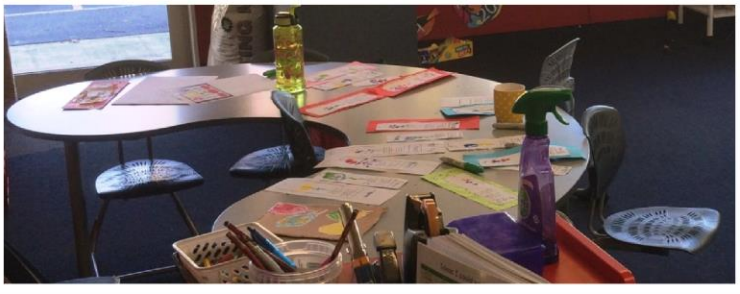










Implications:

- It is important for schools embarking on carrying out renovations/remodeling to:
  - be well versed in the property requirements for developing a Modern Learning Environment (Flexible Teaching/Learning Spaces);
  - have a positive relationship with their architect/draftsman/property supervisor(s);
  - visit other schools who have completed redevelopment or new builds;
  - understand that the design of flexible teaching/learning spaces depend very much on a school's vision for learning, purpose, and its learners;
  - have a clear vision and sound pedagogy around MLE/Flexible Teaching/Learning spaces;
  - manage pedagogical change carefully with staff and allocate appropriate funding to PLD
  - allow staff to trial and take risks;
  - consider your staff's personalities and select teaching teams carefully;
  - ensure adequate funding is provided for furniture, fittings and equipment;
  - ensure design maximizes space so areas are not underutilised;
  - educate the school community in the benefits of MLE/Flexible Teaching/Learning spaces;
  - ensure break-out spaces provide passive surveillance.

- New build schools are working from a blank canvas and are able to incorporate all aspects of MLE requirements.

- Renovated/remodeled schools struggle to include all aspects of MLE requirements as the level of property funding does not provide sufficiently.

- When considering learning technologies it is important that schools develop a robust plan and sustainability for the long-term. Planning should allow for some flexibility to ensure it can accommodate fast changing technologies.

Conclusions:

Modern Flexible Learning Environments is a positive step forward for education and:

- provides for improved utilization of spaces;
- provides for increased light and more effective heating/ventilation;
- caters for indoor and outdoor teaching and learning;
- increases passive visibility for staff.

- Students benefit as Modern Flexible Learning Environments:
  - allows and caters for different student learning styles;
  - increases the likelihood that teaching and learning will be personalised and more responsive;
  - increases self-management within a monitored and supportive environment;
  - encourages strong student voice.

- Teachers benefit as Modern Flexible Learning Environments:
  - encourages sharing and collaboration amongst staff;
  - develops a collaborative/team approach in a high trust culture;
  - utilises teachers strength and interests;
  - encourages regular reflection and feedback within a team;
  - encourages flexibility/fluidity - not constrained when an opportunity arises.

References:

http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/Schools/PropertyToolBox/StateSchools/Design/ModernLearningEnvironment/MLEEgs.aspx

http://www.edgazette.govt.nz/Articles/Article.aspx?ArticleId=8787

http://www.schoolnews.co.nz/education/305-modern-learning-environments/1236-breaking-out-of-the-box-an-introduction-to-the-principles-of-modern-learning-environments

http://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20140616001949/http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/publications/learningspaces.pdf

http://www.minedu.govt.nz/~/media/MinEdu/Files/EducationSectors/PrimarySecondary/PropertyToolbox/StateSchools/SchoolPropertyStrategy201121.pdf

http://www.mle.education.govt.nz/

http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/Schools/PropertyToolBox/StateSchools/Design/ModernLearningEnvironment/MLEFAQs.aspx

http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/Schools/PropertyToolBox/StateSchools/Design/ModernLearningEnvironment/MLEFurtherReading.aspx

http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/Schools/PropertyToolBox/CSR/MLECaseStudiesAndFactsheets.aspx