

Sabbatical Report

Term 3 - 2014

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**Respect – Truth – Humanity - Justice
In the Dominican Tradition**

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my principal colleagues for sharing their time, expertise and time with me through professional conversation and the opportunities to visit classrooms and meet and engage with a number of students in various learning contexts.

St Gerard's School Alexandra

St Mark's School Pakuranga,

Clutha Valley School

St Patrick's School Invercargill

Milton Primary School

Executive Summary

This sabbatical report is an examination and reflection of how school management systems are driven by effective self review in ‘Today’s Schools.’ It looks at the various elements of self review and considers why effective self review is an essential element in a successful school. Guided by some key focus questions I have researched and gathered information from literature and official publications and visited a number of schools to see what effective self review looks like in various settings. I am interested in how schools might differ in their approaches to self review yet share the common vision of maximising opportunity to improve educational outcomes for our nation’s learners.

Purpose

I have looked at effective elements in self-review that enable teachers to improve outcomes for students and therefore increase effectiveness in promoting high teacher performance to help support student progress. As the leader in a Catholic Integrated School I am also involved with the Special Character dimensions of self-review and its contribution to student success and wellbeing.

My particular area of interest is in relation to teaching and learning and its impact on student achievement. This includes the dimensions of Special Character review through which we seek to influence and shape student learning alongside personal and spiritual formation. This may also be referred to as holistic development.

“Our Integrated schools seek to place significant emphasis on the spiritual, values and philosophical dimensions of what they offer as they seek to better engage and excite their students about their learning.” (Patrick Lynch – July 2013)

Rationale

It is widely accepted that our education system in Aotearoa New Zealand is one of the highest performing in the developed world. However our statistics reveal a longer than desired ‘tail of underachievement’ in relation to other OECD countries. (REF) Maori and Pasifika are over-represented in our under-achievement statistics as is the achievement of boys.

“Despite very high performance by many Maori and Pasifika learners in our schooling system, mean achievement for these learners show system underperformance – particularly for early school leaving and senior secondary qualifications of Maori. While 64% of all school leavers, and 55% of Pasifika, achieved at least one sixth form certificate in 2001, only 41% of Maori achieved at this level. This pattern for Maori persisted from 1993 to 2001 with no overall improvement... Statistics New Zealand’s demographic projections indicate that 45% of our children will be Maori and Pasifika by 2021, giving even more urgency to the need for all of our schools to develop approaches to strengthen educational outcomes for these learners. The achievement results ... show that much teaching is outstanding, but there is marked variability within schools in teaching effectiveness, and our system weakness lies in responsiveness to the diversity of our learners.” (OECD Report)

Methodology

I am considering two key questions:

- **What are some effective proven aspects in self review that enable leaders to achieve improved outcomes for school communities and learners and why are these aspects successful?**
- **What are the most effective ways to strengthen self-review processes to ensure sustained future improvement?**

My responses to these questions are based on what is written about self review by the theorists researchers and bureaucrats and what effective self review looks like in successful schools.

Through school visits and discussions with colleagues I seek to become more informed about how self review is practised and most importantly sustained in effective schools.

Findings

The educational achievement of priority groups features as an area of national interest in school external reviews and is an ongoing cross-party political concern. Our national education system is strongly focused on raising achievement for all of all students without exception.

(“Five out of five students” – Hekia Parata 2013)

Research tells us that quality self review can improve teacher performance as well as student outcomes. When teachers are closely involved in evaluating their practice they increase their own understandings of evaluation. It is also desirable to align internal school review practices with external reviews. (Dean and Associates - University of Auckland)

National Administrative Guideline 2 encapsulates the self-review requirement for our schools:

- Develop a strategic plan which documents how they are giving effect to the National Education Guidelines through their policies, plans and programmes, including those for curriculum, Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori and/or National Standards*, aromatawai and/or assessment, and staff professional development;
- Maintain an on-going programme of self-review in relation to the above policies, plans and programmes, including evaluation of information on student achievement; and
- Report to students and their parents on the achievement of individual students, and to the school’s community on the achievement of students as a whole and of groups (identified through NAG 1(c) above) including the achievement of Māori students against the plans and targets referred to in 1(e) above.

Integrated schools with a Special Character have aims which are complimentary within the state system of schools. The NZ Catholic Education Office has the following aspirational goals known as 'Beacon Plan' Goals:

- Quality, effective leadership of schools.
- Equity, quality and excellence in educational outcomes for each student.
- A Catholic population which is knowledgeable about its faith and supportive of its schools.
- Well qualified teachers in Catholic schools, especially in the areas of Religious Education and the Special Character dimension of the school.
- Strong partnership between parish and school to support the revitalisation of the church's mission in the world.
- Practical commitment to achieving positive bi-cultural relationships with Maori, and practical commitment to developing a resilient multi-cultural society.
- Dynamic graduates from our schools who are committed to promoting the Good News in its various dimensions, with emphasis on: evangelisation, service, community and social justice.
- A national system of schools which is proactive, and which positively interacts with Government, its agencies and with wider national networks.
- Commitment to the long-term progress and development of the economically and socially disadvantaged.
- Commitment to our ecological vocation to care for the earth for the good of all.

(NZ Catholic Education Office - Beacon Plan Goals - Adopted 1998 Revised 2006)

The self-review framework for an Integrated Catholic School comprises three broad areas from which a particular focus for improvement can be drawn:

- Pastoral Care
- School /Parish /Community Relationships
- Religious Education Curriculum

These Special Character dimensions fit within an overall self-review framework that schools use to review all areas of operation linking back to the schools strategic goals. The framework illustrates three approaches:

Strategic Self Review

- In depth longer term reviews that identify important issues that affect the school as a whole.
- An ongoing process to meet key goals the school vision.
- **Asks the questions: How can we do this better? Are we ensuring success for all our students? How do we know if we are making a difference?**

Dimensions: Student Learning – Effective Teaching – Leadership & Management – Governance – Safe & Inclusive School Culture – Community Engagement

Regular Self Review

- Business as usual reviews – within the regular review cycle and feeds into the vision and strategic goals of the school.
- Regularly gather data, monitor progress towards goals, programmes in place and evaluate effectiveness.
- **Asks the questions: What is happening? How we know? Is this working?**

Dimensions: Student Learning – Effective Teaching – Leadership & Management – Governance – Community Engagement

Emergent Self Review

- Spontaneous reviews – within the strategic self-review cycle and feeds into the school vision and strategic goals.
- Put into place in response to an unplanned event, issues or changes needing prompt attention.
- Asks the questions: How did this arise? How can we fix it? What can we learn from this?

Dimensions: Student Learning – Effective Teaching – Leadership & Management – Governance – Safe & Inclusive School Culture – Community Engagement

The Six Dimensions – Some Key Questions to Consider

1. *Student Learning*

- How well are students achieving and what evidence is there for this?
- How well are students achieving against national expectations?
- How are Maori students achieving and progressing compared to other groups in the school and similar groups nationally?
- How well are different groups of students from diverse groups achieving and progressing compared to other groups in the school and similar groups nationally?
- How robust is the information gathered by schools and teachers from making judgments and how is it used?
- To what extent are all students purposefully engaged in learning and the wider life of the school?
- Are different groups of students with diverse needs purposefully engaged to a comparable extent?

2. *Effective Teaching*

- How effectively do teachers set and share high expectations for student learning?
- How effectively do teacher practices and pedagogies promote student learning?
- How effectively do teachers use data to identify student needs, design learning programmes and monitor progress?
- How effectively is support provided for students who are at risk of not achieving or who have particular learning needs?
- What is the quality of relationships and interactions between teachers and students and among students?

3. *Leading and Managing the School*

- How effective is professional leadership throughout the school?
- How well does school leadership use evidence to make decisions?
- How well does school leadership ensure high quality curriculum design, teaching strategies, interventions, professional development and performance appraisal?
- How well do the school's procedures and practices align with policies and directions?
- How responsive is leadership to community aspirations, interests and concerns?

4. *Governing the School*

- What is the quality of governance in providing vision, values and strategic direction?
- What is the quality of the relationship between governance, leadership and management roles?
- How coherently does the board focus its efforts on student achievement including the alignment of resources, policies and practices?
- How effectively are human, financial and property resources aligned and allocated to support the board and school's strategic direction?
- How well does the school provide evidence to support the board in its strategic planning and self review?

5. Safe and Inclusive School Culture

- How well does the school provide for a safe physical and emotional environment?
- How well does the school promote and maintain respectful relationships in an inclusive culture?
- How well does the school's organization sustain an orderly and positive learning environment?
- How well does the school develop successful learning and education pathways to meet the diverse interests and needs of students of all cultures and abilities?

6. Engaging Parents, Whanau and Communities

- How well does the school gather and use information about the needs, wishes and aspirations of parents, whanau and the wider community?
- How effectively does the school inform parents about their children and communicate information about the school?
- How well does the school engage parents and whanau in the life of the school?
- How well does the school engage with and make use of community resources, agencies and other educational institutions?

What are some effective proven aspects in self review that enable leaders to achieve improved outcomes for school communities and learners and why are these aspects successful?

(Some theoretical perspectives)

- Investigating evidence and current practices to reveal where improvement is needed.
- Setting goals and targets to bring about the change needed.
- Focus on some goals for students previous evidence about achievement
- Look at what's working well and what can be done better
- Collect and analyse a combination of quantitative data to help leaders and teachers develop themselves and their practices.
- Leveling the data into hard (qualitative /numerical) and soft (qualitative /narrative)
 - Describe what is happening.
 - Turn data into information and explains what it means in order to make key statements or comparisons.
 - Use information as evidence to support judgments
- Strategic long-term and short-term goals and targets that flow through into all areas of school operation and are reviewable within the three approaches described above.

A Professional Learning and Development Perspective

“The big finding of the Leadership BES is that when school leaders promote and/or participate in effective teacher professional learning this has twice the impact on student outcomes across a school than any other leadership activity. In New Zealand the mean effect size for student gain from a year’s teaching is .35

Another key finding in this BES is that when school leaders promote or participate in effective teacher professional learning and development they have more than twice this impact across a whole school, not just one class.” (Vivane Robertson A Friendly Guide to Leadership)

What are some effective proven aspects in self review that enable leaders to achieve improved outcomes for school communities and learners and why are these aspects successful?

In Practice – Some Examples from School Annual Planning and Colleague Discussions

1. Review is focused on the learner with high expectations

Mathematics

Outcome:

“In mathematics all students show progress in achievement in relation to National Standards, especially those in the national target group of Maori and Pasifika and those identified as at risk from 2013 data. Target groups established and monitored.”

How will this happen?

“Teachers to identify and work on areas of improvement in numeracy teaching using a *Teaching as Inquiry* model. This will be facilitated through the Appraisal System.”

Reading

“Well planned reading programmes that meet students need and level.

Assessment Data to be reviewed with staff and learning needs determined for target groups to accelerate students learning.

Targeted students will be discussed as part of syndicate/team meetings to monitor progress of children and share teaching ideas.

Tracking systems to be reviewed to show on-trackness

Review assessment data with staff and continue to put in place programmes to support particular needs of all students.”

2. Strong Leadership and advocacy within an inclusive culture well supported by all personnel and board

“Review Strategic Direction and Targeted and Action Plan, which is to be sent to MOE, after input and presenting to Board and staff.

Develop Targets, Targeted Action Plan. Data gathered from assessment, meetings and surveys with staff, Board, parents, minority groups and students will form the basis of this plan.”

3. Effective Teaching involving data gathering and analysis

“Teachers to identify and work on areas of improvement in literacy teaching using a ‘Teaching as Inquiry’ Model. This will be facilitated through the Appraisal System with input from the Literacy leadership group.”

4. Quality engagement with parents, whanau and communities

(Examples of effective practice)

“Following on from 2013 the group there has been a focus on Family/Whanau engagement in the learning, effective teaching and Lateral Learning as the main thrusts for raising student achievement. From our school perspective the major focus will be on family/Whanau engagement with a focus on all children who are on our school critical register.”

“Consultation regarding school charter and direction - 2 x Parent Evenings February 2012. All documentation including Charter, Strategic Direction Action Plan and Targeted Action Plans.

A parent survey was given out at Parent Teacher interviews and compiled. Results compiled and displayed on our community notice board.

BOT consultation at monthly meetings October, November and February. PTFA consultation was held at meetings in June and August.

“Community consultation meetings were held and included meetings with minority groups. Targets from the Action Plan were reported back to parents at Meet the Teacher nights and goals were consulted on. *Consultation for Annual Aims is ongoing and forms our Targeted Action plan for 2013 and 2014.*”

“Consultation was held with Staff at meetings during Term 3 and 4 in and charter strategic plan and action plan were presented on teacher only days.

Staff are consulted before annual targets are set.”

5. Coherent and consistent practices with a clear structure and plan

Teaching and Learning Programmes:

“There is a focus on using data from student progress and achievement to inform teaching and learning and class programmes. Regular and timely assessment and evaluations will be evident which monitor the learning for all students.

Individual educational plans (IEPs) will be created for special needs students to ensure that progress is planned for and evaluated regularly.

Differentiation will be evident in all class programmes in order to cater for difference and ensure that all students are accessing the New Zealand curriculum at the appropriate level.”

School/Community Involvement:

“Meet the teacher in February, parent/teacher/student interviews in Term 1/or early term 2. Also parents receive a written and verbal report at 40, 80 and 120 weeks. We will provide regular opportunities for parents to learn more about our methods of teaching such as our Junior School maths curriculum and designated curriculum evenings. By parents understanding more about how we teach we can ensure all our students are supported to access the curriculum. Continue parent consultation and minority group meetings.

We also call parents in when there is a worry about progress or behaviour. We operate an open door policy and ask that parents contact their child’s teacher for a conference if there is a concern or a query.”

How we will measure progress:

“Children’s progress will be monitored throughout the year by the class teacher, senior leaders, curriculum teams for literacy and numeracy and staff leading the student support programmes. Individual student progress and achievement will be monitored and reported to parents through interviews, conferences and reports.

The Board of Trustees will receive information on student progress throughout the year with a full review presented at the end of the year. Reading recovery students will be monitored once off the programme to ensure they are making expected progress?

Parent feedback will be collated and presented to the Board of Trustees at regular intervals throughout the year.

Progressive data will be collated over the years so that our cohort groups – Special Needs, Pasifika and Maori students will be tracked and monitored and particular needs addressed.”

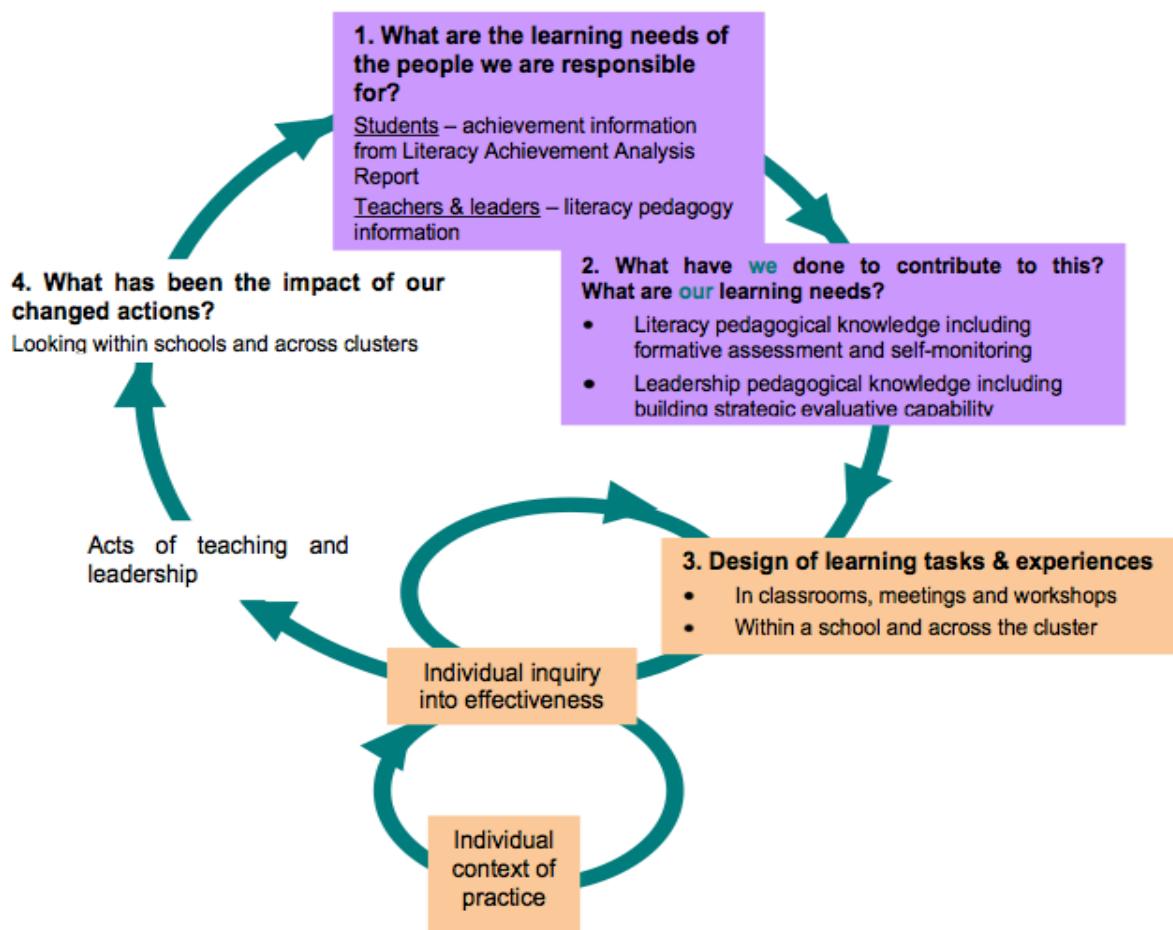
Implications

What are the most effective ways to strengthen self-review processes to ensure sustained future improvement?

Maintain a proactive approach where high performance is promoted and student achievement supported.

Continuously promote a collaborative culture of good practice where professionals collaboratively reflect and critique each other's performance.

Strive for a transformation in practice and ultimately an improvement in learning benefits for children informed by excellence in evaluation practice with findings based on evidence. This will fit into a broader inquiry cycle that considers learning needs; learning tasks and experiences; teaching approaches, tools and additional support; analysis of their impact; and use of these insights to inform improvements and then focus further inquiry.



Conclusions

Schools will differ in their approaches to achieving successful self review. One of the crucial factors in this will be size, management structure which will also determine degrees of delegation. However despite the differences that exist across schools it is clear that systems and practices that are rigorous and consistent based on professional collaboration and shared beliefs are essential to a successful school. These practices will be founded on a strong set of core values which will support a school wide community culture where professionalism and pastoral care are strong.

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