

Principal's Sabbatical Report 2014

Focus: Connecting Vision, Learner Outcomes, Pedagogy, and Learning Spaces

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Ministry of Education for granting me this sabbatical award and to the Mt Roskill Grammar School Board of Trustees for their support of my sabbatical leave during Term 3. Thank you to Mr John Wilkinson, Acting Principal and other members of the senior team for their excellent leadership during my time away from school. Thank you to Principals at schools in Auckland and in Adelaide who gave time to show me around learning spaces in their school and to discuss the link between their ideas about the way teaching and learning should happen and the learning spaces they had developed.

Purpose

I set out to describe the features of 'modern learning environments' to inform future decision making. My research questions were

- How and where do people learn in the 21st Century?
- How do people prefer to work?
- How do you cater for teams of teachers?
- How does learning occur in our community?
- What implications does this have for school architecture?
- What implications does this have for MRGS, an established traditional school as we support 21st century learning?

My reading and visits drew me back to exploring the links between our school vision and values, the nature of teaching and learning that could enact these, and the nature of the learning spaces that would enable this teaching and learning. To simply describe the characteristics of modern learning environments independent of constraint sets of our schools vision values and context is to leap too quickly to a problem solution. Elmore's (2011) exploration of "I used to think, and now I think" comes to mind. Atkin (1996) suggests that the approach should be to "balance the focus of our attention on the practice or action with a focus on the core values and beliefs of the organisation and the expression of these values and beliefs and principles or guidelines for action".

She suggests the points of reference are always

- What do we value?
- What are the beliefs about learning which underpin a particular practice and are they reasonable beliefs based on current research on how we learn?
- How does our current practice help us achieve what we value?
- How will a suggested new or different practice improve our ability to achieve what we value and believe?

With this in mind the purpose of the sabbatical thinking became connecting vision, learner outcomes, pedagogy, and learning spaces. I visited eight schools in Auckland and four in Adelaide as part of the CEFPI conference (Council of Educational Facility Planners International) to explore these relationships.

Outcomes in thinking

Our school curriculum thinking is represented in a 'curriculum map' linking vision and values to curricular and co-curricular structures (Appendix 1). The school vision is to develop 'successful powerful learners who are active and responsible citizens'. The vision is not only for students to gain qualifications and character, but to develop agency and ownership both academically and socially. That's the powerful and active part of the vision, what the New Zealand Curriculum calls confident connected lifelong learners. My reading enabled me to elaborate on these concepts. Appendix 2 is a summary drawn from reading and applied to our school context. Table 1 was developed from these ideas. It describes

- Learner dispositions, capabilities and outcomes that flow from our vision.
- Matching principles for effective teaching.
- Implications for learning spaces.

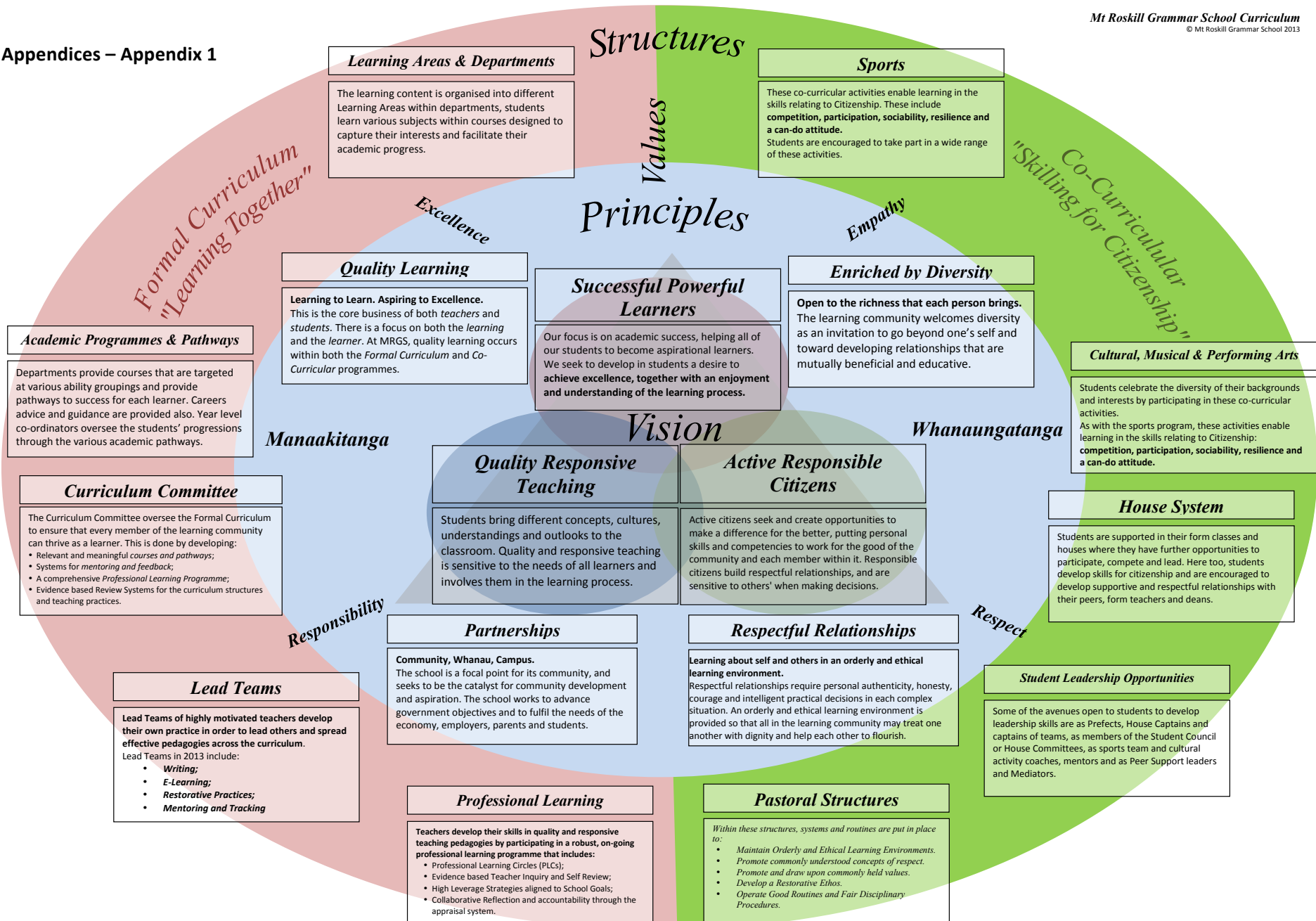
Outcomes for practice

The sabbatical outcomes have acted as a platform for on-going development. The school Board of Trustees spent a day visiting selected schools to develop first hand understanding of the range of learning spaces being developed and to see how our pedagogical principles could be supported by these spaces. The school's curriculum team used the effective teaching principles as a launching pad for further development work of the Roskill Effective Teacher Profile. Appendix 3 contains a draft of the first part of this thinking making explicit what we would expect to see in teacher practice and student learning experience. Development of the Roskill Effective Teacher profile is an annual goal for 2015.

Table 1: Connecting Vision, Learner Outcomes, Pedagogy, and Learning Spaces

Vision	Values	Learner			Principles for Effective Teaching	Effective Teaching Profile	Principles for Learning Spaces
		Dispositions	Capabilities	Outcomes			
Successful powerful learners who are active and responsible citizens.	Maaakitanga Whanaungatanga Excellence Responsibility Respect	Aspirational	Social confidence/skill	Qualifications	Expert curriculum knowledge.	Command of subject knowledge and curriculum objectives. Uses assessment tools consistent with learning objectives, with a strong emphasis on formative feedback.	<p>Physical design is inspiring Innovation, openness and light.</p> <p>Enables Visibility Learning spaces are deprivatised so that teachers can easily observe each other's teaching.</p> <p>Workshop environment Integrate rich special purpose spaces with flexible adaptable multipurpose spaces.</p> <p>Connected to outside</p> <p>Quality physical attributes Sound, light and temperature.</p> <p>Learning anywhere, any time Seamless access to ICT and learning spaces.</p>
		Resilience	Communication	Character			
		Perseverance/Commitment	Collaborative skills	Capabilities	Focus on Relationship.	Put student engagement at the centre of thinking about learning. Balance care and expectation. Create structures in which learning relationships can develop. Ensure learning is social and often collaborative.	
		Courage/Tenacity/Drive	Thinking skills		Focus on achievement for all.	Be demanding for each learner but without excessive overload. Set challenging but achievable tasks for each learner. Regular specific feedback with suggestions for improvement. Embed explicit literacy teaching.	
		Independence	Reflective learner		Develop learner ownership.	Make connections to prior learning/ experiences. Clarity of expectation and use assessment strategies consistent with these expectations. Flexible curriculum structure. Differentiate and personalise learning.	
		Self-management	Metacognition		Develop learner agency.	Model being a learner. Stimulate curiosity. Work from practice to theory. Explore real life situations. Explore issues that are student issues. Support students to evaluate their own work and progress. Encourage learning from mistakes. Teach metacognition.	
		Self-discipline	Writing skills		Be a learner.	Inquiry to further develop pedagogy. Use of ICT to enhance student learning.	
		High self esteem	Digital literacy				

Appendices – Appendix 1



Appendix 2: Developing vision, pedagogy and learning spaces in the MRGS context

Vision

Successful powerful learners who are active and responsible citizens. For our learners to become 'fit for life'. Our learners will be equipped with ready to use knowledge, skills and attitudes including social skills, the ability to assume responsibility for their learning and working. Their learning will enable them to participate in society and successfully choose and pursue a career and deal proactively with change.

Values

Manakitanga, Whanaungatanga, Excellence, Responsibility Respect.

Our values will encourage students to develop inquiry skills and individual agency, and contribute empathetically to communities of learners.

Learner outcomes

Our learners will gain qualifications, and build capabilities and character.

Nature of learning

Clear statements about learning expectations in learning areas and in learning capabilities enable students, teachers and families to recognise measure, discuss and chart progress. The overarching objective is adaptive competence – the ability to apply meaningfully – learned knowledge and skills flexibly and creatively in different situations. This is opposed to 'routine expertise' – being able to complete school tasks quickly and accurately but without understanding. However to seek to exercise competence without foundation content quickly risks becoming an empty technique. Content mastery and learning capability go hand in hand.

We recognise that:

- No two learners learn the same way or bring the same prior knowledge to a learning experience.
- When students work at learning together there is deep understanding of the material.
- When students initiate learning they learn more.
- Learning connected to real contexts is more powerful.

Learning Environment

The learning environment is realised through

- School expectations and values.
- The pedagogy used to equip students with qualifications, and build capabilities and character.
- The innovative use of digital resources and learning spaces.

Principles for effective teaching

Quality teaching focuses on student achievement (including social outcomes), facilitates high standards of student outcomes for a range of students and is responsive to student learning processes. Pedagogy promotes learning orientations, student self-regulation, metacognitive strategies and thoughtful student. Use formative practice and curriculum expertise to build learner knowledge.

- Focus on relationship.
- Focus on achievement for each student.
- Develop learner ownership.
- Develop learner agency.
- Be a learner.

Learning Spaces

“Learning Environments should facilitate engagement, be motivating and recognise the social nature of learning, allow for individualised pedagogies and formative assessment as well as larger group work, and facilitate work that makes a variety of connections” (OECD ,2011).

Inspiring learning setting

Physical design and decoration as symbolic that innovation is in train. The importance of openness and light.

Enables Visibility

Learning spaces are deprivatised with staff work areas being located adjacent to and visible from the learning areas (or learning commons). No doors or glass so that teachers can easily observe each other’s teaching. A sense of openness so that everyone feels a sense of belonging to a community where the focus is on learning.

Workshop environment

Integrate rich special purpose spaces with flexible adaptable multipurpose spaces to provide a dynamic workshop environment for learning.

Connected to outside**Physical attributes**

Quality sound, light temperature attributes.

Learning anywhere, any time

Seamless access to ICT ease of access to learning spaces beyond the traditionally defined school day.

Appendix 3: Developed Roskill Effective Teacher Profile

Roskill Effective Teaching Profile (RETP)

Powerful Learning Responsive Teaching

	Principles of Effective Teaching	What could this look like in your practice for optimal learning outcomes?	What would students experience?
1.	<p>Expert Curriculum Knowledge (TOHUNGA)</p> <p>Experts at the front end of the New Zealand Curriculum, their subject area and able to make connections with other learning areas.</p> <p>Conceptual understanding of subject How teachers deliver the surface and deeper understandings of the subject.</p>	<p>Teachers' subject matter knowledge had little effect on the quality of student outcomes. What was the difference is less the 'amount' of knowledge but more about how teachers see the surface and deeper understandings of their subject Hattie (2011).</p> <p>Teachers at MRGS are passionate and inspired about their teaching and subject and this should be the major promotion attribute of the school.</p> <p>Teachers are supported by a professional development that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Enhances teachers' deeper understandings of their subjects(s). * Supports learning through analyses of the teachers classroom interactions with students. * Helps teachers know how to provide effective feedback. * Attends to students affective attributes. * Develops the teacher's ability. <p>Teachers seek pathways in their curriculum area and teaching to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Solve instructional problems. * Interpret events in progress. * Being sensitive to context. * Monitoring learning. * Testing hypothesis. * Demonstrating respect for all in the school. * Showing passion for teaching and learning. * Helping students understand complexity. <p>Professionalism at MRGS is achieved by teachers and school leaders working to achieve 'visible learning inside'.</p>	<p>Teachers who are positive change agents Positive classroom climate (high trust).</p> <p>An eagerness to learn about subject content because of interesting and exciting learning experiences.</p> <p>Teachers who continually engage with their subject area so they are "at the fore-front of learning".</p> <p>Frequent interactions with teachers who have positive belief in them.</p> <p>Learning in the classroom that is 'mapped' and monitored with explicit feedback from their teacher as to next steps in learning.</p> <p>Expert teachers who can quickly recognise the sequence of events occurring in the classroom.</p> <p>Teachers who know that intelligence is changeable rather than fixed (Dweck, 2006); who have high respect for their students and show a passion that all can indeed attain success.</p> <p>Teachers using SOLO to develop learning intentions, success criteria and questions for assignments.</p> <p>Teachers seeking to receive feedback from students to inform and improve their practice.</p>

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