

**PRINCIPAL'S SABBATICAL REPORT  
2006**

**Developing a Quality Learning  
Environment**

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Mangere**

## **Overview**

In reviewing the range of previous Principal Sabbatical reports the eclectic nature of how principals used their time on sabbatical revealed in the reports is most interesting. It reflects the complex, multi-tasking role of the principal. 'Various' aptly describes the multifaceted dimensions of the job. Consequently it is appropriate that the Principal's Sabbatical is the awarding of time. Time for various. Time to do more of the things that the work of the principal often gets in the way of doing, such as, rest and reflection. Thinking time and the recognition that thinking time does not just take place on the job, or at a lecture, seminar or conference. The recognition that informal and formal settings are both valid settings for insight and learning to occur - the beach or an olive grove being just as fruitful places to reflect as an educational setting or forum. The vital ingredient that is not always present in a Principal's day is time. It is appropriate to differentiate between sabbatical leave and study leave. Sabbatical leave allows for a general focus which can have multiple outcomes as the result of reflection whereas study leave often has a specific focus leading to a further qualification outcome or the formal publication of a research paper – the focus is predominantly on the product rather than process. Having pursued graduate and post graduate study without study leave whilst continuing in fulltime employment in various educational positions I relished this sabbatical leave award as an opportunity to catch up on and explore different planes:

### **1. Professional growth**

- a) *Academic* in the form of increasing my knowledge and understanding of current educational issues through engagement in academic dialogue and readings;
- b) *Technical* in the form of improving my Information Communication Technology skills; and
- c) *Time for reflection* to vision the future

### **2. Personal growth**

More balanced attention to family, health and fitness and home maintenance that can get neglected in the constant demands of the pervasive work of the Principal.

### **3. Research schooling improvement and leadership discourse and issues**

Time and opportunity to reflect on schooling improvement and leadership discourse and issues in relation to the process of Mountain View School transformation and the development of quality learning environments;

### **4. Documenting Learning Landscape developments**

Time and opportunity to mine the school's archival materials to document the school's Learning Landscape developments for the Mountain View School's website to fulfil community demand.

## **Acknowledgements**

The Principals' Sabbatical Scheme is a critical commitment to enhancing educational leadership and duly recognises the importance of allocating time to the 3r's - restoration, reflection, revival. It is a scheme that must be maintained and preferably extended and expanded if sustainable leadership is a goal. Hargreaves and Fink in their latest book *Sustainable Leadership* (2006:272, 273) state 'It is hard to be a successful leader. It is harder still to be a sustainable one. Sustainable educational leaders promote and practice sustaining learning. Sustainable leaders sustain others as they pursue this cause together. Sustainable leaders also sustain themselves, attending to their own renewal and not sacrificing themselves too much as they serve their community. Sustainable leaders stay the course, stay together, stay around and stay alive. Most leaders want to do things that matter, to inspire others to do those things with them, and to leave a legacy once they have gone. ..But sustainable leadership certainly needs to become the commitment of all school leaders. If change is to matter, spread, and last, sustainable leadership that stretches across many leaders must also be a fundamental priority of the systems in which leaders do their work.

Sustainability is the first and final challenge of leadership. And it is the biggest challenge to the highest-level leaders of all – those in our national and state governments.’

The Ministry of Education, New Zealand Principals’ Federation and New Zealand Educational Institute are to be applauded for instigating this scheme and it may well be a deciding factor in the retention of experienced Principals and encouragement of new Principals. I am grateful to be one of the privileged few to be granted a Primary Principals’ Sabbatical Award and I thank the above institutions for this award. However more needs to be accomplished as Michael Fullan points out in his 2006 book *Turnaround Leadership*. Fullan (2006:93) states ‘Leadership development is most obviously the key...Something direct must be done about the principalship in which new expectations have been added for the principal as leaders of leaders in improving learning and closing the gap, *without* taking away or extending support for the managerial and community relations side of the role.’

I wish to acknowledge the mentorship and encouragement of the Mountain View School Board of Trustees not only in supporting this sabbatical but in their trust and constant endorsement of the school leadership and steadfast commitment to the children and vision for the school over many years. To have the *awhi* and *tautoko* of the Chairperson Mere Selwyn throughout my principalship has contributed immeasurably to both my professional and personal development. The Principals’ Sabbatical can not be accomplished successfully without the willingness of the Leadership Team and staff to undertake additional workload and responsibility. I am indebted to Deputy Principal Joy Fraser and Associate Principals Faaleo Ueli and Arahina Karena for shouldering the load so competently and to each and every one of the staff who all went the extra mile to support. Judging by the presents they all gave me to facilitate my sabbatical they obviously thought the total focus should be on pampering and leisure activities! I particularly wish to acknowledge the skills and teaching of our ICT Technician Kane Milne who has exposed me to the wizardry of computer expertise and patiently developed my Information Communication Technology knowledge and ability during this sabbatical.

### **Personal Professional Development**

As a preliminary to my Principal’s Sabbatical leave I attended the American Educational Research Conference in San Francisco. This was partly because conferences providing this breadth and depth of professional development were not available in New Zealand during the leave period and also because I had been part of the first United States - New Zealand Roundtable on Education Policy and there were further meetings in San Francisco at that time to organise a return Roundtable in New Zealand and possible international research. The AERA conference was an excellent springboard for reflection and research and the wide-ranging nature of the conference content allowed me to delve into past academic and research interests and work, as well as keep informed of current research and practice and explore new pathways and avail myself of the latest readings. The outline of AERA Conference sessions attended (see Appendix) shows the variety ranging across anthropological cultural issues, educational policy and schooling improvement, leadership issues and sustainability, professional learning communities, literacy research and new developments. As well as providing opportunities to engage in professional enquiry, discussion, reading, and accessing of expertise to update and extend knowledge and skills the AERA Conference was also an opportunity to purchase or acquire publications that could form a body of work to guide reflection and critical analysis during and after sabbatical leave including the latest publications on professional leadership practice (See Readings and References).

Illuminations and/or findings from professional readings sometimes confirmed similar paths for Mountain View School development to the projected trajectories of the published theories and research. Sometimes these were unwittingly explored well before the overseas research was promulgated probably as a new principal of a failing school in a desperate bid to seek solutions where answers had yet to be found. Michael Fullan in analyzing change forces in reforming schools writes about the chaos theory, or what is now called complexity theory in which he refers to as “leading in the swamp”. Fullan (2003:98-99) states ‘The characteristics of effective leadership are not what they seem. They do not involve creating harmonious groups; inspiring charismatic leadership is a liability; and even pursuing emotional intelligence as an end in itself can lead to superficial first horizon change. The edge of chaos is a (sic) more swamp-like than terra firma because it is at the heart of complexity’s dynamism’.

In their research *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading*, Heifetz and Linsky (2002: 2-3) state, ‘Leadership is an improvisational art. You may have an overarching vision, clear, orienting values, and even a strategic plan, but what you actually do from moment to moment cannot be scripted... To be effective you have to respond to what is happening. Going back to our metaphor, you have to move back and forth from the balcony to the dance floor, over and over again throughout the day, week, month, and year. You take action, step back and assess the results of action, reassess the plan, then go to the dance floor and make the next move. You have to maintain a diagnostic mindset on a changing reality’. Fullan (2003a:100) emphasizes the importance of this “Get on the balcony” approach for effective leadership of the change process. He states ‘This means gaining perspective on the problem, linking to the bigger picture, and periodically stepping back from the action. It involves trying to be in two places at once – in the midst of action and above it’. A diagnostic mindset focusing on the big picture was certainly necessary to change Mountain View School from a failing school to a successful school.

Fullan in his latest book *Turnaround Leadership* (2006: 26,27) cites the importance of the work of Elmore (2004:82) in highlighting within the process of school reform the need for unlearning behaviors ‘and learning behaviors and values that are associated with *collective responsibility* for teaching practice and student learning.’ As a failing school Mountain View needed to establish new systems and structures centred around improving student achievement. Elmore (2004:14) states ‘Schools do not “succeed” in responding to external cues or pressures unless they have their own internal system for reaching agreement evident in organisation and pedagogy... These schools have a clear, strong internal focus on issues of instruction, student learning and expectations for teacher and student performance. In academia we call this a strong internal accountability system. By this we mean that there is a high degree of alignment among individual teachers about what they can do and about their responsibility for the improvement of student learning. Such schools also have shared expectations among teachers, administrators and students about what constitutes good work and a set of processes for observing whether these expectations are being met.’

### **Previous Research on Mountain View School Academic Developments**

Mountain View School transformation from a failing school to a successful school has involved major and often innovative restructuring, research and development in curriculum delivery and resources in English and Te Reo Maori and developing a creative quality learning environment. Previous research papers for more in-depth information on this process include:

- **Whakatere Waka SAILL - Shared Accountability In Literacy Learning** Paper presented at the 18th World Congress on Reading 2000; McLachlan et al.

- **The Role of Research in Maori Student Achievement at Mountain View School**  
Paper prepared for the Educational Review Office report 2002 *Maori Students: Schools Making a Difference*; McLachlan et al.
- **Vision with Action - Closing the Equity Gap A Practitioner's View**  
Paper presented to the First United States – New Zealand Round Table on Education Policy, University of Pennsylvania, 18 - 23 October 2004.) McLachlan.

In attempting to turn around a failing school it was clearly vital for the initial and continuing focus to be on improving student achievement and teacher development and this involved a process of shared accountability between the school, students and families. Robert Elmore in *Bridging the Gap between Standards and Achievement* (2002:5) states, 'Accountability must be a reciprocal process. For every increment of performance I demand from you, I have an equal responsibility to provide you with the capacity to meet the expectation. Likewise, for every investment you make in my skill and knowledge, I have a reciprocal responsibility to demonstrate some new increment in performance. This is the principal (sic) of "accountability for capacity"'. This accountability as a reciprocal process was a lynchpin for improving teaching and learning at Mountain View. Large amounts of high quality professional development for teachers were instigated to support them in developing their knowledge and thus capacity for student achievement improvement.

Shared accountability with families in the form of Family School Conferences for each individual student in the school where teachers and the principal shared full assessment data on the student in detail openly and frankly taking accountability for the level of progress at school in the context of national norms with the expectation that families in turn would take accountability to continue the student learning at home using programme guidance and resources from the school and student data. Hence all parties having shared accountability for the student's learning reflecting Elmore's (2004:82) observation of the need to achieve internal accountability through 'modeling commitment and focus using face-to-face relationships'.

The impetus for change for Mountain View School always had a moral purpose of improving the children's chances of escaping the poverty cycle through quality education that raised their achievement levels. These change factors are directly related to current primary sector goals to raise achievement and reduce disparity and given the abysmal historical record a key issue for all New Zealand school leaders is making a difference to learning outcomes for Maori and Pacific children. Previous Mountain View School research papers (see above) show a focus upon making a difference through accelerating student achievement with a particular emphasis on literacy research and developments. However a failing school requires radical change on all fronts if it is to reverse the downward spiral. Elmore (2004:28) proposes 'capacity building and accountability as a difficult but increasingly doable high-yield strategy'. He states 'We need to reframe our entire reform strategy so that it focuses relentlessly and deeply on capacity building and accountability...Briefly, capacity building involves any policy, strategy, or other action undertaken that enhances the collective efficacy of a group to raise the bar and close the gap of student learning for all students. Usually it consists of the development of three components in concert: new knowledge and competencies, new and enhanced resources, and new and deeper motivation and commitment to improve things – again, all played out collectively.'

For Mountain View School one of the aspects of capacity building was the development of a quality learning environment. The development of quality learning environments is a key issue for all professional leaders but given the state of Mountain View School - rundown, in

debt, resource and facility depleted it was essential that transformation incorporated all of Elmore's three components both inside and outside the classroom across the whole school. While it is generally acknowledged that oral language (speaking and listening) and written language (reading and writing) are critical for the transmission of teaching and learning the power of visual language (viewing and presenting) is often undervalued. Visual Language can convey both overt and covert messages as it can be imbued with symbolism. During this Principals Sabbatical I wanted to predominantly focus on the visual language aspects of the change process. For children and families in a decile 1 school their socio-economic situation impacts on every aspect of their lives. Many of the parents and grandparents have had negative schooling experiences and consequently negative expectations about schools. A change of perceptions requires a dramatic change in the signs and symbols of the school to signal new messages that incorporate the community's cultural capital as well as positive aspirations and expectations for the future.

### **Reflections, Study of the Process of Transforming a Failing School into a Quality Learning Environment.**

The overwhelming response in stepping back from the day to day management of the school and examining the documentation of the change process from a failing school to a successful school was wonderment at how much was achieved and exhaustion just reviewing and reliving the process. The determination and energy levels required are enormous and the commitment often detracts from balanced attention to family, healthy weight and fitness levels and ongoing maintenance of your own living environment etc. A Principal's Sabbatical goes a long way to remedying this. Also the time to view the change process from both ends of the telescope was invaluable. The mind has a fortunate capacity to blank out the frames of a school where it was normal for considerable time to be spent every morning removing the tagging and graffiti off most parts of the school cleaning up the vomit, faeces and broken glass. Not surprisingly there were not a lot of "before" photographs of this phase of school development and pictures of ugliness were likewise not rigorously recorded.

### **Some General / Key factors in the Transformation Process**

On reflection there seem to be some givens in transforming a failing school. For Mountain View School there was a need to –

- Have an overriding primary driving focus or sense of purpose that is an all-consuming obsession preferably which everyone can relate to – for us it was, is and ever shall be CHILDREN.  
Children simply do not deserve a failing school especially children whose low socio-economic circumstances already promote deprivation.
- Harness emotions/feelings to energize/power action and maintain energy/drive. Emotions/feelings such as aroha, compassion, joy, anger etc. are important activators and can be used positively to energise and sustain development. A sense of injustice and unfairness in the inequality for decile 1 children in a failing school can arouse anger or compassion resulting in positive actions. Likewise the delight, excitement, joy, satisfaction of the children can be a powerful motivator in sustaining drive. Being dispassionate is not always the best answer for educational achievement.
- Have a Dream / Vision way beyond the current reality and a healthy disregard for impossibility, negativity and challenge. The dream/vision must be shared, actioned and celebrated.
- Accept change as an absolute necessity. There must be zero acceptance of a failing school.

- Be innovative. Failing schools cannot afford to continue to regurgitate and recycle old failing premises / assumptions, processes / methods / procedures, and systems and structures.
- Have Mentors outside the Primary School System who provide exposure to alternative systems and organization.
- Ask negative as well as positive questions e.g.  
What don't children need? -  
A failing school that is dirty, ugly, not culturally relevant, in debt, poorly resourced, with very inadequate and inappropriate facilities and an expectation and acceptance of failure and inadequacy.  
What do children need to flourish? –  
Children need nurturing, stimulating and challenging in a learning environment that provides security and affirmation, happiness and inspiration.
- Acknowledge the principle of models of and models for reality (Geertz 1973) i.e. Models of reality are presuppositions or assumptions about reality, that is, the models about the world that people have in their heads. Models for reality shape reality to understanding by focusing on aspects of empirical evidence, that is, those models of reality (existing understandings of the world) made a reality. Consequently if we can change the models for reality we may be able to change the models of reality. Howard Gardner (2004) says that the most important thing to do in changing someone's mind is connect to their reality as the point of departure for change.
- Create Learning Landscapes that change models of and models for reality. If we surround children with models for reality of excellence and innovation in a learning environment that incorporates hard work and challenge, creativity and beauty, colour and vibrancy, knowledge and values and leadership opportunities, excitement and fun with clear expectations and evidence of achievement and success then we will have provided alternative realities for children's aspirations and life goals.
- Recognise that structure denotes and promotes the functions of a school therefore all structures and systems need to be interrogated to ensure they are promoting the desired functions. A structure or a system should not be dependant on a particular person to function effectively but should be established as an integral part of the limned learning landscape.

### **Development of Learning Landscapes**

Mountain View School has been used over the years as an information source and reference point for many people, groups and institutions both within the educational sector locally, nationally and internationally and a wider sector of the general community and other government or corporate groups. There continues to be an ongoing extensive demand for school visits, education and community presentations and information. While papers have been written about academic aspects of the longitudinal research and constant work of the school to improve and accelerate student achievement, particularly in the field of literacy as it generally underpins progress in all other school subjects, little formal work has been accomplished on documenting the development of learning landscapes that promote and enhance learning outcomes and assist in the transformation of a failing school into a quality learning environment. Therefore this Principal's Sabbatical was seen as an opportunity to reflect on the process of the developments of the school and research and archive materials recording some of these Learning Landscape developments.

In schooling improvement or schooling reform there is often a tendency to emphasize the change focus too narrowly e.g. leadership, and/or results-based student achievement, and/or teacher development, reform mostly directed to "inside" the classroom in an attempt to find

the 'magic bullet'. The whole and more subtle interconnections are not closely scrutinized. The 'big picture' is often not big enough. The Ministry of Education stop at the school gate. They fund and construct buildings and school environments to deal with the children within a school not the community. But, the children are part of families that are part of the community. Even within the Ministry of Education restricted lens of 'inside the school gate' their focus is narrow and formulaic, on square metres per pupil ratio, and historical and perceived differences between teaching facilities for primary, intermediate and secondary schools rather than constructing facilities to facilitate teaching and enhance student learning. Education researchers spend more time researching inside the classroom than outside in the playground. It is easier to measure academic results than attitudes and to observe parts in isolation. In the search for objectivity we can neglect the value of subjectivity as possible solutions to problems.

When a school is failing it is generally a breakdown in multiple areas and 'fixing' each of these areas may or may not 'mend' the school. However a failing school can not afford to just be mended. In order to recover the time lost during the period of failure a total transformation needs to occur. This requires intense examination of the functions of a quality school learning environment, the structures and systems that need to be in place to facilitate that functioning and the relationship of the inter-connections between those structures and functions. The big picture has to be very big. It has to be centred on the child as a learner and encompass as many aspects that impinge upon that learner as possible. When the school is located in a low socio-economic area where educational resources, facilities and opportunities are meagre, to say the least, it is incumbent upon the school to redress the imbalance. This may mean opening or going beyond the school gate.

At Mountain View School it was certainly necessary to go beyond the school gate for many reasons. There was little point in continuing the school in the same way or following the bureaucratic guidelines and procedures of the Ministry as that had lead to massive failure and children and families were suffering. There was no money because the school was in debt, the Ministry did not give top ups, and the families were so poor that any form of school fees or donations were stopped in an attempt to ameliorate their situations. The generosity of the wider community in donating goods, services and/or funds was critical to turning the school around. All new developments needed to consider the community not just the school. Therefore the developments such as the amphitheatre were constructed to be community inclusive with rockwall tiered seating, stage and electrics. The amphitheatre development simply could not have been achieved without the massive support and generosity of the community from the Digger Drivers to the Quarrymen and beyond they all pitched in. The wider community could relate to the moral purpose of improving schooling and developing quality facilities and resources and restoring equity to the most inequitable group of our society. The Native Bush development incorporated the planting of 130 different trees and shrubs giving immediate access to a learning resource for our children and local community without the cost of transporting themselves to the Waitakere Native Reserve. The identification label stands for each plant with Maori, Latin and English names and both the botanical descriptions and drawings provide an extensive learning resource for the school and community. Community associations also facilitated the development of this resource with the school's links with the Wai o Hua Trust, Department of Conservation, Manukau City Council and Auckland Regional Council in our combined work on the establishment of the Mangere Mountain Education Centre and Mountain View School's development of the Mangere Mountain website.



Consultation and surveys of the families attending Mountain View School showed lack of achievement could be directly linked to lack of facilities and resources both in the homes and at the school. Surveys of all families revealed that 78% of families did not have a computer in the home and the school also did not have adequate computer resources or an ICT teaching area. Adequate amounts and quality of books and reading materials in the homes and at the school was another area of disparity with 56% of the families only having one or two books in the home usually the book being the bible. It was imperative to build facilities to overcome these resource and learning deficiencies. Susan Neuman's 2006 paper 'The Knowledge Gap: Implications of Leveling the Playing Field for Low-income and Middle-income Children' is an excellent example of how the disparities in print access and usage result in a 'knowledge gap' between low-income and middle-income children.

Te Pou Matauranga -the Mountain View Library ICT Centre development was designed as a multipurpose complex to enhance learning for the children and their families. The building was named Te Pou Matauranga - The Learning Beacon to reflect its significance as a centre of learning for the children and their families and the wider community. The carved pou represents the three stages of learning - the family first as the basis of all learning, then the school, then the children as future leaders. The building is designed to link the outside learning environment with the inside learning environment so the student is surrounded by learning landscapes. The shape and scale of the windows draw attention to Mangere Mountain and the historical replication oil paintings gifted to the school by the Department of Conservation for the work of the school in developing the Education Centre and website link art to reality. The flax weaving surrounding the Issue desk highlights the learning skills of this traditional craft. The Library ICT Centre is carefully planned to bring the oral, written and visual language strands together to maximise teaching and learning. The Reading Conservatory provides an area surrounded by window seats and picture books for families to take their preschoolers and use the school library books which are not available at home to read to their babies, or teachers can choose this space as an alternative attractive space to read to their class. There is a courtyard off the Reading Conservatory enclosed by volcanic stone walls and a Manuka stick fence for babies and little children to play safely. Books are displayed in a variety of ways to attract attention and engagement.

The Auditorium with its tiered seating and rounded shape is a space for emphasizing the oral and visual language strands. Children, staff or community can prepare or edit their video or Powerpoint on the work bench in the ICT Room and then go into the Auditorium and demonstrate their work. Or they can use it as a space for performing arts. The Library space is connected to the ICT space by a central workroom with interior windows on three sides. This allows all areas of the centre to be used in school or recreation times with minimum supervision as those with library responsibilities can carry on working with full views of activities in all areas. The Research Room leads off the Library workroom and it is key to ensuring quality learning outcomes. In the ICT area the tables form hexagonal shapes to enable children or families to work alongside each other – a learning style that is effective for Maori and Pacific Island children. There are also three large overhead screens positioned around the room to facilitate learning through visual language. Non English speaking students or their family members can watch the teaching screen and follow the visual actions rather than attempting to negotiate complexities through oral language. Upstairs there is a workroom with stunning views out over the Amphitheatre to the Native Bush on one side and up close and personal to Mangere Mountain on the other side. These views are intended to inspire everyone to work hard when they ascend the stairs via the Resource Room area. The whole complex is designed to motivate, promote and facilitate learning unlike the meagre 80 square metres the Ministry of Education believed was the correct ratio entitlement for our children.

Te Pou Matauranga - Library & ICT Centre



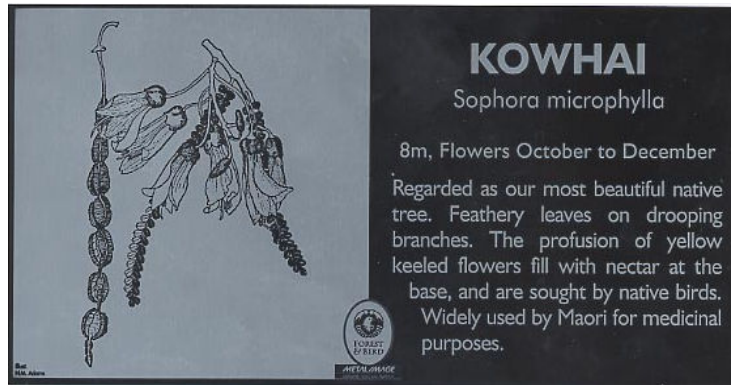


## Learning Landscapes - Mountain View School's New Zealand Native Bush

Visitors to Mountain View School are surprised at the extensive collection of native trees and shrubs in our native bush area. There are over 120 varieties of the native plants which are planted on the mounded area at the corner of Miller and Mountain Roads. A trail winds its way through the native bush area enabling students to closely observe and identify the various species and their characteristics. They are helped in this study by the very informative Forest and Bird labels made by Metal Image. These have the Latin, botanical names, the Maori name and common names of the plants. Additional information of the special characteristics of each plant and medical or other uses of the plant are included as well as the botanical drawings of the leaf, flower and fruit.

Among the many varieties is one of the rarest trees in the world - *Pennantia baylisiana*. It is related to Kaikomako. There was only one of these trees growing in the world and this was on Great Island in the Three Kings Islands off Cape Reinga. In an effort to save this rare tree cuttings were grown and numbered trees made available for sale. Mountain View School's tree is No 237 and was donated for their native bush area by a friend of the school.

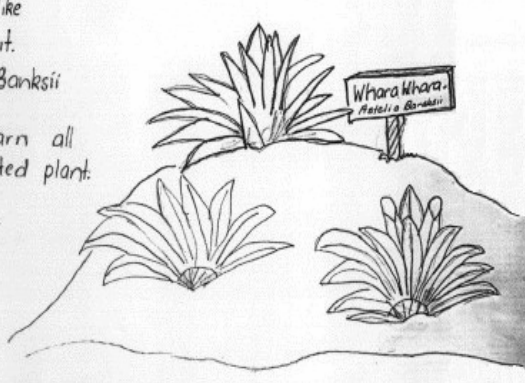
The Native Bush is an extensive learning resource for the children and the community.



**MOUNTAIN VIEW SCHOOL CHILDREN'S WORK ON THE NATIVE BUSH AREA**

Wharawhara  
 The native plant I have chosen is the Wharawhara. It looks like a small flax bush. The Wharawhara is light green with what looks like white powder sprinkled over it. The latin name is *Astelia Banksii* and the common name is Astelia Shore. We have to learn all three names of our adopted plant.

By Supatra  
 Room 7

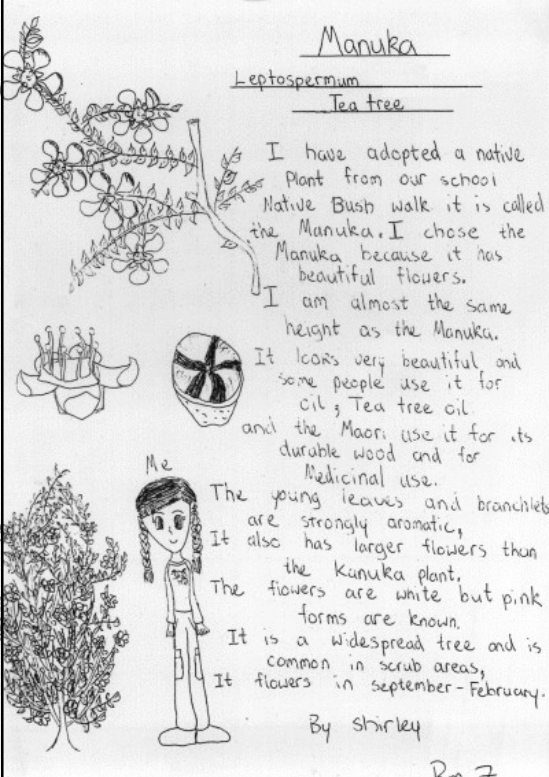



Manuka  
Leptospermum  
Tea tree

I have adopted a native plant from our school Native Bush walk it is called the Manuka. I chose the Manuka because it has beautiful flowers. I am almost the same height as the Manuka. It looks very beautiful and some people use it for oil; Tea tree oil and the Maori use it for its durable wood and for medicinal use.

The young leaves and branches are strongly aromatic. It also has larger flowers than the Kunuka plant. The flowers are white but pink forms are known. It is a widespread tree and is common in scrub areas. It flowers in september-February.

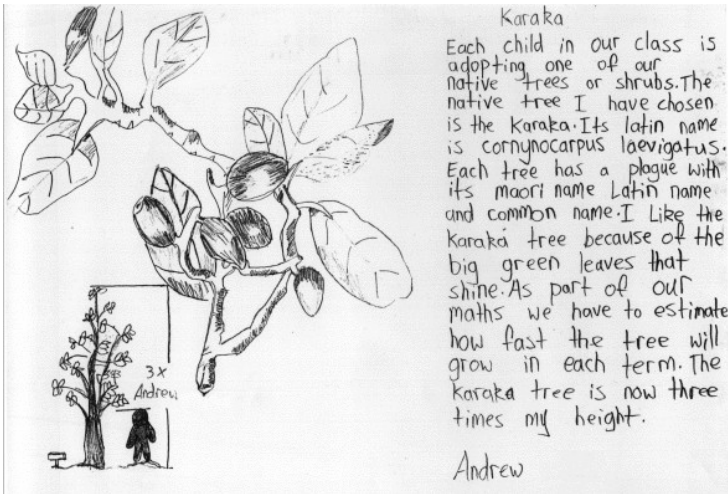
By Shirley  
 Rm 7



Karaka

Each child in our class is adopting one of our native trees or shrubs. The native tree I have chosen is the Karaka. Its latin name is *Corynocarpus laevigatus*. Each tree has a plaque with its maori name Latin name and common name. I like the Karaka tree because of the big green leaves that shine. As part of our maths we have to estimate how fast the tree will grow in each term. The Karaka tree is now three times my height.

Andrew



## LEARNING LANDSCAPES THAT ARE COLOURFUL

Colour can have a powerful impact on an environment. Confronted with an uncoordinated – (the school buildings were painted 13 different colours); unattractive – (NO gardens, garden features or landscaping) and an ugly environment changes were necessary. Children love colour and using colour and form in culturally relevant ways seemed important to reflect the multicultural school community. The school buildings were painted blue – for the sky and sea, green for the land, and purple for spirituality.

Gardens were planted with a huge emphasis on colour. This was in sharp contrast to the norm at the time whereby if schools did have gardens or trees or shrubs they tended to focus on hardy low care plants, shrubs or trees with very few flowers consequently minimal colour. At Mountain View School we planned, landscaped and planted masses of flowering plants and shrubs including annuals. The whole entranceway of the school was changed from a school car park to landscaped colourful gardens which had flowers all year round so children and families could be surrounded by colour and beauty the moment they entered the school grounds. At some gates flowering Stocks were planted around the base of a flowering tree so the scent of the flowers would please people entering, at other entrances roses or other mass planted flowers would greet children or visitors.



Planters were constructed for the children to plant shrubs and annuals and the children painted their own decorations on their colourful planters or the flowers they could identify.



### Wind Socks

The children made brightly coloured windsocks about the current topics of study



# LEARNING LANDSCAPES THAT ARE FUN

## Scarecrows



## Recycling Scarecrows the children made for the 2006 Ellerslie Flower Show



## LEARNING LANDSCAPES THAT ARE QUIRKY

### Gumboot and Glove Gardens

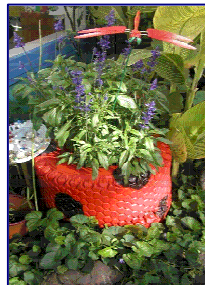
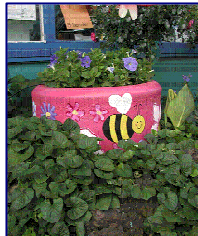


### Insect stones



### Tyre Gardens

Tyres were recycled and made into tyre gardens some with learning messages that visual forms of learning can be fun.



### Fruit Alphabet fence

A corrugated iron fence was transformed from an unattractive learning nonentity to a sought out learning landscape by painting it and putting up 24 wooden picture frames for each class to research, draw and paint different letters and associated fruits to compile a fruit alphabet – learning about colour, categories, alphabet sequence, sounds and associations and that learning can be fun and you can learn as you play. The challenge of the Fruit Alphabet was no fruit associated with Z and that led to a school-wide competition to create Zulalulafruz, where the children created their own imaginative Z fruit





## CREATIVE AND INFORMATIVE LEARNING LANDSCAPES

Murals can be both creative and informative. They can also transform dull and drab areas of the school into a learning landscape. The learning is in the creating as well as the finished landscape. The name of the school - Mountain View is derived from its location on the side of and in view of Mangere Mountain. This mountain is one of Auckland's volcanic cones with significant tangata whenua, archaeological and geological importance. Mountain View children are guardians of the mountain and work with local iwi, archaeologists and others to protect and provide information about the mountain. The Mangere Mountain website was developed by Mountain View School. The children have created murals for both the school and the Mangere Mountain Education Centre about Mangere Mountain.



The above mural development involved the children making a jigsaw mural of **Views of Mangere Mountain.**



Other murals about the mountain were :

**Faces of Mangere Mountain** where the different faces of the mountain were observed and sketched by the children so cut outs could be made and mounted in terms of their compass direction.



**Scenes around Mangere Mountain**

Where the view of the mountain from around the school takes centre stage and places of interest like the old stone church , Manukau Harbour, One Tree Hill and warf, Education Centre, Te Puaa Marae, our school, airport, Puketutu Island and Wader Bird Sanctuary



**The Peopling of the Pacific**

The mountain, the sea, the sun, the moon, the stars, the Frangipani flowers and the Frigate Bird People

### **What is the effect of developing a quality learning environment on learning outcomes?**

It is my belief that learning outcomes are directly influenced by the quality of the learning environment and that knowledge of the process needed to establish quality learning environments is crucial to schooling improvement. It is important to understand that the Mountain View School environment is not just a 'pretty' environment. It is specifically designed to motivate and stimulate learning. Learning is linked inside and outside the classroom. Each area has specific learning outcomes for children teachers and families to discover and rediscover, to challenge thinking, to promote personal, community and cultural values. If children come to school disadvantaged through a mismatch between the informal learning of their home and culture (the personal domain) and the formal learning of the school as an institution (the public domain) then it may be necessary to increase the exposure and opportunities to learn to accelerate the formal learning to close the knowledge gap and reduce the disparities between middle-income and low-income children.

Every learning landscape at Mountain View School was developed with various learning objectives. They were not just decorative landscapes they were learning landscapes in that each of the developments is a teaching resource with multiple learning outcomes at individual, class, school or community levels. The school's strategic and annual planning has driven its direction throughout this process. Although functionality has been the underlying premise of school developments we see no harm in incorporating beauty into the equation. After all beauty is what moves the human spirit and adds to a sense of peace and happiness. The school's Millennium projects were a catalyst for major involvement of the children in transforming the total school environment. The whakatauki from my thesis (1996)

*Nga karu a nga tamariki hei matakite maungarongo mo te ao meake nei*

*The eyes of the children are the visions of the future*

was used for the Millennium Mural and our message to the children for the millennium was that it was their job to make the world a better and more beautiful place. Judging by the comments from visitors to the school about the wairua and peaceful feeling pervading the school environment the children have taken this challenge to heart and their ownership and accountability has created an exciting, challenging and beautiful learning environment. The children know achievements are the result of hard work with everyone contributing. They also have established goals of achieving excellence and high expectations of success.

This period of leave was a valuable opportunity to evaluate achievements and vision the future direction of the school. The school has developed a high profile and the community has been an integral part of this development. There is significant pride in the school's achievements and this sabbatical has provided the opportunity to document these developments for the school community. This work is resulting in a major reconstruction of the school's website which has begun with the development and completing of the children's video about the school during this sabbatical. The rebuilding of the website will continue in future months.

**[http://www.mountainviewmangere.school.nz/video/mvs\\_large.html](http://www.mountainviewmangere.school.nz/video/mvs_large.html)** ).

## **Future Directions**

The process involved in this sabbatical has provided time for valuable reflection and the chance to focus on future directions for the school and to continue to explore research to accelerate the children's learning. A key issue for New Zealand school leaders is making a difference to learning outcomes for Maori and Pacific children and Mountain View School's achievements and continuing goals are directly related to current primary sector goals to raise achievement and reduce disparity. Although the school has been researching teaching and learning literacy interventions on building vocabulary in English and Te Reo Maori for many years, sessions about this field of research at the AERA Conference by Biemeiller, Paris etc. and discussions with academics in this field, signal there is still much work to be researched in this field. Consequently it may be a fruitful future direction for the school to pursue as part of their ongoing goals to raise student achievement and reduce disparity.

## **APPENDIX**

### **EDUCATION RESEARCH IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST** **American Educational Research Association 2006 Annual Meeting San Francisco**

#### **Sessions attended:**

#### **13.043. Deepening Understanding of Professional Learning Communities: Detail of and Contexts for Change.**

SIG-Educational Change

Chairs :

*Louise Stoll, University of London*

*Karen R Seashore, University of Minnesota*

Participants :

Resources for Professional Learning in Talk About Teaching : From “Just Talk” to Consequential Conversation.

*Judith Warren Little, University of California-Berkeley; Ilana S Horn, University of Washington*

A Distributed Leadership Perspective on Creating Professional Community in Schools.

*Richard R Halverson, University of Wisconsin; James P Spillane, Northwestern University*

Developing Collective Understanding Over Time. Building PLC Top Down.

*Sharon Kruse, The University of Akron; Karen R Seashore, University of Minnesota*

The Challenge of Building Professional Learning Communities in High Schools.

*Joan E Talbert, Stanford University; Milbrey W McLaughlin, Stanford University*

International Professional Learning Communities for Educational Leaders : New Contexts for Building Internal Capacity

*Louise Stoll, University of London; Lynn Butler-Kisber, McGill University; Jan Robertson,*

*University of Waikato; Sylvia Sklar, McGill University*

Discussants :

*Ann Lieberman, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching*

*Andrew Hargreaves, Boston College*

#### **16.013. Leaders and Learners in a Changing World**

Chair :

*Juli Anna Swinnerton, University of Washington*

Participants::

Leaders as Learners in a Changing World

*Juli Anna Swinnerton, University of Washington;*

*John D Bransford, University of Washington;*

*Michael Fullan, University of Toronto;*

*Michael S Knapp, University of Washington;*

*Mary Kay Stein, University of Pittsburgh*

Discussant :

*Michael S Knapp, University of Washington*

#### **18.038. Te Kotahitanga: Maori Epistemology, Teacher Education, and School Reform**

Chair :

*Christine E Sleeter, California State University-Monterey Bay*

Participant :

Te Kotahitanga Project. *Russell Bishop, University of Waikato; Mere Berryman, New Zealand Ministry of Education; Tom Cavanagh, University of Waikato; Rangiwahakaehu Walker, New Zealand Ministry of Education*

Discussants :

*Peter C Murrell, Northeastern University; Celia E Haig-Brown, York University*

**20.023. For Indigenous Peoples through Indigenous Research: Celebrating Our New Scholars**

Chair :

*Margaret J Maaka, University of Hawaii*

Participants :

*Lee F Brown, The University of British Columbia;*

*Huia Jahnke, Massey University;*

*Kerry L Wong, University of Hawai'i-Manoa*

Discussant :

*Graham H Smith, University of Auckland*

**26.053. Multiple Intelligences in Global Perspective: Howard Gardner (Harvard University) and Panel**

Chair :

*Branton C Shearer, Multiple Intelligences Research & Consulting*

Participants :

Multiple Intelligences in Global Perspective: *Howard E. Gardner Harvard Graduate School of Education*

Panelist – United Kingdom. *Mike Fleetham, Network Education Press*

Panelist – China. *Jie-Qi Chen, Erikson Institute*

Panelist – Brazil. *Denise Abreu-e-Lima, Federal University of Sao Carlos*

Panelist – Turkey. *Osman Nfiz Kaya, Wayne State University*

**26.071. Choosing Words to Teach**

SIG-Vocabulary.

Chair :

*Shira Lubliner, California State University-Hayward*

Participants :

Selecting Useful Word Meanings for Instruction in the Primary and Upper Elementary Grades

*Andrew J Biemiller, University of Toronto*

Building Vocabulary and Comprehension: Why Big Words Work for Little Kids.

*Margaret G McKeown, University of Pittsburgh*

A Principled Vocabulary Curriculum, *Elfrieda H Hiebert*

Discussants :

*Michael F Graves, University of Minnesota:*

*William E Ngay, Seattle Pacific University*

**28.039. District-Wide Data Use : Data-Based Decision Making from the Boardroom to the Classroom**

Chair :

*Jeff Wayman, The University of Texas*

Participants :

Rapid Implementation of a Districtwide Data Initiative: Implementation and Sustainability.

*Jeff Wayman, The University of Texas; Katherine Conoly, Corpus Christie Independent School District*

District Evidence Use : An Analysis of Instructional Decision Making.

*Cynthia E Coburn, University of California-Berkeley; Judith L Toure, University of Pittsburgh; Mika Tamashita, University of Pittsburgh*

Building a Culture of Measurement in Charter Schools.

*Macke Raymond, Stanford University*

Information Flow to the Building and Classroom Level : Making More Data Work Better.

*Arie J van der Ploeg, Learning Point Associates*

Discussants :

*Mary E Yakimowski-Srebnick, Council of Chief State School Officers;*

*Samuel C Stringfield, University of Louisville*

**33.052. Toward a Theory of Action for State Education Agency Policy in the Context of School Improvement**

Division L-Educational Policy and Politics

Chair :

*Mitchell D Chester, Ohio Department of Education*

Participants :

*Richard Elmore, Harvard Graduate School of Education*

*Andrew C Porter, Vanderbilt University*

*Lauren B Resnick, University of Pittsburgh*

*Alan Bersin, Governor's Office-State of California*

*Susan Zelman, Ohio Department of Education.*

**35.019. Division A Session School Leadership for Instruction: New Perspectives and New Possibilities**

Division A-Administration, Organisation and Leadership

Chair :

*Ann Lieberman, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching*

Participants :

Leadership for Teaching and Learning: Managing the Challenge With a Distributed Perspective on School Leadership.

*James P Spillane, Northwestern University*

Sustainable Leadership.

*Andrew Hargreaves, Boston Collage*

Ethical Leadership : Teaching and Learning as Primary.

*Robert J Starratt, Boston College*

Developing Teacher Leadership in Communities of Practice.

*Ann Lieberman, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching; Lynne Miller, University of Southern Maine*

Discussant :

*Linda Lambert, California State University-Hayward*

**41.039. By Different but Converging Paths to Common Outcomes: Enhancing Schools' Literacy Achievement**

Chair :

*Allan A J Luke, Nanyang Technological University*

Participants :

School Change in Reading: Scaling Up a Reading Reform Effort.

*Barbara M Taylor, University of Minnesota*

Keeping Learning Front and Center in School Literacy Reform.

*Taffy E Raphael, University of Illinois at Chicago; Kathryn H Au, University of Hawai'i-Manoa; Susan R Goldman, University of Illinois at Chicago.*

Replicating a Process : Research-Practice Collaborations Across Two Contexts.

*Stuart McNaughton, University of Auckland; Mei Kuin Lai, University of Auckland; Shelley D Macdonald, The University of Auckland; Sasha Ferry, University of Auckland; Meaola Amituanai Toloa, The University of Auckland.*

A Needs-Based Approach to Enhancing Achievement in Reading and Writing

*Judy M Parr, University of Auckland; Helen S Timperley, University of Auckland.*

Discussant :

*Allan A J Luke, Nanyang Technological University*

**49.010. AERA Awards Presentation and Presidential Address**

Chair :

*William F Tate, Washington University*

Presidential Address:

From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding Achievement

*Gloria J Ladson-Billings, University of Wisconsin-Madison*

Award Presentations :

Palmer O Johnson Memorial Award.  
*Jomills H Braddock, University of Miami*  
 Review Of Research Award.  
*Thomas E Barone, Arizona State University*  
 Relating Research to Practice Award.  
*Stephen White, George Mason University*  
 E F Lindquist Award.  
*Larry V Hedges, Northwestern University*  
 Early Career Award.  
*Jeannie Oakes, University of California-Los Angeles*  
 Outstanding Book Award.  
*Kathryn M Anderson-Levitt, University of Michigan-Dearborn*  
 Committee on Scholars of Color In Education Awards.  
*Beverly M Gordon, The Ohio State University*  
 Social Justice in Education Award.  
*Carol D Lee, Northwestern University*  
 Editor and Book Recognitions.  
*Carl A Grant, University of Wisconsin-Madison*  
 Presidential Citation and Other Recognition.  
*Gloria J Ladson-Billings, University of Wisconsin-Madison*  
 Distinguished Contributions to Education Research Award.  
*Suzanne M Wilson, Michigan State University*

**55.068. Research in reading and Literacy**

SIG-Research in Reading and Literacy

Chair :

*Rosalind Horowitz, The University of Texas at San Antonio*

Participants :

The Effects of Collaborative Strategic Reading and Direct Instruction in Persuasion on Sixth-Grade Students' Persuasive Writing and Attitudes.

*Leisa Gaye Standish, Columbia Union College*

Microanalysis of Oral Reading Rates: Fluent Readers Are Not Just Faster.

*Robert Berdan, California State University-Long Beach; Carol Lord, California State University-Long Beach*

Text-Based Learning: The Role of Goal Orientations.

*Colin Chasteauneuf, University of Northern British Columbia*

Family Literacy Events in Elementary Education: A Qualitative Description of School and Family Interaction.

*Amy Morris, University of Nevada-Las Vegas; Ann C Share, University of Nevada-Las Vegas, Ralph E Reynolds, University of Nevada-Las Vegas; Deborah Perry-Romero, Universidad Autonoma de Queretaro*

The Effects of Early Reading First on at At-Risk Rural School.

*Anna W Grehan, The University of Memphis; Lee Grehan, SBBER/University of Memphis; Lana J Smith; Allan Sterbinsky, University of Memphis*

Portrait of an Elementary School With Very High Language Arts Test Scores.

*Michael Pressley, Michigan State University; Lindsey Mohan, Michigan State University; Lisa M Raphael Bogaert, Michigan State University; Lauren Fingeret, Michigan State University*

**55.087. Mediated Activity as an Indicator of Informal Learning.**

SIG-Informal Learning Environments Research

Chair :

*Jill Hohenstein, King's College London*

Posters :

1. Exploring the Affordances of Exhibits as Mediators of Activity.  
*Robin Meisner, King's College London*
2. Keeping Track: How Record Keeping Mediates Children's Informal Experimentation.



- Lara Meyer Triona; Maureen Callanan, University of California-Santa Cruz*
3. The Effect of Labels as Mediators in an Object-Based Technology Gallery.  
*Jill Hohenstein, King's College, London; Lynn Uyen Tran, King's College London; Valerie Bontrager, King's College London; Jonathan F Osborne, King's College London*
  4. The Role of Museum Educators in Mediating the Experience of a Hands-On Gallery.  
*Heather King, King's College, London*
  5. Adult Roles in Children's Collaborations.  
*Charlotte Nolan, University of California-Santa Cruz; Amy Luree Dexter, University of California-Santa Cruz; Barbara Rogoff, University of California-Santa Cruz.*
  6. Aspects of Successful and Unsuccessful Dialogic Scaffolding in a Marine Science Center.  
*Doris B Ash, University of California-Santa Cruz; Rhiannon Lorraine Crain, University of California-Santa Cruz; Mele Wheaton; Christine Bennett, University of California-Santa Cruz*
  7. Digital Technology in Exhibits: What Kinds of Interactions and Behaviors are Afforded?  
*Molly Leah Reisman, King's College, London*

Discussants :

*Laura W Martin, The Phoenix Zoo*

**57.052. Seeking Caviar on a Cat Food Budget: Charter Schools' Information Capacity Challenges and Potential Solutions**

Chair :

*Guilbert C Hentschke, University of Southern California*

Participants :

*Priscilla Wohlstetter, University of Southern California; Donald Shalvey, Aspire Public Schools; Macke Raymond, Stanford University; Paul Hill, University of Washington; Greg Richmond, National Association of Charter School Authorizers; Young Caprice, California Charter Schools Association*

**59.011. Research in the Public Interest: Scholars as Public Intellectuals. Presidential Session**

Chair :

*Sonia Nieto, University of Massachusetts-Amherst*

Participants :

*Michael W Apple, University of Wisconsin;  
Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Boston College;  
David C Berliner, Arizona State University;  
Jacqueline J Irvine, Emory University.*

**63.10. Democracy, Diversity, and Globalization: Educating Citizens in the Public Interest.**

Presidential Session

Chair :

*James A Banks, University of Washington*

Participants :

Democracy and Diversity: Principles and Concepts for Educating Citizens in the Public Interest in a Global Age.

*James A Banks, University of Washington*

Diversity, Citizenship Education, and Human Rights.

*Audrey Helen Osler, University of Leeds*

Democracy, Globalization and Citizen Action.

*Walter C Parker, University of Washington*

Democracy, Diversity, Globalization, and Teacher Education

*Linda Darling-Hammond, Stanford University*

The Challenge of Balancing Unity and Diversity in Multicultural Nation-States in a Global World.

*Cherry A Banks, University of Washington-Bothell*

The New Immigration, Diversity, and Globalization.

*Marcelo M Suarez-Orozco, New York University*

Diversity, Globalization, and Civic Engagement

*Shirley Brice Heath, Stanford University*

Educating and Counselling Citizens for Diversity in Israel.  
*Moshe Tatar, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

**73.108. Comprehension: The Ladder to Young Children's Literacy Skill Development**

Division C-Learning and Instruction

Chair :

*Elizabeth Sulzby, University of Michigan*

Participants :

Paper 1 : The Knowledge Gap: Implications for Early Education.

*Susan B Neuman, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor*

Assessing Your Children's Expository Comprehension Using Wordless Picture Books

*Alison H Paris, Claremont McKenna College; Scott G Paris, University of Michigan*

The Missing Piece: Assessment of Preschool Children's Developing Comprehension Skills.

*Andrea DeBruin-Parecki, High/Scope Educational Research Foundation*

Discussant :

*P David Pearson, University of California-Berkeley*

**73.082. Constructing a Secondary English Language Arts/Literacy Curriculum; The Montgomery County Public Schools**

SIG-Research in Reading and Literacy

Chair :

*Wayne H Slater, University of Maryland*

Participants :

Constructing an English Language Arts/Literacy Curriculum: Montgomery County Perspectives.

*Kay K Williams,; Arlene J Cohen,; James Flickas,.*

Curriculum Development.

*Arthur Applebee, University of Albany-The State University of New York*

Reading Comprehension.

*Michael F Graves, University of Minnesota*

Engagement and Motivation.

*John T Guthrie, University of Maryland*

Literacy Issues.

*Judith A Langer, University at Albany-The State University of New York*

Organization of Instruction in Writing and Reading.

*Martin Nystrand, University of Wisconsin-Madison*

Secondary English Language Arts/Literacy in the Era of Reform

*Catherine Snow, Harvard Graduate School of Education*

Discussant :

*Stephen M Koziol, University of Maryland*

**74.042. Improving Student Outcomes through Professional Development.**

Division K-Teaching and Teacher Education

Chair :

*Penny E Denyer, The University of Toledo*

Participants :

Impact of Program Intensity and Participants Characteristics on Technology Professional Development Outcomes.

*Katherine E Culp, Education Development Center Inc; Daniel Light, Education Development Center/Center for Children and Technology; Tomoe Kanaya, Muhlenberg College*

"Hey, Why Don't You Take a Step Into Our World?"

*Brigid Moira Burke, Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound*

Professional Learning and Development: A Best-Evidence Synthesis of Impact on Student Outcomes.

*Helen S Timperley, University of Auckland; Lorrae Carolyn Ward, University of Auckland*

The Effects of Professional Development to Promote Instructional Conversations in High-School Classrooms.

*Lois A Yamauchi, University of Hawaii'i-Manoa; Alica K H Taum, University of Hawaii'I;  
Tasha R Wyatt, University of Hawaii'i-Manoa*

**75.041. Implementing Evidence-Based Practice: Intermediary Organisations and the Connection between Research and Practice**

Division L-Educational Policy and Politics

Chair :

*Cynthia E Coburn, University of California-Berkeley*

Participants :

Nonprofit Organizations as Intermediaries for Promoting Evidence-Based Practice.

*Mark A Smylie; Thomas B Corcoran, University of Pennsylvania*

How the Federal Policy Context Shapes Research and Practice in Success for All.

*Amanda L Danow, University of Southern California; Vicki Park, University of Southern California*

Intermediary Roles in Linking Research and Practice: The Case of the Institute for Learning.

*Meredith I Honig, University of Maryland-College Park; Gina S Ikemoto, RAND*

Intermediary Organizations and Policy Implementations: Culture, Politics, and Change.

*Lea A Hubbard, University of San Diego*

Discussant :

*Anthony S Bryk , Stanford University .*

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Starratt, R.J. (2004). *Ethical Leadership*. Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Imprint, San Francisco.

Sweet, A.P. & Snow, C.E. (Eds.) (2003). *Rethinking reading comprehension*. The Guilford Press, New York.