

PRINCIPAL'S SABBATICAL REPORT

Michael Harrison
Motueka South School
2009

***Investigate the potential of e-learning to support learning across
the curriculum with specific focus on Strategic Planning,
Professional development, Resourcing/Equipment
and Classroom Implementation***

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Motueka South School Board of Trustees for supporting my request to apply for and take sabbatical leave.

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

Wellington Region: Lyllall Bay School
 Roseneath School
 Tawa Intermediate

Canterbury Region: Cotswold School
 Thorrington School
 Westburn School
 West Eyreton School

Southland Region: Bluff School
 Otautau School
 St Patricks School
 Waverley Park School

Thank you, also to the Primary Principals' Sabbatical Award Group for providing me with the opportunity for professional development and the much needed time for professional refreshment.

Purpose

Investigate the potential of e-learning to support learning **across the curriculum** with specific focus in the following areas:

- **Strategic Planning** - examine strategies for implementing initiatives that support a planned approach to sustainable and effective e-learning school-wide;
- **Professional Development** - examine and analyse professional development programmes which encourage and monitor innovation and change by teachers in their classrooms, encouraging reflective practice and collaboration, to achieve effective teaching and learning supporting positive student achievement outcomes;
- **Resourcing/Equipment** - investigate use of hardware and software which supports effective e-learning environments;
- **Classroom Implementation** - to identify effective practices that are fully embedded into everyday teaching practice assisting students/teachers to become confident and capable users of ICT.

Background

In 2008 Motueka South School completed a three year ICT PD Cluster contract focusing on identifying and building effective professional practice in ICT.

The school wished to move forward to ensure that an ICT professional learning community was maintained and enhanced through the development of a strategic plan for ICT integration to maximise advantages for our community and provide a clear direction for the next five years.

This is reflected in the priority our school is placing on the increasing development and utilization of appropriate ICT facilities/resourcing and its use to enhance learning opportunities through an integrated approach across the curriculum.

Motueka South School is committed to providing quality e-learning opportunities (learning and teaching that is facilitated by or supported through the smart use of information and communication technologies) for students.

The school has developed an integrated approach to explore how e-learning can not only supplement traditional ways of teaching but also how it can open up and help create new, exciting and different ways of teaching and learning. This is supported by careful selection and installation of appropriate hardware/software along with relevant high quality professional development for staff.

With this background I welcomed the opportunity to visit and meet with Principals and Schools to explore their successes and issues in the development and implementation of ICT across the curriculum.

Methodology

Three approaches were undertaken as part of the research:

- Interviews with Principals of schools in three main regions
- Visits to eleven schools in three main regions
- Research - 'ICT in Schools Report 2007 Final Summary Report' published March 2008
- 'Learning Technologies Planning Guide for Schools' (Using ICT to Improve Teaching and Learning), Ministry of Education publication

Investigative Framework

Schools across three regions were visited to allow for a good cross section of views and levels of development. During the visits, the Principal (and where applicable ICT Leader's) were interviewed using a set of key questions.

Schools selected (randomly) varied in size, location and decile rating. Professional colleagues in each of the main regions were contacted and asked to recommend schools that were regarded as developing innovative approaches with ICT.

The following questions formed the basis for the interview:

- *Has your school developed a school-based ICT (e-learning) plan? How was this achieved?*

- *What are the key areas for focus in 2009? Next 5 years?*
- *Approximately how much is allocated annually to resourcing ICT? Is this solely from your Operational Grant / Other Areas? Are all classes equipped with digital camera / data projectors / interactive whiteboards?*
- *How do you meet professional development needs within your school?*
- *How is ICT implemented in your school?*
- *How do classes/teachers share success/progress with the school and wider community?*
- *How does your school community see evidence of ICT?*
- *How do you provide technical support?*
- *What is the biggest issue you are faced with and what would be top of your wish list for ICT in your school?*

Findings

The extent and usage of ICT resources varied from school to school however the following is a summary of my discussions and observations.

Development of a school-based ICT (e-learning) plan:

- The majority of schools visited had been or were currently involved in the Ministry of Education's funded Information Communication Technology Professional Development (ICTPD) contract;
- Within regions development plans were based on a similar format/model (indicative of a contract approach), with each school developing their philosophy and direction within this format;
- Schools had developed a definite vision/philosophy/pedagogy through a consultative approach within their school community, i.e., Board of Trustees, Management, ICT Facilitator, Teams/Syndicates and parents;
- Plans were based on the Inquiry Learning approach;
- ICT is not considered 'standalone' but is fully integrated into the curriculum.

Key areas for focus in 2009 (and next 5 years):

- Important to retain and move forward with plans developed;
- Commitment to continued upskilling of all staff;
- Refining the inquiry learning process;
- Equipping all classrooms with interactive whiteboards;
- Equipping all classrooms with data projectors;
- Equipping all classrooms with minimum number of computers;
- Introduce/Increase pods of laptops for mobile use throughout all classrooms;
- Authentic integration;
- Further developing student achievement data bases and ensuring these are fully linked/networked for teacher access;
- Further development of school intranet system;
- Creating secure and reliable wireless access throughout schools;

- Developing e-portfolios providing parents/caregivers with electronic links to assessment data;
- Building capacity to ensure ICT is used in authentic contextualized learning situations.

Funding:

- Allocation from Operations Grant ranged from \$1,000 per annum to \$75,000 per annum to fund purchasing/leasing of hardware/software (figures did not include staffing allocation/component);
- Additional funding was supported in some of the schools by fundraising (PTA) and community groups/organisation;
- High priority given to infrastructure;

Hardware:

- All classrooms were equipped with at least one digital camera;
- Most schools had pods of digital camera's/video cameras;
- Some schools were allocated one data projector per learning team, but were planning to purchase/lease more to ensure each classroom was fully equipped;
- Some schools had fully equipped all classrooms with a data projector;
- Three schools had interactive whiteboards in every classroom (supplied by a community project);
- Schools who did not have interactive whiteboards were planning to introduce them when funding permitted;
- There is a definite swing away from computer suites (these were being dismantled in some schools);
- Schools are moving towards ensuring each classroom has a minimum of desktop computers fully networked;
- Majority of schools have established (or in the process) pods of laptops.

Professional Development:

- Majority of schools have been or are involved in the Ministry of Educations funded Information Communication Technology Professional Development (ICTPD) contract;
- Ongoing Professional Development has been provided by independent contractors or skilled teachers;
- Many schools are continuing with ongoing Professional Development using various approaches, e.g., 3 to 4 slots per term at staff meetings, fully releasing teachers for 1 day per year for intensive upskilling, ICT professional learning once a week for an hour before school;

Implementation:

- All schools have fully integrated ICT into the curriculum;
- Some schools have developed a student achievement target for 2009;
- Schools are at various stages of development/Implementation.
- Students are exposed to a variety of tools, e.g., PowerPoint, Publisher, Word, Excel, Blogging, Internet Search Engines, Email, Interactive Whiteboard, Website Design, Skype, MovieMaker;
- Implementation is dependent on teacher confidence;

- A general desire from Principals for teachers to develop a willingness to take risks.

Sharing Success / Evidence:

- Celebration Assemblies;
- School Website;
- Class/Individual Blogs;
- Team/Syndicate meetings;
- Staff Meetings;
- Newsletters;
- Assessment Portfolios
- E-Portfolios

Technical Support:

- 70% of schools contract in an independent provider by funding from Operations Grant or using Staffing component;
- 30% of schools use staff who have skills (this was often recognised by the allocation of units) or a parent of the school with an interest/passion;
- Level of technical support varies (dependent on size of school). Range from 1 hour per day to 3 days per week;

Issues:

- Infrastructure, e.g., cabling, wireless;
- The need for ongoing technical support (increasing hours required);
- Lack of adequate funding;
- Reliable internet (in rural situations);
- Maintaining and increasing hardware;
- Staff prepared to take risks;
- Sustainability;
- Website development.

Wish List:

- Increase in funding for hardware, e.g., data projectors, interactive whiteboards, laptops, quality video conferencing;
- Comprehensive development programme;
- Utilising current equipment fully
- Opportunity for regular communication/sharing with colleagues
- Curriculum Plan was fully functional and meaningful to all staff;
- Perfectly integrated data system with one point of entry and fully synchronized;
- Staff are prepared to take risks.

Summary:

Clearly schools have fully embraced the 21st Century and are fully committed to the radically progressing world of ICT (e-learning).

The implementation of the Ministry of Educations funded Information Communication Technology Professional Development (ICTPD) contract has enabled and supported schools to develop and establish a clear sense of direction and pedagogy within an integrated approach.

Schools are taking ownership of their ICT learning environment and the whole team approach ensures that staff are supported and encouraged to extend and develop their skills and knowledge allowing them to maximise use of technologies within their classroom programmes.

There is a real desire to maintain momentum and support further development in a planned approach, provide the most up to date technologies with structured professional development. Teachers are developing ICT learning environments that are supportive, technology rich and conducive to meaningful student engagement.

ICT Leaders are developing the confidence and capability to effectively lead and manage ongoing ICT and e-learning development within their schools, while striving to grow skills and confidence throughout the entire school (including teachers, students and the community).

The need for knowledgeable and efficient technical support is a priority to effectively operate and manage learning technologies in our schools.

Schools are carefully planning their way forward when identifying the need for new equipment. With financial constraints, a planned pathway is essential for schools to maintain momentum, using an integrated approach into teaching and learning, with established timeframes and high quality professional development which will best serve the needs of the whole school community.