

Sabbatical Report

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This report is not a blow by blow account of my sabbatical, nor is it a catalogue of research and articles and conversations (which reside in my OneNote). This is my synthesis and resulting thinking for Long Bay College, as a result of my sabbatical question. It is but a snapshot of the thinking influences – the tip of the iceberg so to speak. One thing is very clear, 21st C education is easily hijacked by low level ideas, fads. And people who want to sell stuff.

There are some huge issues looming for our children caused by the huge speed of digital development. What will be real? Relationships with artificial intelligence? Online safety – there is no honour or code. What will it mean to be human at the end of this Century? Schools need to get their heads up out of the competitive environment.

Sabbatical Purpose

From my application...

Long Bay College has recently achieved a 4-5 year ERO review under the new 2013 criteria. ERO noted that although our achievement is high, obtaining qualifications is simply part of the journey for our young people and not an end in its own right. Rather, the emphasis of the school is success for our young people i.e.growing great young teenagers. (see Success Guide on our website) ERO spoke highly of our culture and our students (see attached report to board). The establishment and facilitation of pathways for learning, and for life preparedness, are a key foundation of our school.

The concept of 21st Century learning has been somewhat dominated by discussions on buildings and technology. In reality, the truly significant development is our learning about the function and growth of the adolescent brain as a result of the modern research. For example, it is only recently that we have learnt that the brain continues to grow and develop until the early twenties and that adolescence is the second most important time for brain growth. It is a compelling argument that providing the best positive environment for brain growth has to be the fundamental purpose of a school, as against the mere gaining of qualifications. Devices, modern buildings and all the other aspects that make a school environment provide the context and tools for this development.

The key aspect for me is what implications this thinking has on the future planning of our schools, and Long Bay College in particular.

I seek to identify and learn about 'real' 21st century schools – those that are genuinely focussed on growing fabulous teenagers and path-waying them to a future. What ideas,

developments, and schools are out there? How are pathways extended into and out of schools in a practical and enabling way?

In summary, I want to determine through international reflection:

1. What could a high performing NZ state school look like from a creative paradigm and designing to the edges?
2. What would next steps be towards making this vision a reality?
3. Discover schools which can serve as a reference base.

Summary Thoughts

- Recognition at MOE level that specialist teachers are needed in years earlier than year 9
- Numeracy project under question – yet another fad?
- Public service targets and NCEA results – recognition that they are not necessarily achieving what was originally intended, especially for Maori and Pasifika.
- NCEA has had to change in order to meet targets. Easier standards and relaxed assessment rules. It is not better cohorts, better teachers, or better schools. High inconsistency of courses and assessment systems between schools
- Science not compulsory at year 11 in many schools
- Mismatch between Pisa and NZ NCEA results
- Recognition of NCEA internationally and an admiration for its complexity. A level equivalence is apparently being discussed at NZQA board level/
- \$80 million is the cost for the group of children that miss level 1.
- Research needs to respond to schools, not shoot off on tangents to find the school says “we could have told you that”.
- Increasing realisation of poverty issue – social and monetary, with a looming potential for digital poverty and hence a fundamental inequality in lifestyles. Digital world will increase inequity.
- Realisation of competition issue – however there is not a political will to sort. Contrast with Finland. Schools dying. New schools that are not patronised and hence represent a huge loss to the taxpayer
- Sports are in trouble with huge schools emerging, sucking in “talent”, promoting themselves as excellent, and so the cycle continues. Inequity and lack of fairness increasing. Traditional sports need to be careful not to lose their base with the current young children.
- Increasing concern about NZ’s future if our kids lack empathy, resilience – citizenship. The goal to take NZ to 8 million people.
- Realisation of the gaps children have at year 9 and the detrimental effect that has on confidence. Links to mental health issues. Children entering who cannot write, and this is in a decile 10 area.
- There is no “divide” between pastoral and academic support for achievement. It is a whole adolescent who needs to grow in a healthy community. This is a moral purpose which steps beyond notions of best school, highest NCEA results, championship winners etc.
- “Academic” is itself wide and different for all, as is “pastoral”. Words now somewhat distorted by time and fads. Needs a refocus on pragmatic meaning. The trades are now highly academic and require strong digital skills.
- The holistic vision, with multiple opportunities for students to engage in different activities, and with different adults who care and understand (are expert with) teenagers, is a very strong vision. It is the LBC vision.

- Success with confidence and creativity is spot on for 21st C
- Children will need strong sense of themselves, values, and ability to ascertain what is real and what matters.
- Much of society is vulnerable to the Symantec web and all that it represents.
- In preparation for what is coming NZQA has quietly and strategically changed its rules. Recall Lester Flockton telling us that fudging would have to occur to meet the government's 85% target? That has happened through variation of standards and relaxation of assessment "rules"
- After all this time with NCEA little progress has been made with educating students about deadlines. Surprised? No – adolescent brain struggles to rationalise. But learn it must.
- NZ has inadvertently created a culture where it is ok to non-submit, and that the only worthwhile learning is learning for credits. Students are controlling this culture which is not ok.
- Achievement increases when non-submission is not accepted. We can't keep "punishing" if a child chooses not to submit, therefore we want to turn the tables and introduce a structure which will remove this option. How can we do this practically?
- There are a few schools that would serve as a reference base. There is a lot of "smoke and mirrors" especially concerning achievement, MLE spaces, and IT.
- "In education we have just about reached the end of squeezing good out of an outdated school system. The current system is too costly, too ineffective, and as any kid will tell you, deadly boring" Fullan, 2013
- "It is about respecting children as human beings and about supporting, not suppressing, their passion, curiosity and talent. If schools can just do that, our children will become global, creative, and entrepreneurial" Yong Zhou, 2012
- "What is needed in the future is the enhancement of what comes with us as human" Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009
- "The central aim of Finnish education is the development of each child as a thinking, active, creative person, not the attainment of higher test scores, and the primary strategy of Finnish education is cooperation, not competition" Ravitch, 2012

Defining “Teacher”

In all my years of training and PD I have never been given a definition of what a great teacher is. I have found one that resonates with me:

*" Let him be strict, but not grim, and friendly but not too relaxed as to incur neither hatred nor contempt; he should talk a great deal about what is good and honourable; the more often he has admonished his pupils, the more rarely will he need to punish them; he must not be given to anger, but he must not turn a blind eye to things that need correction; he must be straightforward in his teaching, willing to work, persistent but not obsessive; must answer questions readily and put questions to himself to those who do not ask any; in praising his pupils' performances he must neither grudging nor fulsome (the one produces dislike of the work, the other complacency); in correcting faults, he must not be biting, and certainly not abusive for many have been driven away from learning because some teachers rebuke pupils as though they hate them" (Ibid., p. 271, Book II). **Marcus Fabius Quintilianus** (c. 35 – c. 100 CE)*

Years and dollars of research grants have not improved on this. Much fuss is made about people like Hattie, yet their premise is that good teachers make the most difference. We knew this 2000 years ago. Think also about all the initiatives for schools around character and values that now abound.

Two other areas key to 21st C and resonating with articulated desires by governments and leaders around the world:

Quintilian on Reading and Writing

Skills and knowledge, according to Quintilian, are acquired through many different practices revolving around rehearsal. Important skills that Quintilian stressed learning involved speaking, and writing well, in addition to an established knowledge for the foundation of most subjects: "Speaking well and writing well are one and the same thing" (Ibid., p. 309, Book XII). By practicing one's speech along with "writing in one's own hand is important in our studies and is the only way to ensure real, deep-rooted progress" (Ibid., p. 79, Book I).

Quintilian also talked about creativity, not imitation

He then clarified the statements saying that beginner students must receive the "material predigested" supplying them with a 'track' to follow leading them to eventually perform the instruction on their own power. (Ibid., p. 313, Book II). After they have successfully completed the beginning tasks, the teacher can then provide them with further freedom. If they do not, and commit further mistakes, Quintilian advised that the pupils must then "be brought back under his guidance" (Ibid., p. 313, Book II)

Designing to the edges: Thinking Long Bay College

- NCEA Level 1 will go
- Assessment for many subjects will be on demand and online
- Schools will have to be showing they are making a difference other than baby sitting
- Resilience will increasingly be valued and a focus
- There will be changing attitudes to contact sports due to the increasing publicity of the brain research
- The traditional approach to the school year and timetabling will fade away. Expect the terms, school days, and course lengths to evolve. For instance, Level 1 A & B may be an 18 month course.
- Does the government have the nerve to end the old business model of competition between schools? IES?
- Wonderful children in our school
- A school of choice - roll statistics show that parents are choosing LBC. Niche?
- Confident in doing our own thing - sailed our own course
- Capacity for change - continual improvement is in the fabric of our culture
- Well positioned going forwards - roll, financial, community, facilities, passion...
- Trusted and respected school: staff and students
- Strong values: respectful and polite,
- Increasing eagerness to achieve at high levels, and consequentially, improving results
- High pride with a strong sense of family and caring
- Busy and buzzy school which is at ease with interruptions and being flexible
- Culture where students want to be recognised and noticed. They want to be loved.
- Valuing excellence and the consequential requirements of application, commitment
- Non-submission and the consequential 'giving up' when the deadline passes
- A normal to below normal cohort coming in at year nine
- Many students lacking vocab
- Poor skills with transactional writing

Teach students:

- Language of learning . Consistent terminology throughout the school and then throughout our cluster

- The adolescent journey – what is going to happen to them
- The skills required for our google(?) platform
- How to use their portal and what does the information mean
- How to write
- How to learn

Everything is up for discussion here, including timetable. The desired outcome is a cohort of students who are well prepared for further learning and who are embracing the Long Bay Way

Reflections Applied to Long Bay College

- Currently put 46 periods into Deaning.
- Why do schools follow traditional dean structure? There appears no discussion or rationale other than it comes out of the old British schooling model.
- This could now be 43 periods with the Directors of learning. Aiming for an increased holistic focus emphasising the three groups as communities and tailoring needs.
- Adding in excess of 40 periods of Deaning, directly supporting teacher/student/learning.
- We owe it to our children to not accept non-submission, to continuously provide detailed feedback and specific guidance so that they engage with success, and thereby create a resilience – a can do attitude.
- No reduction to careers or guidance counselling. Probably an increase.
- DP supervises Directors of learning, counsellors. No change to that work.
- Introduce Learning to Learn in year 9 to overtly teach children what is happening to them and how to learn
- Link with writing skills
- Give year 9 parents a profile in Feb so they have an objective start point. CEM and PAT. National Standards is anything but a standard. Cause parents to engage and take responsibility with learning needs. Suggest ways forward.

Building Blocks – The Concept of “Practice”

Knowledge about learning isn't enough. We actually have to "do" stuff to cause and maintain learning. e.g we don't bother learn to use the new features on a tv because they are there, but when we want to use a feature we learn how to do it e.g split screens (how to learn). If we don't use that feature often we forget the chain of commands. (Repetition)

Learning is "fun" in primary schools etc, but as we get older it has to shift into the "work" mode. Now the feeling that has to cause in us is accomplishment or satisfaction. This is mature fun. If we get that feeling then we will do more work. That "work" is practice. Work ethic is knowing that you have to practice and doing the practice. (Managing self)

Practice allows us to know how to do 'something', to be able to do that instinctively, and to join all those learnt 'somethings' together to do a task. e.g play a musical instrument in an orchestra, play sport etc. Whilst we theoretically cannot multitask we can learn skills so that we don't have to think directly about them when we are doing them so we can focus on more important matters. e.g start a sailing dinghy race. Sailing is instinctive whilst we focus on the start. There are many learnt skills in sailing. Practice allows us to package skills and perform under pressure. It frees our mind to invent and create because it can wander and dream whilst instinctive skills carry on e.g improvisation.

People are all different and self-starting for some people can be a forever problem. Its not negative, just is, and we have to learn how to manage it and practice managing it!
(Managing Self)

Very few teachers understand practice and the critical link of **feedback** and correct setting of task and next step. A master teacher gets that right and the pupils flourish. They feel accomplishment/success, achievable challenge, grow in confidence, and want more (interest can as we move to new passions or burn out. Things have a life cycle).

- Practice routine should be such that you can get through it and make you feel good at the end
- Effective practice is not necessarily long practice. Concentrating is exhausting.
- Repetitions cause the correct pathways to develop in the brain – important during adolescence. (Pruning etc that goes on in the brain)
- Practice should be progressive, gradually increasing in difficulty
- Focused practice builds good habits, allows things to become a habit. Habits get combined into performance. So whilst we can't multitask we can transfer some skills to automatic pilot.
- Mistakes are part of practice
- practice is repetitive. Think in groups of four in a row correct then move on. Repeat for a week, then move on.
- There is plenty of time. Don't panic or rush.
- It's how you practice that counts. Total focus on task, with high expectations, for a short period which includes repetitions, is the key. A wandering mind whilst practicing makes the practice worthless.

- Always practice in a happy frame of mind
- Think (focus, concentrate on) when you practice
- Drive all fear out of your system. That is something you control. Don't worry! It works. Mistakes are ok.
- Three strikes and you are out - get help!
- It's crowded in the middle level of mediocrity. It's not crowded at the top. Dream of being great.
- Great = great practice=great work ethic
- Beware of trying to overtly focus the mind - can't do. Focus on the task instead.

Proposed Change Model to Long Bay College

Rather than Deans allocated to support group of students by year level, or vertical cut, we will allocate on the basis of faculty

Our students need subject support. They need experts supporting them in the areas of their learning weakness. Specific feedback and feed forward

Success and confidence minimises behavioural problems and increases resilience

The school will be divided into three key stages with a Head of School for each stage:

1. Year 9 - welcome to our world, identify and 'fix' issues, set foundations for future learning and thinking
2. 1A & 1B - the horrible teenage years. Strong boundaries. Knuckle down and work. Participate. Live in the now. Busy children
3. Year 12 & 13 – time to mature, think more about citizenship and service, look to the future and line up the path. Learn to make considered choices

The Heads of School together with DP and the guidance & careers counsellors form what has been nicknamed the tier two team. This is the team that will help children who are falling off the rails significantly

Final Thought

I have greatly appreciate this sabbatical. Time to think, reflect and explore. I believe it will have a direct impact on Long Bay College – watch this space.

Thank you for the opportunity.

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