

## **FOCUS:**

To gain a deeper understanding of 'The Motivated School' approach and assess if it is suitable for using as a student engagement tool that would supplement anti-bullying approaches particularly in the middle years (7 -10).

### **SABBATICAL LEAVE REPORT: MAY-JULY 2006**

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#### **Acknowledgements:**

The hard working and very professional Board of Trustees, in particular Chair Don Clark, need to be acknowledged for their unstinting support, enthusiasm and encouragement given to me. I also must thank the senior management team, and in particular Acting Principal, Jane Beavan who managed the school superbly in my absence and had the grace not to show me up by solving all our problems during my absence!

#### **a. Executive Summary**

The 'Motivated School' approach developed by Alan McLean, principal psychologist Glasgow, is an approach designed to enhance and develop student and teacher understanding of the components needed to establish and maintain a motivating and engaging learning environment.

The approach is actively supported by the Scottish Executive and is one of a number of current approaches being promoted in Scottish Schools to enhance better behaviour and improve learning.

It aims to address issues of disengagement and alienation amongst Glasgow schools and is a response to concerns over the high levels of 'NEET' school leavers (not in education, employment or training).

The Motivated School approach is comprehensive and well resourced. It would easily transfer to the New Zealand system. It is wide-ranging, accessible and inclusive. My recommendation is that the Ministry of Education should seriously investigate the purchase of the programme and make it available to our schools.

**b. Purpose (as in the proposal)**

While my sabbatical had four key components, the motivational study was at the centre and it had three components:

1. To gain a fuller understanding of ‘The Motivated School’ approach.
2. To see the approach being used.
3. To assess if the approach would be suitable for use in William Colenso College and in other New Zealand schools to enhance student engagement.

At the same time the leave allowed me to:

- Renew contacts and share developments and ideas with leading Anti-bullying practitioners in Britain and Sweden.
- Reflect on and discuss issues of mutual interest with a fellow practitioner who is also on sabbatical.
- Visit agents and schools that are involved in our International Student programme at William Colenso College. This allowed me to promote New Zealand Education in general and ODENZ in particular in the growing German and northern European market.
- Revisit the academic work completed as part of my 2005 post graduate study that had a particular focus on the anti-bullying needs of middle year’s students.
- Holiday with my wife in North-Eastern Europe.

**Background**

My initial proposal was to undertake a comprehensive study of current anti-bullying approaches in Europe (particularly in Scotland, Ireland and Finland) with a particular emphasis on approaches designed for the middle years. I had intended to build upon not only earlier work and contacts in the anti-bullying field but also to take into account my new responsibilities for year seven and eight students.

In 1995, supported by a Nuffield Travel Bursary, I spent three months in the United Kingdom studying approaches to dealing with school bullying. This experience led me to complete a research based Masters in Education at Victoria University on secondary school bullying approaches in New Zealand and subsequently this led to the publication of a book<sup>i</sup> on the subject with my supervisor, Dr Keith Sullivan (currently Professor of Education at the National University of Ireland, Galway).

These studies introduced me to the innovative work of Alan McLean, principal psychologist with the Glasgow City Council Education Department. Alan was responsible for the development of the ‘Bully-proofing our School’ resource kit for the Strathclyde Local Area Authority in the early 1990s. My view that this was the best anti-bullying intervention available was confirmed during my visit to a number of Glasgow schools in 1995.

In 2003 McLean published ‘The Motivated School<sup>ii</sup>’. The concept is an extension of McLean’s earlier work and aims to support schools and teachers to develop engaging,

purposeful and safe classroom environments. The publication coincided with our preparation for the merger of Colenso High School and Wycliffe Intermediate and resonated with many of the studies we were looking at to ensure that our new school was effectively catering for needs of our year seven to ten students.

In response to this a group of staff completed a post-graduate paper <sup>iii</sup> that had a focus on the educational needs of students in the middle years. This, my previous teaching experience and my knowledge of anti-bullying interventions confirmed that the approach McLean was describing was consistent with the college's beliefs and had the potential of offering new initiatives.

Working in a low decile college, previous involvement in the Ministry of Education's Suspension Reduction (Student Engagement Initiative) and frustration with the failure of our education system to effectively address the issues of alienation and disengagement had heightened my desire to seek out innovative and effective programmes that would better support our new quest as articulated in the vision statement:

*Using teaching and learning strategies based on best practice, we at William Colenso College are committed to develop our students' talents and expand their horizons. We want our students to leave motivated, with their talents and gifts realized and with the confidence, skill and values to follow whatever path.*

Background reading in preparation for the study and communication with a number of the leading anti-bullying experts caused me to review my plans late in 2005. These communications confirmed that there had been few new developments in the anti-bullying field and emphasised the need for counties to adopt the findings articulated in the report<sup>iv</sup> of the OECD International Policy and Research Conference on School Bullying and Violence, held at Stavanger University, Norway, 6-7 September 2004.

Consequently, in consultation with the college's board, I decided to depart from the original proposal and concentrate on the Motivated School rather than undergo the planned broader study.

A major motive in this decision was my discovery that the Scottish Executive had formally backed the Motivated School approach<sup>v</sup> and was backing the development of an extensive training programme and support materials and was actively promoting the introduction of the programme in Scottish schools.

**c. Activities undertaken (methodology)**

**Preparation:** I formally began my sabbatical leave on the first Monday of term 2 and spent the next two weeks based at home in Napier. (During which time I also attended the May Board of Trustees meeting and participated in a two day senior management team retreat). I used this time to revisit my readings from the 2005 post graduate paper and finalise travel and meeting arrangements for my time travelling.

**International Student Marketing/Promotion:** I spent a week in Japan visiting the College's sister school in Nagoya and international agents in Osaka and Tokyo. This was followed by a week in Germany visiting agents who are actively involved with the ODENZ (see [www.outdoorednz.co.nz](http://www.outdoorednz.co.nz)) schools promoting New Zealand, and in particular ODENZ schools as a destination for German students.

(Later, during the holiday part of my leave, I also visited international student agents in both Prague, Czech Republic and Helsinki, Finland.)

**The Motivated School:** On completion of the international student marketing programme I moved to Glasgow and began my three week enquiry into The Motivated School approach. (I was very familiar with the approach from having read the book several times and from Alan McLean having sent me regular updates and other papers over the years). For the duration of the visit, I stayed in the residential hostel Wolfson House which is attached to the University of Glasgow and is situated at the Kelburn Campus and Science Park on the outskirts of the city in the Maryhill district.

My time was taken up with the following activities:

- Attending meetings, presentation and training sessions with Alan McLean and his associate Derek Goldman with teachers and others involved in the development of The Motivated School.
- School visits that involved talking to practitioners who had adopted the approach.
- Personal reflection and study of the materials in the training kit.

**CIE/Values Education in Schools:** On leaving Glasgow I took the opportunity of visiting Mark Hensman, former Headmaster of Napier Boys' High School and current Headmaster of Harrow International School, Bangkok who was also on a sabbatical at Cambridge.

This provided both of us with an ideal opportunity to share the ideas we were exploring during our respective sabbaticals. Mark has been heavily involved in issues surrounding spirituality education and had also been involved in a project with the Cambridge International Examination Board ( [www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/aboutus/cie/](http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/aboutus/cie/) ).

There are interesting links between the ideas that Mark is developing and the approach advocated by Alan McLean.

**No-Blame Approach/ Lucky Duck Publications:** Following my visit to Cambridge I travelled to Bristol to meet with Dr. George Robinson, co-founder with Barbara Maines of the successful and internationally acclaimed No-Blame Approach. This visit was to reacquaint myself with George and to find out if there had been any significant developments in the approach. We discussed this and I shared with him the major tenants of The Motivated School.

**The Voices from the Margins Project:** I had met Dr Arne Forsman (Luleå Technical University, Sweden) at the OECD International Policy and Research Conference on School Bullying and Violence, held at Stavanger University, Norway, 6-7 September 2004 and in response to an earlier invitation met with him and his colleague Dr Eva Alerby to discuss the possible participation of William Colenso College students in an international study. Arne and Eva are working with Dr Jill Brown of Monash University, (Melbourne) and a number of other academics from around the world investigating the attitudes of students, who are on the margins of society, towards school. They are keen to have the participation of Maori and Pacific Island students from New Zealand.

**Holiday:** Joined by my wife Barbara, I spent three weeks touring Eastern and Northern Europe (Prague, Czech Republic. Riga, Latvia. St Petersburg, Russia. Helsinki, Finland. Luleå, Jokkmokk and Stockholm in Sweden).

#### d. Findings

The Motivated School approach developed by Alan McLean is a robust programme that appears to effectively address issues of student disengagement in schools. It provides comprehensive strategies for teachers, principals and students that will assist them to develop the pre-conditions that will assist in motivating the individual.

McLean has developed a comprehensive framework to support the development of a these preconditions. This is supported by a wide range of materials that will assist both the individual and the school to adopt the programme.

The principles that underpin the approach resonate with the Schooling Strategy goal of all students reaching their potential. In particular, it aligns with two of the three priorities identified for the next five years:

- *all students experience effective teaching*
- *evidence-based practices are used by all involved in schooling.*

They also directly address one of the four areas identified in 2003 by the Government in Education Priorities for New Zealand: '*motivated and self-directed lifelong learners*' and it directly links to the current secondary priority of *Effective Teaching*.

The approach has the potential to address the greatest issues currently facing the New Zealand school system, the achievement gap as identified in the PISA (2003) study:

*There is a wide gap, however, between our highest and lowest achievers. While some students from all social groups achieve very well, Māori students, Pasifika students, and students from lower socio-economic groups are over-represented among students who underachieve.*

Making a Bigger Difference for all Students: Hangaia he huarahi hei whakarewa ake i ngā tauira katoa, Schooling Strategy 2005 -2010, Ministry of Education, Wellington (2005).

The need for ‘Engaged, motivated, and learning students’ is obvious and is identified in the Schooling strategy document.

*Students who are engaged, motivated, and learning attend school and achieve. By the end of their schooling, they are well grounded in the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and sense of identity they need to take the next steps in their lives successfully. They have gained qualifications, they have options available to them, they are committed to further learning, and they are optimistic about their futures.*

Schooling Strategy.

The classroom environment that is advocated by The Motivated School is one that will ensure that students . . . *feel physically, emotionally, and culturally safe at school. They have affirming learning relationships with teachers and are members of supportive, healthy peer cultures. They are developing positive ways of responding to learning and social challenges. They have opportunities to take reciprocal tuakana-teina (helper-learner) roles with their peers. They share, are respectful of differences, and are learning to resolve conflict constructively. They participate and are included.*

*They believe they are capable of learning and experience learning as challenging, relevant, meaningful, useful, and stimulating. They are learning to take charge of their learning and become independent learners. They have opportunities to experience and celebrate achievement and feel safe about risking and experiencing failure as part of the ongoing process of learning.*

*By the time they reach senior secondary school, they are taking increasing charge of decisions and choices about their learning pathways. They are questioning, persistent, and do their best in their learning.*

Schooling Strategy (2005).

#### **e. Implications**

The development of the innovative ‘The Motivated School’ Framework in Glasgow, Scotland provides an opportunity for both William Colenso College and the wider New Zealand education system to review the approach.

While there are many obvious differences between the challenges facing the Scottish and New Zealand schooling systems, there are also key similarities. The levels of success in PISA are similar and more significantly, the levels of disengagement as measured by the achievement gap are almost identical.

McLean’s approach has been forged in some of the most difficult schools in Glasgow where failure is strongly linked to low socio-economic status. Like his successful anti-bullying programme the TMS potentially will provide tools for students, teachers and schools to create more positive, focussed and safe classroom environments.

## **f. Conclusions**

The Ministry of Education should immediately review The Motivated School programme and evaluate its effectiveness. The Motivated School is a complex framework that has the potential to provide support and help for practitioners who want to develop more motivating and engaging classrooms.

William Colenso College will continue to utilise many of the ideas and concepts that underpin the project.

## **g. References**

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<sup>i</sup> Sullivan, K., Cleary, M. & Sullivan, G. (2003) 'Bullying in Secondary School; What it looks like and how to deal with it.' Sage, London.

<sup>ii</sup> McLean, A. (2003) 'The Motivated School.' Sage, London.

<sup>iii</sup> Massey University Paper 211.733 'Curriculum, Learning and pedagogy in the Middle Years'

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/26/51/33868117.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> [Hhttp://www.betterbehavioursotland.gov.uk/initiatives/accessforall/themotivatedschool.aspx](http://www.betterbehavioursotland.gov.uk/initiatives/accessforall/themotivatedschool.aspx)H

Making a Bigger Difference for all Students: Hangaia he huarahi hei whakarewa ake i ngā taura katoa, Schooling Strategy 2005 -2010, Ministry of Education, Wellington (2005).