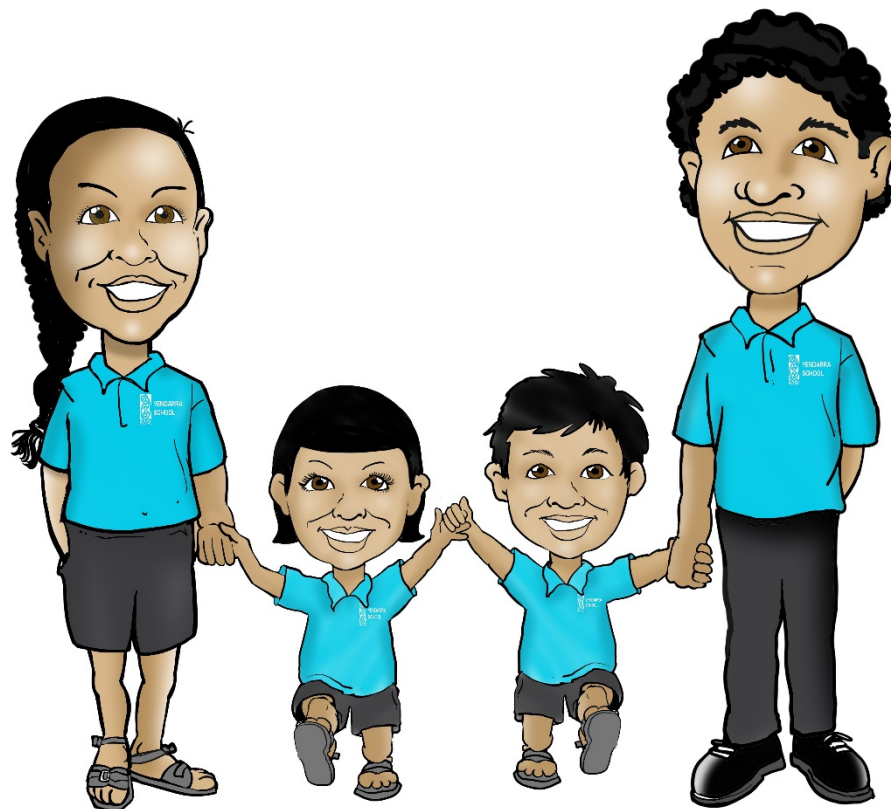


Yendarra School

Be the BEST we can



Sabbatical Report

Susan Dunlop 2015

To research what future focused personalized learning looks like, what principles underpin it and what learning and teaching practices do we promote, enable and sustain.

Acknowledgements

Being offered a Principal Sabbatical gave me the opportunity to explore personalized learning and how it could be used to further enhance learning outcomes for our Maori and Pasifika learners, learners with special needs and learners from low-socio –economic backgrounds.

What a privilege it was to have been granted sabbatical leave for 10 weeks and I acknowledge and thank:

- TeachNZ who awarded me the sabbatical
- The Ministry of Education for providing salary funding
- The Yendarra School Board of Trustees for their unwavering support with my application and for granting me leave from my position as Principal to take up this opportunity, as well as their generous budget allocation for me to attend the 'Inspiring Leadership Conference in the UK
- Mary Takatainga, Jazmin Greig and Sarah Walter who 'stepped up' and continued their exemplary leadership during my absence
- Our amazing Yendarra teachers and support staff who took on extra roles and supported each other to 'be the BEST they could be' in their pursuit to raise student learning outcomes
- Our students and their whanau for their continued piripono and aroha

The 'Inspiring Leadership Conference' featured many highly skilled key note speakers and plenary presenters who all spoke around the themes of excellence in education.

Attending an overseas conference on my own provided:

- development in terms of my personal growth in leadership
- networking opportunities
- a global perspective that comes from an international conference
- an opportunity as a 'leader of learners' to stay up to date with overseas trends and research in education.

I enjoy what I do, especially the people that I have the privilege to work with and by taking a sabbatical, it has been an opportunity to view our school through fresh lenses. While I never actually tire in my role, I feel rejuvenated having gained new skills, and grown both professionally and personally. It is a privilege to be a principal and with privilege comes responsibility and the quest for new learning; better ways of doing things, motivation and staying abreast with current thinking for the continued enhancement of student achievement and well- being.

I am blessed to work in a school with so many outstanding leaders, teachers, support staff and dedicated Board members who inspire me to live our school motto and 'be the Best I can' every-day.

Executive Summary

Technology is all around us and we use it in every aspect of our life. This new world is enabling us with new ways to visualize our world, new ways to teach and learn and new ways to collaborate and explore places we have never been.

The walls of classrooms are disappearing as we move away from the traditional style of teaching and learning that has dominated our schools for many years, into personalizing learning to better meet the needs of our learners.

This new way of teaching and learning develops a higher level of thinking and creativity with increased collaboration. Through knowledge sharing and collaboration we can transform the learning environment, to better motivate and engage students and to learn the perspectives of others that may be very different from our own context.

In equipping students for the global workplace, we need to teach differently to develop the knowledge worker. Virtual technologies, abundant internet access and the proliferation of Web 2.0 and 3.0 tools empower schools to meet the demands of our rapidly changing society and we need to equip our children with the thinking, problem solving, self- efficacy, tenacity and resiliency to succeed in this rapidly changing world. The 'sit and get' is no longer conducive to effective teaching and learning.

Teacher student relationships will always be vital and face to face teaching is still critical, but it no longer means that we need to be in the same physical location to be face to face or one to one. Moreover, it extends our reach to ensure that every student can be connected to a learning community, assuming of course that they have internet access.

The traditional style of teaching has many good points however, traditional teaching practices prepare students for jobs that are rapidly disappearing. Sitting quietly at desks doing rote learning and worksheets, prepared students for rote jobs in an industry, manufacturing and service occupations. Today we need to teach children and our teachers higher order critical thinking skills; how to be creative and to think outside the box.

"We are currently preparing students for jobs that don't yet exist, technologies that haven't yet been invented, in order to solve problems we don't need even know are problems yet."
Karl Fish (<http://thefischbowl.blogspot.com>)

The Changes in Pedagogical Practice

	Then	Now
Focus	Teacher led	Student centered
Approach	Content driven/ one off	Process driven/ 'bigger picture' Spirit of inquiry Constantly learning Reading widely Researching, observing others, asking, collaborating, finding out Exploring new ways of unlocking the potential of every child
Emphasis	Knowing that	Knowing how
Students	Learning is 'done to them'	Doing the learning Student voice sought Podcasting, downloading, updating blogs, creating animations, movie making..... Don't wait for the teacher to tell them what to do. Instead they ask 'Where am I with my learning? Who can help me? What do I need to do to learn this?

Teacher Role	Expert and boss Standing at the front of the room 'telling'	Fellow learner, collaborator and facilitator
Classroom	All doing the same thing with the teacher at the teacher's desk and students asking 'Can I? Is it OK if? What do I do now? I don't know how to..?'	No teacher's desk Students sharing their learning with the teacher, articulating not just what they are doing but WHY and HOW they are learning Little demarcation between teacher spaces and student spaces
Pedagogy	No choices/ options for students Feedback was a quick tick or x Single cell/ sole operator Struggling with paper administration	Offered choices and options Sharing of success via videos, blogs ... Connecting students with the world using technology Teacher partnering with students Innovation, risk taking, sharing, asking, coaching....
Learning Time	9:00am-3:00pm	Learning is a lifestyle – any time, any pace, any where

Purpose:

Now Generation
We are the now generation
We are the generation now
This is the now generation
This is the generation now
Myspace in your space
Facebook is a new place
Dip divin' socializin'
I'll be out in cyber space
Google is my professor
Wikipedia checker
Checkin my account
Loggin in and loggin out
Baby I want it..
Now!

(Black Eyed Peas- American hip hop group)

Effective schools are constantly evolving wanting to stay abreast with current 'best practice.' Re-thinking our current pedagogies will help us to ensure that teaching and learning remains relevant and applicable to our 'digital native' children born into a digitally rich world. While I return to school with more questions than answers, I have appreciated the opportunity to delve into what future focused personalized learning looks; the principles that underpin it, the teaching and learning practices that we enable and retain, while considering future focused teaching and learning pathways.

- What could future teaching and learning at Yendarra look like and what makes it different to our current teaching and learning practices?
- What kind of teaching and learning do our students need for their future in a rapidly changing world?
- How do we embrace personalized learning while still respecting the traditional values of our Maori and Pasifika community who value traditional teaching practices?

- How do we provide teachers and students better flexibility? (resources, time, technology, learning spaces)
- How do we 'let go' unnecessary control while maintaining high expectations, rigor and purposeful learning?

The big question is how we integrate personalized inquiry learning into our successful current teaching and learning practices without compromising our achievement in literacy and numeracy, still the *'bread and butter'* in any school, and especially in a 1a decile school where English may not be the child's first language and homes may not have internet access or useful digital tools.

An analogy to the change needed in pedagogical practices can be made through a recent visit to Jakarta, where on the same street, the contrast between the old and the new is stark. On one side of the street, there are the simple makeshift shelters (our traditional pedagogy in traditional teaching spaces) made from whatever scrap resources could be found, and on the other side of the street there are ultra- modern buildings (our 21st Century pedagogy and learning spaces.)

Personalized Learning seems to be the current chant for education so what is personalized learning?

Research tells us that learning is much more than simply acquiring new knowledge and concepts. It involves thinking and learners need to be actively engaged in ways that allow them to process, interpret and adapt experiences.

Personalizing learning allows a learner to take control of their own learning. Children like adults, learn differently and best when it is at their own pace and to their own rhythm. It is the tailoring of learning to match the learning needs of the learner, and to support the development of their personal passions and interests. Their learning needs, interests, and capability determine the pace of learning.

Personalized learning is best when combined with an inquiry based approach to learning; an approach that recognizes the importance of student voice and choice and of linking new learning to the existing knowledge, experience and interests of the student. This approach to learning helps students 'learn to learn' equipping them with the skills and dispositions to more independently investigate questions, problems, issues and interests.

Teaching with an inquiry mindset changes the way we see our role and the way we see students, bringing new challenges for teachers.

Findings

As unique individuals, we all learn differently with no two individuals learning in the same way, nor do any of us bring the same prior knowledge to a learning experience.

Personalized learning is not *'free range'* where pupils are left to their own devices to do as they please.

Students:

- understand how they learn
- actively engage in ways that allows them to process, interpret and adapt experiences
- own and drive their learning
- are co-designers of the curriculum and their learning environment

"Personalized learning is learning that is initiated by students themselves; typically when a student initiates a learning experience or exploration, they learn more." (Ramey and Ramey, 2004)

Specializing in the physiology of the brain, Baroness Susan Greenfield researches the impact of 21st century technologies on the mind. Her team are concerned about the development of kid's brains if they live in a world seen through a screen and are at risk of 'communicating with their fingers instead of their mouths.' She expects empathy to plummet as communicating via a screen doesn't teach children empathy, body language or voice tone.

Implications

Yendarra's classroom buildings reflect a time when 'sit and get' was considered the only pedagogy that led to learning. They remain the same as they were originally designed in 1968 and retain the suggestion of an outdated teaching and learning model. However, the reality of our pedagogical practices is very different to this style of teaching and is moving with the times and reflects some innovation and risk taking.

Our current classroom situation is a technical issue and one that can be easily addressed. The adaptive change requiring a shift in our habits, roles, identity and way of thinking for some, may be trickier. Personalized learning for our teachers is crucial as at one end of a spectrum we have experienced, highly effective teachers and at the other end of the spectrum in 2016, we will have several 'Learner Teachers' freshly graduated who will need to focus on classroom management and the 'bread and butter' curriculum before moving onto personalizing learning for their students.

Benefits

"Personalizing learning is a key strategy for improving student engagement and academic achievement." West-Burnham 2010, Welt 2010

The advantage of technology in today's environment, is that students can become experts on whatever it is that 'lights their fire'. They can do their own learning and become the coach, collaborator and teacher.

Using a netbook, Google docs and blogging to improve learning outcomes, increased engagement; for instance it may provide the freedom for students to write creatively rather than being inhibited by the ability to form letters correctly or the speed of handwriting.

Using the internet also provides expert support, coaching and mentoring. We can learn anything, anytime, anywhere simply with a click of the mouse.

Conclusions

Education is facing the greatest period of rapid change it has ever experienced. Innovative learning environments, developing inquiry learning and how to deliver an increased level of personalization and student agency in learning, require schools to make behavioural changes that have endured for decades. 21st century learning requires an innovative, entrepreneurial approach if schools are to ensure that we are constantly evolving and adapting to best meet our student, parent, whānau, and community needs in a rapidly changing world.

I have been fortunate this year to enjoy several trips to other places in the World – Australia, Indonesia, United Kingdom and Eastern Europe. At times I was a solitary traveler which allowed me the luxury to simply be an observer.

I wondered..... As we have become more 'connected' using digital tools have we in fact actually become less 'connected?' Once upon a time if we lost our way in a foreign place, we would have simply asked someone for help; now all we need to do is consult with our phone. Waiting at the bus stop once we would have conversed with others in face to face dialogue, now everyone seems to walk with the eyes fixed to a screen. As we explore new adventures, have we become so transfixed on having to view the world through a device and have lost the joy of simply being and seeing the world through our own eyes, living and enjoying the present moment? As Kath Murdoch would say "Just wondering."

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