

PRINCIPAL SABBATICAL REPORT



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Hokitika Primary School

September 2015

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa
No Ingarani ahau
He tumuaki ahau ki te Kura Tuatahi o Hokitika
Ko Kath Martin toku ingoa
No reira
Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- Donna Hessel – Acting Principal for the period of the sabbatical
- Hokitika Primary School staff and community for supporting this sabbatical
- Bette Blanche WGINZ
- Principals and staff of the schools I visited;
 - Tokoroa North School
 - Peregian Springs State School, Queensland
 - Sunshine Beach State School, Queensland
 - Koraunui School, Stokes Valley

To the people I met and the schools I visited, thank you for being so accommodating and welcoming by sharing your journey to becoming the wonderful places of learning that you are today. Your passion to give students the support and opportunities to become self-managing learners and wonderful citizens of our world inspired me to continue to broaden my horizons and deepen my own understanding of how to help make the world a better place.

Background to the Sabbatical

When I was appointed to the position of Principal at Hokitika Primary School in 2013, I was the fifth Principal in five years. Staff had survived a ‘revolving door’ regime of change after change, MOE intervention, a commissioner in charge, and a very willing but inexperienced Board. There was a need to build relationships, put systems in place, review and develop a meaningful local curriculum (still a work in progress) and to restore the faith of the local community. It takes the commitment of the whole team to achieve this, and I want to thank everyone connected to Hokitika Primary School for their dedication to working towards a place of learning that is solid, inspirational and meeting the needs of every single student.

There are a lot of systems and programmes out there which aim to support a school-wide development, and it is difficult to decide which is the best fit for our setting. For many years I have been interested in the work of William Glasser and his ‘Quality School – Managing

children without Coercion', Choice Theory and Lead Management Theory. This Sabbatical leave has given me the time and space to explore the Glasser Philosophy and talk with those who know how life-changing the practice of Choice Theory can be for anybody who chooses to live this way.

Purpose of the Sabbatical

- To increase my knowledge and experience of how NZ and Australian schools are using the 'Glasser Quality Schools' philosophy and framework to support teaching and learning.
- To explore the leadership structures that supported and produced the Quality School.
- To examine the methods that schools had used to determine their progress towards becoming a Quality School.
- To examine the overall effectiveness of a Quality School and how this is measured.

Starter Questions used at Interviews

- Tell me about your journey – how did you get started with Glasser?
- What was the school culture prior to / and following the introduction of Choice Theory and Lead management?
- What change processes and strategies did you use to introduce the philosophy of Quality Schools?
- What do you consider to be the major challenges that you have faced?
- How are the Board and Community involved?
- What are the challenges for sustainability / the future?

KEY FINDINGS:

'Glasser is not something you impose on a school - it is a belief system'

Dr Gwen Sands Principal Peregian Springs State School, Queensland.

'It is a way of being – not a set of things to do.'

'High performance is achieved through personal responsibility.'

Gerard O'Brien 'Intensive Self-Management Support' person Peregian Springs State School and Sunshine Beach State School, Queensland

1. Getting started with Glasser

- The journey for all schools started with one person undertaking the 'Basic Intensive Training' offered by the Glasser Institute – which changed their personal approach to life and their approach to their teaching, through the use of Choice Theory, Lead Management, Five Basic Needs and the Seven Connecting Habits. (see APPENDIX)
- Through the observable changes in student attitude and behaviour, other teachers became interested and wanted to know what had changed.
- The school-wide changes happened gradually as the Basic Training was offered to all staff and many chose to take it on board. Some staff members declined the opportunity to train.
- The changes to personal habits and ways of relating were 'hard work' for most people as it meant a change of language and letting go of external-controlling behaviour.
- The Australian Schools have been working this way since 1993. The Principal of Peregrin Springs School trained in 1993 while working at Sunshine Beach School, then introduced the 'Glasser way of being' as the foundation Principal at Peregrin Springs when it opened in 2010.
- The New Zealand schools have been involved since 1996 and 2004 respectively.
- All schools found that it took around 3- 4 years for the school culture to change as Choice Theory became embedded (with the exception of Peregrin Springs State School which started with the Glasser framework.)
- Staff training and/or refreshment is offered regularly – every year or every term.

2. Changes in the School Culture

- As teachers implemented the Glasser beliefs into their classroom and changed the way they worked – the students responded immediately and within a few months other teachers (and parents) were aware of positive changes.
- Within 6 months, Year 6 students in a NZ school were completely self-managing.
- All schools reported a very high trust levels amongst staff which is directly related to the way staff treat each other.
- The strong shared understanding and knowledge ensured that every teacher had the same approach to students who needed support in the playground – the Glasser Questions, explicit behaviour codes, Choice Pie e.g.
- Changes in playground behaviour were noticed almost immediately.
- The constant reinforcing of social skills across the school ensures that 90% of the positive behaviour strategies actually take root!
- Newly enrolled students are baffled by the non-coercive school culture, but quickly learn to fit in and make positive choices.
- Students who need support are supported by all staff.
- All schools stated that 'Without doubt, it is very hard work – but extremely rewarding.'
- 'This is not a behaviour management system – it is giving the students strategies for living their life!'

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3. Student Achievement

- 'Outcomes rocketed'
- 'Right up there with leading schools in Queensland for NAPLAN (National Assessment Programme for Literacy and Numeracy)'
- 'Despite a transient student population, our results are all in the 98- 100% achieving at National Levels.'
- 'Happy children work harder and achieve more.'
- 'There will always be those students for whom relationships and self-management are more important than meeting National expectations.'
- 'The external review officers cannot believe our student achievement (high) but the data speaks for itself.'
- 'Our National Standards results are excellent when compared with other schools of the same decile.'

4. Challenges / Management / Concerns

- The Principal appointment is crucial as he / she is one of the key drivers and must undertake training in order to fully support staff. A newly appointed coercive principal can undo much of the positive work.
- The change from 'Boss Management' to 'Lead management' for Leaders towards staff, and staff towards students.
- Principal and Senior Leaders become the key drivers.
- On-going training for all staff - this is also a budget concern
- For every staff member to take responsibility for their own needs / development, and to be aware on the needs of others.
- Some staff simply do not buy-into Choice Theory at a personal level, but do follow the school-wide procedures.
- Three of the schools have one full-time teacher released to support students who need in-depth relationship teaching (Choice Theory) along with their parents. The two Australian schools share this staff member on a 50/50 basis.
- Schools have developed a very high level of trust between Management and Staff – a very clear message of 'You are the Professional.' 'You are educated to University Level.' 'You are the one who knows those children well. You design programmes that meet the needs of your children.' 'You know the areas where you need to develop.' 'If you want someone to observe and give you feedback, you arrange for another staff member to do that.'

5. Board and Community support

- Happy students and happy teachers speak for themselves – all Boards loved what was happening in their school and gave 100% support.
- One school had a folder in their foyer which contained letters from their parent population. There would have been more than one hundred letters, thanking the principal, praising staff, stating how very happy their child was, how much their child enjoyed their teacher, how much learning was happening, the lack of

bullying and the amount of care and respect shown by all learners. This community certainly supported their school!

- One principal told me that their recent Education Review noted the happiness of children and staff – how could parents not be happy with this?
- Many parents communicated that their child was learning life skills and was teaching others at home.

6. Sustainability

Using the Glasser philosophy within a school has the potential to change lives for the better. Teaching and understanding the power in operating in an internal control model allows people to live lives full of positive relationships and personal happiness.

In a Primary setting, we have six years to influence a student and his family. By working with Choice Theory we can support people to have better outcomes in their lives and give children a framework for making positive choices in their future.

By choosing to work in the Choice Theory method we go against the External Control method of living our lives (which our society thrives on) therefore it is **hard work** – everyone I spoke to acknowledged this. Annual review of practice, systems and procedures keep all stakeholders involved and committed to change. Using the Glasser questioning ‘What do we want to happen’ ‘Is what we are doing getting what we want?’ ‘What do we need to do to get what we want?’ ‘What is the plan?’ drives everything from Policy Development to Teacher Appraisal.

Within a school, the changes are only as sustainable as the people who are ‘in charge’. As one school experienced, the change of Principal led to a return to a coercive way of being. All of the schools I visited were led by very experienced professionals – who are nearing retirement. So, how do we ensure the school continues to thrive and grow even stronger?

New Zealand schools have the freedom to employ their own staff. Boards and Senior Management would have the opportunity to be very specific when writing a job description. They could choose to consider only those applicants who were experienced in or open to learning Choice Theory. Australian Schools have no say in who comes in as staff – the State Government controls who is employed at each school. However, both schools stated that as teachers come on board, they quickly immerse themselves in the school culture.

One NZ Primary School had already identified a young teacher who was passionate about Choice Theory and who could become a major driver in the future. Individual schools must find a way to preserve the work that has been done and to continue to grow in the future.

Everything in life that works or does not work is based around RELATIONSHIP.

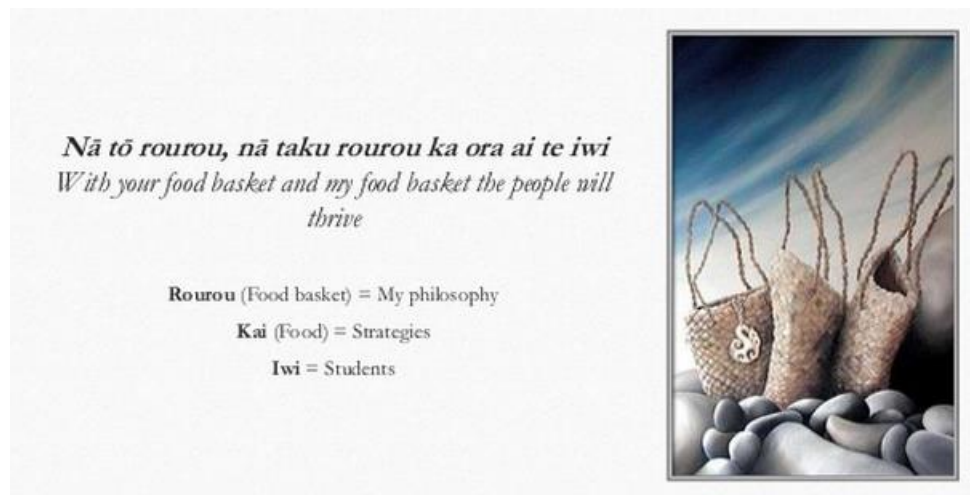
Every school has the opportunity to give their community the tools to live successful and happy lives.

CONCLUSION

The Glasser model for managing students without coercion which includes Choice Theory, Lead Management, knowledge of the 5 basic Needs and the 7 Connecting Habits, is a very successful approach which impacts positively on school culture and student behaviour. Student achievement results rise as students learn to self-manage by making positive choices and understanding consequences. When we have an awareness of the 5 Basic Needs and how each person responds differently according to their particular needs, we develop an acceptance and understanding of human differences.

Should a school decide to adopt the Glasser principles, they must be mindful of the hard work involved, the commitment needed, the ongoing development of staff, and the support needed for the school leaders who will be leading the way. All staff (including support staff) should be given the opportunity to complete the 4 day 'Basic Training' offered by the WGINZ (William Glasser Institute of New Zealand) then to develop 'their way of being' using the tools provided. The change in THINKING is a big challenge for staff as they begin to use their new knowledge to solve problems and conduct relationships.

If you want a happy, healthy school where students and staff love being there, where fun is the norm, and you are not afraid of hard work – then this approach may be for you. To change from External Control to Intrinsic Motivation is a big challenge in the present educational climate where competition and high achievement are valued outcomes. By putting RELATIONSHIPS in the centre of everything we do, we will see everything change for the better. The results are worth it and the knowledge that we really are building something life-changing for everybody's future makes it well worth the effort!



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September 2015

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APPENDIX

CHOICE THEORY:

Choice Theory explains that, for all practical purposes, we choose *everything* we do, including the misery we feel. Other people can neither make us miserable nor make us happy. All we can get from them is information. But by itself information cannot make us do or feel anything. It goes into our brains, where we process it and then decide what to do. Choice Theory shows us how we can make **better choices**. It teaches us that we are more in control of our lives than we realise. We can learn through Choice Theory how people actually function: how we combine what is written in our genes with what we learn as we live our lives.

We learn how external control destroys relationships; those who have the power (agents of government, parents, teachers etc) use controlling, coercing or forcing to get others to do what they want them to do.

Choice Theory is an internal control psychology which gives us the tools to make positive changes that determine the quality of our relationships in all areas of our lives.

BOSS MANAGEMENT vs LEAD MANAGEMENT

A boss DRIVES.

A leader LEADS.

A boss relies on AUTHORITY.

A leader relies on COOPERATION.

A boss says 'I'.

A leader says "WE".

A boss creates FEAR.

A leader creates CONFIDENCE.

A boss KNOWS how.

A leader SHOWS how.

A boss creates RESENTMENT.

A leader breeds ENTHUSIASM.

A boss fixes BLAME.

A leader fixes MISTAKES.

A boss makes work DRUDGERY.

A leader makes work INTERESTING.

GLASSER'S HEIRACHY of NEEDS

BASIC NEED	Behaviour that indicates this need is		
	Low	Average	High
Survival	Willing to take more risks that most of your friends.	Similar attitude to taking risks as most people you know.	Lives a very conservative lifestyle, less willing to take risks.
Love and Belonging (measured by how much we are willing to give)	Hardly any desire to give. Only a few people in your life and you are not close to any of them.	Similar attitude to giving compared to family members and friends. If you are very close to just a few people – means a high desire for love and less for belonging.	Your world is filled with people you get along well with. Kind, loving towards those who cannot love back e.g severely handicapped
Power	Don't care much about having your own way, don't want to own anyone, won't fight for the last word.	You care somewhat.	Always want to have your own way, have the last word, to own people, to be seen as right all the time.
Freedom	It doesn't bother you to conform.	Prepared to follow rules that make sense, happy to stay in one place with the same group of people.	Feels and acts as 'no-one owns them' Can't stand the idea of following rules, staying in one place, hates conforming.
Fun	Don't want to make much effort to learn, depend on others for enjoyment. Very low if you hardly ever laugh.	A little less effort for learning and laughing than High	Enjoy learning, laugh a lot, enjoys making others laugh at what you do.

GLASSER VALUES for a Happy Life (or a Happy School)

Be Safe

Be Responsible

Be Respectful

Be Courteous

7 CONNECTING HABITS	7 DEADLY HABITS
Listening Supporting Encouraging Respecting Trusting Accepting Negotiating	Criticising Blaming Complaining Nagging Threatening Punishing Bribing

GLASSER QUESTIONS when faced with challenging behaviour or a problem to solve:

1. What is it exactly that you want?
2. Is what you are doing now getting you what you want?
3. What do you need to do to get what you want?
4. So, what's your plan?