

To identify strategies used by New Zealand secondary school leaders that enhance the learning needs of a diverse range of students, in particular, priority groups such as Maori and Pasifika learners.

Jane Horton
Deputy Principal
Awatapu College
434 Botanical Road
Palmerston North

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I would also like to acknowledge the Awatapu College Board of Trustees and Principal Gary Yeatman, for supporting my sabbatical application. A special thanks to Gary and the Senior Management Team for accommodating my needs and picking up the different aspects of my role throughout the duration of the leave. I will always be indebted to Peter Howarth for undertaking a significant part of my job during my absence.

Finally, I would like to thank the Ministry of Education for taking the initiative to extend the sabbatical programme to include Senior Managers. From my perspective, it is a highly effective means of providing relevant and meaningful professional development to school leaders. Importantly, I believe the opportunity to share information with colleagues in other schools is a valuable way of building capacity – the ability of a school or educator to grow, progress and improve.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify strategies used by New Zealand secondary school leaders that enhance the learning needs of a diverse range of students, in particular, priority groups such as Maori and Pasifika learners.

The main outcome was to detail different innovations that have contributed specifically to enhancing students' learning needs through:

- raising academic achievement,
- increasing engagement in learning,
- enhancing parents' ability to support learning.

The study also examined the means by which school leaders have successfully managed these changes. As a result of the findings, programmes that could be introduced at Awatapu College to enhance learning would be identified and a plan to effectively implement and sustain the initiative would be outlined.

Key Questions

- What programmes have been introduced to enhance the learning needs of a diverse range of students, in particular, Maori and Pasifika students?
- What innovations have led to an improvement in student achievement?
- How has student engagement been enhanced? What evidence/data supports this improvement?
- What initiatives have developed parent's capacity to support their child's learning?
- How have changes been embedded and sustained?

Description of the Professional Learning Activity

The study has identified the different types of programmes introduced by secondary Principals or Deputy Principals to improve the learning needs of students, in particular, Maori and Pasifika students. The means by which such change has been implemented was also discussed and first-hand advice regarding managing and sustaining change identified.

During the period of leave, five secondary schools in the North Island of New Zealand (decile 2 to 9) were visited. I met first hand with either Principals, Deputy Principals and/or relevant staff to discuss the initiatives they identified as being most effective. In addition, phone interviews were conducted with one principal and one ex-Principal from schools in the South Island. Meetings with approximately thirty staff were held in total.

Professional readings were undertaken on leadership and change management to gain further insight into how to most effectively lead and sustain change. A short synopsis of each text is included. Each summary highlights key ideas that resonate with issues associated with the change process.

Summary of Key Findings - School Visits and Interviews

The findings have been grouped into three broad categories based on the key questions central to the project. For recording purposes the initiatives have been placed in the category which is the best fit. However, in reality the idea may serve to address any number of the key questions.

<p>1. Programmes introduced and strategies employed to enhance the learning needs and academic results of a diverse range of students, in particular, Maori and Pasifika students.</p>

Academic Monitoring

- **Appointment of Maori and Pasifika Advisors or Deans.** The key role is to monitor the academic progress of Maori and/or Pasifika students. The Advisors or Deans meet with and mentor individual students. Regular meetings are held with parents to discuss academic progress, career pathways, university and tertiary funding applications, for example. Facebook and texting are effective tools for communicating student progress and organising meeting times with parents. Strategies have resulted in strong working relationships with families. In another school, advisors also report to a nominated member of the Senior Management Team. They meet with them on a regular basis to discuss findings and also produce an annual report examining results for Maori and Pasifika students.
- **Appointment of Academic Dean/Director –** The main responsibility is to monitor academic progress - initially to identify patterns and trends in data then to establish areas for improvement. Data includes academic data as well as other indicators of success such as subject related competitions. Groups of students at risk are identified and their needs are used to identify goals for them as part of the strategic planning process. Depending on the outcomes, the Academic Dean/Director may then focus attention on a particular target group of students, for example, struggling senior students (approximately 20 students) or high achieving students engaging in Scholarship or Cambridge International Examinations. Regular meetings are held with the parents/caregivers of the target groups. At one school the Academic Director developed a Gifted and Talented Programme and established a group called the “Ministry of Inspiration.” Senior students in this group were actively involved in organising an annual conference which ran workshops for students from local schools.

Typically, data analysis focuses on overall results in NCEA Levels 1, 2 and 3 compared with national data and decile data. Greater attention is being given to measuring performance against:

1. Number of Merit and Excellence endorsements.
2. Retention rates, in particular the number of Maori and Pasifika students remaining past Year 12.
3. The gap between priority groups and European/Asian student results.
4. Value added data – data used to track progress from Year 9 through to the end of Year 13 to determine if students have achieved past their perceived ability.

In some schools results and the identification of students at risk of failing, are placed regularly on the staffroom wall for teachers to view. This increases school-wide discussion amongst teachers about individual student's progress.

Two schools participated in the Ministry of Education Achievement 2013-17 Programme aka A.R.T: Achievement, Retention, Transition initiative. This programme was designed to assist with the development of "value added" data, tracking and monitoring of students, identification of students 'at risk' of not achieving NCEA Level 2 and development of individual learning plans.

Another school compared Canterbury University tests at Year 9 with Year 13 NCEA Level 3 results.

- **Department Reports and Board of Trustees' Feedback** – Department Reports are produced by completing a template designed to ensure consistency in information reported as well as to keep information to a manageable size – three to four pages per department. Result data is collated by the Principal's nominee to ensure consistency in analysis. All reports were bound into one document. In one school all Heads of Department met with the Board of Trustees in a meeting that followed a format which required them to speak for 5 minutes. During this time they discuss two academic outcomes they are proud of (one junior and one senior), one area they are currently working on and a concern/gripe or something they would place on their wish list. Three minutes were then allocated for questions to be taken from board members.
- **Core Class Meetings** – Senior managers held regular meetings with core subject teachers to monitor progress being made by students in the class. In this school, Learning Support has oversight of academic monitoring.

Mentoring Programmes

- **Voluntary Mentoring Scheme** - Students at risk of failing are identified from the analysis of NCEA data. Teachers are asked to voluntarily mentor one of these students and provide support by meeting with them on a regular basis. It is an effective way of trialling a mentoring scheme and to gain further evidence for the idea before introducing it school-wide. In another school students were identified in a similar manner and all teachers were asked to select one student to mentor.

Another model included senior Maori and Pasifika students inviting teachers of their choice to be their mentor. The expectation is that the teachers would meet with the students on a fortnightly basis. Students who did not ask a teacher meet with the Pasifika Deans instead. The Deans regularly send out ideas to teachers that could be used at the mentoring sessions and surveyed or met with Pasifika students for feedback on their overall progress.

A group of Year 12 students in another school were mentored as an initiative established by a Head of House. Activities from the Learning Leadership series by Dr Tim Hawkes were used to support students' learning in addition to strategies on how to overcome The Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve and utilise a SOLO (The structure of observed learning outcomes) Taxonomy that describes levels of increasing complexity in students' understanding of subjects. In this case, the taxonomy describes for students the learning and study habits required to gain Achieved, Merit and Excellence results.

- **Big Sister, Little Sister** – A Year 9 Pasifika mentoring programme that is designed to give Year 9 Pasifika students support, tools and information that will help them to succeed. Students are allocated a 'Big Sister' who is in the same vertical form class. 'Big Sisters' are given a list of ideas of what they can do to connect with their 'Little Sister' i.e. discussing academic goals and involvement in co-curricular activities.
- **Homework/Mentoring Groups** – This is run by Academic Deans or Academic Student Leaders. Expert senior students are brought in to assist other students with specific learning needs. Students are also encouraged to invite teachers who they know will have the relevant subject specific knowledge to support them. Academic Deans also invite teachers to attend, when necessary, as one way of strengthening relationships through one-on-one coaching. At one school, the homework tutoring group run by an Academic Student Leader and volunteer Year 13 students had made a

conscious decision not to involve teaching staff to protect the integrity of the student-run programme.

- **Targeted Mentoring Programme** - Groups of students are identified using academic data. Letters are sent to parents and students to invite them to be part of the programme. Students who choose to participate attend a weekly meeting with their mentor during a normal form time period. The mentor group is made up of approximately eight students and all staff who are not form teachers have a targeted mentor group.

As a consequence of establishing these additional groups, there are fewer students in each form class. The reduction in numbers during this dedicated form time, allows form teachers to effectively mentor the remaining group of students. Mentors take a greater responsibility for the welfare and academic needs of the students in their charge. Mentors and form teachers, meet with the parents/caregivers of the students they take responsibility for, during a 15 minute formal interview towards the end of Term One.

During this annual interview learning and/or NCEA goals are set and career aspirations identified. One of the student's Learning Goals may be required to align with a school-wide goal, for example, a personal literacy goal. Outcomes are recorded on Kamar and the information replaces the traditional form teacher report comment. This information can be viewed by parents via the Parent Portal. The second interview of the year is the traditional meeting with the subject teacher.

- **External Mentoring Programmes** - Use of outside providers/agencies or ex-students to work with small groups of students.

Teaching and Learning

- **Unique Learning Programmes** – A peer reading programme was established to improve boys' reading and literacy skills with the overall goal of closing the gap between girls' and boys' achievement at Level 3. The gap closed to 3% after the programme had been in place for five years. The programme was accompanied by school-wide professional development for all teachers in strategies that can be used to raise boys' achievement. An outside provider was used to run professional development sessions for staff.

Another school developed a programme/option subject at both Years 10 and 11 aimed at enhancing the learning outcomes for at risk Maori students. The programme draws on the skills of the teachers charged with designing the

courses which focus specifically on students developing their leadership and fitness skills. The Year 11 course offers a combination of Achievement and Unit standards to the value of approximately 20 credits and culminates with students completing a triathlon. A Year 9 programme is currently being designed so that the needs of at risk students can be addressed earlier on in their schooling.

- **Appraisal System** – A strong link is made between school wide goals and appraisal goals. In one school the appraisal process is aimed at teachers improving their classroom practice through the use of the Teaching as Inquiry model. A booklet has been designed in which teachers identify goals for raising achievement. It also includes an inquiry checklist and a place to record professional learning conversations conducted with colleagues, methods used to collect student voice and outcomes based on the data gathered. The document forms the basis of the appraisal interview.
- **Participation in Ministry of Education Projects – PB4L: Positive Behaviour for Learning, Kia Eke Panuku: Building on Success and the University of Otago – PLD Pasifika Success Years 1 to 13.** All projects have been identified by the schools involved as having positive outcomes.

PB4L has resulted in the formation of school-wide systems and practices that support students to make positive behaviour choices. A significant decline in classroom management issues has been reported by one of the schools.

Kia Eke Panuku encourages schools to analyse student voice in terms of teacher effectiveness. This student feedback, along with peer observations or shadow-coaching undertaken by colleagues, provide the evidence teachers can use to plan for changes in practice to improve outcomes for Maori and Pasifika students. The Culturally Responsive and Relational Pedagogy Lesson Observation Tool is used to identify the extent to which teachers during lessons exhibit behaviours that are responsive to the learning and cultural needs of Maori and Pasifika students.

The Pasifika Success project has received positive support for providing guidance in how to forge stronger links with Pasifika families and effective student mentoring programmes.

- **Professional Development** – Participation by teachers in NZQA Best Practice workshops, the marking of external exams and/or being a subject moderator has proved to be a highly effective way to gain insight into

changes that can be made to teaching programmes to enhance learning outcomes for students.

2. Ideas Introduced to Enhance Student Engagement in Learning.

Student Voice

- **Maori and Pasifika Student Groups** – Formation of Maori and Pasifika student groups, either combined as is the case in one school or two separate groups as was the situation in another. These groups for example, planned activities for Maori Language Week, ran a Homework Club and designed questionnaires to gain student feedback.
- **Appointment of Student Academic Leaders** – Leaders are appointed using the same process as for the election of head boy/girl, house, arts, sports and house captains. The students' role is to promote the school theme and report on academic progress at school assemblies. This might include the sharing of inspirational stories of current students and ex-pupils, motivational poems, feedback on current academic trends, study ideas from teachers as well as promoting participation in scholarship programmes. Student Academic Leaders at this school also initiated the running of a school homework programme including a roster of senior students to be in attendance. In one school the Student Academic Leader was the chair of an Academic Council made up of student representatives/captains from all subject faculties. The committee implemented ideas to promote academic achievement, for example, designing inter-house quizzes, sharing ideas with academic leaders in other schools and interviewing other students about how they study and balance their time, for publication in the school newsletter. The Academic Dean/Director was responsible for oversight of Academic Leaders.
- **Speed Subject Dating** – A lunch time subject choice information session based on a speed-dating format. Students are able to meet with senior students representing subject areas for a short period of time to obtain information about a subject they may wish to study. This student-led method potentially reduces the opportunity for teachers to “talk-up” their subject.
- **Exit Interview/Feedback from Year 13 students** - Interviews are conducted with all or a cross-section of Year 13 students to gain feedback on whether they have fulfilled their potential, the highlights of their secondary education and their recommendations for change. Outcomes are used to inform strategic planning, course design, annual school theme, student goal setting

etc. In one school feedback was being used to build a profile of what it looks like to be a graduate from their school.

Award Systems

- **Junior Certificate and Diploma Programme** – The Year 9 Certificate and Year 10 Junior Diploma provide a framework to recognise students for their achievement, work habits and attitudes. It is designed to motivate students to give of their best in their classwork and to develop habits that support their learning now and in preparation for NCEA. Grade points from achievement in common assessments are combined with grade points from attitude ratings to determine whether a student will graduate that year or not. Depending on the total number of grade points, students can graduate or if they have done extremely well, they may graduate with Distinction or High Distinction.

Points for the achievement component are gained from one or two assessments per subject targeted as Year 10 Junior Diploma assessments and for the attitude component from points allocated to punctuality, respect, engagement, preparedness and the meeting of deadlines.

During the year if students are not on track to graduate they are required to complete activities to get them back on track, for instance, additional homework or revision activities, attending Learning Support programmes at school and returning to complete work after school or in the holidays. Students who do not graduate are expected to repeat part of or an entire year.

- **Academic Blues** – Academic Blues (traditionally presented for outstanding achievement in sporting codes) are presented to students who achieve Excellence Endorsements in NCEA Levels 1 and 2. The Principal holds regular meetings with Level 3 students who are striving to achieve an Excellence endorsement. In Term One the meeting is to set goals and Term Three to review progress. Members of the Senior Management Team mentor students who are striving to achieve Merit and Excellence at Levels 1 and 2.

Key Messages and Images Promoting Success

- **Key Messages** – A strategy to change a school's culture by relentlessly conveying a clear message to students. Messages include that "It Is Cool to Achieve" and that aiming to achieve "just enough" is not acceptable or that it

is about achieving “Personal Excellence”, “Leaving school with the best level of achievement you can attain” and that “there is nothing mediocre at this school”. Messages are conveyed in school-wide assemblies, newsletters, Wall of Fame, for example. In one school students as a result of the rigorous monitoring of students who did not achieve were give one week to rectify the matter or face returning to school during the holidays to undertake further study.

- **Wall of Fame** – Three high achieving ex-students are inducted into the school’s hall of fame on an annual basis.
- **School-Wide Themes** - Annual school-wide theme or slogan which embodies current annual goals or school-wide learning focus. Examples include, “Read to Achieve”, “Believe You Can Achieve”. Themes are incorporated into all full school and year level assemblies and reinforced in newsletters. Posters are displayed on classroom walls. Student Academic Leaders use themes as the basis for their assembly presentations too.

3. Initiatives used to develop parents’/caregivers’ capacity to support learning.

- **Live/Real Time and Paper-less Reporting** – Traditional reports (interim and twice annual formal reports), which typically have a five week lag from the start of writing to being printed and sent home with students, are replaced with real time achievement feedback and more frequent feedback on attitude and work completion.

Using the student/parent portal teachers give assessment feedback in the form of a written comment in the markbook at the time the result is published to the portal. This comment replaces the traditional, sometimes generic comment, typically written on a bi-annual subject report. This comment makes a point about the assessment result, any opportunity for reassessment and the next learning step/s – similar to the way it might appear on the student’s script. Importantly, the feedback to the student and parent/caregiver is immediate as it is published instantly to the portal. The number of assessments for which feedback is required can vary, however. Two of the schools visited required feedback to be given on one assessment per term. One school had set release dates for the ‘go-live’ of each of the assessments, whereas another let departments monitor when results would be published.

At the end of the year, comments and results are drawn together and collated into a more traditional reporting format, converted to a pdf file and stored on the portal as a record of the student's results and feedback given for the year.

In addition to the assessment feedback, ratings regarding a student's effort/work completion, behaviour and curriculum level are reported on each term in one school and every two weeks in another school – all of these reports are released to the portal at the same time for all year levels. This gives students and parents/caregivers regular feedback from teachers on their attitude toward learning in a timely manner – allowing for any issues to be addressed immediately. Each of these reports requires a simple click-box/criteria selection, typically from a three or four point scale, and does not include a written comment. Teachers are expected to have followed up on a poor result by contacting the parents and recording this contact on Kamar.

As both forms of reporting are accessible from the Portal no hard copies are issued to students. Both schools dispensed with detailed report style guides and with formalised proof-reading processes. In one school Year 9 parents/caregivers are shown how to use the Portal at a Year 9 parent evening.

- **Principal's Forums** - Feedback from parents is sourced by inviting a random sample of parents from one particular student year level to attend a one hour meeting (5pm - 6pm) with the principal. Direction for future change is identified after parent feedback from these meetings as well as from staff and student opinion. Questions put to parents/caregivers include – What do we do well? What is not being done well? What are your burning questions? Key issues that have arisen from these meetings include – student wellbeing, problems associated with over assessing and the implications of BYOD (bring your own device). Meetings with parents from other year levels are held at different times throughout the year.
- **Year 8 Interviews** – All teachers are involved in enrolling Year 8 students in an interview with the student and parent/caregiver during senior exams, Term Three. A full day is used to complete the enrolment/subject choice interviews. Bookings are made by parents/caregivers of Year 8 students using an online booking system.
- **Maori and Pasifika Parent Representatives** on the Board of Trustees and formation of Maori Whanau and Pasifika Whanau groups.

- **PTA Seminars** – Run by the PTA for parents/caregivers on current topics of interest to parents/caregivers such as student wellbeing.
- **Father and Daughter Breakfasts** – a function designed to foster engagement with the school. These functions are held on an annual basis.

4. How have changes been decided on, embedded and sustained?

Advice on Change

- **New Project** – Decide firstly if the change is a strong fit with the strategic plans and school goals? What is a gaping need? What does the data say? What builds on current goals? What can be dropped or has had its day?
- **Student and Parent/Caregiver Voice** – What do your students and parents say? Listen to their concerns and suggestions for future change ideas?
- **Communication** – regularly communicate progress to staff. Get teacher feedback along the way. Don't be afraid to slow down if the pace is proving to be too fast.
- **Teaching and Learning** – focus on improving teaching practice and reducing administration. Streamline administrative processes so that teachers do only what they need to do.
- **Perseverance** – Don't give up on a new initiative too soon – give it time to settle in. It is easy to throw in the towel after one year.

Building Teacher Capabilities

- **Professional Learning Groups** – a forum for building teachers' expertise and capacity. Groups focus on school-wide change initiatives designed to enhance teaching and learning – Gifted and Talented, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, SOLO Taxonomy and BYOD. Groups are led by a teacher and are made up of representatives from each faculty who are expected to feedback and lead change in their respective departments. In some schools groups focus on one goal or theme for the year such as improving teachers' ICT skills and using technology effectively in the classroom.
- **Staff Voice** - Informal meetings held after school which are led by the Principal. Teachers attend and share ideas and examples of effective classroom practice. In one school the Principal meets with a cross-section of

teachers to get their perspective on key issues impacting on the school. Groups may be comprised of teachers who are new to the school or who have been teaching for different periods of time, for instance 5 to 10 years or 10 years and over.

Professional Readings - Summary of Key Findings

The Heart of Change – Real Life Stories of How People Change Their Organisations.

John P Kotter and Dan S Cohen

Harvard Business Review Press, 2002.

“...successful transformation is less about analysis and thinking and more about seeing and feeling.” Pg19

This book is an insightful examination of an eight-step change process backed by real-life business scenarios. It is thought provoking in that it challenges the more traditional use of in-depth data analysis, detailed corporate reports and presentations, for example, as the stimulus for organisational change and instead, advocates the need to influence people's emotions and feelings if buy in for real change is to be achieved. The knock-on effect of the all-important see-feel-change tactics are purported to inspire people to drive change whereas the analysis-think-change methods ultimately fail to change people's behaviour and in turn the all important transformation of the organisation.

Examples of how organisations have successfully motivated people to change using the see-feel-change dynamic, with ideas that have an emotional impact, are accompanied by valuable advice on how to keep urgency up, how to prioritise action, create short term wins and even rid yourself of work that grinds you down. The real challenge is to find stories from within your school that have the desired emotional impact!

The Principal – Three Keys to Maximising Impact

Michael Fullan

Jossey-Bass, 2014

“In my work in whole-system change, my colleagues and I have shown time and time again that if you give people skills (invest in capital), most of them will become more accountable.” Pg 26

If your experiences to date are telling you that overly prescriptive and stick-type approaches to performance appraisal (or any other change for that matter) serve to simply alienate teachers, you are not alone.

Fullan argues that unless the focus of the principal is on building teacher and school-wide capacity, wrongheaded accountability and imposed standards will serve not only to restrict the influence of the principal but will result in teachers being forced to “game” the system.

Rather than demanding accountability or increasing state levels of compliance, he advocates building the professional and social capital of teachers by providing them with opportunities to share practice that is focussed on progress. In short, Fullan believes that by improving teachers’ human and social capabilities they will become innately more accountable.

The benefits of developing teachers to be the very best by collaborating with peers, particularly in other schools is of interest, in light of our current government’s initiative to form cross-sector clusters for this very purpose. Caution is needed, however! Based on Fullan’s assertions there is a need to be wary of mandated changes that can reduce autonomy. Clearly, the ability to retain a school’s independence will be vital to the success of any initiative resulting from collaboration with other schools.

“The Next New Thing?” – Do You Need It? By Linda Bendikson

Perspectives Issue – February 2015. The University of Auckland, Centre for Educational Leadership. <http://www.uacel.ac.nz/perspectives/the-next-new-thing-do-you-need-it>

“The big risk in schools is that we often ‘take for granted’ that an innovation is positive...we need to be wary of innovation for the sake of innovation because every new thing has a cost and that cost may outweigh the benefits.”

The article identifies both the positive and negative outcomes of embracing the ‘next new thing’. Bendikson suggests that when innovation is not tightly aligned with the goal focus of the school a great deal of time, money and human resources can be wasted. Even more concerning is the cynicism and weariness amongst staff that can result when schools lurch from one new fad to another, without any proof of the benefits.

This article is a salutary and, perhaps, long-overdue reminder to leaders that a school’s vision needs to be the filter to decide whether a new idea is worthy of investment and if it will impact positively on students’ learning.

The Six Secrets of Change - What the Best Leaders Do to Help Their Organisations Survive and Thrive.

Michael Fullan

Jossey-Bass, 2008

“The job of leaders is to provide good direction while pursuing its implementation through purposeful peer interaction and learning in relation to results.” Pg 12.

In this book Fullan details his six secrets of change - Love your employees, Connect Peers with Purpose, Capacity Building Prevails, Learning is the Work, Transparency Rules and Systems Learn. With respect to change management, Fullan makes many pertinent points. Embedding strategies that foster continuous and purposeful peer interactions are at the crux of successful change. Fullan states that when colleagues interact purposefully, their expectations of each other create positive pressure to accomplish goals important to the group. His thesis can be used to support the potential value of Professional Learning Groups and perhaps goes some way to identifying what style of collaboration is frequently characteristic of high performing departments.

Fullan’s model endorses the idea that capacity building starts with the recruitment of staff who have great credentials and, importantly, are keen contributors – people who can do their best work in an organisation that places a priority on learning being the work. Combined with a high degree of transparency, through the continuous display of results, the collective outcome of these secrets is an organisation that learns from itself on a continuous basis.

Most importantly, Fullan warns of a concept termed the “halo effect” - a delusion that can deceive managers when they assume that what appears to be successful in one organisation might equally succeed in their own organisation. Fullan explains that once an organisation is seen to be successful, people typically attribute its success to traits evidenced in the organisation *after the fact*. In short, never take what you see or read at face value! Be warned!

Getting the Buggers to Behave – Third Edition

Sue Cowley

Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006

“One of the most essential characteristics of a good teacher is the ability to manage our students’ behaviour, so that we can help them to learn.” Pg 2.

There is no doubt that taking the time to reflect on your own teaching practice can be of benefit. Cowley’s book gives both new and experienced teachers the opportunity to examine a raft of different student management and control techniques. Whether it is the chance to glean new

ideas or simply to feel reassured that you have in place effective and well-tested techniques, this practical book is worth a read. It's great to see attention given to the importance of quality lesson planning if you are to achieve a well-behaved class. In the end, effective teaching and learning is central to raising achievement for all students.

Motivate Like a CEO

Suzanne Bates

McGraw Hill 2009

“What is a leader’s challenge? It is to clearly communicate mission and purpose with passion so that it inspires people and allows them to connect with their own sense of purpose.” Pg 7.

This book is a valuable and practical guide that details strategies and ideas on how to communicate. Hill outlines an array of ways to communicate your strategic vision that are designed to inspire people to take action.

In doing so, Hill emphasises the importance of, for example:

- getting input through the collective wisdom of others.
- sharing the facts so people see the logic of how and why they should do something different.
- using stories to make powerful points.
- utilising a mix of both logical and emotive language to allow the audience to analyse the facts as well as connect with an idea at an emotional level.

Further, Hill believes it is imperative to communicate a picture of the future and never to “bury the lead” – grab the audience from the start by presenting the compelling idea from the very beginning.

Hill also endorses a number of the change strategies identified in the schools visited, in particular,

- that in order to motivate and inspire people you need a theme or mission that not only resonates but is communicated again and again.
- feedback loops are essential to gaining feedback from staff working in all parts of the organisation – including the all-important clients.

The book is peppered with vignettes describing how leading organisations have effectively capitalised on such strategies. This book is a worthwhile read for all leaders wanting to enhance their communication skills in ways that will motivate their staff to act.

Changing Our Secondary Schools

Bali Haque

NCER Press, 2014

“In the case of Tomorrow’s Schools, teachers were expected to become more responsive to the needs of their students, but did not, because they were overwhelmed by the administrative demands of the reform and very little was done to actually support them.”
Pg 119

This book is an informative insight into the origins and impact of the most significant reforms that have taken place in secondary education since 1989, in particular, Tomorrow’s Schools.

What won’t come as a surprise to most teachers, is that Haque launches a stinging attack on the NCEA reform process. He describes it as flawed because of issues that stem from poor quality policy development, a lack of supporting research, and an absence of a mechanism for evaluating the reform’s impact on the performance of schools in terms of improving student achievement.

In an endeavour to address what is needed to change in our secondary schools, Haque sheds light on a number of other significant concerns – the issue of student equity and overcoming socioeconomic disadvantages, pitfalls in the analysis of PISA and NCEA data, drawbacks inherent in decile calculations, problems associated with the ERO review process and how fraught with difficulty it can be to compare the performance of one school with another. For this insight alone, the book is worth a read.

Credit has to be given to Haque for tackling the tough questions around how we measure school and teacher quality. The content of this book is challenging, and whether or not you agree with his recommendations, they are sure to be unsettling enough to test your own stance on these burning issues!

Summary of Findings

As a result of this study, common trends have been identified in the types of strategies schools are adopting to successfully raise the academic results and engagement levels of a diverse range of students, in particular, Maori and Pasifika students. Notably, the schools involved in this study had all reported improvements in student achievement. A number of the schools have had this positive progress acknowledged by the Ministry of Education.

These trends included the introduction of mentoring programmes, the appointment of Academic Deans (in some instances student academic leaders) and/or Maori and Pasifika Advisors as well as innovative teaching programmes and initiatives aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning. Participation in Ministry of Education projects, appraisal systems with a strong focus on teacher inquiry and the formation of Professional Learning Groups were initiatives designed to build teacher capability as well as to allow teachers to reflect on the impact their teaching has on students.

Not surprisingly, schools tended to base their decisions on findings from the close scrutiny of academic data, the detailed analysis of student achievement data - frequently produced in stream-lined department and variance reports, and from trends established in feedback from students and parent/caregivers. Schools typically placed a high value on student and parent/caregiver voice and used a range of different ways to obtain this feedback.

Several changes also served to enhance parents'/caregivers' ability to support their child's learning. For two schools, the most significant of these ideas was a move to real-time reporting. The publication of both the assessment results and the accompanying teacher feedback to the school's portal has meant that parents/caregivers have been in the receipt of this information without any lengthy delay. This has enabled them to take a more proactive role in monitoring their child's progress while supporting them to act on any advice given by their teacher.

Similarly, this tool has proved effective in encouraging students to reflect on and monitor progress in their learning. Other ideas for motivating students to learn, set aspirational goals and improve their academic outcomes included the introduction of mentoring and homework programmes, award systems, junior diploma programmes and clear school-wide messages. These themes and slogans often acknowledge the attributes of successful learners and the importance for students of achieving to the very best of their ability. These catchphrases were frequently referred to by the Principal, student leaders and classroom teachers.

Implications for Awatapu College

This research has identified a wide range of initiatives, a number of which could be used to build on the significant amount of work already undertaken at Awatapu College to increase student engagement and raise academic achievement, in particular for Maori and Pasifika students.

Ever mindful of Fullan's warning about the 'halo effect', the advice on change given by colleagues interviewed as well as from the texts that have been read, suggest that decisions regarding any change need to be carefully thought through. Due

consideration must also be given, in particular, to the College’s strategic goals, current academic results and to input from students, staff and parents/caregivers.

With this in mind, I propose to present this report to Senior Management as an initial discussion document. While it is not a summary of the findings, the following change model does capture in essence some of the advice received around managing and sustaining change. As such, it will serve as a plan for identifying changes to be made at Awatapu College and, importantly, how these new initiatives can be implemented, evaluated and sustained over time.

