

SABBATICAL REPORT : PETER LEGGAT – KATIKATI COLLEGE

Executive Summary

Following considerable professional development and ongoing research and work at Katikati College during 2007 I decided to change the focus of my sabbatical from the specific study of boys education and the use of interactive smart boards to a more generic study of **learning** which I believe would fit in well with recent developments in education particularly with regard to personalised learning. The aim of my work and my study was to investigate best ways of developing a learning community within the school and I believe that that would have a significant impact on student achievement.

During the year we had looked at what we were currently doing and produced a booklet called “Best Practice at Katikati College”. This booklet brought together the work being done in the differentiation, personalised learning, Te Kotahitanga, ATOL and the Beacon School project. All these had common themes based around learning and with the objective of raising achievement for all students including Maori students and boys which brought my sabbatical more in line with national educational initiatives.

As we have made a considerable investment in the use of ICT as a learning tool, I spent a week in Australia visiting schools who have been using interactive boards for some time and also schools who have had laptops as part of their teaching and learning programmes.

Further to this I was invited to join eight other principals from New Zealand on a four week study tour to South Africa and the United Kingdom led by Jeremy Kedian from the University of Waikato Education Leadership Centre. The tour included work in schools in both countries and a period of time based on the National College for School Leadership in Nottingham, England where we had access to many of the leading educational theorists from United Kingdom.

The time at particularly the National College in England gave me the opportunity to see developments in personalised learning from England and to think about how I could best implement those within Katikati College. Plans of my sabbatical are as follows and also I have based my report around presentations I have given to the staff as we seek to create a strategic direction for the future of learning in our school.

Phase One

Visit schools in Invercargill & Dunedin (to view schools with numerous SmartBoards)

Phase Two

Visit schools in Melbourne to observe the use of ICT in student engagement

Phase Three

Study tour to South Africa & England looking at learning.

Interactive SmartBoard

I visited schools who had also invested in SmartBoards or Interactive Boards (Boards) to see what impact they had had on student engagement and how they had sustained that impact.

There is much debate on the usefulness of these boards mainly around the question of engagement versus projection. It is felt by some schools that they could be a very expensive data projector and that teachers could easily create a 'death by powerpoint' environment in their rooms where they do not actively involve students in the lesson and just project notes on the board.

I was particularly interested in the differing perception of teachers who had had to submit an application for a Board outlining what they wanted it for and how it would enhance the learning environment in their rooms compared to those schools that put Boards into all rooms and left teachers to develop best practice for using them.

From my observation there is far more effective use of the Boards if teachers apply for one and that there needs to be a regular survey done of users to check on the sustainability of the resource. In the schools where Boards were supplied to everyone they had initial novelty value but soon became 'projectors' and had reduced impact on student engagement and therefore learning. It also became apparent that faculties who had numerous Boards felt they were making a more significant impact on learning than those who only had one. There is no doubt the power of shared on-going professional development and staff enjoyed developing and sharing resources with other teachers.

To avoid the feeling of the 'have's and have not's' some schools made a condition of a staff member having a Board in their room, that they had to be prepared to make their room and Board available to others in their faculty either in non-contact time or in negotiation. This allows a much wider range of staff to experience the potential of the Boards and also diffuses any potential ill feeling over allocation. At Katikati College we have also made it a condition of having a Board that staff are prepared to have other teachers come into their rooms and observe them teaching using the Board. This peer observation is well known as a powerful form of professional development and has been very effective in encouraging sharing of resources.

A spin off from the introduction of Boards into schools was an increase in the use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool as staff who did not have a board in their rooms looked for other ways they could use ICT to make the learning environment in their room even better.

There is no doubt that the introduction of Boards in school has made a positive impact on student learning outcomes however they should not be seen in isolation but complimenting the general use of technologies in rooms.

Summary

There is no doubt that the sabbatical has not only rejuvenated me but also given me the quality time to reflect on my current practice and look at the areas I needed to work on as I lead the school through the next stage of its' development.

Over the last 18 months I have redefined my role in the school and now have a focus on leadership of learning. While this process has been refreshing, invigorating and challenging for me there needs to be considerable more re-organisation of our school operation especially in the leadership team. The study tour has confirmed this. My SMT still is dominated by management and we need to clearly move that towards leadership and the study tour has proposed some changes that I can make to achieve that.

Schools in NZ need to appoint a trained business manager to take the onerous role off the Principal's shoulders. How can we face up to the crucial challenge of leading the learning when we face continuous challenges over finance, buildings etc not only do principal's need to relinquish (and I say that word deliberately) that control, but then find ways to shift admin tasks away from the extended leadership team to ancillary staff, and to redefine DP's etc roles back to learning and away from management.

The distributed leadership model needs to be expanded to include HOF's and Deans in regular meetings so there is co-ordination of subject leadership and pastoral care so that vision developed by this group can be focused on.

Classroom teachers must also accept their role in leadership and realise that the most important and influential leadership in the school is in fact classroom leadership. This role includes leading not only the learning in their rooms but all the factors that contribute to a successful learning environment.

Many schools in UK have SMT members doing learning walks every period where they are very visibly supporting the development of a learning culture in the school. That would involve classroom visits looking at what students are learning and not just how they are behaving. Not only will this show support for classroom teachers but it will reinforce to the students that our focus is on learning.

This will require not only resourcing but more importantly a committed mind shift from staff led by the senior staff as we seek to move from a learning management role to a learning leadership one.

While this will address the leadership of the learning I also believe we need to re-organise the way we structure our junior classes to maximize the learning potential each student possesses And to create effective learning communities within each rooms.

Like all Principals I speak to, I would like to acknowledge the Ministry for their foresight in creating the sabbatical scheme, it has certainly kept me in my role as Principal for the next few years and came at a time when the on-going pressures of running a school were seeing me question my continuing.

Resources available on Request

Following my sabbatical I have prepared the following resources that I am happy to share with other Principals.

SmartBoard survey

Study Tour - powerpoint

Learning Focus – powerpoint

If you would like a copy please contact

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