

My Professional Learning Activity was to research Modern Learning - Practice with a Modern Learning Environment

I visited several schools, observed teaching and learning in action in ILE and spoke with the principal and/or Team Leader, as well as teachers working in these environments.

I also focused my reading on developing 21st Century skills; collaborative learning - both teachers and students, student centered approaches and modern learning environments.

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

With MLE, the organisation of teaching and learning varied enormously.

In one school, in an open space with 3 teachers and 80 students, the students were allocated their own teacher, one third of the physical space and teaching and learning continued in a very similar way to single cell with the exception of the students gathering together for a few minutes at the start and conclusion of each day. The nature of the learning, the time frames and curriculum content were almost solely determined by the teachers. The pedagogy focused on direct teacher instruction with relevant follow up activities. Students were engaged.

In another school, a new school opened in recent years built entirely as a MLE, student-centered pedagogies were strong, with the older students working to a flexible timetable. The 4 ILE of this 300 student school were referred to as habitats and there were both compulsory and optional teaching sessions for learners to gain knowledge and expertise to support them in their self-directed inquiries. Morning session often included a play based approach where it was totally learner directed.

In the schools I visited, 70 to 90 were the numbers in the learning space, with 3 teachers and sometimes teacher aides for part of the days.

Physically a MLE should include a number of spaces (wet areas, break out room or spaces, independent work spaces, performance spaces (green rooms) open, connected collaborative spaces.

Teachers and Principals I spoke with were generally positive. However through their insights generally positive. However through their insights and other readings I undertook, there are pluses and minuses to be considered.

Positives

- Flexible use of teaching time
- Greater support and feeling of collegiality with colleagues who are teaching alongside you in an ILE.
- Shared ownership of student learning and student well-being. "These are all our students and the responsibility of all three teachers."
- Greater expertise to deliver curriculum to students where teachers could teach to their strengths and passions shared expertise. This was particularly so in the areas of music and drama, and Maori language.

- Increased personalization for students in their learning programme “Active capable students run with it.”

Challenges

- Clarity around roles, teaching time and responsibilities. Modern Learning practice is not just free range learning. It needs to be planned and purposeful.
- Loss of sole decision making authority.
- Gaining confidence to teach and work where other teachers can hear and observe you.

Teachers working collaboratively in an ILE need a high level of emotional intelligence.

Developing shared learning goals, outcomes and ways to engage learners is essential.

Teaching in an MLE will require the ability to compromise, actively listen to the views of others, be flexible, convey ideas with clarity, share information and invite input from others. Be willing to try different things, develop and follow agreed structures, be positive in the face of challenges and be willing to explore a variety of solutions.

A strong professional relationship built with fellow ILE teachers is extremely important and all must contribute positively to develop and maintain this. It is important to have the right mix teaching wise – All need to have a sound knowledge of the New Zealand Curriculum, be co-operative and prepared to pull their weight.

A daily meeting of the teachers for 30 minutes focused on specific students, or groups of students, their progress and next steps was an effective practice I observed. It is important that the dialogue is kept positive and strongly focused on student needs.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Modern digital tools need to be available although one to one devices are not necessary.

CONCLUSION

When setting up a teaching and learning programme in a new 3 class ILE at Mt Carmel School, I will take a balanced pedagogical approach in the first instance which will.....

Inquiry – based learning focused on students interests with student investigation, hands on learning either individually or in teams will be part of the weekly timetable. The teacher will provide support and guide as necessary. Learning conversations between teacher and students will give students opportunities to self-report their thinking, learning and possible next steps.

Direct Instruction by teachers in core curriculum areas will form part of learning. Students will be grouped according to their needs and abilities.

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