

PRIMARY PRINCIPALS' SABBATICAL REPORT

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Term 3/4 2016

Title and focus of sabbatical

How are school libraries changing to support Inquiry Learning?

Principal's Details

I started as the Principal of Cannons Creek School in 2003. Prior to that I had spent 19 years at Russell School in Porirua – 12 of those years as the Deputy Principal. Cannons Creek School is a decile 1a contributing primary school of 180 students situated in Cannons Creek, Porirua East. Cannons Creek School has a diverse ethnic community including Maori, Pasifika, and Refugee Students.

Background

Cannons Creek School has a large library that is well resourced. We have a librarian who works in the library for 2 hours each afternoon (Each morning she works in the school office). This role is an administration position. There is no funding for a teacher to work in the library supporting learning and inquiry.

Our biggest concern is that the library gets minimal use and is empty for several hours each day. We open the library for the children to use in the winter at lunchtime. This well-resourced library is under used.

After a small staff review we discovered that a large number of students and teachers are trying to use a limited number of resources on our Inquiry Topic. Our inquiry is school wide and begins with a 'hook' question or activity leading to a lack of resources across the school. Our first step was to gather all relevant resources and display them in one area of the library for everyone to use. This meant that all the students could access the books (both fiction or non-fiction) really easily and the resources were available for teachers to use with their student.

Our students have very few books at home to use for their Inquiry. Our 'Duffy Books in Homes' programme is probably all the books they have. Our senior school students visit the Cannons Creek Public Library on a regular basis. Very few children have any form of internet at home. In fact quite few don't have electricity. This means that the school needs to provide even more print and digital resources if the children are to have equal opportunities for learning.

Key questions

How can we share a limited number of resources for an Inquiry to most effectively support learning? Effective use of digital technology to support Inquiry Learning? How can we make better use of our school library as a learning centre?

Activities undertaken / Professional learning

- Completion of the 'Collections, Curriculum, Collaboration: School Libraries Supporting Learning – Primary' a five week online course delivered by School Library Service.
- Professional Learning and Professional Reading
- Online discussions, Group forums, and Website Analysis
- Library Visits.

Refreshment

- Personal reflection
- Travel in South America and a trip to London to see my grandson.

Findings

Important ideas from the Library Course included:

- School documentation has only minimal reference to the School Library and the integration of it in Teaching and Learning
- Libraries as we know them are still important to young people today and it is really about adding on technologies
- Research has shown that a full time qualified library teacher is one of the most important things in attaining high quality learning
- There seems to be equal enthusiasm for print and ebooks
- It is important to weed library collections on a regular basis to ensure material is relevant and to inform purchasing of new
- It is important that teachers evaluate websites before children use them as many are too wordy and difficult to navigate
- Schools have set up Inquiry/Library blog pages that help to support children as they navigate the internet.
- EPIC is a wonderful resource that should be used in all classrooms to focus children's Inquiry at an appropriate level
- Avoid purchasing whole series of books. Buy the first in the series and see how it goes before buying further books in the series
- Graphic Novels and Sophisticated Picture Books are particularly useful for ESoL children

Implications for Cannons Creek School

- We need to review our Annual/Strategic Plan to include library goals. We need to update our Library Procedure
- Look at possible ways of funding a teacher in the library for part of each day.
- Consider both weeding and purchasing of resources at the beginning of new Inquiry Topics
- The digital technology team could consider setting up a library blog for students to navigate the web and get the information they are looking for.

- Increase the number of Graphic Novels and Sophisticated Picture Books available in the library

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the Cannons Creek School Board of Trustees for supporting my application and sabbatical leave. My thanks to Deputy Principal, Kirsty Holden for her willingness to take over and ably lead the learning in my absence. Supporting Kirsty were Angela Pau'u, and Kerrin Kilpatrick– my thanks also to them. I also want to acknowledge the Ministry of Education and NZEI for providing this professional learning opportunity and, just as importantly, the chance to experience a period of personal reflection and refreshment. The time has been immensely valuable.