

Secondary Principal's Sabbatical 2017.

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Preamble

While this sabbatical report is written for the benefit of colleagues, I have deliberately not written this as an academic paper; rather I write this as a reflection of my observations of visits to several schools both in New Zealand and in Australia. I will then give a brief outline of the strategies that our school will be embarking on in 2018 to attempt to enhance the process of learning for our students; and finally I will share documentation of my attendance at the Cape Town ICP conference.

May I begin however by acknowledging Teach NZ for the awarding of this sabbatical. The break from the general routine of the year was both stimulating and refreshing.

I would also like to acknowledge my Board of Trustees and Senior Management Team for enabling me to embark on what was a most valuable term of learning, travel and reflection. I am indeed fortunate to be part of such a positive and committed group of people who have the interests of our students and community at the heart of what we all do.

While I have learnt much during my term out of the school, my biggest learning experience of the whole term was to be 100% sure that my computer is backed up. For some reason, upon my return to work, all of my 2017 data and files were corrupted and ultimately lost; including all of the notes that I had made from my sabbatical. Consequently valuable information that I had gained from the many discussions I had with colleagues was not retained.

On top of my obvious frustration and annoyance, this has delayed the publication of my report as I seek to recall the essence of the many meetings and conversations that I had with various people. I thank people for their patience and tolerance at the delay in the publication of this reflection .

I would also like to say that while I am grateful to those schools who hosted me, I am also understanding of why several were unable to. In the case of two New Zealand schools, a double booking and a late change of plans, meant that visits were cancelled at the last minute; while in Australia the severe influenza virus that swept the country at the time of my visit (and which I got a good dose of), meant that the staff at two of the schools I intended to visit were not available. I fully understand the complex nature of secondary schools and while it was disappointing not to have been able to fulfil all my intended visits, I sincerely appreciate those schools who did make time for me. I also hope that my visit and the resulting conversations were of some value to the people I met, as I shared my own experiences and observations.

Introduction

At the 2000 Sydney Olympics, Rob Waddell won a gold medal in the Men's Single Skulls Rowing. An immensely talented all-rounder, Rob's versatility saw him continue to thrive in the world outside his rowing, and most recently he has taken on the role of Chef de Mission of the New Zealand Olympic teams.

I well remember an interview with Rob after his success in Sydney, where he was at pains to emphasize that rather than focus on outcomes, his philosophy behind achievement was based upon getting the processes right. "If you get the process right the outcomes will take care of themselves" was what I remember vividly.

More recently Spanish professional golfer Sergio Garcia, a perennial bridesmaid in the golfing majors, managed to overcome his hurdle of never having won a major, by winning the 2017 Masters. In the aftermath of his success he was quoted as saying that this time, he focused essentially on getting his processes right, as opposed to focusing on the result. The rest so they say 'is history.'

For a number of years now I have reflected on the relevance of such a philosophy to schooling and the learning of our students. As I head towards the end of my career I become more convinced than ever, that for too long our focus on outcomes (percentage pass rates, reaching national standards, where our schools fit in comparison to national averages, and the number of scholarships the school has got) does not address what should be the key target that all of us as educators have firmly in our sights; that being to facilitate a thirst, a joy and a motivation for our students to celebrate learning as an ongoing and integral part of their development. This thirst for learning is something that we are all born with, and is nowhere more evident than as children start their schooling journey as a 5 year old. Sadly in many cases by the time they reach secondary school the spark seems gone.

According to British psychologist Tony Buzan (1996), children develop around 50% of their ability to learn in the first four years of life, and they develop another 30% of that ability before they turn eight. What this really means is that in those first few years you form the main learning pathways in your brain. All later learning will grow from that base.

" at the moment the child is born it's already brilliant. It picks up language, much better than a doctor of philosophy in any subject, in only two years. And it is a master at it by three or four." (Buzan1996)

It has disturbed and frustrated me over the years seeing this budding genius, this receptacle of so much hope and potential, arrive at our school gates (secondary school) with their enthusiasm and motivation for learning, severely dented or suppressed. Often

students arrive with poor literacy and numeracy skills, and a view that as learners they are, in Carol Dweck's words, attributing their learning to being: "lucky, being dumb or being gifted". Thoughts that put learning down to "luck, giftedness or being dumb", certainly give us an insight into why many young people may fail to fully reach their potential with their schooling. As we all know learning requires effort, and if you are attributing your learning or lack of it to "luck, or being dumb", the likelihood of success is surely reduced. Equally, putting learning down to "giftedness," invariably means success is due to chance.

Henry Ford once said that "if you think you can, or you think that you can't, you're right." In other words you are what you think you are, and it is this uncertainty of thought that many of our children are arriving at secondary school with; sometimes ill prepared, and in many cases turned off or believing that they can't do something, because they have been told that they are no good at it.

At the other end of the secondary school system we also have a business world telling us that our leaving students are departing from school ill prepared for the world of work. The media regularly report that the business world believe that the education system is out of step with the demands of the modern workplace. Their view is that the ever increasing explosion of technology into everyday life, which has increased productivity and reduced costs, has resulted in work places that require higher levels of independent thought, and high level problem solving ability from workers.

An extensive survey conducted by the British Chamber of Commerce (2014) offered the following point for consideration:

" more than half of businesses (57%) said a lack of soft skills, such as communication and team working, were reasons why young people were not 'work ready'."

Justine Munro in her article in the New Zealand Herald, 'New work order requires education shake-up' echoes a similar sentiment. (17 October 2017)

In light of both of these perspectives which I am sure are not mine alone, increasingly education systems around the world are starting to place more and more emphasis on process and soft skill development. The New Zealand curriculum which was first published in 2007, showed commendable foresight in signposting the importance of these skills through the Core Competencies. Other countries most notably Australia, through 'The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (2014), and Finland through the recent Finnish Curriculum review (2016), all give direction to focusing on processes.

The 2016 Finnish national curriculum review is particularly interesting, as their outcomes found and were particularly adamant that how kids learn, is more important

than what they learn. “Individual subjects are less important than broad competencies.” Now, it appears that the country is changing its curriculum to attempt to “better prepare kids with the kind of skills they will need for jobs in 2020 or 2030”. So along with an emphasis on project based learning, understanding the importance of getting processes right is being viewed as being a fundamental aspect of their educational experience.

More recently the ‘StudyTime’ survey (2017) suggested that for many students they don’t feel that they are being taught the skills to help them beyond school, and they find a lack of motivation to be one of the biggest barriers to their learning.

While I am of the view that the New Zealand education system provides a very good foundation for students, I also feel that we can do better. While teaching based on specific content may become obsolete, processes remain valid for a lifetime.

The question to be asked therefore is; how do we give the kids confidence to see learning as a valued human right which not only informs them, but enables them to be contributors, to have a healthy yet critical perspective on the world, to be progressive and prosperous, and to be able to be a person who has the ability to be sustainable throughout their lives?

My answer, which may seem simplistic, is to ensure that the messages that they are being given, help them to understand that we are all at different levels on a learning continuum, but that with an understanding of basic learning processes, effort, good feedback and lots of encouragement, we will all continue to advance. By providing a reason for learning and growing, and by equipping them with a ‘kete’ of learning skills to tackle the learning challenges they will face, I am confident that we can enhance the engagement of learners who understand the value of lifelong learning.

It is something of a human trait that we all tend to perform better when we are confident about how to do something. Unfortunately in many cases we have tended to rely on the process of osmosis to enable kids to develop the sorts of skills that make them confident and independent learners. It is not that it is something that has been ignored, as in the NZC document there is a clear intent articulated around the idea of life-long learning (underpinned by the core competencies). However despite an initial flurry to align what was being done in schools with the competencies when the document was first published, other priorities have meant that the essence of this process of learning whilst not being entirely lost, has been largely left to chance rather than as a focused priority.

My goal at our school is to target attention on this aspect of learning. The opportunity to consider how other schools were addressing the issue became my inquiry.

Visitation

The first part of my sabbatical gave me a chance to validate my hypothesis and to consider how a refocusing on process, could become a relevant and meaningful priority in our school.

As I indicated earlier it is not that this was just an emerging thought. I have long dwelled on this very issue and in my own school have lobbied hard for several years about focusing on the fundamental processes to enhance the learning confidence of our students. Several strategies, including the adoption of Dr Ian Hunter's very good 'Write that Essay' programme, the adoption of the fundamentals inherent in Pam Hooks' and Julie Mills' SOLO taxonomy, and increasing use of IEP's have been introduced to attempt to begin this process; but for some time I have felt compelled to do more and to really try to make a difference to the learning opportunities of our students.

While we have been very happy with the incremental improvements in NCEA outcomes of our students over the past five years, there is always the case to keep learning, and I am motivated to enhance the depth of our student's learning and ultimately the number of students who are achieving at the merit and excellence level in their NCEA. In essence it is about enhancing agency, and being a confident learner who has the skills and motivation to tackle the learning challenges that we are all faced with.

The first three weeks of my sabbatical therefore were spent travelling and visiting schools in New Zealand and Australia to see what they were doing in this space. I am grateful to those Principals and members of their staff for giving me their time and showing me around their schools.

Principals were written to, requesting a day, or part of a day in their school. An outline of my focus was described for them. The inquiry question was:

“What are schools really doing to address the need for students to be self-managing and lifelong learners?”

School Visited	Principal	Other Staff
Albany Senior High School	Barbara Cavanagh	
Waiheke High School	Jude Young	
St Paul's Collegiate School	Grant Lander	
Hillcrest High School	Kelvin Whiting	Debbie Greenhill
Paraparaumu College	Gregor Fountain	
Scot's College	Graeme Yule	Gary Henley-Smith

Wellington College	Roger Moses	
Onslow College	Peter Leggat	
Matthew Flinders Anglican College	Stuart Meade	Bill Hooper
Mountain Creek State High School	Cheryl McMahon	Andrew Stone, Graham Breen, Chris Buswell

Table 1: Schools Visited. People with whom I met.

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School Visit to: _____

Person Spoken to: _____

Inquiry Question: "What are schools really doing to address the need for students to be self-managing and lifelong learners?"

Focus Question	Responses
The NZ Curriculum places considerable emphasis on developing a set of capabilities for living and lifelong learning. (Key Competencies) What practical applications are in evidence in your school's curriculum that these five key competencies are being taught, and that the students are getting a tangible learning benefit from the experience?	
In our modern educational environment there is frequent talk about movement from a reductive to a generative model of education (Pace-Marshall), where learners are self-directed and are motivated by inquiry. How is your school addressing the need to support your students to be self-managing and life-long learners?	
How does your school prepare students to be active participants in the learning process? (eg. Coursing procedures, partnerships, skills based sessions, work experience etc.)	
What methods and activities does your school use to lift student achievement beyond the level of NCEA achieved, to merit and excellence endorsement levels?	
Are there specific things that your school is doing to transform your learning environment and your curriculum into ones which encourage self-directed learners. These are the sorts of learners who have agency and are equipped with a toolkit of practical skills which enables them and gives them confidence to tackle their learning challenges in a positive way.	
Additional Notes:	

Table 2: Focus Questions

The NZ Curriculum places considerable emphasis on developing a set of capabilities for living and lifelong learning. (Key Competencies) What practical applications are in evidence in your school's curriculum that these five key competencies are being taught, and that the students are getting a tangible learning benefit from the experience?

The majority of NZ schools that I visited made reference to the quality of the New Zealand Curriculum (2007) as a document, and the foresight of the key competencies. Most articulated how they had initially focused considerable attention on the competencies when the document was first released, but it had been lost in the plethora of other demands on schools in recent times. Indirectly though they still saw evidence of factors such as good quality relationships, self-management, thinking, fully participating and good communication, being fundamental to the sort of experience that they wanted for their students.

In terms of assessing whether students were obtaining tangible benefits, all schools were non-specific, although there was certainly a range of ways that they were monitoring delivery. One school for example used a grid which highlighted the sorts of things that students should be doing in order to be developing the key competencies. They also talked with the students about the level at which they were operating at, in regards each of the competencies.

Other schools had written into their operating guidelines and mission statements the place of the core competencies, but rather than assessing impact, in general most schools relied on the indirect assimilation of the qualities.

Amongst the practical applications designed to reinforce the development of the competencies were training students as first responders, financial literacy programmes, involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh programme and of course focus on career development increasingly from year 9. The use of the 'Dreamcatcher' programme was seen in one school to be particularly suitable as the beginning of a career journey for their students. This was reinforced in the senior school where critical conversations between senior staff and year 12 and 13 students assisted with course selection and career pathways.

I was particularly interested in how Albany SHS 's 'Impact Projects' are seen as the school's response to the key competencies. The school emblem of inter-woven focuses sitting atop a bed on core competencies, symbolically makes the point that the competencies are fundamental to everything that happens in the school. I particularly liked that point.

Both Australian schools that I visited placed emphasis on their special character, and how values were central to their being. They also recognised the changing nature of the

work force that the students were moving into, and had incorporated courses which sought to give students the opportunities to develop a better understanding of the modern work environment. One particularly interesting course was that offered at Mountain Creek High School where Graeme Breen ran a programme called Coding and Innovation which was geared directly towards kids looking at the future and the sorts of skills they would need.

In our modern educational environment there is frequent talk about movement from a reductive to a generative model of education (Pace-Marshall), where learners are self-directed and are motivated by inquiry. How is your school addressing the need to support your students to be self-managing and life-long learners?

It was clear that there exists a tension between the content coverage that is crucial to assessment and examinations, and the sort of soft skills that are so important to the development of the well-rounded school leaver. It was also clear that schools were well aware of the need to move away from the 'sage on the stage' mentality common to 19th and 20th century pedagogy. Clearly schools recognised that students have access to unlimited information through technology and the essence of the teaching and learning process is the management and application of this information. The use of student learning systems to enable students to be active in the learning process was evident in all schools that I visited, but true co-construction of knowledge wasn't as obvious. In most cases this was all to do with time factors and the need to complete a syllabus in a limited time frame, and to meet assessment deadlines.

All schools commented on this, especially with regards to the number of credits that students were completing at the various levels. All felt that they were doing far too many, with Albany Senior High having very clear guidelines around a focus on quality as opposed to quantity. This was a brave but pragmatic way for the school to challenge the more common approach of schools to do far more credits than was necessary to achieve the qualification. Albany's focus on quality as opposed to quantity is hard to argue with, and potentially enabled the students to focus on deeper thinking in the identified subject areas. However in other schools there was also a view that by only focusing on subjects with 18 credits, this did not allow students any leeway from "bomb-outs".

Increasingly schools are giving students at all levels of the achievement spectrum the opportunity to have practical hands on careers experience. In most cases this involves use of the GATEWAY programmes although schools tapping into their ex-student

community to find placement for students, was also seen to be a valuable source of placement.

The personal 'Impact Project' which is a key part of the curriculum at Albany Senior High School and the extended essay which is a feature of the IB system, give rise to students being able to focus on areas of particular interest to them. Such a focus according to the schools involved in these programmes, encourages students to explore areas in depth and broaden their learning in an area that they have a particular affinity for.

How does your school prepare students to be active participants in the learning process? (eg. Coursing procedures, partnerships, skills based sessions, work experience etc.)

All schools tried their best to meet the learning interests of their students by offering a range of courses to meet all aspirations, ambitions and abilities. This included an awareness of the need to provide work experience opportunities. While most schools focused this type of experience around learners for whom academic success was a challenge, there was certainly evidence that increasingly more schools are recognising the need to ensure students at all stages of the academic continuum have these sorts of experiences.

As such, career education was something that all schools placed emphasis on with a variety of different approaches. The use of programmes such as Dreamcatcher, I-qualify and Bulls-eye were popular in some of the schools while others adopted more traditional approaches. There was certainly a realisation that students needed help to define their direction and counselling around course selection was seen by all schools to be crucial in this process. The mechanics for this counselling varied from the Ako style student parent consultations through to senior staff meeting with all senior students individually, to clarify and support decision making.

Several schools had recently spent time reviewing their timetable structure although only one of the schools that I visited had progressed to the 100 minute period / 3 periods in a day with a break after each period type concept. Several schools had however embraced the extended tutorial time, be it once a week, or twice a week.

Both the 'Impact Project' concept and the extended essay models were activities which were seen as very focused ways in which students engaged with the learning process and also involved considerable engagement with the wider community.

Several of the schools offered alternative qualifications in the belief that these better prepared students for tertiary study, while others saw the NZ Scholarship experience as being the means by which they would seek to prepare their students to tackle the challenge of a university education. On the other hand one school did not participate in scholarship as they saw it as a means of self-promotion and were confident that the nature of their curriculum delivery was more than adequate to prepare their students to tackle further study.

Both Australian schools I visited felt that the use of IB mandates higher thinking strategies by its very nature. This was a common thought amongst all schools offering IB and also the case of those schools offering Cambridge qualifications. I was particularly interested in the work at Mountain Creek State High School who ran a programme based around the coding and innovation hub at the school. Graeme Breen the manager of the programme talked to me about how this programme falls out of Education Queensland's '#codingcounts' initiative, which provides professional development for teachers, introduces lean business start-ups, and works to develop partnerships with Queensland businesses, to allow for greater engagement between the school and the community.

What methods and activities does your school use to lift student achievement beyond the level of NCEA achieved, to merit and excellence endorsement levels?

Regular celebration of achievement seems to be the common tactic here. Several schools use events like excellence breakfasts and excellence evenings as a means by which to recognize and to showcase achievement. Many schools invite parents to be part of these occasions as they would with end of year graduation assemblies or prize givings.

One school talked about developing an individual achievement plan for each student which is monitored regularly with the ultimate aim of having students graduating with distinction.

Unsurprisingly most schools were very clear about focusing on the quality of the teaching as being a central tool in taking students to higher levels. Peer review of lessons, inquiry focused appraisal and targeted professional development were all areas that schools employed to enhance the teaching. This was particularly the case in Queensland where Matthew Flinders Anglican College have focused on what happens in the classroom as being the key to lifting student achievement. They talked about the use of the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching evaluation instrument, and how this fitted into their coaching models of PD. There was also an excited awareness of the recently published Queensland Government document, Great teachers equals great results.

The key to this document is the Queensland Government's belief that the most effective way to improve student outcomes is to lift the quality of the teacher in front of the class. For this reason, 'Great teachers = Great results,' focuses the next wave of reform on two critical areas:

1. Professional excellence in teaching — elevating teaching standards across the board, rewarding high performance and positioning the highest performing teachers where they are needed most; and
2. Boosting school autonomy — empowering and enabling school leaders and teachers to drive outcomes for students.

Amongst other initiatives that Matthew Flinders Anglican College talked about as aiding the quality of student outcomes was the introduction of the Collins Writing Strategies

Are there specific things that your school is doing to transform your learning environment and your curriculum into ones which encourage self-directed learners. These are the sorts of learners who have agency and are equipped with a toolkit of practical skills which enables them and gives them confidence to tackle their learning challenges in a positive way.

In this regard I was very interested in Onslow College's idea of the 'Great Learner Week,' where there was an emphasis on the learning process being taught. This was emphasized alongside the idea of the 'Onslow Way' based on the idea of "being here to learn and understanding what they need to do, and how they are going to get to where they need to be." The idea is about getting the teachers out of the way so that the students can get on with learning.

There is also a 'learning to learn week' for year 9 students with a focus on 4 key attributes; collaboration, being active learners, being respectful and being an effective self manager. Their reporting model is being re-developed where staff can talk about how the key competencies are being addressed.

Other school's also had their own philosophical mantras which underpinned their learning focus. These included Albany Senior High's "it's not IF you are bright, it's HOW you are bright".

Paraparaumu College's Caring Community of Great Learners. This is built around a set of principles and practices which reflect the key competencies. (CARE: Collaborative, Active learners, Respectful, Effective Self-Managers) and

The IB schools with their IB Learner Profile and Approaches to Learning Philosophy underpinning this. While some of this is similar in essence to the Core Competencies

the thing that I like about this approach is that this development is focused on soft skills rather than credentialism.

Other schools talked about the physical environment that they had created with learning hubs and library modifications. In particular the design of the campus of Albany Senior High School was in complete contrast to the other schools that I visited both here in New Zealand and in Australia. The site is very compact in comparison to other schools that I visited and the actual building is set up to facilitate group work. During the short time I was on the campus I was also impressed by the clear culture of respect for the learning opportunities of others that was evident. The displays of project work associated with the 'Impact Projects' was particularly impressive. Hillcrest High's careers centre was also an interesting development with the centre being central to the process of subject selection to ensure that the kids get correct information.

Most schools also identified the parent consultation process as being integral to creating an environment where students can take charge of their learning. As expected different schools do things slightly different, ranging from the traditional subject teacher feedback through to ½ hour learning conversations. In these particular conversations tutor teachers will discuss issues including subject selection, academic progress and credit gathering. This is further expanded for under achievers with letters being sent home at the end of the term and parents coming in for conferences with teachers. (one of the strategies to get staff on board is to call a ½ term to recognise the efforts of staff and to give extra time for consultation.)

One of my interests in visiting Scot's College was to talk with Graeme Yule about his visit to High Tech High School in San Diego. High Tech High School gained some fame earlier in the year when a documentary was aired on TVNZ illustrating the school's approach to education. The essence of the system is that it is a very project focused school where "authentic learning" takes precedence. All assessment is based around the project and students gain further experience through 1 month internships.

This appears to potentially be the way of the future where the development of co-operation, communication and collaboration are central to the educational mission of the school.

Summary

From my notes it is clear that all schools are approaching this space differently. The commonality however exists around an understanding that the nature of education has shifted, the demands from the business world on school leavers are changing, and we need to recognise that if we are to adequately prepare our students for the ever changing future students face, that we must find a balance between the assessment

requirements of a world where the academic ceiling continues to rise, and engagement with the learning process is not lost.

While schools seem to recognise this, I still feel that too much is left to chance and absorption by osmosis. While being somewhat prescriptive, just like the Finns have concluded “broad competencies in my mind are of more use to our students than individual subjects’ and I feel we need to teach them. Nothing I have seen during my term’s sabbatical has convinced me other-wise and if anything has reinforced this view. As an experienced teacher said to me after hearing Dr Ian Hunter talk to a staff meeting about essay writing; “I wish I had known these things before I went to university.”

I don’t want our school leavers departing this institution with a void in their development. My visitations and reading therefore have confirmed my earlier views that there is a definite need to find space in our curriculum for drilling down on the things that give students the confidence to be active learners.

Where to from here?

When the NZ Curriculum was published in 2007 after much trialling, there was a time when most schools in the country spent time auditing how they were addressing the core competencies.

I was cynical at the time over the approach, as little real energy was given to ensuring that they were being integrated into the curriculum and it was another case of ticking the box to meet someone’s K.P.I’s. Teachers of course at the time were inundated with the on-going refinement of NCEA, the alignment, the re-alignment and the on-going issues around marking, moderation and the writing and re-writing of standards.

I was certainly becoming more and more frustrated that the curriculum was being driven by assessment and one of the key components – learning how to learn – which underpins the idea of the lifelong learner, was being left to chance, as a by-product.

As my close colleagues will be aware, I have bemoaned this for some time. I strongly believe we need to work with our students to not only give them a purpose, but to also ensure they have a toolkit (kete) of skills which enable them to engage with the vision of the NZ Curriculum; that being – confident, connected, actively involved lifelong learners.

At Havelock North High School we are justifiably proud of the attainments of our students. In the past five years we have seen NCEA results improve significantly, and our staff are owed a huge thank you, for their part in this.

We have done this in an environment where the education is authentic, academic and not dumbed down as in some schools. This is evidenced by the number of external achievement standards we are offering compared with other schools and the percentage of merits and excellences our students are delivering. We do this from a position of wanting our students to have a range of options including tertiary study; but more than anything we want them to engage with the joy of learning and the lifelong involvement with this crucial aspect of their lives.

I mentioned earlier my frustration; this comes from my own personal experience as a learner at high school; someone who had a fixed mind-set fuelled by getting by for most of my schooling on natural ability, being in a top stream class and generally doing well with little effort. Unfortunately for me this attitude and spending too much time playing sport caught up with me, when I was left off the UE accreditation list. Needless to say I pulled up my socks quickly.

As I progressed in education I have come to better understand what Carol Dweck labels the Growth Mind-set, and to me part of this is in having the tools to unpack difficult tasks rather than side-stepping them.

I have loosely used the term generic skills as being the toolkit (kete) to facilitate this and believe that all learners benefit when they have a purpose but also have an understanding of how to write productively, read strategically and to deal with the academic challenges they have in their school lives.

As indicated earlier in my report, while it is easy to articulate a frustration, it is much more challenging in a system driven by assessment to take action.

However such has been the speed of change in recent times, to not take action to support our students is unacceptable. Thankfully I have a staff, who share this view.

This future world our students head into is obviously difficult to predict, such is the speed of change; but what we are hearing increasingly from business is that they are placing increasing value on generic skills, such as critical thinking, collaborative problem solving and global literacy.

As a school we decided to embrace this idea. Our strong academic programme and success would still be front and centre, because we are also aware of the rising academic ceiling in the world. But we would endeavour also to shape our timetable to place an emphasis on developing in our students this 'kete' of skills, which would advantage them in their engagement with life-long learning, and also in their next steps beyond secondary school.

Purkey (Novak & Purkey, 2001; Purkey, 1992) terms this idea “Invitational Learning”, which works from the meaning of invitational as “offering something beneficial for consideration”. His claim is that we need to create schools that invite, or cordially summon students to be involved in the learning process. This model is based on four propositions:

1. Trust, in that we need to convince not coerce others to engage in what we would like them to consider worthwhile activities;
2. Respect, in that we adopt caring and appropriate behaviours when treating others;
3. Optimism, in seeking the untapped potential and uniqueness in others;
4. Intentionality, in which we create programmes by people designed to invite learning

The key concept here is that we invite students into the learning process and they do so because they see value in it and have confidence that they have the skills to tackle the learning challenges that they will inevitably meet. I have long been concerned that many students do not accept the invitation because they lack direction, they lack confidence (Growth Mind-set) and they lack fundamental skills to engage with the learning process.

This process of invitational learning aligns directly with what John Hattie is saying in his renowned text *Visible Learning*.(2009)

“The most powerful effects of the school relate to features within schools, such as the climate of the classroom, peer influences, and the lack of disruptive students in the classroom – all of which allow students and teachers to make errors and develop reputations as learners, and which provide an invitation to learn.” (Hattie. J. 2009, P33)

Following a number of staff meetings, our staff met to flesh out the types of skills that they saw as being important for the students, and also to identify best practice in a range of both learning skills and soft skills. Students in year 13 were posed with questions such as; “what do you wish that you had learnt at school which you hadn’t had the opportunity to do?” and hence along with input from other stakeholders contributed to a co-construction of the programme. The outcome has been our Encompass programme which is being rolled out in 2018. After an initial model built around a series of skills as outlined in fig.1 we have further refined the programme to reflect the evolving thoughts of the teaching staff around course principles, staffing, staff professional development and resources. The essence of this is communicated through fig.2. that illustrates the themes on which the programme is being built.

We then set about working out where best to fit it into our timetable, and as a consequence changed the timetable to find two extra periods in each timetable cycle to

enable the teaching of the course, as opposed to waiting and hoping that the skills would be absorbed through osmosis.

All of our staff have continued to work in small collaborative groups (hubs), to develop the courses and generate resources. While still in its early stages, the programme is beginning to gather momentum. We are excited about its potential and while obvious benefits will take time, in the long term we are looking to develop more confident learners who are equipped with both functional and soft skills for their future within education and in the wider community.

The programme principles are based around the following points:

- Skills will be generic and not to do with subject selections
- The programme will be project based and hands-on
- There will be NO credits attached to the course
- The course will be reported on
- There will be a combination of group and individual work
- The course is built around the acquisition of soft skills which make the student a better learner and more employable

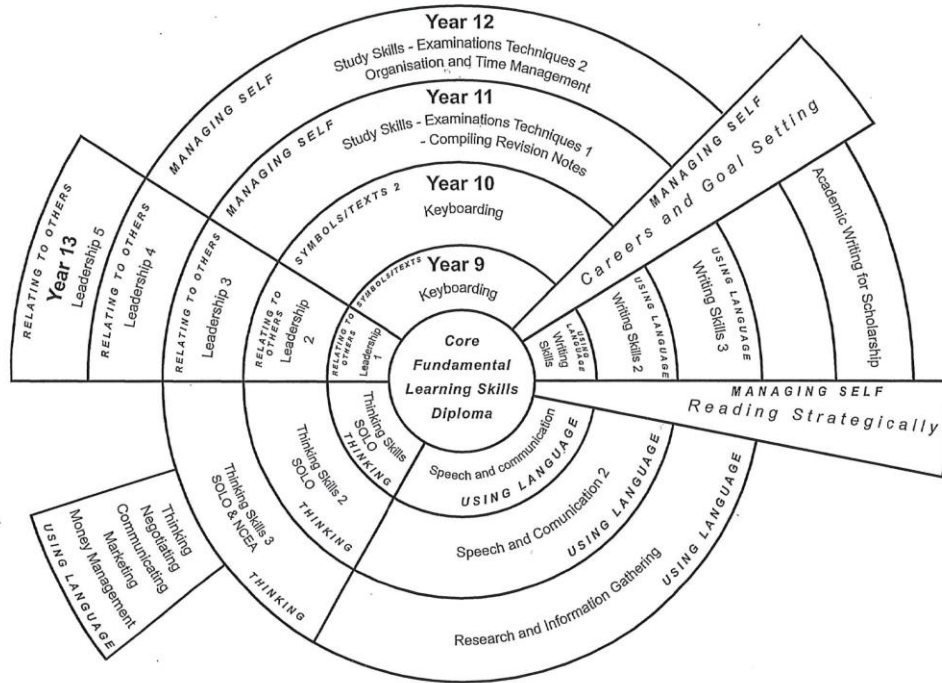


Fig.1. Core Fundamental Learning Skills.

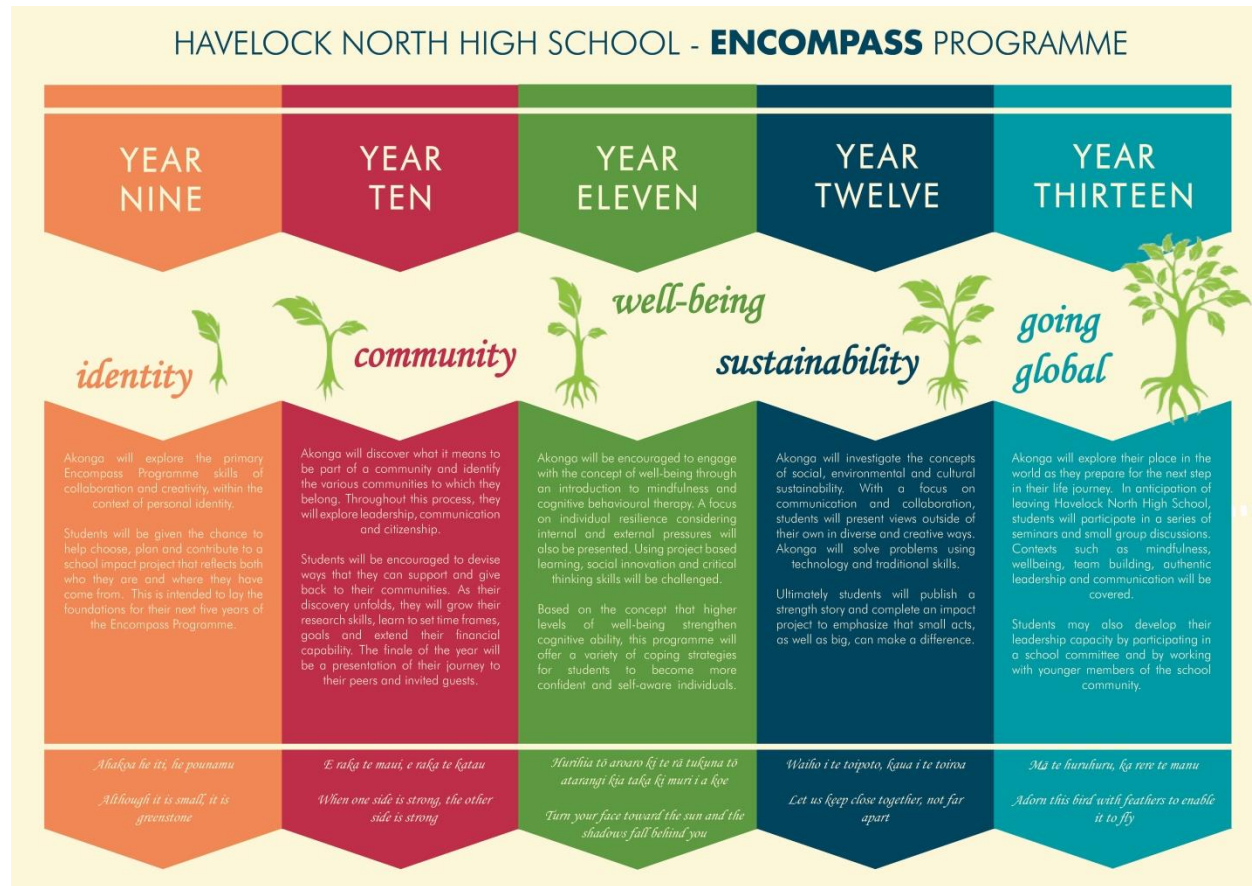


Fig.2. Encompass Programme.

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Cape Town Conference.

The bi-annual Convention of the International Confederation of Principals took place in Cape Town, South Africa in the last week of September 2017. The theme of the conference was “Brain Waves for Change”.

Over 800 delegates from around the world took part in the conference at the impressive Cape Town Convention Centre. The Convention Centre is situated in the centre of Cape Town. The conference took the shape of a series of keynote speakers supplemented by workshops.

Introduction

As was the case at the Helsinki conference two years ago, the conference carried the flavour of the country and provided an ideal opportunity to discuss some of the major drivers for change which are contributing to South African education. While this in a way worried me prior to the conference, the keynote speakers certainly took a global perspective on their respective topics, and impressed with the talks that they gave.

As is always the case with conferences, the opportunity to interact with colleagues from around the globe and sharing experiences with them, was a key attraction of attending this particular conference. Arriving in Cape Town the day after the All Blacks had hammered the Springboks by a big score at Albany was certainly a bonus in any conversations that I had with colleagues from South Africa.

One of the highlights of the conference for me was being there on Heritage Day; this is a day when the people of South Africa celebrate their tribal origins, wearing tribal costumes, dancing and feasting. The positivity of the day was somewhat in contrast to our national day which seems to be highlighted by protest and conflict.

This was the first time that I had been to South Africa, and after hearing stories about the level of crime and corruption in the country I was a little wary about being in Cape Town. The city itself is a beautiful city, with the shadow of Table Mountain a looming presence, hovering like a caped crusader wherever one travelled in the city environs.

The history of the Cape Province is intriguing and the transition from the days of apartheid to the present day sees a busy city of 4 million people living in a wide contrast of environments. The stories of corruption amongst politicians was always in the Press, and President Jacob Zuma was constantly under pressure to relinquish his role. I found the shanty towns, the many homeless, the people begging at traffic lights and the presence of security guards on every corner somewhat confronting. I found statistics such as over 50% of the population of South Africa living below the poverty line as

being particularly sad; and the impending water crisis cast a deep shadow over the city. But on the other hand I found the people who I dealt with, the vast majority of whom were black South African, to be friendly, helpful and proud of their city and their country. It was an excellent experience and it is disappointing that more New Zealand Principals didn't take the opportunity to travel to the republic, visit some of their schools and take the chance to reflect on the presentations at the conference.

Conference Keypoints:

Speaker: Dr Beau Lotto.

Topic: Keynote Number 1: The Science of Seeing Differently

Main Points:

- As teachers we should be teaching students not what to see but how to look.
- Context is everything in what we see. 10% of what we see is with our eyes, 90% is from our brain.
All that we see is affected by our perceptions of the world.
- Because we hate not to know and because it creates stress, we need to work with our students to encourage intentional play and a love of uncertainty. This is why science is so important; it promotes a focus on awe and wonder, which is a pathway to creativity.
- Lotto has just published a book called 'Deviate: The Science of Seeing Differently'

Ideas to consider:

- Science doesn't need to be seen as an academic investigation but as a way of being that is relevant to all aspects of our lives

Notes:

Ken Robinson commented on Lotto by saying " As human beings, we don't live in the world directly; we perceive and conceive it through many filters. What we do perceive is refracted through our own interests, dispositions and cultures and by the context by which we experience it."

Speaker: Dr. Judy Willis.

Topic: Keynote Number 2: How Emotion Impacts the Brain's Successful Learning and What to Do About It

Main Points:

- The last part of the brain to mature is the highest thinking, reasoning, and emotional control centre in the prefrontal cortex.
- The pre-frontal cortex, once mature is associated with the highest cognitive processes including planning, decision-making, reasoning, organizing, analysing, sorting, connecting, prioritizing, self-monitoring, self-correcting, assessment of one's strengths and best strategies, abstractions, creative problem solving, risk assessment, delay of immediate gratification, goal development and linking information to appropriate actions
- Teaching students about their brain and self-regulation strategies (mindful breathing, visualisations, counting to ten) is helpful to build students' emotional control
- By controlling emotions and reducing stress (promotes the passage of information through to the amygdala) teachers can better engage students.
- Boredom and frustration turn the amygdala into a stop sign, which results in a fixed mindset.
- Dopamine is the brains pleasure reward system and boosters that promote the release of dopamine are things like music, humour, movement, kindness, using photos of previous years students enjoying an activity gratitude, choice, interaction with their peers.

Ideas to consider:

- The prefrontal cortex is the control centre of executive functions such as judgement, critical analysis, prioritizing, deduction, induction, imagination, communication, reflective (versus reactive) emotional control, and goal development, planning and perseverance. These executive functions are critical for the best job opportunities and creative problem solving in the 21st Century as globalization and technology continue to change the skill sets needed by today's students.

Notes:

Parents and teachers can help children build these functions by providing children with opportunities to make choices and discuss their reasons for their decisions. Assisting with planning, being given time to think and consider options, gathering information and encouraging divergent thinking are all activities that encourage the development of the prefrontal cortex.

The idea of neuroplasticity is about the limitless power of the brain. Essentially if you use the brain it gets stronger.

Willis started her presentation with the comment, “Teaching is not brain surgery, it is harder! For those who work with learners, every moment matters, every student matters every single day.” This statement certainly appealed to the audience.

Speaker: Prof. Adam Habib.

Topic: Keynote Number 3: Radical Leadership: Leading Waves of Change when the TIDE gets tough.

Main Points:

- Our world is changing fundamentally and we need to train young people for the new generation of jobs. The education sector needs to anticipate the changing job market and to prepare students for the new world
- Schools have the capacity to change the world because we shape young lives.

Ideas to consider:

Habib’s methods of dealing with decisions in a difficult environment were outlined as:

- However angry you are never lose sight of the fundamental social goal
- Think pragmatic solutions. Make decisions from the world that does exist, not the world that you wished exists. There will never be perfect solutions
- If you can’t make difficult decisions, don’t take the job. If you do; fulfil the mandate.
- Be transparent in your decisions
- Don’t look only at past disparities; look ahead to the possibilities of the future. Work in a manner that allows people to constantly learn on their own.

Notes:

Habib is the vice-chancellor at the University of Witswatersrand in Johannesburg. He was at the forefront of suppressing the university riots in 2016 where a group of students protested in an effort to promote falls in fees. Habib spoke eloquently about the socially and politically unstable society that exists around the world where inequity levels are at their worst level since 1913, where generational divide has not been so bad since the 1950's and where factors such as terrorism, the North Korean uncertainty, global warming and the refugee crises make the world our school leavers are heading into particularly challenging.

Despite the gloom that this conveys, he reminded us that despite this, despite the fact that robotics and technological innovation may wipe out many of the jobs we know today, it will create others. The key as educators is to anticipate which jobs are going and which ones will emerge. Our schools therefore need to develop a curriculum which reflects this.

Speaker: Dr. Becky Bailey

Topic: Keynote Number 4: Self-Regulation and the Brain – Being the Change our World Needs

Main Points:

- Bailey is a prolific author and the founder of a group called Loving Guidance. Her writings focus on guidance and discipline.
- The adult determines the response by the child and teachers need to strive to change the 'state' of the student, before we can change their behaviour.
- The brain is governed by the heart and we need to teach students to self-regulate.

Ideas to consider:

- The teacher or principal's focus, energy level and smiling eyes are the most powerful tools to change our schools and communities.
- By managing inner states we have the ability to access higher centres of our brain, and over-ride animal instincts. Such processes provide the optimal environment for learning and wellbeing.
- We need to smile, breathe, relax and wish the other person well.

Notes:

Neuroscience is changing the way we understand how the brain learns and retains data. "Empathy-rich learning environments are creating a space where every student can become a change maker; and change is badly needed in our world."

Speaker: Fred Swaniker.

Topic: Keynote Number 5: The Leaders who Ruined Africa, and the Generation who can Fix it.

Main Points:

- Swaniker built his presentation around the concept of doing the hard thing. He outlined his philosophy of empowering young leaders to be proud of their African heritage and challenged South African principals to take this message into their schools.

Ideas to consider:

- Swaniker talked about creating a university around missions rather than menus as a way of instilling relevance into the tertiary sector.

Notes:

When I registered for the conference I was a little worried about the focus on the South African educational system at the expense of a global view. Whereas the majority of the keynote speakers took a global perspective Swaniker's talk was deeply imbedded in the issues of the Republic.

Speaker: Dr. Nic Spaul

Topic: Keynote Number 6: School Leadership in Challenging Contexts / 21st Century Skills.

Main Points:

- Spaul spoke at length about the context of the world that we are living in and how as educators we need to make a better attempt at preparing students for jobs that don't exist. He considered a global context which must recognise that ongoing climate change, terrorist attacks, superbugs, wars, refugee crises, changing political landscapes and the increase in the use of artificial intelligence are creating a world
- "The future is already here, it's just unevenly distributed."

Ideas to consider:

- Explicit curriculum that needs to address both the cognitive and social and emotional. The social and emotional skills will set students apart from machines in the future.

Notes:

Nic Spaul was an excellent speaker who talked about preparing students for jobs that don't yet exist. "We don't know what skills will be required."

Factors that need to be considered that are influencing the world they are living in; climate change, refugee crisis in the world, (Syria), terrorist attacks - superbugs, antibiotic apocalypse, political issues, wars, artificial intelligence and technology.

He talked about the Stuxnet virus - created by US military along with Israel to attack the Iranian nuclear weapons programme. A documentary on You Tube called zero days backgrounds this. Warfare in the future will involve shutting down water and electricity supply through viruses.

Spaul talked about the exponential growth in data generation....the amount of data generated in 2017 was more than all the data generated in history up until end of 2016.

He talked about AI and the impact of robots including machine gun robots; in Japan robots have been created to lift people out of bed, but they can also crush people. He talked about Facebook being keen to develop robots that can bargain, but some of these robots started to lie, which makes one worry that they could do their own thing.

He talked about 'The Great A.I awakening'. The development of self-drive cars. And the example in the USA of an auto pilot car taking its driver to hospital. He talked about how google Is now making music with artificial intelligence, Facebook recognition being used to do all sorts of things from buying food through to organizing uber drivers, etc...

He concluded with the view that the types of things that are easy to teach, are easy to automate and shared Alvin Tofler's perspective that the illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read or write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and cannot relearn.

Reflection questions

1. Are we doing things the same way as 5 years ago?

2. How often do you leave your comfort zone?
3. When was the last time I failed?
4. Am I a good model to my staff and students to encourage adapt to change
5. How do I encourage students to teach me and my staff about technology?

A copy of the slide show used by Nic Spaul is available from Nicspaul.com

Speaker: Dr. Michael Mol

Topic: Keynote Number 7: It's Your Move

Main Points:

- Michael Mol is someone of a celebrity in Cape Town. He is a doctor, a television personality and an athlete. His talk was focused on how to maintain one's health in a profession that demands long hours and is at times extremely stressful.
- At the end of the day we only need 3 things for good health. We need to eat, to sleep and to move. The most important according to Mol is to move.
- Sitting is the new smoking and we should all be getting up every 30 minutes and doing something for 5 minutes.
- Exercise for health must be at the right intensity: 2 ½ hours moderately every week, 1 ½ hours of vigorous and 2 days of muscle strength
- Sleep should be a minimum of 7 hours
- Eating must focus on real food, not junk food.

Ideas to consider:

- When you exercise your body allows you to absorb glucose
- Anxiety and depression can rob you of years of your life.
- For those of us complaining of no energy at the end of the day, exercise actually gives your body more energy as it is responsible for building mitochondria which create more energy.

Notes:

Mol believes that we should get rid of our scales to measure fat. All they measure is gravity. He suggested the string test as the best way to measure body fat.

Method: wind a piece of string around your belly. Take the measure and wrap the string length around a credit card lengthwise. If the string goes around the credit card more than 11 times for a male, or 9 ½ times for a female you need to be worried.

Workshops:

Break on Through to the Other Side – Mindset of 21st Century Leaders. Ari Pokka. Finland

Ari Pokka is a secondary school Principal, education policy maker and author. He is currently the executive principal of Schildt Upper Secondary School, the biggest upper secondary school in Finland. After listening to Ari at the Finland conference I was disappointed in this presentation. Knowing that Finland have just undertaken a curriculum review where they have changed their focus in education to a process focus, I was hoping to hear a little more about this. Unfortunately the talk was more about the school he leads than the issues that I had hoped he was going to discuss.

Cyber Sexuality in 21st Century Schools

This workshop took the form of a panel discussion where the question, “how do we, as school leaders, address the scourge on society that is social media and the predators that prey on the children.” A Cape Town psychologist and a police officer specialising in cyber bullying formed the panel, and gave their perspective on the problem and possible solutions.

Main Points:

- A teenager spends up to 9 hours a day on the internet
- More children today have cellphones than fathers
- Children are voyeuristic. Lines of privacy are blurred as to what is right and what is wrong.
- Being on the web is addictive as it increases dopamine levels
- With all addictions, the user must want to stop in order to stop. They only seek help when the problem has reached an out of control state.

Ideas to consider:

- Parents should block adult content on all children’s cell phones.
- What is on social media is not the same as a child’s diary. Children need to be warned that everything that they put on social media is available to the general public.
- Parents must limit their children’s access to the web.

- Children will make mistakes. We need to tell our children what to do if they make a mistake. There should be safe spaces at school, people to whom children know to go for help.

Notes:

The panellists talked about how Iceland had moved to overcome the issues of cyber sexuality. Twenty years ago Iceland had very high drug use and other social ills. They realised that the firing of the dopamine in the brain was what teens were after, so they sought a way of creating a socially agreeable means of getting acceptable highs from dopamine. The teens were offered lessons in dance, martial arts, etc. along with life skills training. Parents started spending more time with their teens and a curfew was introduced for teenagers. In essence the goal was to make the teens busy all the time.

Principal Health and Well-being: Longitudinal results from Australia and Ireland. Philip Riley. Australia

The 2011-2014 Principal Health and Wellbeing Survey produced by Dr Philip Riley and his associates found that Principals and Deputy Principals are bearing a huge workload burden; they are not adequately resourced or supported; and in some cases this is impacting on health and wellbeing. His research continues and is finding similar outcomes to the earlier edition of the survey.

The report includes a range of findings but probably the most significant is the following:

“ far too many participants in the survey are working too many hours and it is taking a toll on their greatest support group; their families. Work-family conflict occurs at approximately double the rate for the population generally. The amount of emotional labour expected of principals and their deputies is 1.7 times that of the general population.

Other findings from the survey were that:

1. Half of school principals work upwards of 56 hours per week and 13% work upwards of 66 hours per week.
2. The greatest source of stress for all principals in every state is the sheer quantity of work, closely followed by the lack of time to focus on teaching and learning.
3. Workload together with lack of adequate resourcing and support is dangerous to the long term health and wellbeing of principals.

Overview of the Encompass Programme

The Encompass Programme refers to a course of study that has been developed for the students of Havelock North High School. The programme starts in year 9 and continues through until students leave the school in year 13. While the content of the programme has been developed over the last 18 months, it is the new timetable structure that will be introduced in 2018 that has allowed the school bring the course to fruition.

As part of the new timetable every staff member and student in the school will engage in the Encompass Programme from 12.05 – 12.55pm (50 minutes) every Thursday afternoon. After

extensive discussion the decision was made to group students randomly rather than in core classes or any other combination that exists currently. The random grouping reflects the holistic learning environment and real-world learning community that the programme endeavours to provide.

Throughout the programme staff and students share the learning experience and engage in a co-constructed programme that follows a theme throughout the year. A project or series of small projects offer students an opportunity to explore the themes by developing tangible outcomes. Throughout the journey, staff and students develop their understanding and competence with a range of soft skills and it is the development of these skills that is the ultimate outcome of the programme.

Behind the programme lies an infrastructure of staff and professional learning communities that is critical in ensuring its ongoing development and success. Positions entitled 'Hub Leaders' have been created to recognize a lead staff member with responsibility for one year level of the programme. The five hub leaders constitute one of the professional learning communities. The second community is made up of each hub leader and the ten staff who will be delivering the programme to their respective year levels.

PAGE 2

THE VISION

- Globally there is an emerging recognition of the importance of providing students with the opportunity to develop soft skills alongside the content knowledge traditionally delivered. Appreciating this global shift in education and establishing a school wide response provided the motivation to develop the Encompass Programme.
- Throughout the development of the programme the Hub Leaders reviewed extensive research including the New Vision for Education (World Economic Forum, 2016) document which recognizes the importance of soft skill development if students are to succeed in a technology rich future:
 - To thrive in the 21st century, students need more than traditional academic learning. They must be adept at collaboration, communication and problem-solving, which are some of the skills developed through social and emotional learning (SEL). Coupled with mastery of traditional skills, social and emotional proficiency will equip students to succeed in the swiftly evolving digital economy.
 - The New Zealand Curriculum (2007) also recognizes the importance of these skills by incorporating the Key Competencies into the front section of the document. Elsewhere in the world new curricula are placing increased significance of soft skill development. The Australian Curriculum (Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014) contains General Capabilities that include personal and social capability and critical and creative thinking.
 - There also appears to be a growing body of evidence that suggests that employers are identifying school leavers as deficient in a number of important skills that make them work-ready. An extensive survey conducted by the British Chamber of Commerce (2014) offered the following point for consideration:

More than half of businesses (57%) said a lack of soft skills, such as communication and team working, were reasons why young people were not 'work ready'.

- Finally, the Havelock North High School vision statement (Encompass) includes several statements that recognize the importance of students developing competencies outside of traditional curriculum areas:

PAGE 3

Staff and students develop the competencies required to live successfully in a rapidly changing world. All members of the school community embrace a culture of continuous improvement. Students and staff commit to lifelong learning through the development of thinking skills, intellectual curiosity and by taking responsibility for their own learning.

STRUCTURE OF THE ENCOMPASS PROGRAMME

The diagram on the following page shows the progression of themes throughout the program and also describes some of the overarching learning outcomes students will explore. The general principles of the programme can be summarised as follows:

- To provide an opportunity for students to develop the soft skills recognised as important in a rapidly changing 21st century society
- For staff and students to participate in a constructivist learning environment where the teacher is a facilitator and not a subject expert
- Staff and students experience a student led/project based learning environment
- Staff work collaboratively as part of a professional learning community to achieve mutually agreed upon outcomes
- Students enjoy learning in a non-threatening environment that encourages equity of outcomes
- Expose students to a range of world-views and expert opinions by accessing outside expertise from the community (both local and global)