

SABBATICAL REPORT



DIGITAL LEADERSHIP

Written by: Kim Scott, Wyndham School, Term 3, 2017

Blurb

Attend a Leading a Digital School conference in Melbourne and spend time with a successful school cluster (Manaaikalani), to gain the future focused knowledge I need to enhance my vision for a digital school and build my leadership depth in this area for my school and then my wider community (through our LMV CoL).

Acknowledgements

A number of people and schools shared their knowledge, expertise and time with me over the course of my sabbatical and I am truly grateful to you all.

My thanks to Wyndham School Board of Trustees who supported my application, to my Deputy Principal Mrs Sue Bousfield who stepped into the Acting Principal's role and to Mrs Nola Gill who stepped into the Acting Deputy Principal's role - thank you. Thank you to all of our staff for their extra work while I was away while also maintaining our wonderful learning environment - my heartfelt thanks to you all.

Thank you to Clutha Valley School, Wanaka Primary School, St Clair School, Manaaikalani Cluster schools and leaders - I thank you all so very much for your willingness to share so readily of your ICT and ILE journey - thank you. How incredibly lucky your students are to be in such amazing schools - your pride, passion and commitment were inspiring.

Thanks needs to go to the other principals in our Lower Matura Valley COL who are walking similar pathways to mine and whom I rang and talked with often. Your willingness to act as my sounding boards, to ask questions that helped me to reflect more deeply and to journey alongside me was truly valued by me - thank you Gerry, Mark, David and Rebekah.

Lastly my thanks goes to the Ministry of Education and Teach NZ for making this very vital opportunity available to me, it has refreshed me while deepening and enhancing my understandings - thank you.

Purpose

- To develop a depth of understanding of the leadership of a digital school thus ensuring the ongoing development of our ILE journey.
- To spend time reflecting on the changes that have occurred over the last three years and spend time building my skills and understandings for the next stage of our school journey which is about consolidating these changes and building depth especially in the everchanging area of digital citizenship.

Background

Wyndham School has gone through rapid change under my leadership in the last three years. The school was under a Commissioner, had one permanent teacher left, had a decreasing roll and almost all of the support and admin staff were new. In the last three years we have developed a fantastic BOT, appointed all permanent teaching staff, increased our role by 25%, increased student achievement in the core areas and rebuilding whanau engagement and ownership within the school. We have developed a senior ILE environment (Year 4 to 6) and a junior ILE team (year 1 to 3) while maintaining a New Entrant - Year 1 reception room over the last two years and this has involved considerable new learning for all teachers and students which has been exciting but quite scary for our parents who had a completely different model when they went through school.

Rationale

As a passionate advocate for learning the digital revolution has soothed my soul as I see it as a way to reduce the disparity that I have watched become more and more evident in our schools as the financial pressure to run a school as a business has meant greater inequity for many of our learners. I am excited by the potential of the digital landscape but I am also wary of the 'purchase and play' mentality that is coming through with some schools. I am also disturbed by the lack of quality ongoing professional development available to teachers who are trying to stay afloat on the sea of constant change that is our digital landscape in schools.

I had worked previously as an ICTPD facilitator as well as a principal in a range of schools from a Decile 1c to a Decile 10 and it was and it is my belief that developing student digital fluencies and providing them with a device that has the capacity to support their learning will help them to access the curriculum that they need and deserve; and in my heart of hearts I hope that this will help to make learning in New Zealand schools more equitable.

I am also incredibly fortunate to work with a team of very capable teachers who have worked hard professionally and personally to be providing well-balanced programmes to our students and their work over the last two years to build Innovative Learning Environments that included collaborative planning, teaching and assessment supported by digital devices that meet their needs. Our teachers all have Activboards, ipads, HP Streams (1 step up from chromebooks) in their classes. We have a 1-to-2 device ratio in our junior rooms and a 1-to-1 device ration from Year 4 to 6.

I believe that the Principal in a school must also ensure that they are providing the leadership that is needed within a school and the key area of concern for me was the digital landscape and how I can ensure that the systems and structures are set up within our school to support our ongoing digital journey, thus my sabbatical focus was forming.

The opportunity (just after I had applied for this sabbatical) to complete a post grad diploma in Applied Technology was made available alongside a scholarship which I had won to pay my fees meant that I was going to be fully immersed in digital learning as a learner which would give me other insights along the way also.

Methodology

I decided upon multiple tiers of knowledge development and I used a reflective journey to keep an ongoing record of my thoughts, ideas etc.

1. I spent considerable time researching digital practices within New Zealand schools currently and specifically 1-to-1 device strategies and whether they affect student engagement - which was a key focus area for me within our ILE structures at school.

2. I travelled to the IWB conference (Leading a Digital School) in Melbourne to compare global trends and ideas with the New Zealand trends and then attending the Google Summit in Wellington to compare key messages.
3. I spent time in New Zealand schools that were successfully running Innovative Learning Environments with clearly supported digital programmes to consider the key components needed .
4. I discussed and collaborated online with leaders about their future focus for their schools and how they plan to implement or are implementing digital devices within their schools.
5. I enrolled and completed my Post Graduate Diploma in Applied Technology to build my personal digital skills and to ensure that my mindset and skill set wouldn't hinder my approach.

Findings

1. Research

I completed a Literature Review around how 1-to-1 digital devices improve student engagement and this set the basis for how I then moved forward as I used extensive research to help me to understand. Here is the lit review [link](#).

2. Trends

The IWB Conference and the Google Summit highlighted some key trends for me:

- A **growth** mindset by the Principal is vital to ensure that they remain abreast of the ever-changing digital landscape and if they are unable or unwilling to remain current; that they delegate this load to others within the school to ensure the school systems and structures remain 'current'.
- Learning structures and systems that **support digital developments** within the school. These include teachers pedagogical understandings, teacher professional development - ongoing, appropriate support personnel for technical issues (usually employed), ongoing budgets for upgrades, subscriptions etc
- **Time and energy to upskill** both your personal skills but also your pedagogical understandings behind some of the drastic shifts in practice that need to occur.
- **Schools' readiness** to embrace these changes e.g hardware configurations, devices, data systems, capacity within network and systems to support these.

- Speed of change is becoming exponentially faster within the digital landscape and therefore we need to understand what we are trying to achieve and be **clear about the needs of our students as learners**.
- **Teacher agency and student agency** are becoming increasingly more important within the digital equation for schools, how we develop this is dependent on each school context and the learners within it.

3. New Zealand Schools - Baseline components

This was the part of my sabbatical that I personally enjoyed the most as each context (school) that I visited was just so different from the next and yet each of these schools had similar components in place. These were:

- A yearly budget for ICT and a firm belief and understanding by the BOT about the importance of digital learning - most were just developing their purchase/lease schedules to be more strategic.
- Ongoing Professional Development - most schools used multiple external providers and in-school systems to support this within classes. In all schools it was expected that teachers would be planning, teaching and assessing digitally. The planning tended to be through the use of Google Suite apps and mainly in Google Docs or Google Sheets. The teaching systems were supported by Google Sites, Free websites e.g. Weebly, Blogs and Wikis and some commercial options thought these were being phased out with a greater emphasis on the student needs and student agency. The range of SMS systems in schools meant that the assessment systems were not seamless though a large number of primary schools were using seesaw as an online learning tool that was being used as a digital portfolio that was shared with whanau.
- Strong school systems of staff development supported by a shared pedagogy that was continually being reworked as new learning was shared by staff.
- ICT Unit - all the schools had at least one unit for ICT (where possible) and the teacher who held this would 'managed' the ICT within the school. In some instances these teachers were also in coaching roles but most indicated that they spent most of their time in this role problem solving and 'fixing' rather than coaching.
- External tech support - primary schools and internal skills by Tech team -secondary schools

Personal Findings

I found it a real privilege to have time to reflect and learn to a depth that excited and scared me. I have always been proactive and I have a strong belief in the value of personal professional development but this p.d. experience was superb. The digital landscape provides the excitement with constant change, new learnings and the need to have a growth mindset but it also scared me as it made me realise the changes that I needed to make to continue to stay 'current' and so I applied for the Post Grad Diploma in Applied Technology being facilitated by AUT to ensure that my personal skills were current. At this I found a group of like minded teachers and principals who were as passionate and motivated as I was and what a pleasure it was to have the time to really spend time with all of this new learning. The biggest change was to my mindset as although I had believed that I had a growth mindset - my new learning especially in augmented reality and gamification really stretched how I see the future of education and learning in general. It is my belief that we will move completely away from a knowledge based environment to one where skills are learned anywhere, anytime, at any pace and with anyone (global is now a reality). We will be confident, connected, life long learners and we will expect to be from a very young age.

ILE Findings

In all of the Innovative Learning Environments that I was fortunate enough to spend time in there was a clear and planned digital presence. This tended to be more evident in the senior ILEs (Y5-Y8) than the junior ILEs. The teachers indicated that this was due to the increased level of skills that students tended to have in the senior skill and the increased availability of devices. Most senior ILEs that I observed had a 1-to 2 or a 1-to-1 device ratio whereas the juniors tended to have 1-to-3 or 1-to-2 device ratios.

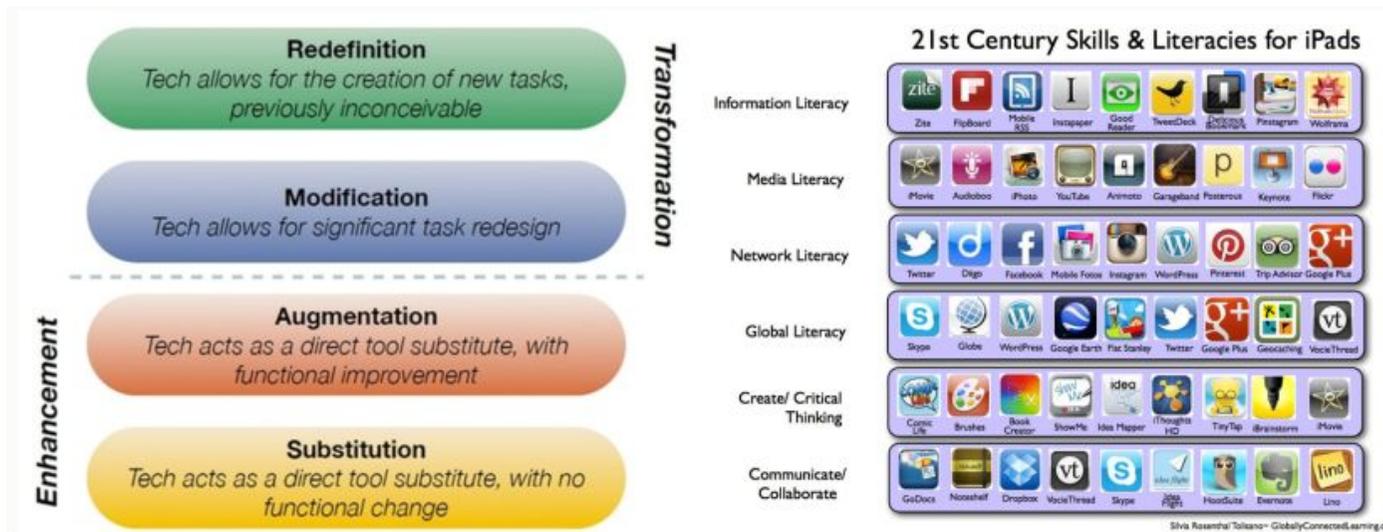
There was a mix of BYOD and school bought/leased devices with chromebooks being the most prevalent in the senior ILEs and ipads in the junior ILEs. Equity of devices was a huge factor and the key reason why schools were buying or leasing. BYOD schools were mixed in their device preferences but all prescribed the device they wanted parents to purchase. Some clusters were purchasing in bulk and Manaaiakalani have a parental buy back scheme where they pay \$3.50 per week to purchase their child's device.

The usage of these devices was in direct proportion to the skills level of the teacher and the most successful usage of these was where the students and teachers co-constructed the learning upon them. The use of google sites to provide support for

learning was very prevalent and teachers were using these successfully to support their workshop structures and programmes that had a student agency supported philosophy. The increased use of videos and video footage to support learning processes was amazing to see and this too was dependent on teacher mindset and skills levels.

Although the digital component is only one component of a successful Innovative Learning Environment - it was considered by all the teachers that I talked with - that this was one of the key components. Many indicated that it was the component they most needed to work on when they were setting up their ILE and many believed that there needed to be greater p.d. and support for this component as many had learnt these skills for themselves, accessing other people or videos to teach themselves. It is great to note that the MOE are now providing digital professional development to support the roll out of the new Digital Technology curriculum.

Most teachers within the ILEs, I observed; used the Google Suite of apps to support their digital programmes. Most used Google Classroom or Hapara to oversee, maintain and assess. Most used Seesaw as their digital portfolio though Manaiaikalani used their own purpose built teachers dashboard. The schools SMS tended to be where the school reports were generated from - if used at all, the use of google sites (previously this was wikis and blogs) to provide a website that students access was becoming more common thus ensuring students focus on the programmes and apps best suited for their learning and the range of apps used for learning were incredible and a real testament to the teachers who I observed - as they would have taken hours to find and set up for their classes.



Most principals and some teachers were starting to look at the quality of use of the devices within the ILE and many were using the SAMR model to really consider their use of digital literacies. Most were using technology for enhancement of learning e.g. substitution or augmentation and there was evidence of increasing awareness of deepening the use of devices and there was also evidence of pockets of development especially with info tech and collaboration technologies. This was more evident in the senior end of primary schools than the junior end.

Developing greater 'student agency' was a key reason that the teachers (especially in the senior ILEs) indicated they were redeveloping their digital structures within the classroom though many indicated that this was quite hard for them, as teachers; as it meant a whole new way of teaching. This was being addressed in a variety of ways within each school.

Junior ILEs use of devices was very task specific and although the students observed in all ILEs were engaged on their devices there seemed to be great engagement levels more evident in the senior ILEs. The students I talked to in each of the senior ILEs indicated that they loved the ability to learn at their own pace, where and when they were ready and this really helped them to remain engaged, they also loved that they could access these programmes, apps, sites etc from home and many indicated that although they didn't like or do homework, they were happy to practice and learn digitally at home.

Implications

It is with excitement that I write of the implications for Wyndham School.

- From this sabbatical I can see that our school systems and structures are well set up and that our device 'load' is comparable to other schools across the country and higher than our Australian counterparts.
- With completing my Post Grad Diploma in Applied Technology I now have the skills and underpinning understandings to continue to lead our Digital journey at Wyndham.
- We have very experienced teachers at Wyndham but we have some teachers who have fixed mindsets with digital learning and this is hindering the depth and quality of digital landscape available to our students. This will mean finding targeted professional development that helps them to develop growth mindsets especially in the area of digital, supported by in-school coaching, just-in-time learning of new apps and ongoing support of them as teachers.
- We have the provision of digital professional development, as part of our COL application and this has not been targeted to the needs of the teachers but more of a delivery of lectures and workshops providing generic development of key skills needed. This sabbatical has helped me to gain greater clarity around the professional development needs of teachers and the importance of 1-to-1 coaching which have since been considered and implemented by our PLD providers.
- I am currently an Expert Principal for our COL and would like to build our Strategic Plan across the whole COL rather than just at our school as then this means that our students will have a greater seamlessness to their digital journey through education. The first part of that has been for the bigger schools all to be using the same SMS which has already had benefits with the direct transition of records from primary school to high school. There are other components that can be developed e.g. consistency of device type - ipads and chromebooks, digital platform - all now moving to Google, all primary schools using seesaw as their digital portfolios, all schools using Google Sites as their learning site etc. Imagine all students learning one system that will work for them all the way through their schooling - how exciting would that be!!

Benefits

I have many personal benefits as a result of this sabbatical but the key benefits for me have been:

- Confirmation that I have the current digital capabilities to lead our school and the COL with our digital learning.
- A deeper understanding of the importance of understanding the pedagogical changes that are necessary alongside new digital learning.
- An excitement for the future of learning in New Zealand that I hadn't fully explored before.
- An understanding of the importance of the digital landscape and its potential within schools if it is integrated strategically and supported by ongoing professional development for all.

Conclusion

I feel truly fortunate to have had this time to reflect and learn and I believe that we as a country; are well placed to provide the digital learning for our teachers and students though we need to continue to provide ongoing professional support for our teachers and ongoing funding to support digital purchase/lease within our school to ensure we remain 'current.'

I have had it confirmed to me, through the teachers I have talked with; about the importance of digital within ILE classrooms and the key components of successful digital integration within a school setting have been outlined earlier. The most important observation was that the quality and depth of digital usage in ILEs was directly proportional to the skills of the teacher and therefore the support for them to continue to upskill is paramount.

I am excited for what the future holds and this sabbatical and subsequent learning through post grad papers has ensured that I have the skills, understandings and a 'growth mindset' to continue to develop in this exciting field of digital learning. I also believe that this mindset will support me well as a leader in all areas (obviously including this digital realm also) and it has reconfirmed my belief in the importance of ongoing professional development.

The redevelopment of our school's digital Strategic Plan using the MOE's five Es showed that we are 'well down the digital track' but that these components will continue to need to be addressed year by year as the digital landscape is ever

changing. There needs to be a greater understanding of the importance and costs involved by BOTs, external agencies and specifically the MOE so that a more collaborative digital landscape can be developed.

My next step is to take what I have learnt and developed within our school at Wyndham and develop the digital Strategic Plan for our LMV COL so that we can build a digital landscape that encompasses the needs, wants and aspirations of all our schools in our area and makes for a seamless development of digital learning for our students.

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