

# MLE Process and Design

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Campbells Bay School  
Silverdale School  
West Melton School  
Kaiapoi Borough School  
Remarkable Primary School  
Shirley Primary School  
St Francis of Assisi  
Lyttleton Primary School

## Purpose

The purpose of the sabbatical is two-fold:

- A. To investigate the design options that best suit our school context, in particular our pedagogical beliefs and practices to ensure even better outcomes for student learning
- B. To identify a clear pathway to scaffold an effective transition for our students / teachers / parents from single cell classrooms to an Innovative Learning Environment (ILE)

## Methodology

I reviewed literature regarding MLE's, in particular the work completed by the Ministry of Education, OECD, M Osborne and Bradbeer. The readings discussed the new building requirements and the theories of the Modern Learning Environment (MLE) pedagogy.

I visited schools on the North Shore and in Christchurch. I was particularly interested in the schools that had:

- been operating an MLE for 3 or more years
- two – storey configurations
- teachers move from single cell environment to a MLE
- built to have a variety of spaces (i.e. campfires, watering holes, and cave spaces)

At the schools I toured the spaces and interviewed key persons on two areas:

- Building Process
- Change of learning Process

The questions I asked were seen as a starting point for discussion:

1. Describe your building and pedagogy?
2. Describe the process you followed to develop the build and pedagogy?
3. Who was a key person?
4. Describe the Good, Bad and Ugly of the build?

## Terminology

In my research I came across four different names that people were using to describe the new teaching environments. They were:

Term	Name	Meaning
ILE / ILS	Innovative Learning Environment / Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• describes the learning ecosystem as a whole (MOE 2016)</li><li>• one that is capable of evolving and adapting as educational practices change and evolve (Osborne 2016)</li></ul>
MLE	Modern Learning Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• building that is centred around a student 'home base' where a lot of teaching and learning occurs, and these bases provide access to a variety of other learning spaces (Osborne 2013)</li></ul>
FLE	Flexible Learning Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• describes the physical environment (MOE 2016)</li><li>• more open than traditional classrooms and can often accommodate more than one class and several teachers. They are often made up of many different size spaces so they can support different ways of teaching (Osborne 2016)</li></ul>
NGLE	New Generation Learning Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• designs that have emerged recently, many are based on the concept of a group of teachers co-habiting a learning space. Instead of working in isolation, groups of two, three, four or more teachers work (Bradbeer 2018)</li></ul>

My preference is the term Modern Learning Environment (MLE).

## Purpose A: Designing an MLE

In my investigation into MLE design options I found that there is no one specific classroom design in use across the schools I visited. Each school had variations – some quite marked! (see Appendix A). There were similar spaces within the buildings; such as Break Out rooms, teaching spaces, wet areas, service areas, teacher areas; yet the layout and organisation of these spaces within a building varied greatly. In some cases these had been imposed by architects or a school leader or by the school community and were a source of either celebration or concern – if the design wasn't fit for your learners it can leave a legacy of dissatisfaction and expensive modifications.

I noted some common general themes in discussions when designing an MLE being:

- Make the design to match YOUR student's needs. The student's needs at your school need to drive the design, this may mean less open area and more breakout areas or the opposite.
- MOE have specific guidelines that they have to adhere to when building new blocks (e.g. classroom is 78sqm). The MOE requirements include all areas of the build: toilet space, teaching space, lift access etc. If you want wide verandas then this may mean smaller teaching spaces.
- Flexible spaces - maintain the ability to be flexible by using ideas such as sliding doors rather than glass doors. The flexibility of the areas was important to cater for the needs of different year groups. Sliding doors that could open up rooms for large assemblies and then closed to allow smaller spaces.
- Watch the budget carefully, especially in the early stages so you do not build up a huge expectation amongst the community and then have to "cut" the design back. The BOT should be aware of the possibility of putting some funds in to get "extras".
- 2 to 3 teacher spaces were preferred in schools and this was based on student needs and teacher ability to teach in larger open areas.

### Good Design points / ideas

- Ensure you can work with the architect/MOE Lead
- Teacher Resource areas were used in varying ways with amalgamation of the allocated area into a large room or using the space as a storage area and having teacher bases in the general classroom space.
- Multi gender toilets require foyers and success is varied between schools – they have been converted back to single gender toilets at students request and parent feedback was problematic at a school.
- Try to model your design in a Hall to see how it flows and what furniture is available to fit in the room.
- Try to get as much built in furniture as possible to save costs on school for furniture
- Grey carpet is better, not patterned, as it appears to be more soothing.
- Check on visibility sight lines e.g. ample windows and big glass doors that can close off areas yet allow for supervision
- Future Proof for digital literacy: Power points, data points, green wall for filming, charging stations; yet one school commented on having too many on the walls – they were a cost.
- Ensure links to outside the classroom with sliding doors or sliding windows – this allows more openness
- Wet areas with modern facilities e.g. stoves, fridges, dishwashers
- Verandas being wide and accessible with good shelter – yet this can take space from your class area
- Bags / lockers for students outside of room
- The use of a "Cave" for students to get quiet time, very effective alongside the Café Booths.
- Acoustic tiles are non-negotiable

- Heat Pumps are necessary – cooling and heating

**Issues to address**

- Coat racks / shoe racks had to be made bigger
- Ventilation is important and must work in your local environment i.e. check the direction of the predominant wind.
- Stairs made of metal and noise reverberates
- Drainage channels on the top veranda are too wide

**Design Process**

I have taken the process developed by CORE (2013) in the MLE Planning Matrix for MLE dimensions and adapted it for our school. In the adaptation I have not included the Network dimension, nor the Maturity / Sustainability phase as we are a long way from that point at the moment and need to focus on the other four dimensions / phases

**MLE Dimensions DESIGN PROCESS (adapted CORE)**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Vision / Scope</b>	<b>Implementation</b>
<b>Education Purpose</b>	Does BBS have an agreed and clear Vision for the next 20 years? Is the Vision referred to during decisions?	Building Leaders and Learners Motto BBS Values
<b>Learner Focus</b>	Have the Year 5 – 6 needs been identified? Have they had a voice? Does the design give learners agency in the way they learn and interact?	Survey students Survey teachers
<b>Teaching and Learning</b>	What are the current pedagogical beliefs and practices? Are these consistent with the beliefs? Does the design enable the pedagogical aspirations of staff?	Pathway to Success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Inclusion</li> <li>• Learner Agency</li> <li>• Responsive and Holistic</li> <li>• Smart Systems / Routines</li> <li>• Wellbeing</li> </ul>
<b>Learning Space Design</b>	What are our understandings about the relationship between pedagogy and space? Does the actual use of space match design? What changes need to be made?	Principal Sabbatical Leadership PLD Teacher PLD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research through visits, readings</li> <li>• External Facilitator</li> </ul>
<b>Finance</b>	Where is funding committed? What supplementary costs will there be? Has consideration been given to ongoing and operational costs?	MOE Budget BOT Budget
<b>Furniture / Equipment</b>	What furniture works? Why?	Furniture trials
<b>ICT</b>	What digital competencies do we want learners to have? Are the ICT's implemented supporting the learning needs?	ICT review on current and future practice GAFE eTap

<b>Environmental sustainability</b>	How might the local environment, landscape and history influence the design? Are there particular areas of sustainability to develop? What environmental design features are to be used in the MLE? Does the design give thought to natural light, energy efficient lighting, heating and use of water, solar ...	Planting Plan 10YPP Sustainable power
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### **Purpose B: Process towards teaching in a MLE**

In my investigation to identify a clear pathway to scaffold an effective transition for our students / teachers / parents from single cell classrooms to a Modern Learning Environment (MLE) I found that there was no one specific plan for a process used across the schools I visited. Each school had variations yet there were commonalities in the process.

I also found that the process did not just stop when the new MLE was occupied. The continued focus on working as a team collaboratively was just as important. Teams had to work to keep the ideas alive.

When I visited schools I noted some common themes shared by Management over the process of introducing a MLE design:

- Take time to do it right – time for the process and time for school to adjust
- Communication needs to be clear and involve all stakeholders. Front foot it with your community and be ready with expectations and answer to concerns.
- Include teachers, parents and students in the process.
- Have belief that it can happen
- The development of a team of interested stakeholders with a key support person was seen as important. There are so many facets of the process it needs a team with a Coordinator to follow the project through to a final conclusion.

### **Good Processes points / ideas**

- Once in the MLE, Team Meetings must have time set aside to review / refocus on collaborative skills.
- Team Leaders were important to support teachers in “keeping to the script”
- The team needs to establish the pedagogy of the MLE to your vision and values
  - Start in the MLE how you intend to continue.
  - Use the same language across the MLE – pod / whanau/ learning team
  - Monitoring of students needs to be sorted e.g. Spotlight; LincED
- One school followed the process 12 months out of possession with:
  - All staff informed
  - Job roles were outlined and how teaching was to work (this meant that the general philosophy had already been outlined e.g. collaborative structure had been determined) – teachers signed off on MLE
  - Opportunity to visit / discuss
  - Staff applied for roles in MLE
  - MLE opened gradually with classes trialling the new areas before moving in completely.
- Teacher Agreements: Teachers need to come in with same lenses

- How will we work this environment (early stages used a taped area in the Hall to show limitations e.g. storage)?
- What will our timetable look like?
- How does furniture fit – not all seats or all seats?
- My space – where is it?

#### Issues to address

- PD was helpful yet staff need to be ready for the “impact” of going into an open area – 12 months to understand
- Be mindful of staff needs – teacher visibility leads to teacher stress when transferring from a single cell environment.
- Dissatisfied staff are an issue and can be countered when you reinforce the “pockets of promise” and by continually addressing issues early at Team Meetings.

#### Process to an MLE

I have taken the process developed by CORE (2013) in the MLE Planning Matrix for MLE dimensions and adapted it for our school.

In the adaptation I have not included the Network dimension, nor the Maturity / Sustainability phase as we are a long way from that point at the moment and need to focus on the other four dimensions / phases

#### MLE Dimensions PROCESS (adapted CORE)

Dimension	Vision / Scope	Implementation
<b>Change Leadership</b>	Does BBS understand need for a change? Can this be led internally or externally? Is there a clear plan for change that is communicated to all stakeholders listing Roles? Responsibilities?	<i>Have you chosen the right systems, structures, tools and support?</i>  Teaching / Pedagogy Action Plan
<b>Collaborative Culture</b>	What does collaboration and a collaborative culture look like for BBS? Why is it important? How can we do it? What protocols and strategies need to be developed? How can we use the current collaborative environment?	<i>How will collaboration be practiced supported and maintained?</i>  Teaching / Pedagogy Action Plan
<b>Community Engagement</b>	Where is the key drive for the MLE coming from? Is it reflective of everyone? Is there a clear community consultation plan?	<i>Are all stakeholders informed?</i>  Community Action Plan
<b>Professional learning and development</b>	Is there a shared understanding of what makes effective PLD? Has BBS completed a review of staff needs, competencies and aspirations? What gaps are there? Is there a PLD plan? Are there experienced people to lead this?	<i>Are all staff participating in PLD?</i>  PLD Action Plan

<b>Evaluation Review</b> /	Is there agreement on the vision and values for the MLE? Has a clear case for the MLE been established? Does the plan for the MLE initiative meet expectations and can it be done within budget? Does the design of the MLE enable the sorts of learning espoused by BBS?	Milestones included in the Above Action Plans
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