

**Development Program for High Performing Principals
2006-2007
Final Report Cover Sheet**

This report details, in relation to my participation in the Development Program for High Performing Principals, the following elements of my Individual Professional Learning project and my Contribution to System Development project:

- rationale;
- objectives;
- activities, including sharing activities;
- key learning;
- outcomes.

In addition this report contains my reflections on participating in the Program, and describes the further goals, based on my key learning and outcomes, I hope to achieve beyond the life of the Program.

Name: Kerrie Heenan

Date: June 2009

School Name: The Lakes South Morang

Region: NMR

Phone No: 94013919

Email: heenan.kerrie.a@edumail.vic.gov.au

Permission to Publish Report Online	Y
-------------------------------------	---

Rationale

During the life of my learning project moving from Fawkner Secondary College to The Lakes South Morang lead me on a very different journey to that first anticipated. My initial project was to investigate how corporate/community investment could be harnessed at network level to create collective responsibility for young people rather than continue to compete for the corporate dollar. This was particularly relative to the Broadmeadows Network that had recently embarked on a renewal project.

The Lakes was a completely new ball game. A purpose designed building reflecting many of the features being touted around Broadmeadows was under construction. The more I researched 21st century learning spaces the more agitated I became. There were lots of ideas, theories but I was unable to find anywhere that the talk was really being walked. I changed my project focus.

My initial objective of looking at the role of networks and collective responsibility for student learning remained but my personal learning objectives changed. My objectives were now clear: How do flexible learning spaces make a difference to learning outcomes; what role do the furnishings have in making this happen; what qualities are needed to deliver the pedagogy and how will this be measured.

Literature searches, lengthy discussions with designers, architects and academics all provided opportunities for how The Lakes would deliver 21st century programs to young people who engaged in learning very differently from many of the teachers in our schools. I was now on a mission

The learning spaces particularly in the middle years campus had picked up what the research had told us. One size doesn't fit all. Students need different spaces to meet their own learning styles, spaces needed to be adaptable, minimal fixtures, line of sight for incidental supervision, open to create space particularly for growing boys, inside and outside spaces, quality access to ICT, breakout space, teacher meeting places for collective, responsible planning and delivery.

The footprint had been laid and the buildings were evolving - studios, workshops, precinct and of course The Learning Street. - What is this? - How do you furnish a learning street? - classrooms without walls, no corridors for lockers, spaces that matched learning styles, alcoves for soft furnishing, not enough storage and few whiteboards or display spaces, "Heaven forbid the schedule for furnishing new schools originated with the ark" - We were on new ground - The Lakes wasn't designed for 13 tables and 26 chairs per room with some lockers or tubs a teachers desk and a whiteboard.

A series of new challenges awaited - What furniture is available? - The answer is stock standard boring school furniture or a new adventure. Together with architect Geoff Stanistreet we approached IKEA to source modern 21st century - funky furniture to bring our school alive - response - too big for a cash and carry business. Mobile furniture was what we needed whiteboards, storage, laptops, trolleys, beanbags, couches, soft cubes, tables in different shapes, intensive ½ moon teaching tables not always readily available but always expensive.

The specialist areas were even more difficult to furnish. Continuing the theme of mobility and the idea of flexibility sourcing work benches for woodwork, drills and other equipment that are safe and ergonomically designed for students 10 -16 years old has required much thought and consultation with manufacturers. We have got this right maybe we will patent our new designs.

Staffing was the next challenge - Who was going to best deliver the programs? This challenge was easy in theory. Everybody knows relationships are the key to successful learning. This would be vital at The Lakes. If staff were to successfully work in teams with collective responsibility for students the composition of each team was critical and would continue to be as the school rapidly grew. Decisions, decisions. Should I recruit young energetic staff and build their capacity to thrive in a different model? Is using coaches a better option than building depth via expert teachers? What if the experienced teacher found the open learning too hard? Did I have an opportunity to pilot and explore a range of options? I had to get it right - the outcomes for students was at stake and for every day I got it wrong a child's future was at risk.

Jobs were advertised. Referrals were abundant. It wasn't fair. What chance did this new school offering a very new model have when excess staff were constantly referred. The end result was exemplary leading teachers were appointed, DEECD initiatives such as Graduate Program, Graduate Scholarships and Career Change all enabled at balanced but dynamic base to be formed. Personalities and a range of skills with a common philosophy appeared to be the key.

Sharing

My initial thoughts were presented to the NMR staff on their Professional Development Day. The learning environment on offer at the Lakes was described and the importance of staff selection in ensuring the best combinations could work in an exposed setting with no walls and reliant on shared thinking, planning and responsibility was shared.

I then took this message to preservice teachers speaking and sharing the ideas behind the new designs and pedagogies developing in Victorian Schools. The lecturers were shell shocked, our new generation of teachers had limited access to these new models and maybe the trainer needed to do some rethinking - Victoria University Sunbury and Latrobe University Beechworth have been very supportive and have elements in there programs that work for schools like The Lakes South Morang.

More sharing

During the period from opening in January 2007 until June 2009 The Lakes has hosted visitors from every region in Victoria, interstate WA, QLD, NSW and Tas and international. The visitors have represented government, private, catholic education, architects, educators and parents.

DEECD projects or initiative we have supported through visitors or tours of The Lakes have included

Building Futures - Wodonga, Leongatha, Geelong Area, Albert Park, West Gippsland, Horsham

Regeneration Projects - Broadmeadows and Bendigo

Teams of architects, leaders, school council members and teachers have been referred to The Lakes to observe and witness our learning spaces in action. This has provoked questions and discussion as to how spaces can be adapted to meet the need of different communities. Feedback is that often this is the first time the concept registers as “seeing is believing” for many planning group members

Rural Renewal -

These teams often have significant numbers of community members trying to grasp the idea of studios or learning neighbourhoods. These visitors are encouraged to talk with students and staff working in the learning street to get authentic opinions and ideas.

Public Private Partnerships - Scaffidi Hugh-Jones Consultants, Consortium Bidders

The focus of these visits has been to ascertain what works and what the community wants. Discussions have also been around contractors, architects, project management and quality of workmanship and consultation. ICT has been a particular focus for Scaffidi Hugh-Jones in preparing documentation for this project

CEFCI Conference -Site Visit - 47 Delegates

This visit was very much focussed on Design, ESD features and a conversation around whether the architects had delivered the vision of the community. Did the design enhance curriculum and learning outcomes.

DEECD School Design - Kerrie EkinSmyth - Infrastructure Division -Design Exemplars - Victorian Schools in Planning - Documents, Website and Virtual Tour

A team from our school was invited to contribute to this project. This has been a fantastic experience and enabled us to engage in conversations with others in similar circumstances while enabling new communities to benefit from our learning.

DEECD Teaching and Learning Video - Implementing learning in New Designs - Spencer Mitten - Communications Adviser

Building on the school design project capturing learning in action and the grass roots opinions of our students, staff and parents

DEECD visit from ICT Section - Steve Loquet and Christian Enkelmann - Best Practice Network

Sharing the experience of a network built from the ground up as against a patchwork. This visit enabled staff from the centre to witness ICT in action. It also enabled us to have input into discussion about new directions in hardware and software acquisition.

These visitors provide an enormous opportunity for us to share our experiences and provide opportunities for the system to learn most of all it has allowed me to reflect on our journey and to continue to improve The Lakes Learning community.

The final area of continuous sharing that has occurred is in the area of environmental sustainability. Local government, developers and academics have been drawn to The Lakes to observe and share how units of work are developed around the ESD features in our school. The capacity to recycle the rock extracted from the building program, water tanks, smart roof solar panels, sensor lights and purging of hot spaces have all now been linked to programs like “Ecomania” our highly recognised sustainability program.

Key Learning

21st Century Learning Spaces

Victorian Architects and designers have an amazing understanding of education and how the theory to improve outcomes and engagement can be implemented. I am surprised and somewhat disappointed that we in education continually look for our answers internationally and dismiss what's in our own backyard. Most of the designs under construction with creative leadership and an opportunity to select staff will improve learning considerably.

The budget brief for new/refurbished schools needs to reflect the nature of the environment and the planning process must be alerted to the tendency to remove fixtures from tender documents in favour of mobile pieces. This will only work if the furniture budget is adjusted. Corridors are extinct and learning streets need furniture and fittings.

Manufacturers of furniture need to be engaged to design and create pieces that suit the learning environments we want. Boring shapes and colours do not stimulate learning. Portability is essential as is height adjustment in practical areas. If this was undertaken at a system level the cost for specialist furniture would become competitive rather than prohibitive. This will become increasingly so as new requirements are implemented in Technology Centres.

Networks

When in Canada in March I visited the Durham District Board and a number of schools both K-8 and 9-12. My thinking about the role of the network was affirmed. I witnessed quality PD in ICT at the Board Centre where practising teachers were seconded for short periods of time to deliver authentic learning in ICT. This demonstrated how valued expertise from within the service was and ensured the learning was valued by the participants. I had the opportunity to see their version of the Ultranet in action - bring it on - I loved the fact that all schools had the benefit of bulk buying and rollout of equipment as equitable, including ICT software available to every teacher and student.

I was intrigued that competition between schools for the market was negligible and while I am a strong believer in local selection I was drawn to the idea that competition is alleviated when you as the principal may well find yourself in the very school you aggressively marketed against.

It made me reflect on is it about my school or our schools - a very affirming time. I still believe we have a long way to get to this point in Victoria.

I also witnessed the District Superintendent in action - wow - I loved the pressure applied and the questions asked about data and how the principals were going to ensure students moved to the next level.

I was intrigued at how much of what I do here in Victoria is carried out centrally and for just a minute a little envious of being able to focus on teaching and learning rather than

buildings, ohs, workforce planning and so on. My Canadian colleagues were gobsmacked as to what my duties included and felt a little overawed.

I was also fascinated by objects as simple as tennis balls being attached to the legs of chair and tables to reduced damage to floor surfaces and allow students to glide around workspaces.

The final key learning for me was how effective inclusive models of schooling were with special needs students being catered for at the local level. This was highly successful and very reassuring given our model - The Lakes South Morang and Merriang SDS P-6 campus living and sharing together.

Outcomes and Future Directions

The program has been exhilarating and renewed my personal learning. The opportunity to focus on what has been important to me with some time to inquire, research, observe, reflect and share has been fantastic.

Feeding my learning into a range of forums and being influential in small ways has reignited my passion for our system and enabled the experiences we have to filter through key forums to improve outcome for those who come next.

The Lakes has a revolving door and together with facilities and infrastructure branches I believe we will continue to contribute to The Building Futures program ensuring that the educational needs of every student informs the planning and development of school infrastructure. Our school is designed to

- promote individualised learning
- create settings for innovative teaching
- incorporate new technology
- be environmentally sustainable, and
- support community involvement.

When every child and every community has access to this level of learning environment we will have succeeded.

Most of my project objectives are still to be realised. How do flexible learning spaces make a difference to learning outcomes; what role do the furnishings have in making this happen; what qualities are needed to deliver the pedagogy and how will this be measured.

My journey will continue and the data will tell the story. I guess it is a little while yet before we can analyse our outcomes. Early data tells us students are engaged. In the meantime I will continue to work with preservice teacher programs, teachers and communities to share the expertises and learning @ the Lakes South Morang P-9

Kerrie Heenan
The Lakes South Morang