

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT ON ATTENDANCE AT THE HAWKER BROWNLOW EDUCATION 12TH ANNUAL THINKING AND LEARNING CONFERENCE

MELBOURNE 22 MAY – 25 MAY 2015

Overall Impressions

Despite a very hefty 'A\$1312.00' registration fee, this conference lived up to my professional expectations in providing high calibre keynotes from well researched international educationalist authorities, supported by a range of other educational consultants, all with successful practice, experiences and with capacity in building frameworks for effective teaching and learning.

This was my first attendance to one of these established conferences and there was sufficient in each day's presentations, to develop considerable:

REFLECTION – CHALLENGE – INQUIRY – INTEGRATION

into my current Principal and leadership position.

The following are summaries of key presentations I attended.

Dr. Dylan Wiliam – Preparing Students For A World We Cannot Imagine

- Technology is replacing an increasing amount of full-time jobs globally and it is fast becoming very competitive to retain a job, but also realising that the competition for jobs into the future is likely to see in a New Zealand context, multi-hundreds after any one position.
- The current 21st Century skills appear to be universal as desired school outcomes – learning environments:
 - Cognitive processes and strategies/communication and collaboration
 - Knowledge
 - Creativity/problem solving
 - Intellectual openness/critical thinking
 - Work ethic/conscientiousness
 - Positive core s
 - elf-evaluation
 - Teamwork
 - Leadership
- Teaching quality depends on:
 - The amount of time the teacher has to plan teaching
 - The quality of the curriculum
 - The material resources available
 - Class size
 - Support of Colleagues
 - Support of Community
 - Skill of the Teacher
- Effective Learning Environments
 - Create student engagement/capitalise on the pedagogies of engagement
 - Are well-regulated
 - Develop disciplinary habits of mind

Dr. Dylan Wiliam – Embedding Formative Assessment with Teacher Learning Communities.

POINTS OF INTEREST

"It's a mistake to think that every lesson commences with a Learning Objective – sometimes we need to hook students into a learning activity in a way that will excite them/raise their curiosity and at a later time arrive at the learning intention as an outcome of where they are in their learning".

"Formative assessment is evidence driven".

A Good Teacher:

- Establishes where the students are, in their learning.
- Identifies the learning destination.
- Carefully plans a route.
- Begins the learning journey.
- Makes regular checks on progress in the way.
- Makes adjustments to the course as conditions dictate.

"Shared learning intentions early in the lesson, should be clearly communicated and have a connected success criteria.

- Consider providing this in "student's language".
- Use posters of key words to talk about learning eg. describe/explain/evaluate.
- Use planning and writing frames, judiciously.
- Use annotated examples of different standards to 'flesh out' assessment rubrics eg. investigations.
- Provide opportunities for students to design their own tests.

"Seek a peer review where one teacher observes/records another teacher questioning.

- Analyse the amount of words within that/those questions and follow up with clarity of the question.
- Identify the better question that should have applied and decide why that is the better constructed question".

Consider when marking student's work:

- "Five of these answers are wrong; find these, and correct them!"
- It helps to move the learning on!"

Summary

- Raising achievement is important.
- Raising achievement requires improving teacher quality.
- Improving teacher quality requires teacher professional development.

To be effective, teacher professional development must address:

- What teachers do in the classroom.
- How teachers change what they do in the classroom.

Dr. Anthony Muhammad – “Transforming School Culture”

Points of Interest

“School Culture is the set of norms, values and belief, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and stories that make up the ‘persona’ of the school”.

- Deal & Peterson, 2002.

“Healthy School Culture – Educators have an unwavering belief in the ability of all of their students to achieve success and they pass that belief on to others in overt and covert ways. Educators create policies and procedures and adopt practices that support their belief in the ability of every student”.

- Peterson, 2002.

“Transformational Leader (at all levels) is determined to lead a person into better behaviour rather than being satisfied with identifying and criticizing current behaviour”.

“Intelligence alone is not enough to be a good leader”.

“Transforming behaviour works best when it demonstrates a leadership style which is task and relationship orientated”.

“Disruptive personnel in 1x team are likely to be disruptive in another team. Look at transformational response, rather than structural change”.

“What do great cultures do differently than toxic organisations?”

- They seek and find the brutal facts.
- They get the right people on the ‘bus’ and sit them in the right seats.
- Accept that improvement is the catalyst of getting better, preferably when data driven.
- Set up professional learning communities (PLC).
- Collaborative alignment following reflection and a desire to move in a different direction.
- Change the failed systems and non-functional processes.

“Schools need transformational leaders at every level. These leaders are determined to lead people to better behaviour. They do not stop at criticizing current behaviour. Rather they use their resources and influence to help people improve”.

Dr. Anthony Muhammad – “The Elephants in the Room: Eliminating Barriers to Effective Collaboration”.

“We assert that despite there being an achievement gap, student ethnicity and social class are not barriers to learning; rather, schools that do not properly respond to the needs of these students are the barriers”.

“Effective teachers, rather than “Looking out the window”, are more inclined to “look in the mirror” with an inquiring mind to ask questions about their teaching effectiveness rather than to blame others for not being effective learners.

Elephants in the Room

Predetermined concepts:

1. Educators own socialisation and the impact on his or her practice in the classroom.
2. Students perception of his or her probability of success in school.
3. Institutional barriers and inequitable distribution of resources, that make the job of educating every student very difficult.

Other Policy Elephants

1. Student placement in advanced coursework.
2. Zoning policies around ethnicity and economic class.
3. Discipline/expulsion policies.
4. Graduation standards/polices.

“The best case for public education has always been that it is a common good. Everyone ultimately has a stake in the calibre of schools and education is everyone’s business”.

- Fullan, 2003

“Research shows that one year of underperforming teaching influence takes up to 3 years for those impacted, to catch up”.

Other Notable Extracts of Interest from other Presentations

- 'Distributive leadership focuses on interactions rather than actions'.
- 'Leadership is viewed as a practice rather than a role: - Practice makes better!'
- 'Professional learning communities cause educators to behave in new way to continuously improve student learning'.
- 'The quality of an educational organisation cannot outperform the quality of its teachers.
- "Education change depends on what teachers do and think – it's as simple and complex as that". – Sarason 1971.
- "Lifelong learning – the ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge".
- "Facilitation skills are essential for anyone seeking to lead others in a participatory, process of discussion, learning and change".
- "Quality leading for quality teaching for quality learning".
- "Disciplined collaborative learning is a key lever for school improvement".
- A progressive school is one prepared to "Get off the Dance Floor and onto the Balcony".
- "Good to great organisations think differently".

David Sausa – "Today's students will"

- Graduate into a complex, ambiguous, volatile and uncertain world.
- Compete for jobs that do not yet exist.
- Use technology that no one has yet developed.
- Do more learning on the job than they ever did in school.

Question: Are we preparing students for these challenges?

"The most important knowledge and skills for Pre-School – Y12/13 students to learn for our complex future: - (via Harvard University research 2015).

Ranked at the top:

- Thinking
- Self-Understanding
- Empathy
- Ethics
- Communication

Ranked at the bottom:

- Science
- Mathematics
- Technology

Society and how it works

"Integrating arts-related skills into the school curriculum along with other courses, is an effective way to enhance student interest and achievement, whilst most importantly, developing 'creativity' as a necessary requisite for the 21st Century learner.

Conclusion

- I am reflecting closely on distributing responsibility among a wider number of school based PLC, led by identified staff in an endeavour to empower, and grow the leadership talents in them.
- Transformational leadership sits very comfortably with me and my task is to ensure a more collaborative buy-in to change which is based on task and relationship developments.
- Growing and supporting Teacher effectiveness is a desirable continuum for MWPS and the Inquiry conversations based on data, will inform the pathway of development.
- I need to be mindful of the "Elephants in the Room" and act by "looking into the mirror" as a constructive way of leading into better ways of people behaviour.

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the professional support provided to me to attend this conference. I definitely see the quality of the presentations experienced at this year's conference as good reason to look forward to a repeat attendance in 2016.

Thank you.

David Wallis
PRINCIPAL