

The changing role of the learner and teacher

This is the third article in a series of four by Dr Chris Jansen from Leadership Lab and Dr Cheryl Doig from Think Beyond that profiles the shifts that are happening in many secondary schools across New Zealand towards more future-focused and flexible learning opportunities.

When most of us went to school, teachers were the primary source of learning new information. However, in the 21st century, information is now readily available through the internet which is changing the role of teacher. The increasing demand for skills such as collaboration, creativity, critical thinking and problem solving is also shifting the way learning is organised in our secondary schools.

One example of this is a shift in *teacher to student* interaction. The traditional role of teacher delivering all learning is being blended with students working at their own pace. This can mean students designing their own timetables, programmes and contexts with teachers as mentors. At Ao Tawhiti Unlimited Discovery, passions, interests and student needs are at the forefront of the learning design. Learning opportunities are negotiated by the student, parent/whānau and learning adviser (teacher) and learning is based on readiness rather than age so the weekly interaction between student and learning adviser is critical in balancing teacher direction with self-management.

Christchurch Girls' High School has recognised that teachers are no longer the exclusive source of knowledge, and that with advances in technology and shifts in future employment needs, this requires a shift in learning approach. Students are encouraged to work in groups and take the lead in accessing information from a range of sources with the teacher acting as a facilitator who works alongside students in their inquiry process. The positive outcomes measured at present include students gaining new skills, feeling in charge of their learning and therefore becoming more connected, engaged and curious.

Pedagogical change is also evident in the great variation in *teacher to teacher* interaction. Typically, secondary teachers have worked either alone or within their specialist area or discipline. Many subject areas are now working collaboratively by co-teaching with two or more teachers within their discipline, or working across two or more specialist areas or disciplines using multidisciplinary approaches. A wide range of secondary schools in Christchurch including Hornby, Shirley Boys', Haeta, St Margaret's College, Burnside and Kaiapoi have groups of teachers collaborating to design and facilitate learning programmes for their students – thereby modelling the collaborative skills that students are also seeking to develop.

Student to student interaction is also becoming more prevalent. While there are still students that spend most of their school day working alone there are increasing examples of students collaborating in groups; working in self-paced, self-directed ways; or having greater flexibility in their interactions. The Riccarton High School Media and Advertising programme is an elective for Years 11–13 students, with a focus on developing skills through communicating with community. This student-driven programme has students creating content for many different communication pathways including newsletter, website, billboard, video, Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram.

The manner in which these flexible approaches are occurring looks different from school to school and this list of examples just scratches the surface. There is no doubt that students and parents are expecting more personalisation in their learning and schools are actively exploring how best to enable this. ●



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