



Term 4 2017

Embrace Equip Engage Empower

The Learning Quarterly (LQ) is published during Fallow Week each term. The purpose is to highlight and explore current practices in education within the St Kieran's context. It is one of the many ways we keep you engaged in your child's learning.

Stage 3 2018

Throughout the year in the *Learning Quarterly* you will have read articles relating to advancements in contemporary learning such as **flexible learning spaces** and **21st century learning**. As you would be aware after reading the last few newsletters, the school has chosen to move towards creating an open classroom for Stage 3 in 2018. Work on creating this space is due to begin before Christmas and be completed for the commencement of school next year.

The space will be created in what was the iCentre (school library) with the library moving to what is currently the Year 6 classroom(s). The space that was the library, admin and Lighthouse will be converted to one large space where the three classes i.e. Year 5, Year 5/6 and Year 6 will have defined meeting points for class instruction. The rest of the space will include a technology hub, two creative arts spaces, interactive whiteboards and LED televisions for viewing and presentations. Scattered throughout will be work spaces for individuals, pairs and small groups with furniture including stand-up desks, collaboration tables and "grandstands" for group work. The flexible work space allows children to work in an environment conducive to their learning style. During this time the class teacher, in fact all teachers will be supporting the children with their learning.

The concept of 21st century learning is based on the premise that students today need to be ready for a workplace where the skills of collaboration, creativity and critical thinking are highly developed. These are part of the 6 C's. The visual representation explains these in detail.



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Why we don't have a traditional model of 2 School Captains and 2 Vice Captains

Since the information session at the Term 4 P&F meeting, the school has received a variety of questions asking for clarification on next year's arrangements. A selection of these is included for review. A few key references are also included for further exploration.

Q&A's

- Why is the school reducing the number of teachers in Stage 3 from four to three?

The decision to reduce the number of teachers in the school was a decision made by the Catholic Schools Office. The decision was made in 2016 however the school was able to fund the employment of an extra teacher for 2017. Unfortunately we were informed in October that this could not be sustained and so we are moving to three teachers for next year.

- Will Year 6 lose their identity and the responsibilities associated with their leadership?

Aspects of Year 6 that are specifically "Year 6" will be kept separate. The leadership program will be maintained by implementing a different set of roles for Year 6 students to those in Year 5. Grade specific PD lessons will also be kept separate. Preparation for NAPLAN testing will be kept separate. If for example, the Year 5 group need to meet for something specifically relating to Year 5 – the use of the "breakout" room will become useful.

- How will you challenge and stretch the learning capabilities of high achieving students with such a large class size?

Our Learning Support Program monitors and plans interventions. Teachers do not teach to one level in any classroom. They are trained to differentiate the program and so balance the structure of teaching and learning to include independent tasks/small group intervention and individual intervention.

- How will students, who require extra support with their specific learning needs e.g. sensory processing issues, be accommodated in the classroom?

Providing flexible learning spaces is a positive way to support students with sensory issues i.e. vestibular, auditory, tactile and proprioception. These issues can affect students' learning depending on whether they are hyposensitive or hypersensitive. A variety of seating and learning spaces allows for better regulation and management of these symptoms. Example: a child with vestibular and proprioception sensory issues will benefit from working at standing tables.

- What level of research has been brought to this situation?

John Hattie's research was referred to at the presentation. Aspects of teaching and learning that provide the greatest success are things such as: collaborative teacher efficacy, student visible learning, formative teacher evaluation and the use of feedback as well as metacognitive strategies.

All of these aspects have been researched over the past few years at St Kieran's and have formed much of our professional learning program. As a result of this many structures have been put in place and provide the blueprint for success by ensuring that:

1. *Teachers work together to plan, evaluate and review programs.*
2. *Students are given opportunities (and the language) to explain their thinking.*
3. *Students are included in the process of self-evaluation and goal setting*

*Ron Ritchhardt's body of work, **Making Thinking Visible**, has also been used as part of the professional learning for staff at St Kieran's. His strategies promote engagement, understanding and independence for all learners.*

- Is the school able to provide any research or evidence that supports this change?

Much of the research conducted is based around the work of John Hattie and Ron Ritchhart as well as systems level work around 21st century learning. The CSO document Learning Principles includes current research in the main body of work.

Also, we have included further references below:

1. Foundation for Young Australians. (2017). The New Work Smarts: Thriving in the New Work Order. Sydney. https://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/FYA_TheNewWorkSmarts_July2017.pdf
2. Fullan, M., & Langworthy, M. (2014). A rich seam: How new pedagogies find deep learning. Retrieved from London. http://www.michaelfullan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/3897.Rich_Seam_web.pdf
3. Hattie, J. (2015). 8 Simple Tasks: What Works Best in Education. Pearson: London. https://visible-learning.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/John-Hattie_Study_Pearson_Solutions_What-works-best-in-education_The-politics-of-collaborative-expertise_2015.pdf
4. OECD (2017), The OECD Handbook for Innovative Learning Environments, OECD, Publishing, Paris. <https://tinyurl.com/ybbblemd>

What do our students think of flexible learning?

Charlotte

Freedom, an open classroom, space and more opportunities - the Year Six classroom is fantastic! In Year Six you are offered a wide variety of things to do and many different ways to do those things. With flexible seating you are able to work out how you work best to get your work done. In Year Six the seating choices are desks, chairs, the window sill, ottomans, bean bags and the floor and if you don't want to sit, you are able to stand or work independently. The one thing I most looked forward to coming into the Year Six environment was being one big class with two teachers, rather than a smaller class with one teacher. We are encouraged to work with peers who we wouldn't normally work with and build learning relationships in the classroom. I enjoy having two teachers because it means that you can develop relationships with both teachers and there is more support and guidance in our learning.

Albert

Year Six is the best year for opportunities and controlling your own learning. I have found that I work best when I'm standing up, and in our classroom, I am able to do this. This has helped me to work to my best ability. This flexible environment has allowed me to develop relationships with boys and girls who I hadn't played or worked with before. Our class is an inclusive environment. I like being able to choose where I sit and who I work with. I have learnt to manage my learning behaviours by working with different children. Everyone works together to support each other's' learning and social needs. To sum it all up, in Year Six I've noticed that I have become more independent.

Daniel

Imagine an open classroom, full of opportunity and learning choices. We have greater responsibility for our learning choices because we are allowed to sit wherever we want to (as long as it's within class rules) and that

helps our learning. We can sit on the window sill (don't worry, it's safe) and at any of the desks, the floor and on the ottomans. You can develop more relationships with people that weren't even in your class before as you're now one BIG class - more people equals more friends who may even be of the other gender. But in general, it's a healthy, fun, caring community that, I believe, is a great way to end your primary school journey.

Traditional School Captains vs Shared Leadership

The concept of student leadership is often used interchangeably with the terms student agency, student voice, and student participation. Researchers tend to identify a spectrum of activities and practices that constitute student voice and leadership.

The necessity of participation and freedom of expression is explicitly stated in the United National Convention on the Rights of the Child, which calls for signatories to “assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child” (UN General Assembly, 1989). Student leadership practices emerge from this rights-based concept, reflecting the potential and importance of young people’s capacity to play a role in making the decisions that affect them.

A study conducted by researchers in 2012, indicates that there are numerous ways students can be involved in making a difference to their school. This is through structures such as school councils and school working groups and action teams. The study found that students involved in these groups experienced a number of benefits as a result of their participation, including:

- developing life skills
- developing/improving self-esteem and social status
- developing democratic skills and citizenship skills

This builds a case for leadership structures that benefit not only students involved in a more traditional model of “two school captains and two vice captains” but instead, leadership structures that benefit all students. This is the model we’ve chosen to implement at St Kieran’s: a shared leadership model of Year 6 Leadership Teams. We understand the benefit of providing our students with greater agency. We know that social confidence; the ability to work collaboratively and to think strategically is developed by being given leadership opportunities.

By participating in this model our Year 6 students experience a shared responsibility between staff and students to pursue the common good. It provides our students with a sense of meaning, purpose and connectedness. Our Year 6 students benefit by:

1. learning to collaborate with others (peers and/or adults) in the identification of needs, tasks and problems within the schools or the wider community
2. learning to ask appropriate questions and gather appropriate information
3. discussing and negotiating possible courses of action
4. sharing in planning, decision making and the responsibility for implementing the plan,
5. reflecting on results of specific initiatives and communicating these to others.

These skills are developed in Year 6 and provide a “building block” for further development as our students leave St Kieran’s to move to high school and then indeed out into 21st Century work spaces.