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Project title:  
Applying Music Education Pedagogy to other curriculum areas

Project reference:  
Taipa Area School (TLIF 1-042)

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Research reports are available on the Ministry of Education’s website  
Education Counts:  
www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications
Summary

Teachers and the Board of Trustees at Taipa Area School wished to explore project based learning to motivate, engage and raise the achievement of students. The purpose of their inquiry was to extend successful pedagogical practices in music to other departments over 2015-16. Collaborative student project groups led by departments were expected to impact on student learning, engagement and achievement (NCEA credits). The inquiry also aimed to increase community engagement with the school.

Inquiry Team

Project Leader: Karren O’Carroll

The other members of the project team were Sean Scanlan, from the Music Department, and Julien Atkinson. David Lowe and Claire Wilkinson taught other curriculum areas and were interested in employing techniques from Music pedagogy in their teaching.

An external advisor, Dr David Lines from University of Auckland, provided critical review at times throughout the inquiry.

Background

Teachers had noticed that students who participated in Music performance courses achieved better results relative to their and others’ results in other curriculum areas. They were also aware of research reporting positive student engagement in practical music.

The inquiry

Classroom teachers worked with their learners to identify places and activities that would engage them in authentic and meaningful learning in their community. A range of contexts were selected such as exploring marine reserves, making props for local theatre productions, and working with businesses to learn in real-life situations.

Teacher practices were changed with more attention being paid to student voice, and to the capabilities identified in the community for shared teaching. Students were given the responsibility to initiate, plan and implement these new learning opportunities.
**Key findings**

The inquiry resulted in positive changes for teachers and students.

**Changes for teachers:**

- Added new contexts to their learning programmes that enabled students to learn in real life settings.
- Encouraged student choice for learning contexts and supported their increased responsibility to initiate and organise the community contacts they needed.
- Worked in collaborative groups to develop interdisciplinary projects that would create authentic learning for their students.
- Gathered and evaluated data on the impact of these initiatives.

**Changes for students**

- Improved outcomes included increased student
- Ownership and leadership of learning
- Motivation and enjoyment
- Achievement results for individual assessments were estimated to be 10-15 percent higher than previous years.

**Changes for the community**

- There was increased community involvement in learning programmes
- Teachers reported more positive relationships with the community.

**Key implications**

Taipa Area School are moving towards a trans-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary direction for learning programmes. This TLIF inquiry provided sound evidence of success for their learners and the increased engagement of their communities from this approach. As a result, the school intends to expand on this approach by including other curriculum areas.
When students can choose and take responsibility for their learning contexts, there is the potential for increased engagement and enhanced educational outcomes.

**Plans for sharing the findings**

In the first instance, the results are being shared with other teachers in the school as part of their professional learning and development (PLD). Teachers involved in the inquiry will present to subject associations and to the Northland school clusters.

**Reference List**


Licht, Meredith (2014) Controlled chaos: project-based learning. Education Digest, Oct, 80(2), p.49 (3)


Heitin, Liana (2012) Project-Based Learning Helps At-Risk Students; Curriculum engaging those who struggled in regular school setting Education Week, April 25, 2012, Vol.31(29), p.8

**For further information**

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Lifting aspiration and raising educational achievement for every New Zealander