

New Learning

The term, 'New Learning' refers to new ideas, new pedagogies and new ways of approaching education. The term has been used to describe the changing face of learning, culture and human understanding during the Renaissance in Europe in the fifteenth century. In this context, New Learning relates to ideas and strategies to modernise the education system: to move the educational focus to 'learning' rather than just outcomes and levels of success. New Learning proposes that if children are actively engaged in learning, then there is a greater chance of improved outcomes as a result. It is the proactive approach to education using active cognitive engagement of student learning at the source.

Educational debates are so focused on standards, testing and achievement that they have largely neglected the business of how teachers teach and its relationship to what and how students learn. (Stigler & Herbert 1999 in Shernoff 2013)

Leadership Evaluation and Teaching and Learning Model

The Leadership Evaluation Model (Figure 1) has been derived from Marzano (2012) and provides the school with a format for discussion and planning around strategic planning. According to Marzano, a successful operating school must have the following:

- A data-driven focus on student achievement
- A continuous improvement or instruction
- A Guaranteed and viable curriculum
- Collaboration and Collaboration
- School Climate

Aligned to this is the Woongoolba State School Teaching and Learning model which now underpins all new school documentation and programs and identifies a process through which students and teachers follow when developing learning programs for students. The model offers five domains which guide the schools strategic planning and classroom processes: Engage, Identify, Teach, Assess and give Feedback.

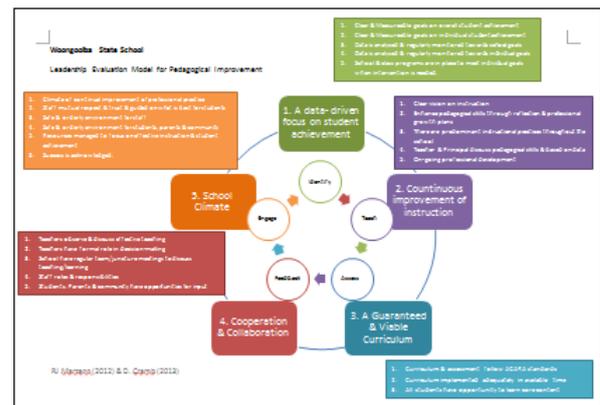


Figure 1: Leaders Evaluation Model

Student Engagement

Student engagement must be at the heart of learning and teaching in schools. A clear understanding of what student engagement is, however, must be discussed initially in order to ensure that appropriate strategies are used to effectively engage each child. Student engagement in learning is a complex term. While much literature exists to attempt to define student engagement and some agreement exists as to its components and importance, measuring this notion has always been more difficult. Schools spend a great deal of time and money developing and analysing research and data around school and student performance however very little identifying the key aspects of student engagement which arguably, if done effectively, would improve student learning performance.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership published a paper entitled Engagement in Australian schools in 2014. The paper examines the concept of student engagement by attempting to identify what it is and how it can be measured. The document identifies a framework adapted from Fredericks et.al. (2004) to attempt to explain engagement in three key areas: ‘cognitive, behavioural and emotional’ (p2).

Social/emotional engagement is about students forming positive relationships with teachers and therefore contributing to a harmonious learning environment. Behavioural engagement examines whether student behaviour is appropriate in order for them to participate in learning. These can be seen to be linked as student behaviour can be improved due to students building relationships with teachers, feeling they belong to the class and having mutual respect for teachers and the expectations they set. Evidence of behaviour engagement more often identifies ‘disengagement’ identified through disciplinary data such as suspensions and exclusions or non-attendance data. Both Marzano and Pickering (1997) and the Kids Matter Mental Health Initiative (2008) also advocate the importance of emotional engagement in improving student performance and teacher success by describing this as building a learning culture.



Figure 2: Teaching & Learning Model

Social-emotional engagement can also take place when teachers consider the development of their learning environments in terms of symbolism and visual aids in order for the learning space to be ‘engaging’. Symbolism refers to the messages, quotes and pictures that help build meaning and can influence behaviour. Visual aids include posters, displays and colour which create a learning context and establish a bright and vibrant learning space. Simmons (1995) states that colour in the learning environment improves visual processing, reduces stress, and challenges brain development. Visual stimulation rewires the brain, making stronger connections while nurturing visual thinking, problem solving, and creativity. At Woongoolba, we should consider including colour through posters, charts etc into the various learning spaces and environments. Our learners live in a bright, interactive environment, and school has to compete with that. Therefore, classroom spaces, where learners want to spend their time, must stimulate the brain and a student’s creativity so that they can spend their time there productively.

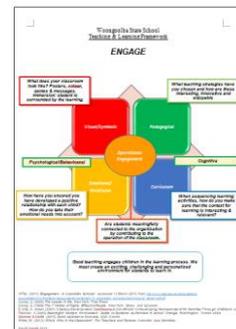


Figure 3 Engagement Model

Cognitive engagement is argued to be ‘a student’s psychological investment in their own learning’. (AITSL 2014 p.4). This is to say, students actively plan for the involvement and improvement of their own learning through goal and target setting and discussions with teachers on developing personalised learning profiles. For successful cognitive student engagement to occur, students must have ownership of their learning journeys. They must be able to negotiate with teachers about the learning and have a role in program design and assessment to ensure that it is not only appropriately personalised but it also relevant. Covey (2008) discussed this concept of cognitive engagement through the use of data notebooks. This resource was developed in schools for students to take

ownership of their own learning journey by recording personal and academic goals as well as having a process to engage in discussion and feedback.

Organisational engagement is about the role students have in the organisation of the classroom: whether or not students are given the opportunity to play an active role in the way the learning environment is managed. This form of engagement requires teachers to provide opportunities for students to participate in the day to day operations of the class encouraging ownership and belonging. A positive learning classroom culture is one where students are part of the learning and the goal of organisational engagement is to achieve this.

Differentiation: Identifying the Learner

Personalised learning is key to the teaching and learning philosophy of Woongoolba State School. The ability of teachers to analyse specific data from individual students, identify the learning needs of those students and provide appropriate pedagogical strategies to help them move forward with their learning is essential in the development of learners. Identifying the learner includes:

- Goal Setting
- Knowing students interests and background knowledge
- Being aware of individual learning levels from relevant data
- Knowing a student’s personality traits and learning styles
- Using thinking skills to align pedagogy and assessment to individuals



Figure 4 Identify Model

The commencement of the ‘proficiency’ program provides a structure that allows teachers the opportunity and resources to group students appropriately to match their learning need. The process for this at Woongoolba is as follows:

- School and systemic data provides teachers with information on students in key improvement areas:
 - Reading (PM, PROBE)
 - Comprehension (TORCH)
 - Spelling (WTW)
 - Number (PAT-M)
- These data sources allow teachers to identify and then group students in appropriate learning groups
- Teachers align specific teaching strategies with personalised student need within the key improvement areas.
- On-going data-analysis and discussion focusses on individual student learning pathways.
- Goals and targets are development for students to assist in their personal learning journey.
- Curriculum programs are adapted to ensure that personalised learning is a key driver in teaching and planning.

Masters (2015) argues that, for schools to move forward and effectively meet the needs of modern learners, ‘curriculum is seen less as a body of content to be taught and learnt by all students in a particular year of school and more as a map of what it means to make progress in an area of learning

and Learning as a framework for teaching, educators include direct, indirect, interactive and experiential teaching as part of their strategies.

A range of strategies are also used to assess student knowledge. The concept of ‘assessment for learning’ is a focus at Woongoolba S.S. The main reason for assessing is to find out where a student is currently sitting in their personal learning journey and what is now required to assist them to meet their learning goals. Masters (2015) again argues:

Traditionally, assessment has been used to judge how well students have learnt what they have been taught (usually a body of knowledge and skills defined by a syllabus or curriculum) leading to a percentage or grade. Such judgements can be made both at the end of a course and during a course, and may include the ‘diagnostic’ identification of learning gaps. An alternative paradigm...sees assessment as the process of establishing and understanding where learners are in their learning at the time of assessment – a question that can be answered in varying degrees of diagnostic detail. The aim is to establish and describe what learners know, understand and can do. (Master, 2015)

Assessment is demonstrated through four domains:

- Class assessment: developed and used in context with a range and balance of techniques including appropriate rubrics, exemplars and/or task sheets/
- Cohort assessment: selected shared/common task for moderation using appropriate criteria
- School assessment: agreed school wide assessments such as running records etc
- Systemic Assessment: NAPLAN

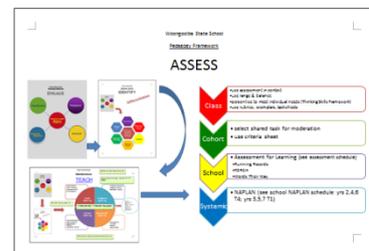
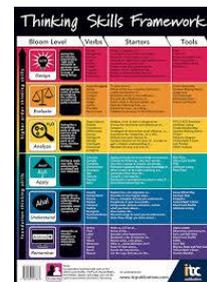


Figure 6 Assess Model

Also included in this assessment paradigm, is the use of the ‘Thinking Skills Framework’. Developed from the work of Eric Frankenheim, the Thinking Skills Framework is based on Bloom’s Taxonomy and uses critical and creative thinking tools and co-operative learning. This can be linked with the content, skills and processes in classrooms to personalise assessment for individual learners. Well targeted questions or tasks added to more general assessment will allow individuals to meet and potentially exceed individual potential.



Feedback

The final part of the Teaching and Learning Model at Woongoolba is Feedback. It is essential in a cognitive engagement approach, for teachers to work with students throughout the learning process and provide feedback to the students. Appropriate feedback includes:

- Social: assisting in the development of interpersonal skills and helps build mutual respect & rapport (Emotional and behavioural engagement)
- Academic: discussing performance criteria, building ownership of data and linking goals, establishing pathways.
- Future: re-stating foals and reading achievements, establishing relationships and regarding student in learning

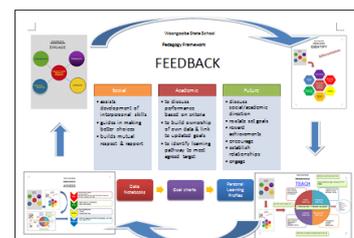


Figure 7 Feedback Model

The recording of feedback may take the form of data notebooks (Covey 2008), goals charts or personal learning profiles.

Conclusion

The teaching and learning framework provides an overview for school program implementation and improvement. Specific initiatives and strategies may vary depending on how teachers choose to meet the needs of individual learners within the goals and philosophy of the framework. What is of most important, however, is that educators continue to engage in conversations collaboratively that focus on the *learning* of individuals rather than the appeal of 'quick-fix'.

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