



# Auckland Normal Intermediate

## MLE CASE STUDY

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Schools all around the country are embarking on new and innovative teaching and learning approaches to respond to the major shifts in the use of technologies and the way students are learning. This publication is one of a series which aims to showcase how schools are adapting to keep up with the pace of change throughout the world. This case study looks at Auckland Normal Intermediate (ANI).

AUCKLAND NORMAL INTERMEDIATE is a decile nine school which caters for years 7 and 8. It has 700 students and operates out of a mix of old relocatable and permanent buildings, the majority of which were established around 1975.

## Inspiration for change

With the introduction of a new curriculum in 2010, we questioned our curriculum delivery and asked – “As a high decile school with high achieving students, what are we doing to support their all round development, is our curriculum engaging, relevant and challenging?” The school was teacher led, specialist subjects were disjointed from what was happening in the classroom and students were not operating in a 21st century learning environment. We knew the answer lay in a new model of teaching and learning – where the ownership was transferred to the student.

## The journey

The school did a lot of research both locally and internationally and decided on a student focused, inquiry led and conceptual approach where the students take responsibility and ownership for their learning through a programme of inquiry.

Change came from developing a clear and strong vision grounded in international best practice. This was important to help the school justify the changes to teachers and parents. The vision is grounded in the philosophy of International Baccalaureate where students work in a global context. Learning programmes are student centred and their learning explores significant content.

The school day is based on a ‘unit of inquiry’ which is a conceptually based theme running through the term (six themes in a year). Class based subjects are integrated in this unit of inquiry and this is complemented by specialist subject work. Class based teachers go with their students to the specialist subject areas to work and learn with their students. There is a clear transfer of knowledge from classroom inquiry to putting it into practice in the specialist spaces.

The first space to be modified was the specialist area. On a shoestring budget, the school opened up the space into a large,



open, flexible learning area and were creative with furniture. Now a student can seamlessly work on, for example, building a chair using wood, fabric metal and art in the same space, which all supports the unit of inquiry. Teacher desks were removed and teachers now use a teaching station when working in these spaces. Desks and chairs for students were removed and replaced with a variety of flexible furniture options.

## And now...

- Students are motivated, 100% engaged and achievement levels have improved.
- Attendance is high and behavioural issues are almost non-existent.
- Students have a voice in developing what is happening in the school – they helped develop the inquiry model. The classroom is ‘learner centred’ not ‘teacher centred’.
- There is a strong child centred philosophy across the school.
- The school no longer has a formal timetable.

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*“Achievement information shows that most students are achieving above national norms in many areas of the curriculum. This high achievement has been sustained over several years and students show good progress in their time at the school, especially in writing.”*

EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE

- Inquiry based learning is fully embedded throughout the school. Classroom inquiry is supported by practical work through specialist subject areas.
- The school feels that its students are at a developmental stage that requires them to have a relationship with a significant adult. For this reason students have their own classroom teacher. There is a teacher student ratio of 1:29.
- Students decide where they work, how they want the furniture configured. They move furniture around, turn it upside down, stack it on top of each other and turn it on its side to suit their needs.
- Furniture is flexible, easy to move and caters for different learning styles. Every day rooms are configured differently so that students can use what is best for them according to what they are learning that day.
- Spaces are designed for functionality. All spaces in the school, while different, still provide the same functionality to support all types of teaching and learning.
- The school has adapted spaces to incorporate break out areas, opening up corridors and cloakrooms to provide additional flexible space.
- The use of floor to ceiling glass partitions has created a transparency in teaching and learning.
- Break out spaces are important to enable students to have quiet areas for individual work or group collaboration.
- The school has students with hearing impairments who are easily catered for in these spaces, because they can choose where to work and what works best for them.
- Students watch teachers learn...and fail as part of their learning. Teachers are constantly reflecting on how they can improve.
- Teachers meet and plan in areas that are visible to students – there is real transparency in their work.
- Students don't want to go back to how it used to be for teaching and learning.



“ANI has a way of teaching us things when we don't even realise we are learning.”

YEAR 8 STUDENT

“I really like the break out rooms for individual work and group work.”

LEON, YEAR 8 STUDENT

“If you come into our intermediate and it is the same as when you went to school, we're not doing our job properly. Learning commons are 'learning spaces', places to experiment, practice, celebrate, learn, work and play”

JILL FARQUHARSON, PRINCIPAL

## Lessons:

- Develop a strong and clear vision
- Establish the vision, embed the vision
- Articulate the vision in plain language for parents, teachers and students
- Encourage students to lead in all areas
- Involve students in decision making
- Develop student reference groups to share responsibility for how the school operates. For example, students work out how to source funds, how to spend some of the budget, what furniture to buy etc. They co-wrote the schools strategic plan, monitor it and report on progress to the Board
- There is a natural “tipping point” when the vision will become fully embedded
- Trial and error
- Functionality of space is key
- ‘Just do it’

*Flexibility is key! Spaces, teachers, leadership, furniture, curriculum.*

*Teaching is not a solitary occupation.*

<http://www.ani.school.nz>

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