

7 Principles for Teaching and Learning in Innovative Learning Environments: Dr Noeline Wright

- 1. Start with valued learning outcomes and the kind of learning you want to promote.** You might begin by asking ‘what does school mean for our students, and who do we want our learners to be when they leave us?’ Consider what matters for achievement – the accumulation of credits or quality learning with deep understanding? Be prepared to think differently as a teacher, and provide learning that is different from what you might have done before. Be brave.
- 2. Exploit the opportunities provided by the curriculum to create learning programmes in line with your vision for learning.** Look at what you can do when you re-interpret and make new sense of the curriculum. Unpack it, consider what is most meaningful in it, and work out how to build a curriculum that will suit where you want your learners to be when they leave your classroom and your school. Consider moving from ‘prove to me you know this content’ to ‘how do you use concepts and processes from different subjects to help you solve problems?’
- 3. Consider the whole student rather than just their academic achievement.** Develop a pastoral care model for students which relates to their academic development as well as their wellbeing as a whole person. Offer students choice about their learning. Have students work with learning coaches to map out where they’ve got to, where the gaps are, and then what they need to do to fill them. Ensure the timetable allows time for students to work closely with teachers. Develop peer group models to provide additional pastoral care.
- 4. Think about how your space can support the kind of learning you want to promote.** Create an environment which is more than the sum of its parts. Help students learn to use the space in ways that feel comfortable. Opportunities for variety will help more and more kids to make the learning environment around them work for them.
- 5. Use the technological tools that best fit the learning purpose.** Allow students to move in and out of using pencil and paper, manipulatives and devices - they are tools of practice. Offer students different ways of producing work. Create conditions in which students can choose from a range of modes that give them opportunities to show off their learning in the best light. Find ways to make the content and the concepts accessible – if it’s digital and it works, use it; if it’s not, find another way to connect students with the content and concepts.
- 6. Consider ways to explore cross-curricular options within traditional learning spaces.** Make sure teachers and students are using the same language to structure how to approach the learning. Ask how you and your colleagues could combine where you need to take your learners together, even if you’re in separate spaces. Start with a question that is of interest to the students and develop a set of learning outcomes related to that concept. Nut out what curriculum objectives you could use to connect with the concept, and then work out a project that the students have to undertake that will combine learning from the different curriculum areas. Think creatively and boldly about how you can make your own content knowledge accessible via another means. Consider longer periods of learning time to enable deep learning.
- 7. Give parents direct opportunities to ask questions and express their concerns.** Most parents only know what schooling was like for them, and that’s what they expect to see. When it’s completely different, their knowledge of what school is is destabilised, so it’s important to give parents access to school leaders so they can start to build a shared understanding of new models of learning.

Noeline Wright's new book, Becoming an Innovative Learning Environment: The Making of a New Zealand Secondary School, is out now.