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Cultivating student engagement - Part 2

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Engagement is a sense of connection with what you are doing or where you are: a sense of belonging – ‘school is a place for me’. Engagement in teaching and learning is a prerequisite to success. A student is not as likely to succeed in learning if they or their school are not invested in their learning. Engagement is a significant element in wellbeing.

Fundamentally, students engage with schooling and what they are doing through engaging pedagogies. As Goss, Sonnemann and Griffiths (2017) observe:

Student participation is a critical part of effective teaching and learning. Without opportunities to speak, problem-solve and work with others, students may quietly disengage or become restless – and teachers may not know if those students are learning... Opportunities to collaborate with peers and do group work also improve a student's achievement, interpersonal relationships and attitudes to learning.

In Part 2 of ‘Cultivating student engagement’ we examine the contributions of assessment, spaces/places, curriculum and school cultures to student engagement.

Engaging assessment

The use of particular modes of assessment can be highly engaging. Barron and Darling-Hammond (2010) note that exhibitions, projects and portfolios provide occasions for review and revision to help students examine how they learn and how they can perform better. Student presentation of their work to an audience – teachers, visitors, parents, other students – can be an excellent way of learning. This approach to assessment can be used to assess students' mastery. Presentations of work, particularly public presentations, can signal to students that their work is significant enough to be a source of public learning and celebration. This can contribute to student engagement in a

task and in school. It can provide opportunities for others in the learning community to engage with student work. Performances can embody representations of school goals and standards so that they remain vital and energising, and develop important capabilities.

Good performance tasks are complex intellectual, physical and social challenges that stretch students' thinking and planning abilities while also allowing student skills and interests to serve as a springboard for developing capabilities (Barron and Darling-Hammond, 2010). The challenging nature of exhibitions, projects and portfolios, and their formative nature (assessment as and for learning) demands greater investment of students, contribute to task engagement and in turn school engagement.

Engaging spaces

The OECD suggests that a 'learning environment' is an organic, holistic concept - an ecosystem that includes the activity and the outcomes of the learning. The key elements and dynamics at the heart of each learning environment are termed the 'pedagogical core'. This is composed of four elements: **learners**, **educators**, **content** and **resources** (digital and learning spaces). Organisational dynamics and choices connect these core elements (OECD, 2013; OECD, 2015).

A learning environment combines a focus on arrangements for teaching and learning and on the organisation of these arrangements. The familiar triangle - **learners** (who?), **teachers or educators** (with whom?), and **content** (what?) - provides the starting point for defining the environment's core. As learning environments are concrete, **resources** (with what?) are added as a fourth key element. With the focus on learning, such resources are essentially those that can be directly exploited in learning. That is, physical resources (buildings, facilities, infrastructure) and learning materials. Two resource elements are **learning spaces** and **digital resources** (OECD, 2013; OECD, 2015).

On this account, engaging learning spaces are those that contribute to and facilitate engaging learning environments and in particular engaging pedagogies. The underlying principle in this approach is that pedagogies drive the learning space and not vice versa.

Innovative learning environments functioned best when students were able to take ownership of their learning, work with some autonomy and interact directly and indirectly with peers, teachers, technologies and the physical environment (Cleveland, 2011).

As well as contributing to an innovative learning environment, spaces can be engaging in themselves. For example, some identify colour as an important factor for engagement, where certain colours can cause detachment or sleepiness whereas others can increase alertness or activity (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2017).

Blackmore and colleagues argue that the focus should be on people and learning places and not spaces. Place attachment and spatial identity is critical to learning. Research shows that it is 'actually a notion of place which frames interactive behaviour'. Place attachment can be produced through how learning spaces are designed and used. It is place attachment and various bounded places that impact on social interactions critical to student engagement and learning. (Blackmore, et al., 2011).

Learning spaces as learning places are highly significant for cultivating big E Engagement (Stevens et al., 2018) which involves cultivating in students the responses such as 'school is a **place** for me', 'school is a **place** where we discuss our ideas' and 'I am a kid from **here** going **somewhere**'.

Engaging curriculum

Curriculum is engaging to the extent that it supports engaging pedagogies by emphasising the philosophical: the problematic and controversial – the thought provoking. As Matthew Lipman notes,

For insofar as academic disciplines take themselves to be non-problematic, the instructional approach they favour is that their students must learn what they are taught, whereas the more problematic the image these disciplines have of themselves, the more they will favour an instructional approach of joint, shared inquiry by teachers and students alike. . . It is when a discipline conceives of its integrity to lie in ridding itself of its epistemological, metaphysical, aesthetic, ethical and logical considerations [the philosophical, in short] that it succeeds in becoming merely a body of alienated knowledge and procedures (Lipman, 1991, pp. 33-34).

Curriculum is engaging or not depending on the degree to which it supports engaging pedagogies.

Engaging culture

Goss et al. (2017) identify ways in which schools can prevent disengagement through a positive school and classroom culture.

High expectations for every student

Effective teachers instil in every student an expectation of success and recognise that student motivation, engagement and self-belief can drive achievement which can lift self-esteem and enable the students to become more engaged.

Good teacher-student relationships

Students who have a good relationship with their teacher(s) tend to succeed at school and teachers can also more effectively intervene when problems arise. The skills of self-discipline need to be taught and reinforced, and teachers can do this by providing opportunities for practice and positive reinforcement.

Clarity and structure

Teachers provide clear and consistent expectations about what students are to do as well as teaching them how to do it. Students respond well to rules and routines when teachers explicitly state the learning goals, define classroom procedures, direct activities and minimise distractions. The best teachers also become role models of the behaviours required.

Encouragement and praise

Specific and genuine praise, and positive attention and genuine encouragements can also be effective. Giving rewards is most effective when both given for positive behaviour and withheld or withdrawn for negative behaviour.

Corrections and consequences

It is not appropriate for teachers to always jump straight to punishment without some warning which gives the student an opportunity to change their behaviour. If punishments are necessary they will have a clear learning purpose and teachers will explain why students are being punished

and how their behaviour affects their learning and that of others. 'Tactical ignoring' of minor issues in combination with praise for appropriate behaviour can encourage better behaviour.

Exclusionary practices are a last resort as sending a student away from class may reinforce negative behaviours if they are acting up to avoid school work. It can also damage teacher-student relationships and as well as the student's own learning.

Goss et al. (2017) identify four steps that teachers can use to reduce behavioural problems in the classroom.

- 1.** Teachers must know their students and any behaviour issues or disengagement. Teachers need to know the conditions that prompt and reinforce behaviours so they can tailor effective and efficient responses.
- 2.** By being proactive teachers can alter or remove factors that trigger problem behaviour and if needed adapt instruction or learning activities to promote engagement.
- 3.** Teachers can increase appropriate behaviour and enhance a positive classroom climate by modelling and reinforcing good behaviour and highlighting this as teaching and reinforcing new skills.
- 4.** Teachers who collaborate with colleagues and experts to discuss problems as well as solutions have more success in managing difficult behaviours. Observing teachers who have created successful classrooms is also important. (Goss et al., 2017).

School-wide approaches are critical and teachers are more likely to create effective classrooms when their school supports a common approach. Each school can:

- have common expectations, language and understanding of appropriate behaviour for learning;
- have a behaviour plan that articulates the school's philosophy and values as well as monitoring student attendance and instances of bullying and other behavioural issues;
- provide a comprehensive induction program to help new teachers develop their practical skills and strategies;
- encourage collaboration with colleagues for example working together with peers and experts on how to handle difficult situations;
- share resources such as the tools to assess and improve their approaches so that new teachers don't have to reinvent the wheel;
- provide extra support for teachers confronted by serious misbehaviour;
- provide extra support to teachers and students where needed;
- clarify which problems can be managed at the school level and which can be managed at the classroom level.

Positive Behaviour for Learning

Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) is a whole-school approach to creating a positive, safe and supportive school climate in which all students can learn and develop. PBL provides a framework that enables schools to establish the social culture and learning supports needed to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of every student. As a framework or approach, it is a compilation of research-informed and effective practices, interventions and systems change strategies.

Positive Behaviour for Learning enables schools to design systems to meet the unique social, emotional and behavioural needs of every student. It is characterised by an effective problem-solving process that involves four critical elements.

Outcomes:

Outcomes are locally determined, contextually and culturally relevant. These include academic, social-emotional and behavioural achievements for all students.

Practices:

Practices are student-focused. In the area of school discipline, these practices embrace a positive, proactive and instructional approach.

Data:

Data is used to identify the status of current practice, support the need for change and evaluate the impact of interventions or practices and implementation fidelity.

Systems:

Systems to support staff are essential to sustain the successful implementation of processes and practices. Systems include strategic and committed leadership and governance approaches; team structures that support the development of the continuum; professional learning and development; staff recognition; data systems that support easy collection and analysis; and other organisational supports for staff.

Schools begin PBL by designing school-wide systems for universal support that includes eight essential features:

1. Developing a common language, vision and experience.
2. Leadership for governance and implementation.
3. Defining expected behaviour.
4. Teaching expected behaviour.
5. Encouraging expected behaviour.
6. Responding consistently to problem behaviour.
7. Review, data and ongoing monitoring.
8. Effective classroom practices.

A team leads the implementation of these essential features.

The effective classroom practices address strategies for classroom management such as organisation of the physical environment, defining and teaching expectations for the classroom, developing procedures and routines, using effective positive reinforcement and using consistent corrective responses for problem behaviour. In addition there are four other classroom practices focused on instructional strategies that support quality teaching and promote student engagement. These are:

- Active supervision
- Opportunities to respond
- Activity sequencing and choice
 - Adjustments for task difficulty


Schools can cultivate engagement by:

- Engaging pedagogies – student centred and inquiry-based (Stevens et al., 2018).
- Engaging assessments – these are formative (assessments for learning) and authentic (e.g. exhibitions, projects and portfolios).
- Engaging spaces – spaces designed to facilitate engaging pedagogies.
- Engaging school cultures – built around respect, rights, responsibilities, relationships as reflected for example in Positive Behaviour for Learning.

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Movies with class: Making quality movies at school

[Thomas Gough](#), teacher at Glenwood Public School, provides a thorough, user-friendly introduction to filmmaking in the classroom. This year, his students' short film, [Chocolypse!](#) , screened at the Cannes Short Film Festival and won gold at the International Schools Film Festival.

Historically, filmmaking has been an expensive and laborious pastime. Each movie, however simple, had to pass through an army of expert hands – from editors to colour graders to optical printers – before ever reaching a screen. No more! Today any child can pick up a phone or iPad and (given imagination and some technical guidance) make a cinema quality movie. They can upload it and have it seen across the globe instantly. However, your young Spielbergs will enjoy the best possible start if equipped with some solid basics. Here's how to get them started!

Getting started

Equipment options

Plenty good enough

Cool!

Wow!!


No way!!!


iPad (it's got iMovie and GarageBand too)	HD camcorder with zoom	HDV prosumer camera with 3 pin microphone and mini equalizer	RED camera
iPad stand	External, unidirectional microphone	3 pin external unidirectional microphone plus extension cord	Steady cam rig
White foam core board	White foam core board	Boom for microphone (could be a broom handle or a proper boom)	Location sound recording suite
Yellow foam core board	Yellow foam core board	White foam core board	Dedicated sound stage
Work lamps and stand	Adobe Premiere Elements (available on DoE computers)	Yellow foam core board	Green screen stage
	iPad or iMac (for GarageBand)	Adobe Premiere Elements and/or Adobe Premiere Pro	Edit suite with Sony Avid
	Work lamps and stand	Adobe After Effects (comes with Premiere Pro)	CGI unit
		Green screen kit (about \$500 - comes with everything, including soft box lights)	
		iPad or iMac (for GarageBand)	
Cost: \$1047 (including iPad)	Cost: about \$2000	Cost: about \$4000	Cost: too much!

I'm going to proceed as if you're beginning with the basics. You've got an iPad (with iMovie and GarageBand), some foam core, a stand and lots of enthusiasm! Most of the following advice can be carried over into the 'Cool!' setup too. If you want to take it further, great effects like rack focus and long lens shots can be achieved with a HD/HDV camcorder or prosumer camera. These are powerful tools for creating mood in certain scenes.

The idea

Where do the ideas and inspiration for the storyline come from? At Glenwood Public School, our movies can be divided into roughly two categories: play-built and documentaries.

The play-built movies are dramas or comedies that emerge from dedicated drama lessons. For younger classes, I just brainstorm title ideas and we whittle them down by a process of voting and elimination until we land on the final title, which is usually pretty descriptive (for example, [Hippies Save the Trees](#) ). For older classes, we might brainstorm a theme to explore. With the same process of elimination, we settle on an idea from which a rough story can be discussed. We then take a term or two of drama lessons (about an hour a week) to build the play or movie scene by scene.

The documentaries are usually based on a class theme which we research. We then think of ways of conveying this information in interesting, entertaining and visual ways. (For example, [Heat it Up: Global Warming](#) ) has location interviews, puppets, a song and a cartoon.) For both types of movies, every inclusion must serve the story and be interesting, entertaining and visually strong.

Filming

Sound

Sound is the single most important thing in a movie. If your sound is good, all visual sins will be forgiven! Indeed, it will make all your mistakes seem deliberate and 'arty'.

The basic mistakes with sound include:

- wind on the microphone (beware!)
- voices too loud/soft
- hands rubbing the microphone
- subject too far from the microphone
- inconsistent volume from shot to shot.

Record the sound cleanly and then check for consistency in the final edit. iMovie or Adobe Premiere Elements display a 'heart rate monitor' on the sound track which visually indicates the volume of each scene. 'Sweeten' the sound at this stage by evening out the highs and lows.

Some tips for producing good sound when filming with different devices:

iPad


iPads have a limited, omnidirectional microphone that records everything. Record in a quiet environment with the iPad as close as possible to the subject. For interviews, shoot the subject in close-up so that the microphone is near. For drama, shoot at least one close-up of each character saying their lines so that you can use this sound for all the shots.

HD camcorder


Hopefully your camera has a unidirectional microphone which will pick up only the sound directly in front of it. If so, continue to follow the iPad instructions. However, you will enjoy greater flexibility with the distance between the subject and the camera and a better tolerance for a noisier environment.

HD prosumer

Hooray! You have near complete freedom! In general, follow the instructions for the iPad (get close, find a quiet place). However, you should be able to disconnect your microphone and use an extension cord and boom to get great shots with a zoom while someone discretely holds the boom above the actors.

Remember that you can always re-record sound later. When we shot [Old Sydney Town Adventures](#)  on the Endeavour at Darling Harbour, there were helicopters constantly overhead due to the Papal visit. Consequently, all the sound was 'looped' (aka 'dubbed') later by the students.

Scripts and screenplays

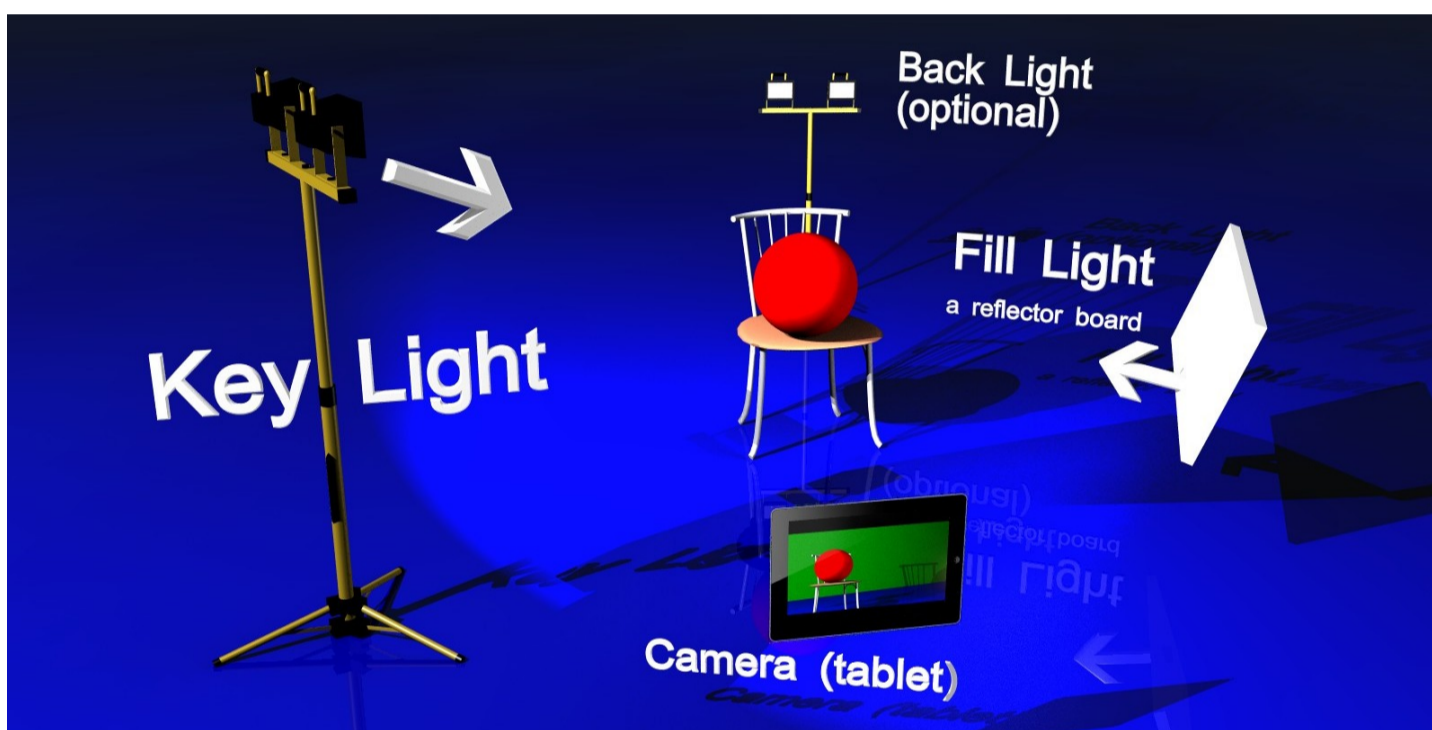
If you have a very long or complicated project with lots of shots, a script with numbered scenes can be very useful. A script can also help structure documentaries, by planning and sequencing the important linking messages. A [sample script template](#)  is available from Screen Australia.

Tips - if your script is typed in 12 point Courier with the dialogue indented, each page will equate to about one minute of movie. This provides a good indication of how long your finished project will be. Also, while shooting, give a student a clapperboard to call the scene and take number. This is a fun job - and proves very useful during editing!

Lighting

The basic lighting set up is called three point lighting. This involves using three sources of light, although you can get away with only two. There will be a key light, fill light and a back light. The key light is the main source of light on your subject. It will usually be on one side of the subject. The fill light is not as strong and fills in the other side. The back light illuminates the back of the subject and sets it off from whatever is behind.

Indoors, the normal classroom lighting sometimes makes your movie look flat, grainy and cheap. You could use porta flood lamps (on a stand) from the hardware shop to boost and control the lighting.



Three point lighting

Outdoors, use some foam core boards (available from Officeworks, for example) to reflect the sun. Outside, the sun is the backlight or side light and the reflector is the fill light. If you can afford it, a diffusion kit is fantastic! This is a circle of white plastic that is translucent and softens the sunlight shining through on the subject. The pictures below give you some ideas as to the setup.

Something I've noticed: iPads do not like certain kinds of lights, such as fluorescent lights, and if one is seen in a shot it might flicker. Try to avoid these kinds of lights being visible in the shot.



Figure 1. A halogen work lamp for the main light and a matte white board to reflect the light



Figure 2. The main light is above and behind the action, and the board will be used to reflect and diffuse the fill light. Notice how the letter in the actor's hand also works as a beautiful reflector/diffuser!



Figure 3. The final composition (freeze frame from the movie)


Camera angles and coverage



Capture at least these two types of shot: wide angle and close-up. The close-up is important for both visual variety and for securing clear sound, as mentioned previously. It is also essential to capture a variety of angles. This provides flexibility to cover up mistakes.

For example, if a scene involves two characters talking (such as an interview), you should shoot a wide shot (all the action together in one shot, like a play), a close-up of person A, and then a close-up of person B. Now the editor can control both the pace of the scene and cover up mistakes. Different shots can be stitched together by cutting away to the other character reacting.

The following definitions outline some additional shot types, camera techniques and transitions:

- wide shot: takes in the whole scene (looks like a stage play)
- medium shot: closer than a wide shot (you tend to see people from the waist up)
- close-up: shows the character's head and shoulders
- pan: moving the camera sideways (such as taking in a landscape)
- tilt: moving the camera up or down (such as looking up to the sky)
- tracking shot: the camera moves to stay with the action (can be from the front, side or back)
- rack focus: the camera's focus changes from one object in a shot, to another, often in front or behind, without the camera moving
- insert: a quick, close shot of something else, often an object that the characters are looking at
- cutaway: a quick cut to something else and then back again (highlights something important for the audience to see)
- dissolve: one picture disappears as another appears
- iris in/out: starts with a black screen, then a circle expands to reveal the scene (or the reverse, going from the scene to black).

To ensure good coverage, shoot the whole scene each time. This allows you to capture not only the bits that person A says for the close-up, but also their reaction to what person B is saying. You then have plenty of video available to create a varied, seamless and apparently perfect take. (See the photographers' introduction in [The Weirdest Jungle Ever](#)  for great examples of cutaways to other characters' reactions.)

Also, for fun, keep the camera running after the scene is done. You never know what you might pick up, especially with very young actors. In [Chocolypse!](#)  there is a moment where the main actor, waiting for the director to yell cut, looks to the camera - this turned out to be the perfect caper to one of the shots. Similarly, an important reaction shot in [The Sorrow of War](#)  had nothing to do with the script but was the result of just keeping the camera running and mining reactions to other things.

Filming with iPads

iPads are the most awesome starter kit in the history of cinema. Working in a school with an iPad or two means you have the equivalent of the whole of Columbia Pictures circa. 1930, barring actual soundstages. You have camera/s, the sound department, editing labs, an optical effects lab, composers and orchestra, and unlimited supplies of 35 mm technicolour film (you have one up on Columbia there). You can do things in five minutes that would have taken any major film studio a week to do fifty years ago. The limitations of the iPad are more than compensated for by their compact might. You can shoot the movie, edit it, compose an original score, add special effects, screen the movie for a live audience (via Apple TV or Reflector) and broadcast it to the world via an upload to YouTube.

Sound and steadiness are the iPad's major drawbacks. I have addressed the sound issue already. With regard to steadiness, you can purchase an iPad stand for shots that require no camera movement. For shots that require movement, just make sure to capture both wide shots and close-ups. Don't use the iPad's zoom! If you're close to a subject, a bit of movement is not that noticeable. To hold the iPad steady, ask students to lock their upper arms tight to their sides and hold the iPad out with their forearms, like a robot. To pan and tilt, they move their whole body.

Multi-rolling

The hardest part of filling out the form for competitions is when I have to record who was the director, who was the editor, and so on. The truth is, in a class movie, everyone is everything - that's multi-rolling. The teacher typically starts off as the director. That is, you work with the class during the playbuilding stage to help structure the story and to refine or develop performances. At a certain point, if it's all working, the students will warm to the story, be free-flowing with their ideas, and add their own quirky value to the characters.

At that point, you can step back from directing, becoming simply the proxy audience. Keep the story on the rails and make sure its meaning is clear. Keep it tight too: a maximum of 20 minutes. Film festivals have time limits for short movies, as do audiences! Keep it under 5-10 minutes if you can.

With the students directing, they can take turns overseeing processes such as 'lights, camera, action' and 'cut':

- lights: check the lights. Does the scene look good on camera?
- camera: press record. (Check that the camera is recording!)
- action: perform the scene
- cut: press stop.

The first few times, you will need to step in at this point and, having watched the scene being filmed, make a judgement as to whether it achieved its aim. Carefully explain what worked and what didn't, and what should happen in the next take. With this modelling, students will gain confidence in making judgements about the shot, and will eventually take on this aspect of the director's role.

To support this, ensure the camera operator watches the movie (through the camera), rather than the performance. Having someone's eyes glued to the camera ensures glitches will be picked up. Who walked into the shot? Could you see the action properly? Do you need to stand a bit further over? Have students take turns doing this job.

What's likely to happen is that one or two students will emerge as having a real eye for operating the camera. This will become apparent as you play back the shots. You can then decide whether you want those students to take over the bulk of that role or give everyone a turn.

Meanwhile, other students can be busy taking photos or video for the behind-the-scenes package. You might also have a script supervisor (who follows the script off camera to ensure the actors say all their lines), set dressers (who restore the set between takes if things get moved), a make-up person/team, and a continuity supervisor (to ensure scenes and costumes match when they're supposed to follow on, since scenes are often not filmed in order).

Green screens

Green screens are handy for quick projects or news style programs where you want to swap out the background or do some 'flying' effects. However, it is very hard to achieve the standard of a green screen epic like the Marvel Cinematic Universe movies. This means you need to think about the 'flavour' you want your final movie to have. For something light and fun, you could use a green screen. Avoid this, though, for serious projects, unless you're prepared to really go all out on the lighting and have quality green screen facilities.

Editing

If you're a novice editor, iMovie is a good starting point. The boundaries are pretty strongly defined but that doesn't mean you can't shoot something that looks slick, professional and entertaining. iMovie is quite intuitive and there are lots of online tutorials. Or simply click everything and see what it does. One tip - avoid using the built-in iMovie music, which has become pretty grating.

Edit in your mind first

Think of the scenes you've shot and imagine the final movie on a screen with an audience. How do the scenes progress? What do we need to see to understand the moment? What interesting things did the actors do that you want the audience to see? What problems do you need to solve? What is the pacing and rhythm of the scene?

Transitions

A transition is the way one scene moves into another. In iMovie and all other video editing software, you will find a variety of built-in transitions. Stick to straight cuts, fade-in, fade-out and dissolves. Almost every other transition will weaken your project, although there are exceptions, depending on the nature of your project. [Chocolypse!](#) uses iris-in and iris out most of the time as that was a standard transition of the silent era, which the movie attempts to emulate.

Detach audio

This is a feature of iMovie and most other editing software. It's where the sound from the original can be separated from the shot. Use this! In both narratives and drama there will be times when you want to hear one character but see another. In a narrative, for example, you might want to see a reaction. In a documentary, you might want to cut to an interviewer nodding as a way of disguising a cut you have made to an answer in the interests of time or concision (without distorting the answer). That's why it's so important to have coverage of a scene from lots of angles.

At a more sophisticated level, you can also do what's called L-cutting. For example, you are looking at one character and then another starts to speak. You hold on the first character for just a moment before cutting to the new character speaking. It's kind-of what you might do if you were watching a conversation. You don't know when the second person is going to start speaking and it takes you a moment to look at the new speaker. Sprinkle these throughout your scene and it's surprising how professional they suddenly look!

Filters

Again, lots of editing programs come with filters: black and white, old time movie, blur and so on. You can easily try them and then delete them if they don't work. You should have a clear idea before you make the movie of the kind of look you want though - and why you want it. Don't use a filter just because it looks cool.

iMovie filters are fixed - you can't adjust them. However, in Adobe Premiere Elements or Final Cut, you can fine-tune the effects.

Music

In GarageBand for iPad, explore the Smart Instruments to see the great music you can make with minimal effort. There are other sources too, but these are problematic. For instance, everyone has heard those five iMovie theme tracks a zillion times; don't use them. You can also buy great royalty free tracks from places like [MusicLoops](#) or [Partners in Rhyme](#). The problem with these is that, on several occasions, the Glenwood Public School movies that use them have been hit with

copyright claims which are a pain to have released. How does this happen if they're royalty free? Like this: an artist buys one of these tracks for use in their work, such as a commercial audio book. They then engage the services of a bot company to scour the internet for unauthorised uses of their work (audio book) or for revenue. We happen to have used the same track (under licence) but get pinged for monetisation as the bots can't recognise that we're both legitimate users. Because YouTube assumes guilt until innocence is proven, I've had to formally challenge the ping, emailing the rights companies with our licence agreement. This can be time consuming. Teaching your students GarageBand avoids all of this, while giving them a great introduction to music composition.



It is also worth noting that you can't necessarily use classical music. Contrary to popular belief, most classical music is not out of copyright, at least not in the form that most people access it. Although Beethoven is long dead, that recording of the Fifth Symphony you want is subject to a recording copyright for the artists of that particular performance.

Final thoughts: achieving cohesion

The first aesthetic is yours. By that I mean, you're the teacher, so one way to kick start a project or to ensure its coherence is to begin with a definite idea of what you want to explore and what you want your students to learn. You can draw on the visual arts outcomes on the forms and mediums to create a set of aesthetic rules or boundaries which are then used to inspire, to help solve problems and to make choices.

Draw this from your own interest, and therefore your own enthusiasm, which is almost certainly going to be infectious.


To some extent, it helps to enjoy film. When you watch movies and television what do you notice about the way the scenes are put together? Start looking at them. How do the cuts progress? What do they tell you about the scene, about the characters' points of view, about what the writers or the director need you to notice? There's a language there that you need to learn, in order to teach it. For example, pick an episode of a show you like and watch it sped up. You will really see how the shots progress, what you get to glimpse as determined by the makers. You may be surprised just how many cuts there are. Count how many different angles cover the scene. You probably won't have the time or technical freedom to be quite so thorough, but you will at least need a blend of wide shots and close-ups.

The chosen aesthetic also helps you and your students make decisions about how the film is shot. For [Chocolypse!](#)  it was silent horror films of the 1920s: shadows, contrast, Dutch angles, static camera, lots of close-ups, slow movements, mime and so on. You know that going in so you know the kinds of shots you need. [Betrayal](#)  was quite different. It was contemporary, urban reality, so plenty of hand-held shots, deep focus (shot with an HD camera rather than an iPad), and multiple cameras shooting all at once to capture intense moments that should only be performed once.

So think of your (and your students?!) favourite genre - science fiction, horror, action - and do your research. Then start training your students. Provide good, honest feedback when they're learning, and you will get great results. Your first movie might be something of an imitation. So what? You're learning too. Besides, your students, having not yet developed their own aesthetic, are able accomplices as you explore movie-making together. Work with them in their playbuilding to encourage twists that haven't been tried before and, by the time you're ready to shoot, you'll have enough originality to rightfully call your movie your own. Think about Hollywood: how many movies are twists on something that's been done before? Pretty much all of them!

Above all, have fun!

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Research - Mind the gap

Peer reviewed article

Research article on the critical role of school leaders in promoting parents and teachers as partners in learning by [Dr Marie Murphy and Dr Kathy Rushton.](#)

Introduction

'To educate the whole child in a culturally and linguistically diverse context it is necessary to nurture intellect and identity equally in ways that, of necessity, challenge coercive relations of power' (Cummins, 2000, p.6.). As educators we are charged by the community to prepare children to become critical readers and competent writers so that they can both learn from others and express themselves (ACARA, Australian Curriculum). It is also assumed that in modern Australian society, this learning and expression will be undertaken in the English language. In contemporary Australia, around 30% of Australians (Australian Bureau of Statistics) speak a language other than English at home, a trend reflected internationally (Freebody, Freebody & Maney, 2011; Turney & Kao, 2009). Being bilingual can be a support to learning (Collier & Thomas, 2017; Gibbons, 2006; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013) but for some young learners the gap between success in an educational setting and their own previous learning experiences widens. The vast majority of children enter the schooling system having mastered at least one language and for many, two or more languages or dialects. It is therefore very important for educators to recognise that learning a language also means learning a culture and a way of being, habitus (Maton, 2013). For some children this will be a seamless transition from learning in the home to the learning experienced in an educational setting but for others it will require a big adjustment (Bernstein, 1990; Cummins, 1981; Painter, 1996; Williams, 2000).

The contexts, in which educators work, are shaped by social, ethical and policy guidelines and educators need to respond to these guidelines within the dictates of their specific school contexts. This context is strongly influenced by the background and culture of the students in a community. Drawing on our experiences, especially from one large multicultural primary school in south western Sydney, we will explore the impact of the school context and possible ways for schools and parents to work together to enhance school-based student learning and prepare children to function effectively in contemporary society.

The context

The context in which we worked, as a principal and a teacher of EAL/D students (English as an additional language/dialect), was a large multicultural school where 96% of the student population had a language background other than English, with 43 languages being spoken at the school. While the majority of students were born in Australia, the majority of their parents were born overseas. The student mobility rate at the school was high, for instance in one period mobility ranged from 18 to 32 per cent annually. In schools like this, due to this high rate of change, relationships between teachers and parents can be hard to develop. Therefore, as well as exploring the reciprocal nature of language learning and the value of facilitating a reciprocal relationship between schools and parents, attention is also given to responsive classroom strategies. Finally some recommendations are made for ways to develop and imbed practices sensitive to a school's context to engage parents and support learning.

The lead learner: the critical role of school leaders

For principals to invite and support a reciprocal relationship between schools and parents the school needs to develop a range of culturally sensitive strategies responsive to the needs of the specific community.

The challenge in developing effective school practices that will lead to best outcomes for students and create the opportunity for parents to be involved in their children's learning is that principals may need to stop their teachers from doing good things and support them to do better things (Wiliam, 2014).

Context specific practices have the potential to close the gap between parents and teachers and the role parents and teachers play in supporting young learners.

A teacher's main responsibility is clearly in the classroom while a parent's responsibility lies with the learning that occurs in the home. As the lead learner, the task of the principal is to work with both these key groups in the school community to ensure the best outcomes for students.

Effective school leadership is critical to enhanced student outcomes (Robinson, 2007).

Implementing appropriate pedagogy and developing reciprocal relationships with parents is critical to student learning and the implementation of these elements cannot be left to chance. Leadership is required to ensure the implementation and maintenance of both these school-based practices, therefore principals need to display an understanding that learning occurs across multiple settings and have the skill to motivate their staff and invite the community to work together across learning environments.

In order to lead the development of reciprocal relationships between teachers and parents solutions were sought directly from the community. This was done by conducting two focus groups, one with parents, teachers and community members and a second with students, to identify ways the school could develop this significant relationship between teachers and parents. A number of common themes arose from the discussion with parents, teachers and community members that the group considered supported or limited parent-teacher relationships. The main areas identified by the group included the need for frequent informal discussion between parents and teachers; the importance of being proficient in the English language or having easy access to interpreters and also having access to information about the school, the curriculum and community resources. Students also spoke of these matters, in particular they mentioned the

need for a connection between parents and teachers. In response to these findings a different group of parents and teachers were invited to be part of an Action Team (Epstein, 2010). This group, the Parent Teacher Action Team, considered the feedback from the focus group and made suggestions of how these matters could be addressed in the school.

For instance, one strategy that was undertaken was to introduce English language classes for parents at the school. These classes provided an opportunity for parents to develop language proficiency, spend more time at the school and also form relationships with other members of the school community. This matter is of particular importance for parents from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds as they may not feel confident about being at school and be unsure of the expectations schools may have of them. Further, parents from CALD backgrounds may consider that school learning is the responsibility of the school and consequently not visit the school frequently, they may make limited attempts to communicate with teachers, or fail to ensure their visits are noted (Pena, 2000; Wong & Hughes, 2006). English language classes gave parents both the opportunity to develop their language and a further reason to be at the school. Beyond providing English classes for parents it remains important that teachers are cognisant of parent motivation and be aware of the range of ways parents may show their interest beyond developing their English language skills.

Teachers and the power of the dominant language in the classroom

While expectations for teachers and principals are now set out in national standards there are still many challenges that need to be met. For instance teachers have a significant role in developing and maintaining a relationship with parents yet this role is frequently overlooked in schools (Cairney & Munsie, 1995; Hindin, 2010; Wong & Hughes, 2006). The complex task of relating to parents, especially those whose language, culture or social class differ from that of the teacher, may be difficult for teachers as their main focus and area of skill and training is in teaching and curriculum (Kim, 2009; Lawson, 2003).

As there is traditionally no or limited pre-service training for teachers in working with parents there are few opportunities for teachers to develop awareness of the potential benefits of parent-teacher relationships.

In our context these issues were significant as none of the classroom teachers had pre-service training in working with parents or more specifically parents of students from a CALD background. This situation would be similar to many schools as although teachers are required to 'know their students and how they learn' (NESA, 2018) it is difficult to meet the requirement with the depth of knowledge that might be required.

This challenge is particularly so in the case of language development as many students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds might find that their linguistic repertoires are not valued in the school context. For students whose first language (L1) is developed with educated parents who can help their children to reflect on their language use, developing a second or third language or dialect can only support their learning (Williams, 2000). In other cases the concept of 'subtractive bilingualism' might best describe the child's lack of mastery in the first language which may impact on the development of additional languages or dialects (Collier & Thomas, 2017). The child's identity and culture is confirmed through the use of language and for some

children the pervasive popular culture which privileges English only may curb any enthusiasm to further develop their first language. Alternatively students who are literate in their first language will find the development of an additional language much easier especially if they are supported to develop the metalanguage to compare and contrast what they know and understand about the linguistic resources they have or are developing (Adoniou, 2016; Cummins, 2000; Gibbons, 2006).

For teachers, a first step in identifying student needs is to recognise the difference between spoken and written language and its significance in developing English as an additional language. The structure and grammatical features of texts vary across genres but also particularly across the continuum from the spoken to the written mode. In summary, spoken language is usually more grammatically intricate than written language and depends on the context of the interaction which is especially important for the development of an appropriate tenor to reflect the social distance between those participating in the interaction (Martin & White, 2005). For instance, in English, an adult teacher might say to a child: 'Would you mind re-writing that paragraph, it isn't as clear as it could be'. Unless they wanted to appear disrespectful the response for a native speaker would never be 'No, I don't want to do that'. This is because it is understood that the use of modality is to soften a command and to make the interaction polite, it is not a genuine offer of choice for the other participant.

Understanding how to make the most appropriate language choices is best developed through guided opportunities to use language in oral interactions as well as in writing.

Therefore classroom routines need to reflect the range of language uses on the mode continuum and help students to both move from spoken to written language and to reflect on the choices they will need to make to develop specific texts (Derewianka, 2011; Droga, Humphrey & Feez, 2012; Rossbridge & Rushton, 2010, 2011 & 2015). In science for instance, allowing students to interact orally around an experiment will help them to learn about the field, the subject matter central to the experiment, but to develop the written mode rather than oral mode there will also need to be a change of tenor. For instance, if students are building a balloon powered car and explaining the process, they would need to move from comments like: 'Look, the car's moving' to 'When the balloon is deflated the car moves forward'. This move can only be made if students are able to read/understand explanations modelled by the teacher.

They will also need the support to develop vocabulary like 'deflate' and the use of grammatical features like the dependent clause of time in the first position: 'When the balloon...' and the use of the passive voice 'is deflated'. This move is from the more spoken: actor 'the car'; action process 'is moving' to the use of the structure and features common to written explanations.

For teachers, realising that this shift on the mode continuum is necessary for both English speaking and EAL/D students, can inform the development of a pedagogy that meets the needs of all students. Vocabulary development is of course key for EAL/D students, but as seen from the previous example, vocabulary development is only useful if the new lexical items can be incorporated in appropriately constructed texts that focus on the audience and purpose of a text as well as its subject matter. Similarly, with spoken language it is the interaction that is key rather than the learning of sounds. English has many more sounds than letters of the alphabet and the vowel sounds in English are completely dependent on the context in which they are found for example sew and so; bough and bow (a curtsey) but dew and do and cough and bow (a hair

ribbon). What is important is to realise the relationship between speaking and writing and how phonology and orthography are related. Learning sounds is useless without knowledge of the history of spelling and how word families were developed (Adoniou, 2016). For teachers these complex issues are best met through daily guided and modelled reading linked to guided writing. These provide pedagogical opportunities for students to develop metalanguage to discuss the use of language as they draw on their own oral language resources to interact meaningfully about the texts they are reading and writing.

This complex task of developing language and literacy can be more effectively addressed if parents are aware of the complexity of learning formal language and the expectations of the school. The next section explores the challenges and some ways that schools can share this information with parents and engage them as partners in the process.

Parents as partners in learning

As a child's first teacher, parents need the opportunity to be active in their children's school based learning as this involvement has extensive benefits for students including enhanced academic performance, attendance, behaviour and social adjustment which can extend beyond the school years and across different racial and ethnic groups (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2005; Mutch & Collins, 2012). While the benefits of parents' engagement in their children's learning are acknowledged, fewer parents from CALD backgrounds appear to be involved or be visible at the school (Kim, 2009; Turney & Kao, 2009). A lower level of involvement of parents from CALD backgrounds may be due to the limited or often formulaic practices that are frequently used as ways to engage parents in their children's school (Crozier, 2001).

While parent involvement is supported by policy, it is poorly supported in practice and the complexity of implementing and maintaining parent-teacher relationships is not acknowledged (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010; Cairney & Munsie, 1995).

Simple strategies such as the after school communication strategy, as recommended by the community, provided an opportunity for relationships between teachers and parents to be developed naturally.

When parents are from CALD backgrounds and have limited English they may be uncomfortable with the formal style of communication generally used in schools (Lopez, Scribner & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Mills & Gale, 2009). Additionally, teachers' professional place in the school puts them in a position of power which may create further distance between themselves and parents making the formation of relationships difficult (Kim, 2009). While the relationship between home and school is important and teachers' role in creating this connection is critical there is research suggesting that home-based parenting can have a greater impact on student learning than any activities that parents may participate in at school (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003).

Drawing on recommendations from the school based focus groups one further strategy which was employed to close the gap between home and school was to strengthen the communication between parents and teachers. The Parent Teacher Action Team suggested that more teachers be available in the playground after school for ten minutes or so to talk informally with parents to support casual communication and answer parent queries. Following discussions during Stage team meetings a teacher from each stage volunteered to be present in the playground one

afternoon a week. The Deputy Principal offered to be available one afternoon a week and together with the Stage volunteers this provided a member of staff available to support casual communication between parents and teachers each day of the week.

While parents need to be aware of the expectations schools may have of them this can be difficult to ascertain as these expectations are often implicit and may not be obvious to a parent new to a country or culture. The Parent Teacher Action Team also had a suggestion of ways the school could address this. The Action Team suggested that additional information that was of interest to parents be included on the school website, including information on curriculum, homework and assessment. Studies have demonstrated that CALD parents actively and visibly participate when schools are welcoming and take responsibility for involving their parent community and develop programs that meet the identified needs of the community (Jeynes, 2011; Hindin, 2010; Lopez et al., 2001). The simple actions that arose in response to the recommendations from the Parent Teacher Action Team were a visible demonstration of the school actively seeking and responding to the needs and suggestions of the parent community. Further the recommendations were developed by parents and teachers working together. The school was actively facilitating reciprocal relationships between themselves and their parent community when they acknowledged that parents and schools may have different expectations of how to display interest and endeavoured to develop strategies that limit the distance between home and school.

Based on the effectiveness of the strategies introduced at the school in response to the Parent Teacher Action Team it was possible for the school to plan further opportunities for parents to have greater involvement with the school. At this point it was timely to consider the effectiveness of the measures employed and adjust practices in response to the feedback. The practices of the Parent Teacher Action Team could provide a flexible platform for parents and teachers to build reciprocal relationships.

When asked of her reaction toward the strategies that had been used by the school one parent commented: 'Well don't stop now just keep doing it.'

Language and culture are the foundations for learning (Mansouri, 2013) the challenge for educators is to identify and embed inclusive practices in schools that acknowledge the language and cultures of the community, facilitate learning and invite parents to be partners in this process. Schools require practices responsive to their context that acknowledge multiple languages and cultures and promote learning between home and school together with reciprocal relationships between parents and teachers. Such practices promise to enhance school-based student learning and genuinely prepare children to function effectively in contemporary society.



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