

Christchurch facilitator removes threat from training

By Nick Billowes
National Coordinator
ICT/PD Schools
Ministry of Education
Email: nickbillowes@xtra.co.nz

This article was part of a range of contributions to a publication by Nick,
which can be viewed online at:

<http://www.tki.org.nz>

Christchurch facilitator removes threat from training

Rob Clarke is facilitator for Christchurch ICT Cluster, based at Fendalton School.

His interest in ICT stems back to his time at the Christchurch College of Education.

"Early on, (at College) I saw that ICT was going to be very important in education in the future. Based on that I chose to take all the ICT courses I could in my last year and did some in my own time."

Rob began teaching at Murray's Bay School where he designed electronic student reports. The school gave him the support to extend himself.

"I had a brilliant beginning teacher programme and the most amazing tutor teacher who was a leading light for me. I really had the chance to explore in that year. I looked at various ICT related things, as well as thinking skill in the classroom", he reflects.

He also attended the Apple *Teaching and Learning with Technology* conference and heard speakers like Lane Clark from Canada.

But a move to Tahatai Coast School in the Bay of Plenty gave Rob his biggest injection of professional development and an environment that nurtured his skills.

"Having a laptop (from the school) was one of the major reasons for my progress. We were a great team and were passionate about what we were doing. I flew. I got really involved in databases and planning, using ICT with kids, using the network, and doing big Hyperstudio projects.

After two years he moved to Magnummac as their education consultant in Christchurch and, a year and a half later, to Fendalton School to facilitate their ICTPD project.

Now, two years into the project Rob has had time to reflect on what are key ingredients for successful PD.

He believes that teachers need a structured programme that also has room for teachers to experiment and explore. This programme needs to challenge teacher beliefs about learning and the place of ICT in this. He believes the inclusion of some form of reflection is vital in helping the process of change. Rob uses a reflective journal to help record this process with staff in his cluster.

“There needs to be a balance of ‘this is the way we are doing it’, with ‘go and explore’. I think there is a fine line to walk down here, especially with teachers who can be hesitant and need guidance”, he says.

He also has some advice for schools on choosing facilitators and lead teachers.

“Facilitators must be able to build really strong, open relationships with participants. I use other systems such as lead teachers to help me support staff”, he says.

Rob says knowing how people are feeling is vital to the process of teacher change.

"Often people can feel threatened by ICT and the challenges it presents, and they need to be open and honest about this. By recording these feelings in the reflective journal (or through just discussions with staff) I'm able to help them by looking at ways of working with ICT that are less threatening or put in other forms of support that work for them, such as lead teachers."

He sees the role of school-based lead teachers as vital.

"Their job is to promote a model classroom in their school. The other part of their job is to be a communication link between the staff and me. Because the role of the facilitator sometimes threatens people, the lead teacher's role needs to be a very supporting one. It is better to choose a lead teacher based on their interpersonal skills than their technical skills. As long as they are keen and open to learn that is OK."

He says lead teachers also need to make teachers aware of professional development opportunities that come up from time to time like workshops and conferences.

Check out the Christchurch ICT Cluster web site at:
www.christchurchict.org.nz for further information on their model for professional development, underlying philosophy, and a range of other resources that may be useful to you.