

# School transformation made simple with The Invitational Education Toolkit

*John Young and Allyson Schoenlein*

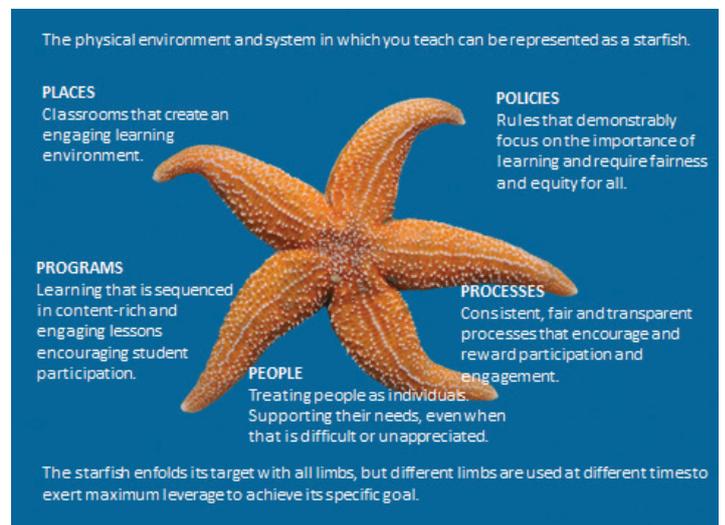
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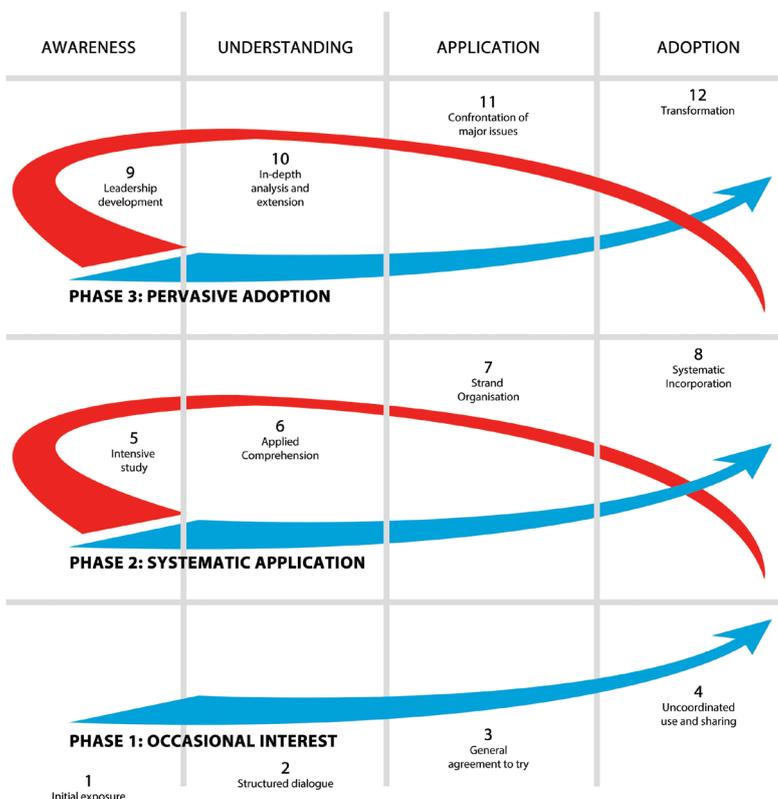
**A**ustralia's education system is in need of reform to maintain international competitiveness. Essential to this reform are changes in school climate, culture and cultural proficiency. A new change-management resource taps into that thinking. Entitled *The Invitational Education Toolkit: Creating Positive Climates for Learning, Leading and Living*, this resource provides both a theoretical foundation for effective school reform and a cultural framework for change. By combining the theoretical foundation of Invitational Education with the visual framework of the Invitational Helix, The IE Toolkit develops the unique strengths of a school and the people within it.

The Invitational Education Toolkit is a professional development resource that guides each school to construct a unique improvement plan. It brings school stakeholders together to analyse and improve the five domains found in every organisation: People, Places, Programs, Policies and Processes.

The theoretical foundation for The Invitational Education Toolkit presents a compelling view of human potential. In their book, *Fundamentals of Invitational Education*, Second Edition (2016), William



## The Invitational Helix: A School Journey



Purkey and John Novak compare Invitational Theory to a bridge resting on a foundation of three sturdy piers:

- 1 Democratic tradition (people work together to construct educational institutions that expand human potential)
- 2 Perceptual tradition (human behavior is based on a person's view of the world)
- 3 Self-Concept theory (people believe things about themselves that are learned and can also be unlearned).

With this foundation firmly in place, Invitational Theory is made visible using a spiraling Helix as the framework for school improvement. The Invitational Helix depicts the developmental nature of Invitational Education. In *The IE Toolkit*, the Helix provides a 12-step path to school transformation.

### Phases of the Helix

**Phase I** Is a time of Occasional Interest. Everyone in a school learns about Invitational Education during a four-step process. In this phase, some stakeholders try Invitational Strategies and share their experiences with others. No demands are made upon individual staff to participate because an invitation, by definition, is not a demand.

**Phase II** Moving up the Helix to Phase II, a school shares four new steps about Systematic Application. Before this begins, staff must reach consensus that they want to make their school more inviting. People agree to work together, to abandon personal agendas and to select goals they can all support. Everyone examines the school as a system with interacting parts that determine the school culture. Phase II of the Toolkit explicitly develops systems thinking and provides a process for constructive school culture change.

**Phase III** Rising on the Helix to Phase III requires the greatest staff commitment. In Phase III, Pervasive Adoption of Invitational Theory and practice transform a school in four final steps to sustain Invitational transformation. Leadership grows among all stakeholders. The school's

influence spreads into the world beyond its doors.

Flexibility and local adaptation are essential. There is no prescribed time to complete a Step or a Phase of growth. Each school sets its own pace. Invitational growth is a continual process. Participation is not exclusionary. Every school stakeholder can benefit, including professional and service staff, counselors, health providers, parents, and students.

The benefits of Invitational Education cited in the Toolkit are increased engagement, attendance, graduation, achievement, with decreased bullying and anxiety. Benefits are universal, affecting students, staff and the school community.

### Improvement research

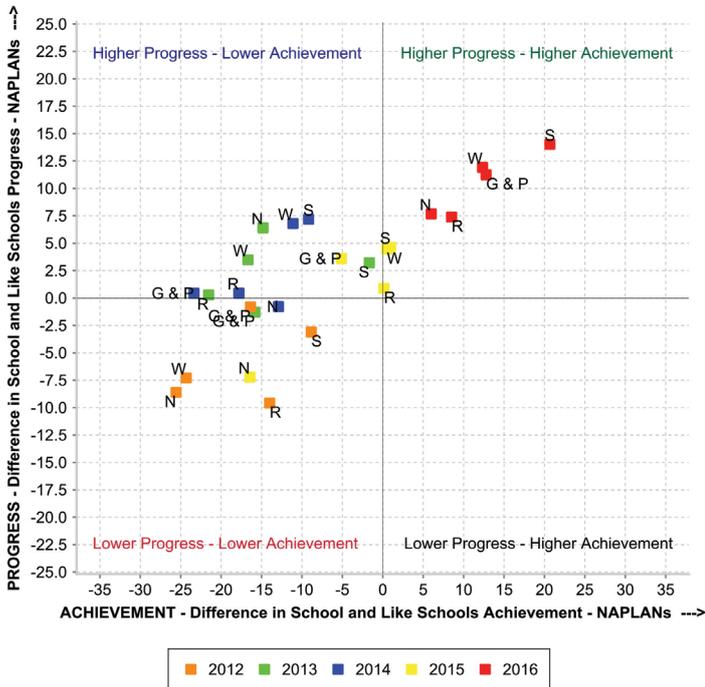
Much of the school-improvement research in recent times has focused on teaching specific strategies in order to accelerate student learning. In contrast, *The Invitational Education Toolkit* provides a potential renaissance in relation to school climate and school culture. Teaching strategies are chosen to intentionally transform school culture. As a result, intentionally inviting schools choose effective teaching strategies to better engage students and make learning visible.

Prof John Hattie considered Invitational Education in his book, *Visible Learning* (2009). He noted the significance of teacher 'mindfulness' as common to both Visible Learning and Invitational Theory. Each emphasises the intentional choice of the mind frames that teachers bring to their work and the consequences of their actions on student engagement. Invitational Theory advances that 'intentionality' promotes a positive school culture with benefits for both staff and students.

Research clearly shows the classroom teacher to be the most significant, in-school influence on students' achievement. High-achieving education systems focus on the cumulative effect of successive teachers for each and every student, hence building what Fullan and Hargreaves (2012) call professional capital. The Invitational Education Toolkit builds professional capital. When professional capital is

## Student Progress and Achievement Compared with Like Schools

### NAPLAN Year 7 to Year 9 Longitudinal



mobilised, all teachers in a series are strengthened to improve student outcomes. Life's prosperity, social, emotional, and psychological, is contingent upon students having literate futures.

#### Invitational Education at Clarkson

Clarkson Community High School promotes Invitational Education as a key part of its learning journey. We actively encourage all people to be intentionally inviting. Our aim is to create, maintain and enhance human environments that invite students, families and staff to realise their potential. It is fundamentally important that students are invited by our school to flourish.

The connection between what teachers believe and their own self-reflection about Invitational Theory is a catalyst for school improvement. Effective, successful teachers have enthusiasm, commitment and moral purpose. They are teachers who know how to maximise student performance through better learning and teaching. Professional expertise based on Invitational Theory and Practice helps create and enhance our positive school climate and our culture of success.

No matter how beautiful the strategy, inexorably you must look at the outcomes and the school improvement data should, and must, 'talk.' The adoption of Invitational Theory must demonstrate improvement in student outcomes. The intentionality of the Invitational stance at Clarkson has delivered tangible improvements.

Our choices regarding programs, people, places, policies and processes have resulted in very positive gains in NAPLAN testing in Years 7 and 9. However, at Clarkson, students' Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) in 2015 and Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (OLNA) in 2016 clearly show why teachers must lessen the strategy-to-execution gap between SMART performance management goals and students' results. All teachers must become more consciously inviting.

A key signpost indicating students' progress toward a literate and numerate future is in the NAPLAN high-stakes testing results. The 2016 NAPLAN, stable cohort Year 7-9 progress results for Clarkson show that the progress in numeracy has been a standout at 1.8 standard deviations – a significant effect size. 'Very high' achievement is twofold better than 'like schools'. Slightly fewer than half the students are below 'very low' and 'low progress.'



#### The Process and the Product

Thinking smart, as opposed to merely spending more money, is the only realistic future for most schools in the current fiscal context. The I.E. Toolkit is sold as a two-year site license for a modest subscription fee. It is published online by IAIE and housed on the IAIE website: [www.invitationaleducation.net](http://www.invitationaleducation.net). Online publication allows IAIE to frequently update content without charging subscribers for new materials. A free introductory PowerPoint posted on the website provides more details about the product along with a sample facilitation script.

The Invitational Education Toolkit is intentionally designed to help a local facilitator lead site based training without hiring a consultant. Each PowerPoint Step comes with a set of detailed facilitation notes. The notes include a slide-by-slide script which the facilitator may either read or paraphrase. Notes also prompt the distribution of handouts accompanying the Step, explain embedded activities, suggest time limits, give background knowledge and explain invitational concepts. Every Step also includes a brief video by varied international practitioners who reinforce the content.

The IAIE Toolkit was developed by five veteran members of the International Alliance for Invitational Education based on concepts created by IAIE co-founders William Purkey, Betty Siegel and their colleague, John Novak. Toolkit authors donated all profit from Toolkit sales to IAIE in order to promote Invitational Education globally. **ET**



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**Allyson Schoenlein** led the team which created the Invitational Education Toolkit. She also edited *Fundamentals of Invitational Education*, 2nd Edition. She currently serves as Chairman of the Board Trustees for the International Alliance for Invitational Education. She retired recently as Federal

Programs Director for Cabell County Schools in West Virginia, USA.



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