

# Beyond the obvious

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Have you ever sat in a meeting or discussion with others, with the beginnings of an idea sitting deep in your brain? Yet for some reason, you don't share the idea. Maybe the idea needs more thought and development? Maybe you're lacking in confidence to share? "My idea just isn't that good," you think. "It's so simple. Someone else will come up with the same thing."

But no-one else does. Sometimes you finally share the idea, other times you run over the meeting in your head that night, wishing you had spoken up. Or maybe the group has now taken someone else's idea and run with it, so a different direction is now on the horizon.

I have often been that person who, for a variety of reasons, keeps an idea in my head. Recently I watched a life-changing video from entrepreneur [Derek Sivers](#). It made me really think about why we sometimes hold back from sharing and contributing and how we can create conditions to get those great ideas out in the open.

Video: <https://youtu.be/xcmI5SSQLmE>

As the video says, everyone's ideas seem obvious to them! But often an idea might be absolutely amazing. How can we make sure that these ideas are shared and developed? This got me thinking about our learners and staff in schools and the ways that we as educators and leaders provide the environment and opportunities for this to happen. After much thought, reading and discussion with colleagues this is what I think is key.

Culture: A classroom culture and staff culture where every member feels valued, respected and heard. A safe place where voice and feedback is invited, welcomed and valued. According to Deal and Peterson (2009), research suggests that a strong, positive culture serves several beneficial functions, including the following:

- Fostering effort and productivity.
- Improving collegial and collaborative activities that in turn promote better communication and problem solving.
- Supporting successful change and improvement efforts.
- Building commitment and helping students and teachers identify with the school.
- Amplifying energy and motivation of staff members and students.
- Focusing attention and daily behaviour on what is important and valued. [1](#)

Often an idea needs the energy and drive of a group to get behind it, in order to gain momentum. This leads nicely to my next essential element!

Collaboration: There's a reason that collaborative teaching is often called "power teaching." By collaborating with others we combine expertise. Interacting with a wide range of people lets us gain multiple perspectives. This in turn leads to greater chances of our ideas intersecting or colliding, increasing the likelihood of creativity and innovation. We can share ideas that may then evolve into transformative action.

Modelling this for learners is key. Are there opportunities for students and staff to work alongside each other, with genuine amounts of time dedicated for this? Learners need explicit modelling of different ways of thinking, how to discuss ideas with others and of collaborative workflow. By building on prior knowledge and asking questions, connections and links between ideas are developed.

Learning Design: Often we need a structured approach to developing ideas and solving problems. There are many models that support this and they all seem to have a stage where fluency of ideas is encouraged. [Fluency](#) is all about generating a lot of different ideas. It doesn't matter if the idea is good or bad, the aim is just to get many different ideas on the table. The aim of the process is that eventually one idea may lead to another, allowing ideas to develop and be built upon. [Design Thinking](#), Inquiry Learning Models and many thinking tools encourage an initial 'brain dump' of ideas. Some of them, of course, may be obvious, but there will be gold there too. These models may provide opportunities for those who are less confident to contribute.

Environment: Does your environment provide flexible spaces that let people group together, have quiet time or discussion time and create hubs for creativity and innovation? It is interesting that as many schools strive to develop these environments in their classrooms, they sometimes forget about the areas their staff use. Does your staffroom allow for different teacher preferences as much as your classrooms? Or would you be better off holding the next staff meeting in one of your learning spaces?

Technology: For those who have difficulties verbalising their ideas – technology provides so many ways to get those ideas across. Use tools such as [Socrative](#), [Google Forms](#), or [Answer Garden](#) for learners and staff to share their contributions. This also enables easy collation of information and sharing. Technology also allows for more thinking time. Everyone processes their thoughts in different ways and anytime access provided by collaborative platforms such as [Google Apps](#) and [Office 365](#) allows people to add, share and build on ideas when they are ready.

I would highly recommend sharing [Obvious to you. Amazing to others](#)

with your staff and students and allowing time for a discussion about your culture, environment and systems. You never know – the reticent student or teacher who always sits in the corner at staff meetings, might just get a chance to shine.

Web Sources: Dimensions of Creativity: Fluency. Retrieved 22/02/16 from <http://www.teachersfirst.com/ISTECRe8/flu.cfm>

Further Reading:

- [Seen But Not Heard: The Introverts in our Classroom](#)
- [Dreading Meetings? Craving Quiet? You may be an introvert teacher.](#)

- [Design Thinking for Educators](#)

1 Retrieved 22/02/16 from:

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/111014/chapters/Creating-Culture-in-Schools.aspx>



## **Ngaire Shepherd-Wills**

[Ngaire Shepherd-Wills](#) is a Learning with Digital Technologies Facilitator. She has taught in the United States, the United Kingdom, and in New Zealand. At Russley School, in Christchurch, she was a lead teacher for ICT PD, Inquiry Learning, and Curriculum. Ngaire moved to Clearview Primary in Rolleston where she was involved in the design of their collaborative teaching model, and the development of their modern learning environments. In 2013 Ngaire was awarded a sabbatical to study the transitions of teachers and students moving from a traditional classroom environment to a modern learning environment. She has always had a passion for e-learning and curriculum design.