

e-Guide

Infinity Learning

Maps

A practical tool for teachers, students and parents to explore the science of learning-how-to-learn.

Brian Annan, PhD & Mary Wootton, MEd (*Hons*)



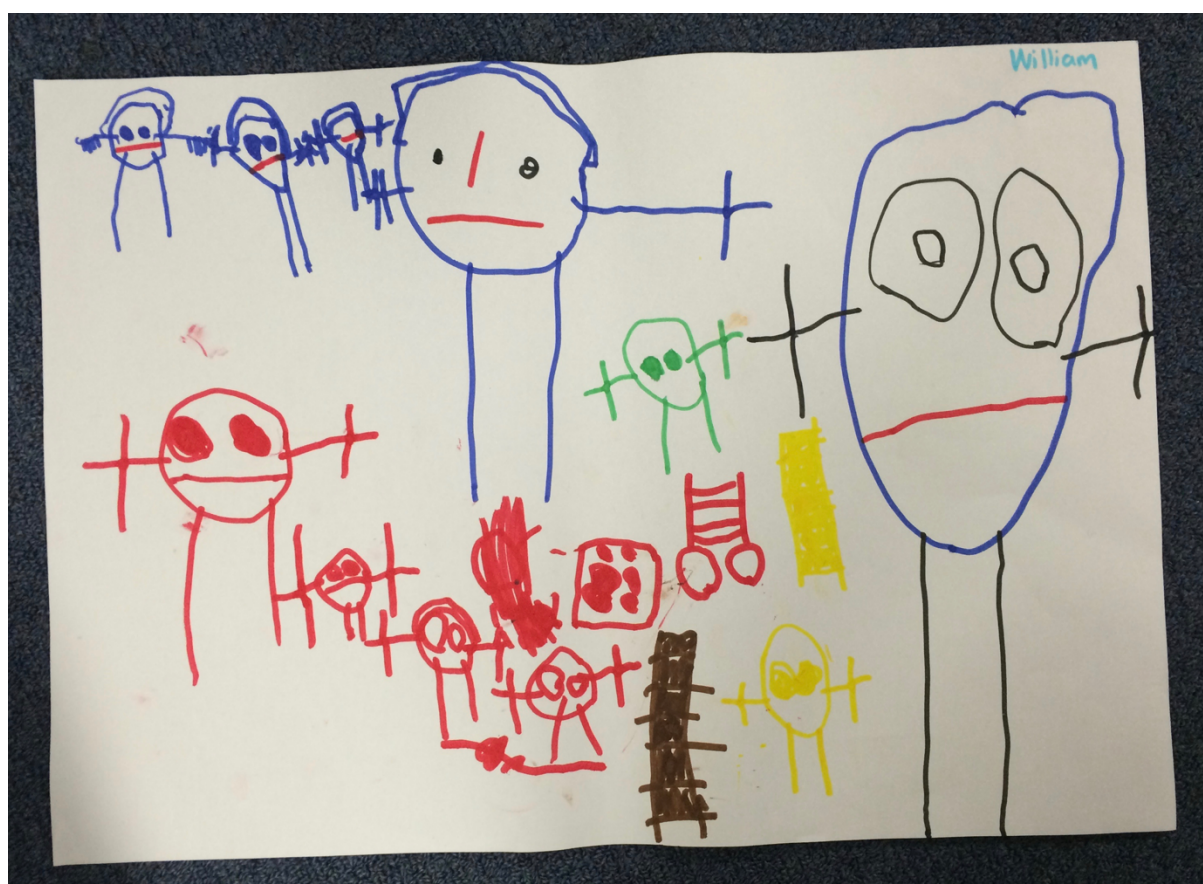
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Welcome to Infinity Learning Maps

Congratulations!

You now have your e-Guide to explore Infinity Learning Maps.

For a tailored training package or personalized support, contact directors Brian and/or Mary by email at info@infinitylearn.org.



Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the children, young adults, parents, teachers, leaders and a range of other professionals across New Zealand and around the world who have worked with us and influenced our thinking through a variety of mapping exercises over several years.

We have had the privilege of exploring learning situations with so many people. It has been like living in a treasure map of diverse learners, cultures, communities and ways of living.

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Mary and Brian



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Overview

Infinity Learning Maps

provide a practical approach for teachers and parents to support students to analyze the way they go about improving their learning.

The approach merges the three sciences of
teaching,
learning-how-to-learn, and
positive psychology.



Students are activated in fun and energizing ways to reflect and improve their learning situations with support from their teachers and families.

Infinity mapping exercises involve teachers supporting students to draw pictures of how they see their interactions surrounding a learning situation. Students then analyze their...

web of interactions

and decide what they would like to change in the way they are learning, with support from their teachers and parents.

The process of drawing, analyzing and making changes to current learning situations typically;

- lifts student confidence and achievement, and
- motivates teachers and parents to rethink their respective support roles.

(Annan, Annan, Wootton, 2016)



Central to the Infinity Learning Maps approach is decision-making among students, teachers, parents and school leaders about what to change in learning situations.

Decisions range from personalized through to strategic.

- **Personalized decisions.** Foundation decision-making in the approach involves teachers supporting students to make personalized decisions about improving their academic learning. See student case studies - Te Awhitu, who scripts a new story about his learning <http://bit.ly/InfinityMapsCaseStudies> and Lucy <http://bit.ly/LUCYACaseStudyofoneStudent>
- **Teaching decisions.** The Infinity approach supports teachers to learn how to merge their formal teaching routines with the children learning through their interests and passions. Teachers support their students to become active in this process of merging formal and informal learning. Read about Kelly, to find out how a school teacher is growing active learners <http://bit.ly/InfinityMapsCaseStudies>
- **School leadership plans.** Some school leaders have engaged their teachers, other staff, students and families across an entire school in the Infinity mapping exercises. They used the students' mapping data to inform annual planning priorities. See the principal case study, Andrea Scanlan who engages parents in their children's learning through the mapping process <http://bit.ly/InfinityMapsCaseStudies>
- **Strategizing for networks of schools.** Groups of schools used data from their students' Learning Maps alongside other data sets to inform their strategic development priorities. See the school network case study to understand how leaders included students and parents to set their strategic direction. <http://bit.ly/InfinityMapsCaseStudies>



Theory underpinning the Infinity Learning Maps approach encourages teachers to treat *all* their students as capable during the mapping activities.

Children love discovering that they are capable. They also love it when caring adults reinforce that discovery. They immediately feel more confident when their teachers, parents and other supporting adults acknowledge them as capable. Children who experience love, safety and security from their supporting adults and who feel confident in themselves typically succeed in academic learning (Parrett & Budge, 2012). The Infinity Learning Maps approach is a way of manufacturing an arrangement in which supporting adults become closely associated, or 'joined-at-the-hip' as some teachers term the phrase, with their children in their learning journeys.



Is every child capable?

Yes! Every child who starts school is capable in their unique way. However, those signs of capability can get lost as children progress through their formal schooling system. System-wide attempts to lift academic achievement globally have resulted in some children being seen as capable and others considered 'not-so-capable' in learning. Not-so-capable children have been given a range of politically charged labels over time; 'At Risk', the 'Tail', 'Priority Learners', 'Below National Standards', 'No Child Left Behind', 'Every Student Succeeds'.

Irrespective of the labels, most of those students know and feel the script that has been written for them. They typically learn in line with that script, not because they want to but because the schooling system takes over and crafts how they will learn. Their needs and gaps are identified for them. Teaching professionals then build their knowledge and skills to meet those needs and close the gaps. Although this system-wide approach is well-intentioned for the 'not-so-capable', the results are generally underwhelming; a few children rise up the ladder but many only make small gains and experience disappointing plateaus throughout their years at school.



Our belief is that it is possible for ‘deficit scripting’ to be turned around but not by decisions made at the top-end of large systems.

A change in a system tends to build on what is already in place (Fullan, 2016). Additionally, top-down change takes a long time to transform anything. Decisions made by the students, their teachers and parents are more likely to encourage confident learners and accelerate academic achievement. A school leader comments

<https://youtu.be/ecyWNdY4yXA>

It is imperative that decisions are made with a strong belief in the capability of every child. Students need to hear that belief, feel it, and know that their new-found belief in their capability is there for the long term.

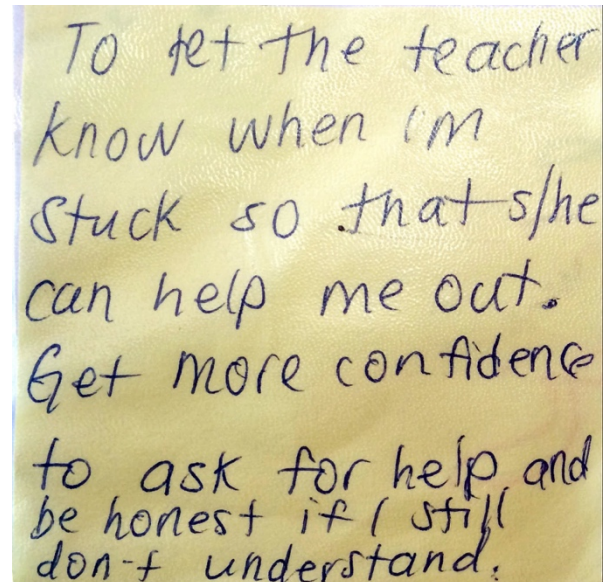
It is here that the
positive psychology
comes into play.

The quote below summarizes our view of how positive psychology can be used in the intervention space to activate student agency and engagement in learning:

“Positive psychology concerns the lens used to select the features of any situation and the processes by which we make meaning from what we perceive. It leads us to appreciate what does work, what is valued and what conditions are desirable for learning to occur (see Annan & Priestley, 2012; Edwards & Holtz, 2007; Nickerson, 2007). The positive psychology movement, initiated by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), has encouraged the creation of optimistic climates for change by placing emphasis on presence rather than absence. Fullan and Langworthy (2014) suggest that schools build on the “pockets of educational innovation’ that are exciting students into learning.” (p.13. Annan, Annan, Wootton, & Burton, 2014)



Our positive and appreciative approach towards strategy design does not ignore problems, challenges and gaps that children have in their learning and lives. Difficulties in learning are dealt with but the emphasis is on students taking greater responsibility by using their strengths to address issues.



To let the teacher know when I'm stuck so that s/he can help me out. Get more confidence to ask for help and be honest if I still don't understand.

As students become more active in their learning, teachers and parents can provide more personalized support. A central question to activate students is to ask:

“What are **you** going to do to change this situation?”

A school leader reflects <https://youtu.be/1tYdm25Xlps>

Typically, children are not asked to answer that question. Our research is finding that Infinity Maps help to turn on the ‘learner agency tap’ inside children’s heads, which makes them far more active, connected and



aware of the way they are learning and interacting with the world around them.

There are now many Infinity Learning Maps stories about children, with support from teachers and parents, re-scripting the way they learn-how-to-learn; academic challenges, English language challenges, replacing negative behaviors with positive behaviors, succeeding with visual and hearing impairments,

engaging in passion learning adventures, project-based learning, addressing sporting challenges and many more.

Introduce Infinity Maps to your children and watch them map out their current learning situations, then address challenges in their own ways. Watch how they re-script the way they see themselves as learners.



Infinity Learning Maps are engaging both English and Māori medium teachers. One indigenous Māori teacher of new entrant students, Papa Bill from Tolaga Bay, shared his views in this video about the value of the approach after attending a series of workshops to learn about Infinity Learning Maps. An English translation is provided below.

<https://youtu.be/b8nCXL84OY0>

Benefits of Infinity Learning Maps

The benefits of these learning maps is that you see the depth and breadth of the students' thinking. It is not just pertinent to one particular curriculum area but to all areas of learning in all aspects of a child's life; school, marae, home wherever he or she may roam. I thought I knew my students well, but through the mapping process I have seen that the students have their own rich connections to their friends and whanau. These are made explicit through the mapping process. It has been new learning for me to see the value of these connections and how to reinforce existing strong connections and strengthen weak connections. It was humbling to see that I was not existent in some of the maps, I'm not concerned because it is how each individual students views their learning pathways. Once the maps have been drawn the students record their explanation of their map and I have been in awe of how confident and clear they are about their learning pathways and connections. Each child has a voice that is worth listening to. Papa Bill, Tolaga Bay, 2016.

You may be a teacher, school leader, mum, dad, whānau (extended family) guardian, proud grandparent, counsellor, mental health worker, youth aid officer or an employer; whatever your role, you can support your children to script positive stories of the way they engage in learning.



As your children engage with Infinity Maps, they will start to see things that will improve their learning and living. Those discoveries will often be things that have previously gone unnoticed. You are likely to be surprised, excited and sometimes uncomfortable about the disclosures that your children make about their learning situations. You may also be



surprised by the rapid change in student's decision-making.

You may have been pestering a student to make a change in the way they learn for months or even years, such as asking questions in class. Then, in a relatively short period of time, that student decides to do that very thing for themselves.

We trust you and your children will find value in the Infinity Maps activities.

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