

Redlands College Builds Engagement Through Differentiated Learning with the MBTI® Assessment

A Case Study of Redlands College



CASE STUDY AT A GLANCE

OVERVIEW

Redlands College is a co-educational, independent day school in Queensland, Australia. It prides itself on providing a quality educational experience within a Christian environment for students Prep to Year 12. The college embraces innovation and was recently acknowledged by Apple, Inc., as an Apple Distinguished School. Redlands is one of only 24 schools in Australia that have received this acknowledgment.

CHALLENGES

Redlands College sought to find ways of assisting students to better understand themselves and support them in their career pathway choices in Year 10. The college was also particularly focused on re-engaging students in the Year 10 Maths pilot programme and also finding ways to further support disruptive students involved in the Behaviour Management unit.

IMPACTS AND OUTCOMES

After introducing and using the MBTI® instrument, training and resources with the teaching staff and students, the Maths teachers gained an understanding of how to use their personality type to adapt teaching strategies to accommodate the different preferences of students. The staff training also had the benefit of offering these teachers an awareness of their own individual MBTI strengths and how these could contribute to their cohesion as they worked together as a department. Greater engagement from both staff and students was evident in the classroom. Some students commented that learning was fun when the teaching aligned with their personality type preferences. The MBTI framework and resources also helped the school better support students who were considered to be 'disruptive'.

WHY REDLANDS COLLEGE USED THE MBTI® INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Redlands College was seeking a solution to develop a stronger understanding of type theory and how different personality types prefer to learn and participate in education. To achieve this outcome, all of the Year 10, 11 and 12 teaching staff undertook their own MBTI assessment and participated in an in-depth workshop using type theory in an educational context. A pilot programme continued throughout Semester 2 with the Year 10 Math teachers to integrate and apply type theory strategically in the class curriculum.

IMPROVING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

As a result of the pilot programme, Redlands College administers the MBTI assessment to all Year 10 students annually to assist their self-understanding. The assessment is part of the college's broader strategy to support the students in mapping their future career pathways by considering their personality type preferences identified through the MBTI assessment and verification process. Knowledge of the students' types has also provided assistance and extra insights into disruptive or disengaged students.

Upon reviewing the MBTI assessment results of Year 10 students collected over the previous seven years, Redlands College identified a pattern of predominant types in the student population when comparing each annual cohort. This

pattern indicated a link between type and choice of curriculum streams as well as student engagement and poor behavior.

Lynda Ives, the college's Behaviour Management Coordinator, and Allan Patterson, the Head of the Senior School, identified this link, and they sought to explore ways of improving student engagement and behavior using knowledge of personality type theory. Lynda and Allan also noticed a significant difference between the predominant type preferences in the student and teacher populations.

Analysis of student and teacher data from Redlands College showed that Introversions (I) and Judging (J) preferences were predominant in teaching staff, while Extraversion (E) and Perceiving (P) preferences were predominant in the student cohorts. Type theory, proposed by Carl Jung, suggests that people will be at their best when they have effective command of their dominant function. To develop facility and confidence in their dominant function, children need encouragement and support in learning in their most natural and preferred ways.

Educational research has further shown that:

- Teachers create assessments that favour students whose learning styles match those of the teacher (Murphy, 1992).
- Teachers' beliefs about how students learn correlate with their own personality preferences (Hammer, 1996).
- Teachers' subject areas and instructional practices vary according to their type preferences (Hammer, 1996). Consequently, the preferred methods in many disciplines appear to be biased against students with other learning styles.
- Teachers are more likely to discipline students who do not share their type preferences (O'Neill, 1986).
- Students with certain personality type preferences disengage from school at a much higher rate than students of other type preferences—and are least likely to become teachers. Consequently, knowledge of how these disengaged students learn is largely absent from the educational debates.

To address these issues identified in the research, Redlands College's senior teaching teams were introduced to MBTI type theory and differentiated learning. This approach enabled the teachers to understand that students learn most effectively, especially when approaching new or difficult topics, when they are provided with opportunities to use their most effective or dominant learning style.

During and following the [MBTI] pilot programme, participating teachers stated there was a 'noticeable change in student engagement'... The teachers themselves were also noticeably more enthused.

Redlands College then engaged Brian Lawrence, Principal Consultant with CPP Asia Pacific, to design and facilitate a programme assisting teachers to further understand and apply MBTI type theory in a differentiated learning. This knowledge provided a firm foundation for the teaching staff to begin to explore teaching outside of their type. Fifty-six senior high school teachers attended the differentiated learning workshop facilitated by Brian. The teachers learned about the MBTI type framework and how it applies to teaching and learning. They were shown how they could dissect their own teaching style, their beliefs and their preconceptions about student behaviours. This, they understood, would enable them to look beyond their own type preferences and re-engage disengaged students in learning.

TYPE AND DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING PILOT PROGRAMME

Following the differentiated learning workshop facilitated by Brian, eight teachers from the senior Maths department participated in a four-month pilot programme to further apply their knowledge in their teaching approaches. Brian and his colleague Lauren McCoy conducted monthly coaching sessions with the teachers via teleconference, where the teachers were encouraged to set individual goals for applying differentiated learning principles. The teachers observed behavioural differences resulting from the type preferences of their students and chose at least one student who appeared disengaged to work with and to help re-engage the student during the course of the pilot programme. The students were not aware that the teacher had selected them during the programme, and the teaching activities were directed towards the whole class. All pilot programme participants were given a copy of the *Introduction to Type® and Learning* booklet to support their teaching strategies and practice.

CHANGES IN TEACHING STYLES

After introducing the entire senior school teaching staff to the MBTI instrument and training, Lynda and Allan noted the amount of positive 'type talk' in the staff room—with teachers discussing the similarities and differences in each other and suggesting ways to improve communication between the teaching staff.

During and following the pilot programme, participating teachers stated there was a 'noticeable change in student engagement'. Some students who had not previously been engaged in classroom activities were now showing more interest. The teachers themselves were also more noticeably enthused as they shared ideas for delivering differentiated strategies in the classroom.

As a result of the successes demonstrated, a number of teachers who had not been involved initially in the pilot programme have since enquired how they can learn to apply the strategies in their classrooms. In addition, two more teachers at Redlands College have become MBTI® Certified Practitioners through CPP Asia Pacific's certification programme. The school continues to adopt differentiated type strategies in the classroom and plans to roll out the programme to other departments.

Prepared by Brian Lawrence, Principal Consultant,
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RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

- Dunning, D. (2008). *Introduction to Type® and Learning*
DiTiberio, J. K., et al. (1993) *Introduction to Type® in College*
Kise, J. A. G. (2006). *Differentiated Coaching: A Framework for Helping Teachers Change*.
Kise, J. A. G. (2007). *Differentiation Through Personality Types*.
Lawrence, G. (2009). *People Types & Tiger Stripes: Using Psychological Type to Help Students Discover Their Unique Potential*.
Myers, I. B., et al. (1996). *MBTI® Manual: A Guide to the Development and Use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® Instrument* (3rd edition).

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