

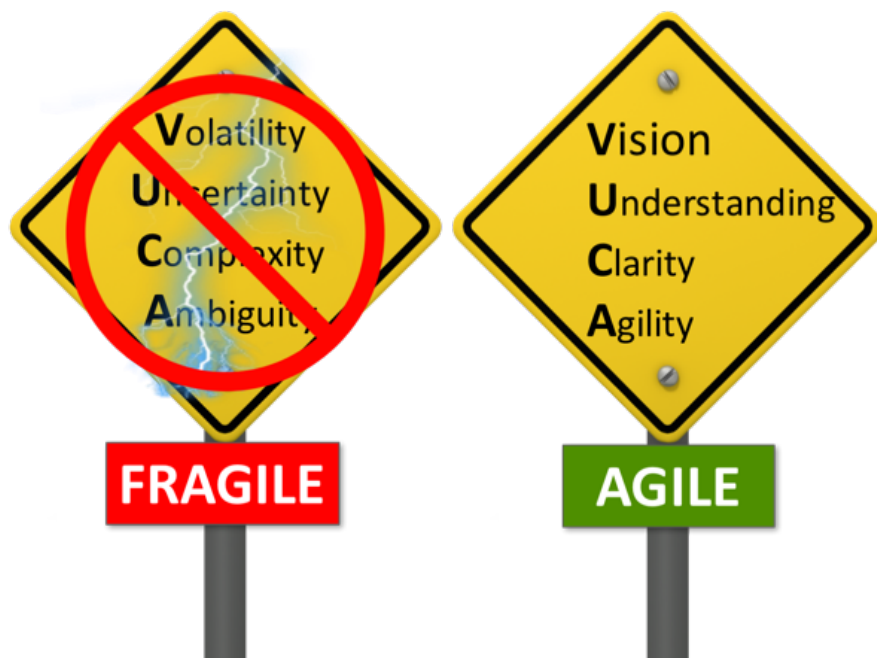
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Living in a VUCA World: Preparing

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admin

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*By Shanti Clements*

21st Century teaching and learning isn't just about activating students as digital learners in a techno-world, it is also about empowering students to be change makers in their schools. How can schools empower and allow students to be change makers in their school community? How can we help them thrive in a VUCA world?

Traditionally, we give adults the power to enact change within a school, forgetting that it is equally important to give children the same opportunities. The reality is that we aren't just preparing students for higher education, we are also preparing them for life in a VUCA world.

VUCA is a military and managerial acronym short for Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity. Most recently, it has evolved into a new acronym known as **VUCA PRIME**: Vision, Understanding, Clarity and Agility. Teaching this new perspective to students is essential if we are to help them balance the dynamic between volatility and vision or to manage change with

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the ability to self-regulate.

At Beauty Point Public School, we empower our students to be change makers through our leadership, wellbeing and academic programs. Our aim is to provide our students with the skillsets to manage and lead change with agility, confidence and a positive mindset. We have designed our programs to help them to live their lives as confident and successful global citizens and leaders, which is the aim of the education charter endorsed by all Australian states and territories, the Melbourne Declaration¹. We do this in four ways:

1. From Volatility to Vision – The Importance of Leadership

To teach students how to be 21C leaders and change agents, we implemented *The Leader In Me* program in 2010. We promote the 7 Habits for Highly Effective People³ to cultivate key interpersonal and intrapersonal skills to manage change and transitions. *The Leader In Me* program encourages students, staff and parents to use the 7 habits to manage themselves, collaborate with others, develop their leadership abilities and unleash their potential each day at school. Specifically, the 7 habits help students to handle challenging and complex situations with emotional and leadership intelligence.

2. From Uncertainty to Understanding – The Importance of Teams

At Beauty Point Public School, we use the *Imagination First* program to help our students to develop collaborative project-based learning skills. Used in primary and secondary schools across Australia, the *Imagination First*⁴ approach encourages students to think in creative, divergent, imaginative and innovative ways. It also develops team building and leadership skills to dream, design, problem-solve and develop proactive strategies for lifelong learning, change implementation and success strategies for the modern world.

3. From Complexity to Clarity – The Importance of Transdisciplinary Curriculum for Brighter Futures

In our school, we have empowered students to be active co-designers of their curriculum and assessment activities by creating a 'flipped' co-constructed approach. Our aim is to support the academic and holistic development of our students while preparing them for the world they will inherit. Over the past six years, we have designed and implemented a whole school 21C K-6 transdisciplinary curriculum model, called the *Brighter Futures Project*. This transdisciplinary approach creates a classroom learning environment that combines a focus on the academic (curriculum and general capabilities) and affective (emotional, social, spiritual, physical, mental) domains of learning. Informed by the NSW School Excellence Framework⁵ and NSW Wellbeing Framework⁶, this model helps Years 3-6 students thrive as 'change agents' in their own learning. As a result, students are active co-facilitators of rich learning experiences every day at school.

4. From Ambiguity to Agility – The Importance of Developing Growth Mindsets

Another initiative that has supported our students in developing growth mindsets and the ability to manage change is our *Peer Coaching* program. Through the program, students in Years 5 and 6 are mentored to become a coach and facilitator. Teachers actively role model the communication and coaching skills needed to support students in running leadership and wellbeing workshops with students from Years 3-6. Students participate in four coaching workshops which help enhance their skillsets as 'change agents' and peer coaches:

- + *The Interpersonal Shift* - where students are provided with an overview of their social and emotional development to help understand themselves and others;
- + *Being At My Best* - where students develop emotional awareness about their thinking, emotional responses, self-talk and personal resilience so that they can be at their best more of the time;
- + *Learning How to Self-Manage* - where students develop intrapersonal skills by learning strategies to self-regulate and manage their emotions; and

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- + *Growth Conversations* - where students learn how to develop trusting and healthy friendships by using 'growth mindset' conversations to engage in peer coaching conversations in the classroom and playground environments.

Our programs at Beauty Point Public School empower students to become active 'change agents' to help them thrive in the rapidly changing world we live in. By supporting student co-design and co-facilitation in their learning, thinking, problem solving and socializing at school, we have enabled students to develop the skillsets needed to perceive the world with a growth mindset (VUCA PRIME) instead of a deficit paradigm (VUCA). This is essential if we are to help students unleash their full potential to create, imagine, innovate and thrive.

Questions

- + How do you currently empower students as active 'change agents'?
- + How can you further enhance student co-design and co-authorship in your school's leadership, teaching and learning programs?
- + What first step will you take to enhance student-led 'change' projects in your school?

References

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Shanti Clements has been Principal at Beauty Point Public School for almost 8 years. She was most recently the recipient of a Commonwealth Bank National Teaching and Leadership Fellowship award. An educator for over 23 years, she was formerly Assistant Director, Leadership and Teacher Quality with the NSW Department of Education. In this role, she supported the development of new school planning processes and designed a leadership pathways strategy for NSW Public Schools. Her career includes co-writing two curriculum

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