Mai i te Kōpae ki te Urupa, tātou ako tonu ai

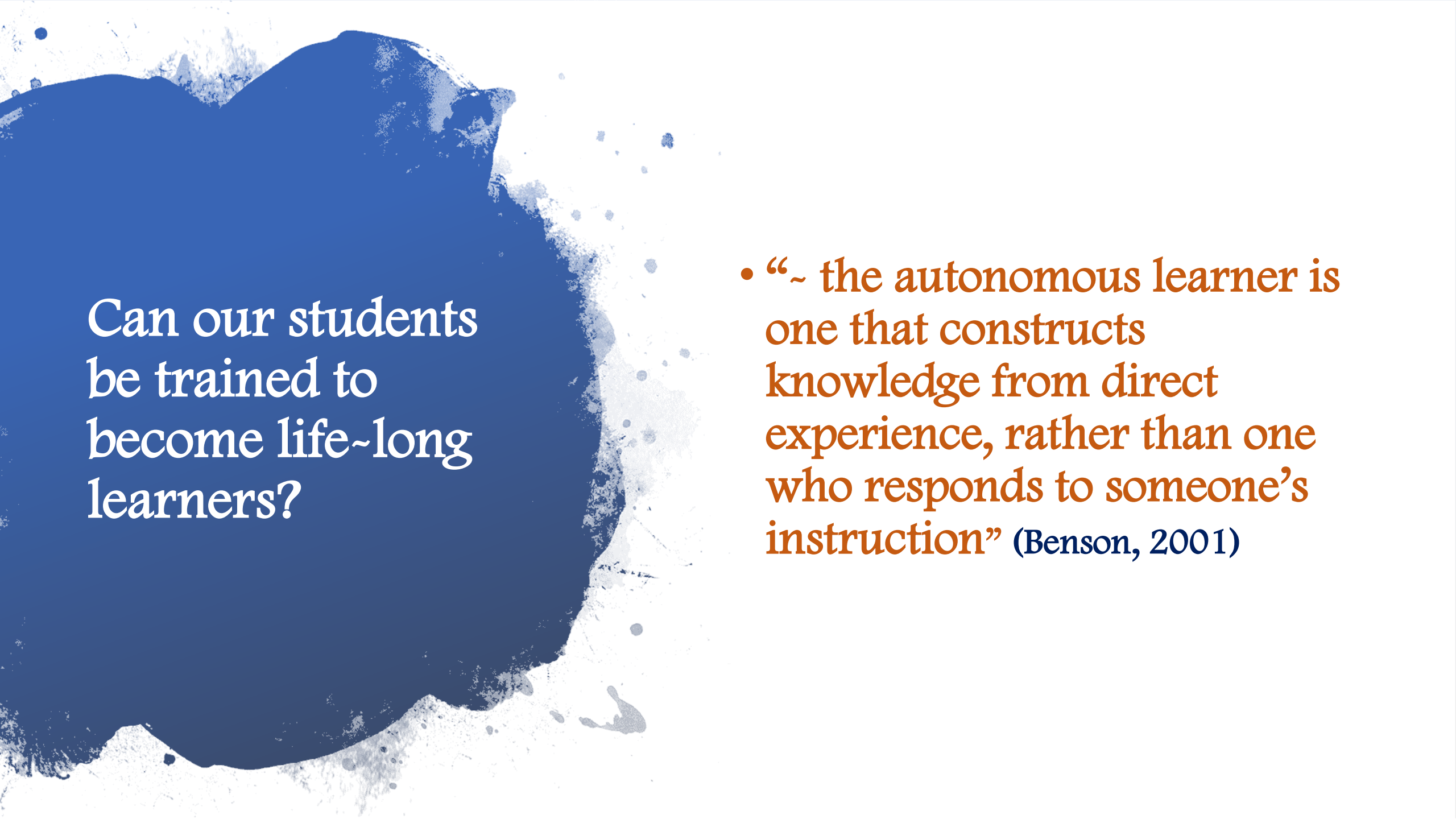From the cradle to the grave we are forever learning~

A Maori proverb

Inclusivity, sustainability and life-long learning –
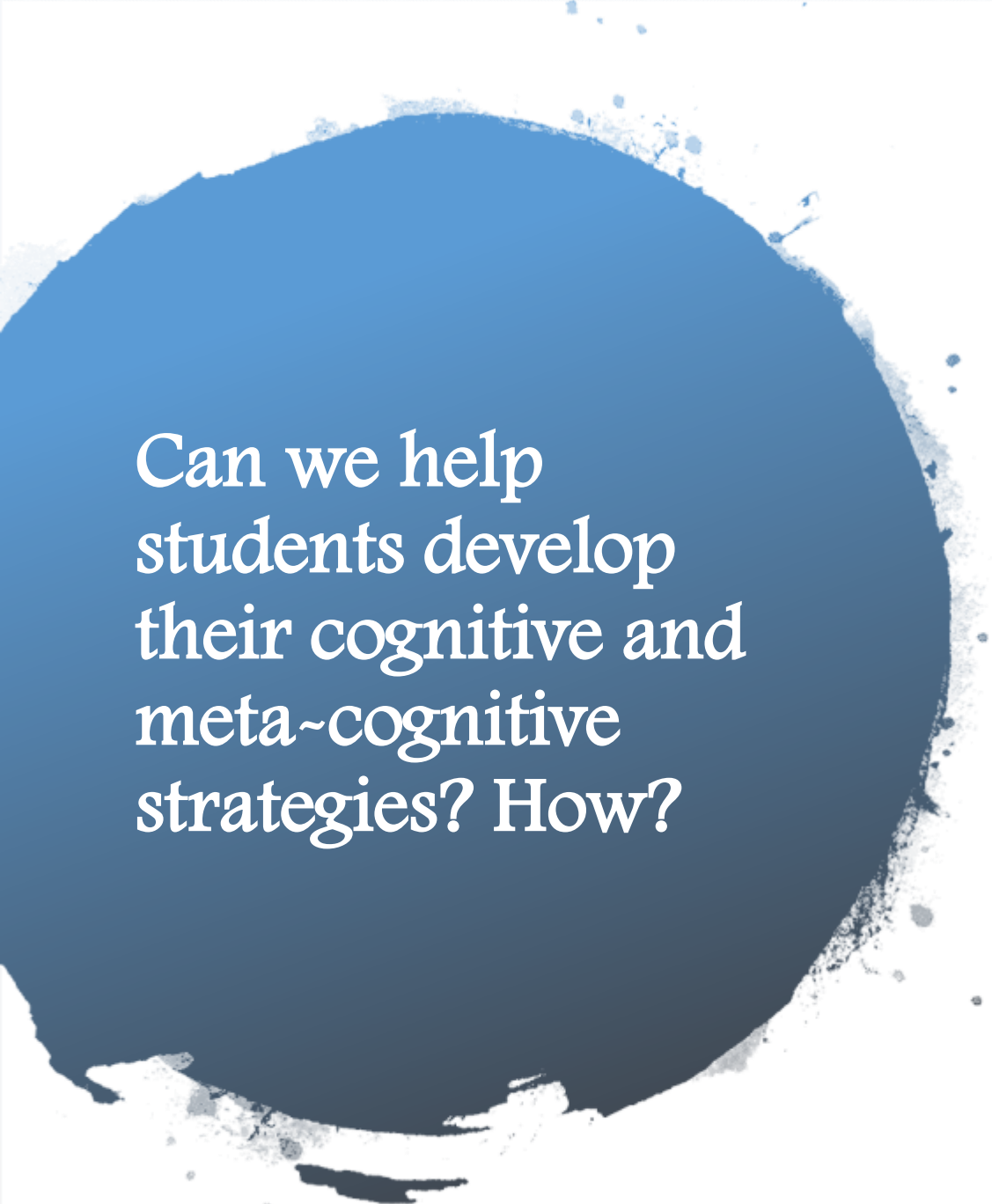
Why? and How?

Can our students be trained to become life-long learners?

- "~ the autonomous learner is one that constructs knowledge from direct experience, rather than one who responds to someone's instruction" (Benson, 2001)

How?

Help	Help students distinguish between goals and dreams.
Allow	Allow students to set their own goals. (Gardner & Miller, 1999)
Help	Help students to identify their preferred learning styles. (Nunan, 2003)
Encourage	Encourage students to learn both inside and outside the classroom. (Hedge, 2000)
Teach	Teach students to reflect on their learning strategies and monitor their progress. (Gardner & Miller, 1999)

Can we help students develop their cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies? How?

Cognitive strategies can be developed by teaching students techniques to make sense of language themselves instead of relying on a teacher (Hedge, 2000).

Meta-cognitive strategies can be developed by providing opportunities for self-evaluation where students practise assessing their own performance and learn to become self-critical (Hedge, 2000).

Why?

It acknowledges differences in learning abilities

Students learn to take responsibility for their own learning

Students learn to set their own goals for language learning based on individual ability

Students learn to reflect on and monitor their own progress

It sets up students for life-long learning

How to get started?

Basics we need

Time - A set time for self-access sessions makes it possible to integrate them into the school curriculum.

Space - A designated space is important because it creates a conducive environment for autonomous learning.

Structure- A clearly defined structure helps both teachers and learners to get positive outcomes from the self-access sessions.

What does it cost?

First make the best of what you already have, e.g. EFL readers, old/'retired' course books, the daily newspaper, archive of worksheets, links to good websites etc.

It is important to get a few materials across all levels and skills.

Development of a full library could be an ongoing process, dependent on individual institution budgets.

The practical aspect

- Student learning passports
- Self-access hour
- Student-teacher conference guidelines
- Goal setting
- Monitoring
- Stamps for encouragement and motivation

Projected pitfalls

Students complaining about losing an hour of class time.

Teachers being unaccepting of the idea/ resistance to change a human tendency.

Actual pitfalls

Diagnostic section in the learning passport unsuitable for lower learners.

Poor management of student-teacher conference time and lack of adequate monitoring during sessions.

Inconsistency in maintaining records in student passports.

Missing books/resources from the library/learning centre.

Remedy

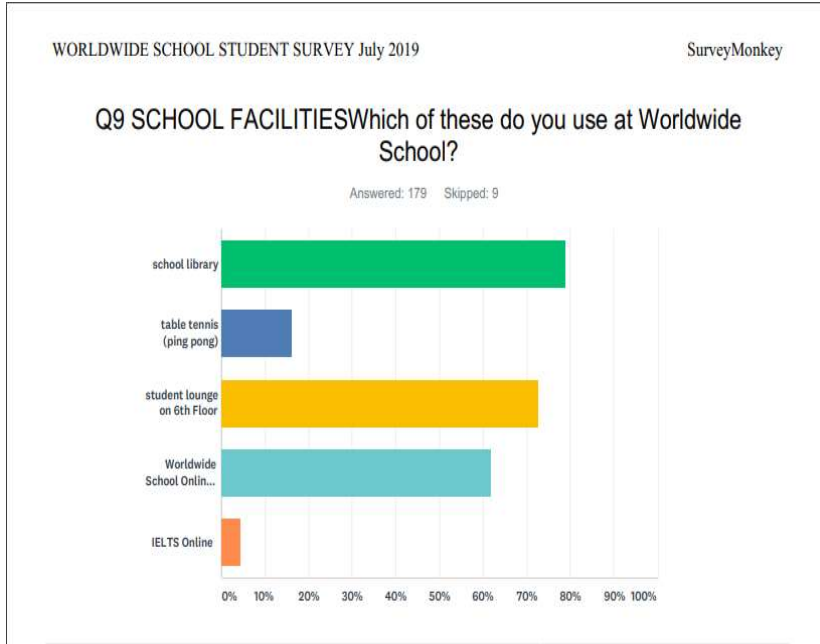Editing of student learning passports based on teacher feedback.

In-house PD sessions in running self-access sessions smoothly and consistently.

Guidance in conducting student-teacher conferences.

Providing induction for new staff members on gaining familiarity with available resources and running self-access sessions.

Share the load of monitoring, doing conferences and being vigilant so that no materials go missing.
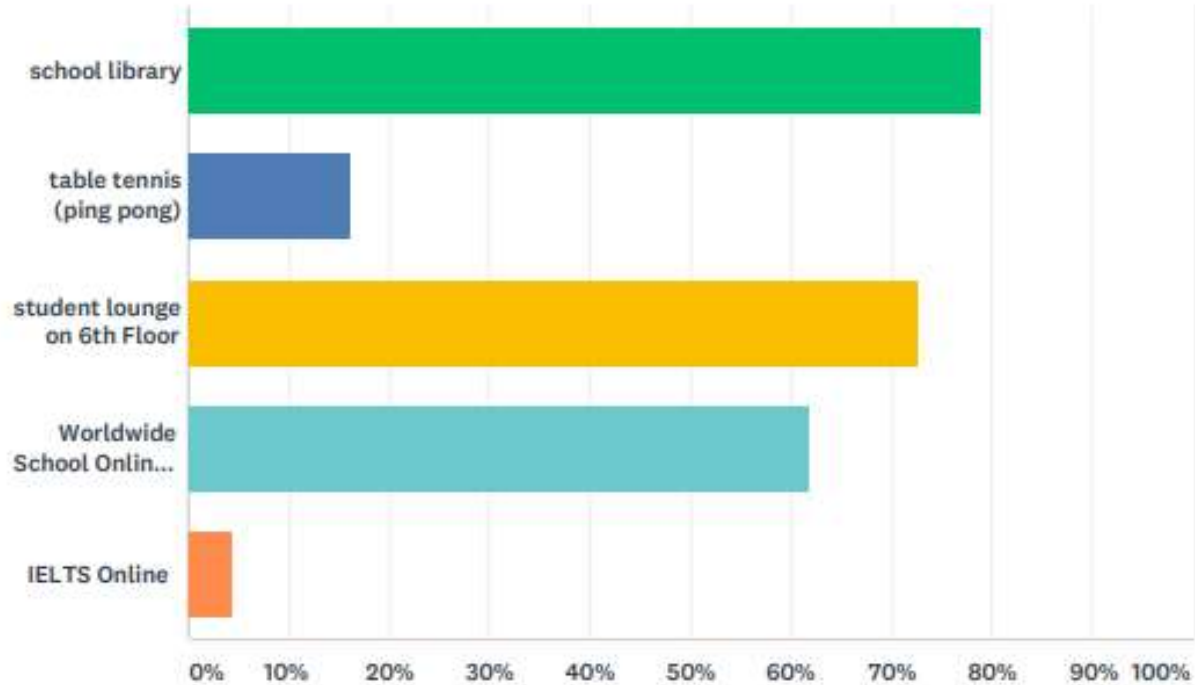
Internal feedback

WORLDWIDE SCHOOL STUDENT SURVEY July 2019   SurveyMonkey

Q9 SCHOOL FACILITIESWhich of these do you use at Worldwide School?

Answered: 179   Skipped: 9

- Self-access sessions feature in the top five most preferred activities in student surveys.

- Teachers have embraced the system and see themselves as a valuable part of the process.

Q9 SCHOOL FACILITIESWhich of these do you use at Worldwide School?

Answered: 179   Skipped: 9

External feedback

- IALC, English New Zealand and NZQA audits reinforce our position as a student-centred school, which provides its students tools and strategies for life-long learning and equips its teachers to become a valuable part of their students' learning journey.

References

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