

Getting Clever with Student Learning

Teacher and Student Learning in
The Yarra Schools Consortium – An Active Learning
Community



Compiled by Pamela Burton and Zita Pinda
Sponsored by the Yarra Schools Consortium Success for Boys Program



We said there warn't no home like a raft, after all. Other places do seem so cramped up and smothery, but a raft don't. You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft.

Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

The Yarra Schools Consortium is a group of nine diverse schools in the inner city area of Melbourne. The Consortium includes: Abbotsford Primary School, Collingwood College P-12, Collingwood English Language School, Fitzroy Primary School, Lynall Hall Community School, Melbourne Girls' College, Richmond Primary School, Richmond West Primary School and Yarra Primary School.

This group of schools has a proven history of collaborative projects which have created new knowledge and effective practice. The School Participation Project is widely recognised as a best practice model for improving student attendance and engagement as is also for the Network's model for shared Learning as outlined in the *Clever Network Model*. In establishing joint programs, the Consortium has been active in establishing shared vision, values and beliefs.

The Consortium currently has eight joint working groups, including four Professional Learning Teams established in 2007. This report documents the evidence based action research undertaken by the Professional Learning Team members and their professional colleagues.

To the Yarra Schools Consortium

You have demonstrated a highly professional approach in the delivery of the Success for Boys PD Program to your learning community.

In particular you are ensuring the teacher understandings from this learning are being implemented in a stimulating and engaging way.

Thank you for your commitment to this program for your teachers and for your co operation in ensuring the boys in your classrooms have more opportunities to be engaged in their learning and therefore more successful in their futures.

Denis Young
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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	6
Contact Us	7
1. The Principles of Boys' Education and the Learning Protocols of the Yarra Schools Consortium	8
2. The Yarra Schools Consortium as a Learning Community	15
3. Professional Learning in the Yarra Schools Consortium	24
4. Focus on Literacy and Numeracy	30
5. Focus on Student mentoring and Wellbeing	60
6. Focus on ICT	88
7. Focus on Hands On Learning	98
8. Focus on Community Projects	106
9. Some Useful Resources	112
10. The Schools of the Yarra Schools Consortium	128

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1. The Principles of Boys Education and the Learning Protocols of the Yarra Schools Consortium

Tom appeared on the sidewalk with a bucket of whitewash and a long-handled brush. He surveyed the fence, and all gladness left him and a deep melancholy settled down upon his spirit. Thirty yards of board fence nine feet high. Life to him seemed hollow, and existence but a burden.

Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

Guiding principles for success in educating boys

Introduction

The ten guiding principles for educating boys below are extracted from the report *Meeting the Challenge: Guiding Principles for Success from the Boys' Education Lighthouse Schools Initiative Stage One 2003* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003, ISBN: 0 642 77402 1).

The following set comprises 10 interrelated core propositions which should inform the development and implementation of ongoing programmes to improve the education of boys in schools.

1. Collect evidence and undertake ongoing inquiry on the issue, recognising that schools can do something about it.

Boys' education is an issue of concern within schools in Australia as evidenced by a significant body of research and the experience of the 110 project schools and clusters. It also is an issue that schools can do something to address. This requires each school to gather and analyse its own student achievement and other data (eg attendance, behaviour incidents, student opinion survey data) on a gender basis and identify the needs of specific boys and students 'at risk'. Such inquiry should involve sustained data collection, reflection and evaluation at the local level, informed by research in this area. The school then can develop, implement and continue to evaluate and amend appropriate strategies and targets tailored to the unique and specific needs of students.

2. Adopt a flexible, whole school approach with a person and team responsible.

Improving the educational outcomes of boys requires a whole school approach based on a common vision and a coherent, integrated set of programmes across the broad range of activities noted in this report (ie pedagogy, curriculum and assessment; literacy and communication skills; student engagement and motivation; behaviour management programmes; and positive role models for students). Such a whole school approach is more effective with the identification of a leader in the school who is responsible for its implementation, and the establishment of an appropriate team to support the leader. It also requires a degree of flexibility on the part of the school when needed in relation to structural and other arrangements to support the programmes adopted (eg single-sex classes and activities, withdrawal programmes). This approach should be integrated with existing school improvement strategies and should engage the broader school community.

3. Ensure good teaching for boys, and all students in all classes.

Improved education for boys depends, just as it does for girls, upon good teaching of all students in all classes. While there are many recipes for good teaching in schools, teachers demonstrating good practices all have the following features in common.

- Having high expectations for all students, knowing their students well and listening to their students.
- Reflecting on current teaching practice in terms of the information collected by the school and an informed evidence base of research.
- Using a range of teaching techniques – if all a teacher does is talk at the students and writes things on a board, they are unlikely to learn very much. All learners require variety and teachers need to vary the ways in which they pass on information to, and engage, students.
- Structuring their teaching so it supports student learning – the teacher is the trained, professional adult in the class, so must ensure that the key messages and lessons are learned. This means they need to make sure that students understand the main

- points as they proceed, make connections to other things that have been learned, build on what students already know and keep reinforcing key messages.
- Involving students in learning activities and encouraging their participation – learning requires that students do things, as well as having them explained or shown to them. Teachers need to actively involve students in solving problems for themselves and get students working together in groups so they learn social and cooperative skills.
- Providing positive feedback and praise – an important part of teaching young people is providing them with feedback on their work. Teachers need to let students know how they are going in general, what their strengths and weaknesses are and how they can continue to improve.
- Being open, flexible, fair and consistent in dealing with students, having a ready sense of humour and being prepared to negotiate and discuss teaching and learning with students.
- Making connections with the community – involving the students' parents and other important community members helps demonstrate to students the importance the teacher attaches to the programme and their work.

4. Be clear about the kinds of support particular boys require.

Boys are not a homogeneous group and not all boys can be treated the same. Gender intersects with a range of other factors, including developmental and sub-cultural factors, to affect each student's experience of school. Some boys may experience a tension between being masculine and engaging with and being good at school; with the result that demonstrating their masculinity can inhibit participation and performance in class, making school a negative experience. Not all boys, however, experience or identify with aspects of masculinity that conflict with educational engagement, and there are many boys who do successfully integrate success in schooling and growing up as adult males. Hence the school needs to clarify how best to support each boy in his learning at school.

5. Cater for different learning styles preferred by boys.

Students learn in different ways. There is, in this context, substantial research as well as school and cluster experience through these projects to suggest that boys (as well as many girls, of course) commonly respond more positively to learning experiences that:

- have a practical focus and physical or hands-on dimension;
- they see as relevant and having a real world connection;
- use thinking skills focused on actual problems;
- challenge them by requiring higher order and conceptual thinking;
- have clear instructions and structured sessions in manageable chunks;
- enable them to work with others as well as individually;
- provide for a range of ways in which work can be presented; and
- provide them with a degree of involvement in decisions about content and opportunities to negotiate their learning as a valued stakeholder.

That said, good practice in boys' education also seeks to broaden the range of ways in which boys view themselves as learners and the strategies they adopt, while strengthening their capacity to develop responsibility and self-awareness, and to value success at school.

6. Recognise that gender matters and stereotypes should be challenged.

Acceptance of gender identity is important for all students. Boys should be encouraged to value being male and the positive virtues this entails. Equally, the negative aspects of stereotypical views of masculinity, often manifest in bullying, aggressive and physical responses to conflict and difference, or a conscious disengagement from school, need to be challenged. Schools and teachers are well placed to promote and model values and behaviours that are fundamental to people learning and working together. Schools can

enable boys to broaden the ways in which they relate to others as they develop and grow, and exercise power, control, competition, cooperation, freedom, responsibility and choice; thereby enhancing their development as adult males in modern Australian society. Schools should, in this context, seek to establish a culture where achievement is seen as 'cool' and desirable for all students and is accepted as something to be celebrated.

7. Develop positive relationships, as they are critical to success.

Relationships are crucial in any young person's schooling, especially the teacher–student relationship within the classroom and in the broader learning environment of the school. Particularly important for success at school is that each and every boy should know and feel that there are people in the school who care about him and his development. Beyond this, boys will benefit where there is consistency of approach between the home and the school, and parents are actively engaged in the education of their children and in developing 'shared values' with the school. The experience of clusters in this programme also has demonstrated the benefits to be gained from increased cooperation between schools and, in particular, sharing of strategies and resources to improve the education of boys.

8. Provide opportunities for boys to benefit from positive male role models from within and beyond the school.

Boys in school want and need to develop positive relationships with significant males within and beyond the school, most obviously their fathers and teachers, but also older male students and members of the wider community. Such role models provide inspiration and support for young boys seeking to develop their own understanding of how to become an effective adult male in the community, and also can assist in the development of clear goals and pathways to future learning and personal development.

9. Focus on literacy in particular.

There is little doubt that boys' relatively weaker performance in literacy than girls has been one of the threshold factors leading to the focus on improving education for boys. Literacy, especially in the early years of school, is critical for educational success at school and subsequent successful participation in the community and its economy. There is substantial evidence to show that effective literacy for boys requires a balanced approach which includes some whole language teaching, but also direct instruction of phonics and phonemic awareness to improve outcomes across the board. Effective teaching and assessment should incorporate a recognition of the range of literacies students require today, including multimedia and emerging literacies in which young people, and particularly boys, are achieving success. This is a strength that can be built on. Beyond this, there is a clear need to ensure that processes are in place to identify students at risk of under-performance (primarily but not only in literacy) as early as possible, so they can be provided with appropriate, targeted support (eg one-to-one or small group tutoring).

10. Use information and communication technologies (ICTs) as a valuable tool.

It is well documented that boys, and especially boys who are under-achieving at school, respond favourably to the use of ICTs as a means of engaging them in learning activities. Many of the schools and clusters involved in this programme have drawn on the motivational and educational powers of ICTs. The interactive nature of many new technologies helps create learning environments where boys can learn by doing, receive immediate feedback and continually build new knowledge and enhance their level of understanding. This enables students to develop a richer and deeper understanding of core knowledge and skills and to lead their teachers in an area where they are often experts and adults are learners. ICTs that include an emphasis on application and tailoring education to

the needs of individual learners are also supportive of a shift in practice to more learner-centred approaches, which encourage the active participation of boys in the learning process, rather than the passive absorption of knowledge

The Yarra Schools Consortium Protocol for Student Learning

The schools of the Yarra Schools Consortium recognise:

- The strong relationship between quality student learning and effective teaching that is supported by rigorous evidenced based and reflective teacher action research
- Positive outcomes for students are dependant on a supportive productive and safe school environment, a curriculum that provides for all students, and structures and approaches that facilitate the success of all students
- Student learning is dependant on quality student/teacher relationships underpinned by genuine unconditional respect and concern for all members of the school community, restorative approaches to student wellbeing and clearly understood student management practices
- Students have rich, valuable and varied experiences and points of view that are respected and can be used as a basis for connected and relevant learning
- Effective learning environments are developed through the modeling of optimistic and positive language and behaviours
- Effective and supportive transition arrangements offer the students the best chance of adjustment to new learning environments
- All students should have access to a full education and be given opportunity to take advantage of all the educational opportunities available to them.
- There is a direct link between social/emotional health and learning which can be developed by explicit teaching of Habits of Mind, values and social skills
- There is a direct relationship between engaged and effective student learning and the provision of classroom learning experiences that cater for individual backgrounds, perspectives and learning needs
- Self-directed learning leads to positive and effective learning outcomes
- That the classroom is a community of learners where students learn with, through and from others
- Assessment practices are an integral part of teaching and learning and should include formative, self and summative assessments
- Links with community are important to foster authentic and relevant learning partnerships
- Quality learning leads to increased connectedness to peers, school community and the wider community

- Parents and carers are important contributors to supporting their children's learning.
- The need to develop critical, creative, caring and reflective thinking to enable students and teachers to participate in the global work environment of the 21st Century

All schools of the Consortium are committed to:

- Ongoing evidence based and data driven professional learning which is embedded in teacher practice and supports quality pedagogy and improved student learning outcomes
- Student wellbeing structures and policies that enable the constructive support of all students and their families
- Maximised learning through effective classroom structures such as beginning the class with an outline of the lesson, provision of short, sharp lessons and using a range of cooperative groupings
- The provision of uncluttered yet stimulating learning environments that mirror student learning
- The provision of explicit assessment criteria and feedback that is designed to support students' further learning and encourage them to monitor and take responsibility for their own learning
- Regular use of ICT to scaffold and engage student learning
- Improvement of student literacy outcomes through modeling explicit literacy practices, providing choice, regulating student learning and providing a range of visual and auditory stimuli.
- Acknowledgement that oral language development precedes reading and writing and underpins student literacy and therefore requires regular opportunities for active and focused listening and speaking
- Recognition that writing requires a relevant and purposeful context and develops through explicit scaffolding of writing structures and features
- The provision of a whole school approach to spelling
- Recognition that our contemporary society demands a multiple literacies approach to learning which is dynamic and includes using new technologies in a cooperative process where all teachers and students learn and master these technologies

The Yarra Schools Consortium Protocol for Student Mentoring

The schools of the Yarra Schools Consortium recognise:

- Positive outcomes for students are dependant on a supportive school environment, a curriculum that provides for all students, together with structures and approaches that facilitate success for all students
- All students should have access to a full education and be given opportunity to take advantage of all the educational opportunities available to them.
- The school is an important link with the community for all students and their families.
- Well planned and organised formal mentoring programs can provide strong individual support, advice and guidance for young people
- Mentoring relationships are seen as mutually beneficial and reciprocal, having positive outcomes for mentors as well as mentees
- Mentors need to have the capacity to enhance the life of their mentee through supporting them in their social, emotional and cognitive development
- Mentors should be at least two years older than their mentee
- Mentoring arrangements should have a particular focus and a purpose within the context of a strong personal relationship.
- Mentoring by one's own peers can have a considerable potential for influencing boys' behaviours and attitudes
- Adults who interact regularly with small groups of students can fulfil the role of mentor

All schools of the Consortium are committed to:

- Student wellbeing structures and policies that enable the constructive support of all students and their families
- The ongoing provision of appropriate and relevant student mentoring programs that meet the particular needs of cohorts and individual students
- The development of links with local community support agencies and other community groups to foster shared ownership of, and a community approach to, mentoring programs
- The creation of a Consortium data base of potential mentors and organisations that support mentoring
- The provision of ongoing training for mentors so that they can develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to become an effective mentor.

- Recognition that fathers and carers should be encouraged to develop stronger relationships with their sons.
- Ongoing professional learning for all staff on mentoring as an effective strategy for improving outcomes for individual students
- Regular evaluation and revision of mentoring programs
- Active membership of the Yarra Schools Consortium Attendance Success for Boys Professional Learning Team.

The Yarra Schools Consortium Protocol for Professional Learning

We believe that following practices support sustainable improvement in teaching and learning in schools:

- The use of workable and achievable techniques imbedded in the reality of the workplace
- The use of information and data to provide evidence of improvement and to steer direction
- Placing the learner as central to the process. Frameworks such as the PoLTs, the VELs and Habits of Mind are used to support the process but do not become the central focus of the work
- Focusing on achieving improvement rather than change
- Using an action inquiry oriented approach
- Employing a cyclical, non- linear action learning process.

We believe the following about Professional Learning Teams:

- Usually a small group of teachers who meet regularly to discuss particular challenges and improve aspects of their teaching practice. A PLT is essentially a professional learning structure. They are not administration or management teams
- The focus is on classroom pedagogy and exploring the culture, structure and relationships of the school for the purpose of improvement in teaching and learning.
- Professional Learning Teams get down to action as soon as possible. Work - based projects use an inquiry based approach and members can adopt A READY FIRE AIM approach. Meetings are focused on the work and avoid talk fests.
- Projects usually have a narrow focus and are fairly short term e.g. one term.
- The team members take collective responsibility for all the students in the Network
- The team promotes professional learning in the context of the classroom and the school and also encourages self reflection on professional practice. Teacher learning should be transferred directly into actual classrooms and teacher practice.
- The team works on the principles of genuine collaboration and cooperation and ensures personal, professional and structural support and confidentiality for all members.
- Participants need time release to attend meetings, conduct action research and genuinely reflect on their own practice.

- There needs to be a formal leader of the group to facilitate meetings and support members. However, there is also a need for all members to share leadership of the group.
- The team recognizes the need to address relationships within the group and ensure that all members feel comfortable and able to actively contribute. This involves expecting and acknowledging difference.
- The team commits to making the external demands of the system their own rather than getting bogged down with the enemy is out there mentality.
- The as well as meetings they may facilitate other joint activities including the following;
 - Visits to each others classrooms and schools
 - Peer observation
 - Lesson study
 - Examination of student work
 - Joint projects

2. The Yarra Schools Consortium as a Learning Community

Often, the less there is to justify a traditional custom, the harder it is to get rid of it.

Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

The Yarra Schools Consortium - An Active Learning Community

The nine principals of the Yarra Schools Consortium have traditionally formed an active collegiate group, meeting at least twice each month. In 2003, whilst defining their own role and possible future directions as a group, a shared vision was recognised. The group wished to further develop the links between the nine schools and in doing so, work towards the development of an enhanced “Consortium Culture”.

The group recognised that the most effective approach would be to establish some shared work or projects between the schools. In doing this, the group discerned some common aims around improving student learning outcomes, and combating rising levels of student absenteeism. As a result the School Participation Project and the Schools for Innovation and Excellence Program have been developed and implemented and have led to enhanced and newly developed relationships between the nine Consortium schools

The focus in the Consortium has been on the formation and operation of the following Consortium Learning Teams:

- Principals
- Assistant Principals
- Early Years
- Middle Years
- Success for Boys
- Wellbeing
- School Participation and Attendance
- Business Managers
- Student Transitions

Representatives on these groups are Consortium teachers and personnel who meet regularly to establish common professional learning including ideas on classroom approaches and other school initiatives as well as to share resources. The teams also provide an opportunity for enhancement of *Performance and Development Culture* initiatives through collegiate support

These learning teams have provided the stage and back drop for the development of strong relationships between the Consortium schools. These relationships can be defined as **The Nine Cs in the Yarra Schools Community**:

1. **Coalition: formation of a strategic partnership to support joint projects.**

The schools of the Yarra Schools Consortium recognise the value of a group of schools combining their complementary capacities to work strategically towards desired outcomes. Together they have been able to articulate **shared values and vision** of a community approach to improving student outcomes, and have recognised the value of implementing joint projects. As a result the School Participation Project and the Schools for Innovation and Excellence projects have been initiated with agreement on clear goals, desired outcomes and the strategies needed to achieve these goals and outcomes.

2. Coordination: managed and organised use of shared resources and experiences.

The Consortium schools led by the Principals Group have managed the employment of the School Participation Officer and the SIE educator to establish strategic direction and to oversee and coordinate all aspects of Consortium projects. This has resulted in the subsequent formation of learning teams to focus on and implement the major strategic direction of the projects. This has involved clear definition of roles and responsibilities of the learning teams including a cooperative service delivery model for the project officer and educator resources. Management strategies implemented include the establishment of a central project office and the appointment of coordinating schools to manage the project funds and to facilitate human resource functions for the employment of the personnel.

3. Commitment: assurance made by each of the member schools that they will participate in and contribute to the joint project.

The School Participation Project and the SIE Program have enjoyed high levels of ownership and commitment from the leaders and key staff of all the Consortium schools. Each school has had designated representation on all learning teams and there has been full and regular attendance at meetings. This involvement has required individual school support of staff time release when necessary. Each school has fully recognised and demonstrated ownership of the project strategic plans.

4. Communication: reporting and sharing of ideas, knowledge and learning.

Regular, well-structured and purposeful meetings form a crucial part of the scaffolding for the work of the Consortium. Priority time is given in these meetings for the **sharing of ideas, knowledge and learning** and meetings are held on a rotational basis between all the school settings. Each team prepares detailed and well-circulated agendas and minutes and there is regular email and telephone contact made between staff in all schools. Staff visits, including classroom observation, to other Consortium schools are commonplace. Pivotal to the effective communication between all groups and all personnel involved in the project is the preparation of detailed monthly reports by the learning teams. The work is also widely profiled beyond the Consortium by regular detailed input to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development as well as other community groups and agencies.

5. Cooperation: mutual assistance and teamwork between the Consortium schools.

Teamwork between the schools has been established through the cooperative use of the School Participation Officer and SIE Educator resource and the establishment of well functioning learning teams. The establishment of **shared programs** and initiatives such as student transition programs, professional learning activities, exhibitions and forums and the initiation of shared parent and student casework allow genuine teamwork to be of mutual benefit to schools. Schools have further assisted each other through the regular **sharing of facilities and resources**.

6. Collaboration: enhancement of the capacities of partner schools for mutual benefit and shared purpose.

All schools have actively involved in the planning and setting of priorities for the Consortium projects. This has resulted in agreement on shared approaches and the development of shared resources and tools. A major point of collaboration has been the development of the Consortium protocols, which articulate **shared policies and procedures**. All schools work actively together in all aspects of project decision-making.

7. Complementary capacity: recognition that the similarities and differences between the participating schools can be utilised to improve outcomes for all schools.

The distinct nature of each of the Consortium schools has been recognised and celebrated. Consortium schools have adopted the title and identity of *The Yarra Schools Consortium*. Learning teams have articulated that they accept collective responsibility for the learning outcomes of all students in all Consortium schools. There has been an acceptance at all levels that individual schools had differing capacities for improvement and there is also recognition and endorsement of some schools requiring more project support than others. Consortium schools regularly and enthusiastically support events and achievements in the other schools and recognise the responsibility and benefit of allocation of some project time to inform the wider community.

8. Critical reflection: use of an action research approach enabled by inbuilt processes and structures.

Learning teams adopt an action research and evidence based approach ensuring regular reflection, analysis of data and discussion of key learning. The learning from research from individual schools is communicated between all schools. The working groups pay special attention to the analysis of annual Consortium and individual school data to inform their work. The teams continually keep abreast of new directions and learning through the maintenance of regular professional reading and research as well as contact with similar projects and other good practice models. External evaluators and critical friends have been engaged to support Consortium projects.

9. Celebration: recognition and commemoration of collective and individual successes.

All Consortium meetings have a focus on acknowledgements and the reporting and celebration of good news. This approach is supported by regular reporting of all project initiatives to staff forums and in newsletters in each school. There is regular communication and affirmation of the recognition received by the Consortium and individual schools for the good practice adopted in the project. Publicity about the successes of the projects has also been gained through major press and television coverage as well as regular profiling of the projects to the wider community through input at professional learning forums

The schools of the Yarra Schools Consortium demonstrate how collective action around shared policy can produce significant outcomes that impact on student performance. There is clear evidence of improvement in teacher and staff professional confidence and competence, student learning outcomes, student attendance and student and parent connectedness to the schools and wider community.

Through the articulation of shared values and vision and the implementation of projects underpinned by the establishment of evidence based professional learning team

approaches, the Yarra Schools Consortium has transformed into an active and effective learning community

Adapted from Pinda,Z and Walta, C *Getting Clever with Attendance - The report of the Yarra Schools Network School Participation Project Addressing Issues of Student Absenteeism* September 2006

3. Professional Learning in The Yarra Schools Consortium

*He likes me, becuz I don't ever act as if I was above him.
Sometimes I've set right down and eat with him. But you
needn't tell that.*

Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

In 2007 the Aims of the Yarra Schools Consortium Professional Learning Program were:

- To provide ongoing teacher Professional Learning scaffolded by the Principles of Effective Professional Learning, that assists in the development of curriculum programs that incorporate the Principles of Learning and Teaching and support the VELs, and lead to improved learning outcomes for students.
- To establish Consortium Professional Learning Teams to engage teachers in action research based which is focused on their own classroom practice, evidence based and data driven and which leads to improved pedagogy and practice

Strategies

- Establishment and implementation of three new Teacher Professional Learning Teams comprising membership from Consortium schools:
 - Early Years
 - Student Wellbeing
 - Success for Boys
- Consolidation of the work of the Middle Years Professional Learning Team
- Involvement of Consortium teachers in evidence based and data driven action which supports critical reflection and results in improvement to teaching practice and student learning outcomes
- Implementation of the DEST Success for Boys Professional Learning Program

Resources

- Time release and CRT support for PLT meetings and activities enabled by individual schools
- Support and expertise of external consultants and personnel:
 - Pamela Burton (Literacy and Success for Boys)
 - Neville Johnson (Effective Professional Learning Teams)
 - Jo Lange (Effective student management)
 - Lynne Gunning NMR (Language Support and Speaking and Listening)
 - Peter Langdon (Developmental Stages and their impact on Student learning)
 - Paul Bowman NMR (Student Wellbeing Initiatives)
 - Keith Woodward (General support)
 - Christina Walta RMIT (critical friend)
- Shared professional learning sessions between schools
- Participation in the DEST Success for Boys Program and the associated funding, resources and central support
- Participation in the NMR DigiLearn Professional Learning Program
- Shared resources and venues for PLT activities
- Links with Chloe D'Huillier (SFYS) for shared ownership and support through additional funding for programs
- Individual school participation in the Soundhouse Claymation techniques and *Lights Camera Action* Programs
- The work of Deb Sukarna on *Snapshot Writing* techniques
- DEECD online Student Learning resources

- Professional Learning Leader participation in the AGQTP Leading Professional Learning program

Facilitating and Inhibiting Factors

Facilitating:

- Allocation of time and structural support for Professional Learning Teams to meet regularly
- Regular time tabled meetings
- Regular written communication and reports between PLTs ,Management Group and the staff in all schools
- High levels of support from all Principals
- Articulated Consortium shared vision and values
- Positive attitudes towards sharing and working collaboratively from all teachers especially PLT members
- An established history of the Consortium schools working collaboratively on shared projects
- Teacher willingness to conduct action research, participate in coaching/ mentoring sessions and to generally reflect on their own practice
- Funding to enable consultants and critical friend to work with teams of teachers
- Commitment of teachers to participate in each professional learning session.
- Sharing of units of work
- Development of curriculum planning, action research planning and project documentation templates
- Knowledge of and ability to access a range of external support personnel and resources
- Close proximity of Consortium schools
- Flexible and cooperative service delivery model for Professional Learning Leader

Inhibiting:

- Not all schools have the same capacity to participate in the program and to implement school improvement strategies
- Limited ICT structure in schools
- Not all schools involved in the Success for Boys Program
- SLR and Consortium data not available until after the completion of the school year and the SIE program
- Finding suitable timeslots for shared professional learning sessions involving all teachers

Data Collection Activities

- Teacher Component Mapping using PoLT
- Auditing teaching practices
- Number of teachers participating in action research
- Number of teachers participating in PLTs. And their commitment to activities
- Number of curriculum units developed using VELs
- Percentage of teachers participating in Consortium PD and finding it useful/ highly useful
- Number of teachers using inquiry unit planning model
- Student Engagement/ Satisfaction Survey
- Degree of implementation of learning from teacher action research

- Use of ICT in teaching practice.
- Attendance data
- AIM data
- Torch and other literacy testing
- Photo analysis
- Peer observations
- Teacher devised pre and post test and surveys

Evidence of Success

Quantitative Data:

- Teachers are implementing a variety of teaching practices to engage students actively in their learning.
- Teacher undertaking expanded professional reading
- Teachers demonstrating improved understanding of pedagogy, resources and technologies to support student learning
- Units of work are collaboratively planned, written and implemented.
- High level of student engagement in authentic learning experiences within the local community.
- Teacher comments regarding action research very positive and teachers reporting positive impacts on student learning
- Teachers articulating a decrease in feelings of isolation.
- All teachers have been willing to fully document and present their action research

Quantitative Data:

- 35 teachers participated in the professional learning teams and conducted individual evidence based and data driven action research projects
- There has been 90% attendance at PLT meetings
- All relevant Consortium teaching and SSO staff attended the whole Consortium PD sessions with Pamela Burton attending Cluster PD day and finding it highly useful.
- Approximately 80 teachers have participated in mentoring/coaching sessions with the SIE Educator and external consultant Pamela Burton. All of these teachers completed a survey reflecting on their own classroom practice
- The full impact of the PLT approach will not be able to be measured until the release of SLR and Consortium data in 2008
- AIM data for Yr 5 has showed steady improvement in reading and number. By Year 7 students are performing well above the state mean in both reading and number
- Student attendance data has continued to significantly improve across all levels in the Consortium with the average absence per student decreasing from 13.8 days to 12.5 days between 2005 and 2006. Absence rates have been maintained below the state mean across all levels
- .Improved student attitudes to school data

Outcomes

Intended Outcomes:

- Teachers participated in auditing teaching practice and critically reflected on effective pedagogy

- Teachers skilled in the use of action research to critically reflect on their own practice in order to improve teaching and student learning outcomes
- An expanded repertoire of pedagogy and teaching practice
- Increased use of ICT within classroom teaching programs
- Deeper understanding of VELs
- Greater connectedness between schools
- Improved student engagement and attendance
- Reduction in teacher isolation
- The development of a discernible Consortium Culture which consolidates the Consortium as a Learning Community and reinforces the practice of life Long learning with both teachers and students

Unintended Outcomes:

- The development of Consortium protocols on Student Learning which incorporate the PoLTS and the Principles of Effective Professional Learning
- Links from student learning focused Action Research to Performance and Development Culture.
- Shared professional learning through the PLTs has had greater value and impact than external and outsourced professional learning activities
- Increased teacher confidence leading to an increase in the number of teachers seeking new education career opportunities
- Some of the external consultants have formed a deeper association with the ongoing work of the Consortium
- The attraction of some media attention to the work of the Consortium

Teacher Professional learning Activities

Objectives

- To implement the Principles of Effective Professional Learning
- To further implement the VELs
- To use the PoLTS to scaffold teacher professional learning
- To develop an accurate profile of each student in order to give accurate assessments using the progression points
- To develop a Performance and Development Culture in each school and in the Consortium
- To use the Principles of Boys' Education to scaffold student learning and promote success for all students

Nature of Activities

- Regular Consortium Professional Learning Team meetings and professional discussions
- PLT members individual action research projects
- Shared and individual professional reading
- Classroom walks and observations
- Coaching and mentoring sessions with SIE Educator and external consultant Pamela Burton

- Whole Consortium professional learning sessions with Lynne Gunning(NMR)
 - Building teacher capacity in Language Support
 - Assessing Speaking and listening
 - Whole Consortium professional learning sessions with Pamela Burton and SIE educator *Boys and Literacy and Student mentoring*
 - The multiliteracies
 - The use if ICT
 - Classroom groupings
 - Framing and scaffolding learning
 - Peer and adult mentoring to support student learning
 - Whole Consortium professional learning session with Jo Lange *Beyond Telling Off*
 - Creating a safe and supportive learning environment
 - Catering for the individual learning needs of all students
 - Goal setting and learning plans
 - Restorative approaches to classroom management
 - Middle Years PLT participation in the NMR DigiLearn professional learning program
- Consortium Expo to be held and resource *Getting Clever with Student Learning* developed documenting Consortium good practice to share both within and beyond the Consortium

Evidence of Improvement in Teacher Practice

- Staff understanding of VELs has significantly improved and is evidenced by the number of units that are being written which include the integration of the three Strands of VELs
- Development of inquiry based learning units within schools.
- Consolidation of integrated curriculum approaches in middle years
- A variety of assessment tools being utilised including rubrics and student self assessment
- Teachers expressing increased confidence and optimism in focus and survey evidence gathering
- Teachers using a wide range of evidence as a basis for their research including photos, teacher and student reflective journals and PoLT component mapping
- Teachers using a variety of tools to measure improvement in student learning
- Teachers demonstrating an expanded repertoire in classroom practice
- Teachers willing and able to discuss and present their classroom practice
- Teachers participating in classroom visits and observations
- Teachers more open and responsive to mentoring and coaching and are striving to become more reflective in their practice

Improved Student Learning Outcomes

- Increased number of students reaching bench marks
- Student enthusiasm and engagement levels high as evidenced by improvements in student and parent opinion surveys and other student and parent feedback
- Student assessments more accurate and supported by documented evidence
- Schools introduce student goal setting as part of reporting process
- Student self assessments included in assessment
- Increased use of ICT
- Students more confident in presenting their work
- Increased rates of work completion

4. Focus on Literacy and Numeracy

In order to make a man or a boy covet a thing, it is only necessary to make the thing difficult to obtain.

MARK TWAIN, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*



Early Years Oral Language Project at Abbotsford Primary School

Abstract

Strategies for teaching and learning oral language with ESL students as well as tools for measurement of student outcomes

Background

The class at the centre of this project was a multi level grade of prep / one / two students predominantly of E.S.L. background. Vietnamese was the main first language.

The situation which prompted the need for ACTION was the fact that most of the prep students were presenting with little or no English despite the fact that most had been to kindergarten.

The literacy program needed to be altered to address this challenge. If a student's reciprocal and expressive language is so low, learning in all curriculum areas will be at a minimum.

Students learning English as a second language need targeted English language teaching and extra time, support and exposure to English before they can attain the learning outcomes described in English VELs.

We needed to provide students with the communicative language to better function in the classroom and the playground and therefore maximise their understanding of English.

Had we not responded to this challenge and retained the current Literacy Program the students' acquisition of English may have been delayed.

How did the project operate?

Assessment

The students' English language abilities were assessed using the following materials and methods:

- School Entry Assessment Kit
- Auditory Processing Test (Children's Hospital)
- Observations of students in the classroom and playground (recorded on checklists)

The informal assessment highlighted the fact that these students were really struggling with oral expression. They were unable to draw pictures as a response to a task and were certainly unable to dictate a sentence or story for the teacher to write. Some could not even answer personal questions about family, siblings, favourite things to do, etc.

The tests included in the S.E.A. revealed that these students had some recognition of letter names but none of letter sounds; they had no sight recognition of high frequency words and were unable to complete the "Concepts about Print" activity.

The Auditory Processing Test revealed scores ranging between 15 to 0 out of a possible 28, with most at around 6 -7. This test states that low sentence scores are to be expected with E.S.L. students.

Structure of the Program and Personnel

The targeted group of 9 students attended three, one hour sessions with the E.S.L. teacher in a separate classroom where movement and noise was not going to interfere with other classes.

On the other two days, these sessions were followed up in the regular classroom with the class teacher. Sessions focused more on pre-reading skills such as Big Books, puzzles and games similar to Learning Centre tasks.

Students were also involved in the Perceptual Motor Program where they participated in a half hour session of physical activity each week. This was particularly useful as the program incorporates important concept words used in everyday English.

Types of Activities

Reading and writing is strongly linked to the development of learning to speak and understand English, therefore the focus of the program was oral language. Activities were high interest and always linked to movement and music. They included:

- Greetings and Questions to music
- Action songs eg. The Ants Go Marching, Hokey Pokey
- Big Books with repetitive text and offer opportunity for drama ie. We're going on a Bear Hunt and Five Little Monkeys
- Concepts eg. playing "Hidey", relays
- Drama games which promoted the use of different voices and sounds
- Finger plays
- Puppet theatre
- Dancing eg. Heel toe Polka, Time Warp, Hot Hot Hot & YMCA
- Listening games such as Simon Says, Dr. Knickerbocker
- Rhyme and Nonsense Rhyme eg. from Unreal Banana Peel
- Dress-ups
- Picture Chat
- Picture Dictation
- Cubes games (sentence starters, verbs and emotion words)

Materials and Resources

Most of the materials used to operate the oral language program were currently in the school or were relatively inexpensive to purchase.

- A range of activities and games were purchased from Learning Resources (www.learningresources.com)
- These included: Location Bingo, Game Board Book, Early Actions, Verb Cubes, motions Cubes and Sentence Starters Cubes.
- Departmental Resources included: Language Games for E.S.L. students, The E.S.L. Companion and the English VELS document.
- Western Australian First Steps – Speaking and Listening Resource Book

- Various CDs and tapes of familiar songs
- Collingwood English Language School Assessment Disc
- Big Books – Various titles

Benefit for individual students and school

We believe this project worked well for a number of reasons.

The most obvious result of the oral language program was the confidence with which the students approached oral language activities and their preparedness to participate fully.

Students were becoming more vocal with their responses in class, they using words rather than pointing to objects and they were speaking in shorter, clearer sentences during discussion time.

Students enjoyed the songs and rhymes so much that they could be heard singing them in the playground at lunch and recess time.

Students became better able to describe their drawings and dictated sentences and short stories.

Students' knowledge of letter names and letter sounds increased but this could be attributed to general development over time. Nonetheless, they were now beginning to write independently by attempting to sound out letters and ask for help with particular words.

Unfortunately we were unable to assess the students using the same tests at mid year as this was not generally recommended, however they were assessed against the E.S.L. A1 indicators. Only one student was well behind the desired achievement level.

We believe the project has been worthwhile also because it has highlighted a need for a whole school assessment tool for speaking and listening.

Speaking and Listening has always been a priority at Abbotsford Primary School and this project has confirmed its importance. It needs to be an equal partner in the Literacy Program, especially in the early years of school. It may also be of interest to investigate a play – based program to explore a less formalised approach to language acquisition.

We would like to acknowledge Zita Pinda, Anna Wood and the other members of the Early Years Team for their support, the staff at the Collingwood English Language School and Lynne Gunning for their expertise.

Dina Kambardis
Marg O'Farrell
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Early Years Oral Language Project at Richmond West Primary School

Abstract

My focus was on improving outcomes particularly in Listening and Speaking by developing an Oral Language Program for my P/1/2 classroom. My aim was to provide stimulating, focused opportunities for students to engage in small group activities. Although there were numerous opportunities for students to be involved in oral language activities during the normal school day, my intention was

- to commit to regular oral language sessions
- to structure activities providing organized, casual, concrete and literate tasks
- to integrate activities, connecting them to the classroom program/units of work where possible
- to provide activities along the language continuum providing for the needs of a range of students
- to provide more role models,
- to create small group sizes that would allow greater participation
- to provide opportunities to observe children's skills more closely
- to build student confidence by facilitating small group activities
- to relate activities to VELs and CSF ESL Companion Outcomes
- to include activities that would interest, motivate and engage all students (including the needs of boys) and had a 'more hands' on component

Background to the Project

My project initially looked at developing an oral language check list for students entering school at the Prep Level. However in pursuing this goal the broad range of language requirements for my current students became more evident. My class composition included several new arrival students as well as the majority of others coming from non English speaking backgrounds. In addition I needed to consider students in the class who had receptive and expressive language difficulties (3 students)

(In a P/1/2 class of 21, student backgrounds include Samoan, Somali, Indonesian Thai, Turkish, Aboriginal, Mauritian, Egyptian, Chinese, Naruan and one student from an English speaking background)

Because a greater number of students in the class arrived at school with no or little English students needed more opportunities for oral language development.

How did the Project Operate?

- The oral language sessions were timetabled for once a week (twice where possible)
- Students were organized into 4 groups for each session.
- The session was structured as a WHOLE PART WHOLE format
- The sessions began with a rhyme, poem, picture chat, focus skill, circle time prompts eg paying compliments, reflecting on feelings and finished with a reflection on learning.
- Students then participated in two carefully chosen activities eg building, constructing, sand play, play corner, puppets, origami, games (snakes and ladders, rhyming games, playdough/clay work, pin the tail on the donkey)
- Students has some choice about activities that were to be included

- Students from 5 / 6 were invited initially to show 'reader's theatre' skills and continued on throughout the year to help group work
- A teacher aide supported the program once a week, working with a specific group
- "Oral Language Stars" were awarded as the program progressed. The teacher and 5 / 6 students chose one student each for this award but had to provide specific information about the behaviours that had been demonstrated.

What have been the benefits of the Project?

- The first obvious benefit is the fact that students' look forward to oral language sessions. Observation and an evaluation during the program confirmed this.
- Observation clearly indicates student engagement in activities partly because of their hands on nature and partly because of small group sizes.
- The senior school students also enjoy the opportunities to be role models and help the students with their activities. The younger students enjoy their contributions too. This also builds connectedness between the older and younger students across the school
- Grade 5 / 6 students prepared some Reader's Theatre using simple rhymes to demonstrate to the P-2students. Not only did this task provide them with an authentic purpose but the younger students also gave them feedback on these performances.
- The program includes the pragmatics of language as students learn the language of taking turns and paying compliments during games.
Small group activities allow equipment to be used effectively
- These sessions provide a broad range of activities for the students to experience
- By introducing "Oral Language Stars" each session, students strive to do their best.
- Opportunities to expand vocabulary and develop specific skills in listening and speaking

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Early Years Research Project at Collingwood English Language School

Targeting specific language/ literacy needs of our New Arrivals to better prepare them for mainstream school

Brief outline of project

I attended my first Early Years meeting in Term 3. I met the other teachers in the network and listened attentively to find out more about the research projects they had undertaken.

I had some ideas and then discussed them with my Early Years colleague at CELs.

The dialogue and discussion jumped from one idea to another. Such as: Our setting is so different to mainstream schools. Each term children exit and enter the program. Usually age equivalent students spend only 2 terms and students with interrupted or no schooling can spend up to 4 terms. So the students in our 3 primary classes language needs vary greatly, as do their social and emotional needs and time in the Language School.

At first we thought we would work on improving our teaching of writing, however the project evolved after discussing the varying needs of our students for our literacy week activities ie low literacy/no schooling and exiting students.

As part of our literacy week activities we decided to group our students into five multi-aged groups across the whole base program, and involve two additional teachers. All teachers concerned were very positive with the groupings and the language activities that the Early Years teachers had organised. Everyone wanted to continue this initiative. So that is how our real project started.

We have tried to run the literacy groups twice a week but some weeks we only managed one session.

Our five groups are:

1. Pronunciation through chants /rhymes and speech activities
2. Building skills for Comprehension for older exiting students
3. Building knowledge of letters/sounds through games and activities
4. Building knowledge of sentence structures- writing skills
5. Building confidence and reading strategies

Relationship between project and school strategic plan

Our student learning goal is 'to improve the learning outcomes for all students, with a particular focus on the age-equivalent cohort'. This initiative will well support this goal by improving teaching skills and students' learning outcomes through targeted intervention.

The challenge

The teachers need support with materials as well as additional professional development (PD). The Early Years funding is supporting this program as well as the Literacy Support funding (which is only available until the end of the year).

What do you hope to achieve?

- To improve learning outcomes for all students.
- To be able to implement an intervention program so we can better prepare students for mainstream.
- To improve teachers' specific skills and strategies for language learning.
- To increase teachers' capacity when teaching students who:
 - may have no schooling/or severe interrupted schooling and enter a middle or upper primary class`
 - a Language disorder
- To improve teacher's job satisfaction

Measures – how will you determine the success of the project?

By monitoring individual's progress

By improved student outcomes on the ESL CSF scales

By teachers' feedback

Long Term Goals

1. Organising some PD with facilitators such as Lynne Gunning, Rose David, Julie Shepherd and a Speech Pathologist.
2. Funding some teacher time for in-house mentoring and/or attending some outside PD.
3. Maintain the time for two teachers to meet and organise materials/resources and groupings as well as assess student's learning.

Project Description

Literacy Groups are:

1. Pronunciation through chants/rhymes and speech activities
2. Building skills for Comprehension for older exiting students
3. Building knowledge of letters/sounds through games and activities
4. Building knowledge of sentence structures- writing skills
5. Building confidence and reading strategies

We started our Literacy project in Week 2 Term 4 2007.

So far we have had two sessions. We organized the groupings last term to help us to work out specific student language needs and possible groupings. The addition of two teachers has enabled the student groupings to be about 8 students in each. However the criteria for grouping is governed by needs, not numbers, thus some groups are larger than others. More experienced teachers have been asked to take the more challenging groupings- Groups 4 & 5. The teachers have met at the end of the day to discuss sessions, groupings, resources and improvements.

We are using our early years funding to get this program up and running.

So far we assisted a graduate teacher in organizing her teaching group by giving her an outline of what to teach and as well as some mentoring.

Next Steps for our Project

We would like to organize some PD with a speech pathologist to improve our teaching skills and better help children with pronunciation difficulties.

- To increase our sessions to twice a week, which may mean we have to overcome some problems with having enough teaching staff.
- To assist with planning ideas and strategies for all teachers.
- To release teachers for planning and mentoring.
- To review our program at the end of Term 4 with directions for Term 1 2008

The implementation timeline

- Literacy Groups Discussed and Organised	Week 70 Term 3
- Early Years Teacher and Curriculum Co-ordinator organise support material. - Assessment of new students to CELS and placed in Literacy groups.	Week 1 Term 4

- Start Program - Discuss effectiveness and short comings	Term 4
- Early Years Teacher and Curriculum Co-ordinator to meet weekly to develop materials	Every Week
- Organise time release for staff PD or mentoring	Term 4 Week 6
- Evaluation and review	End of Term 4 2007 and at the end of Term 2, 2008 and end of term 4 2008

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Middle Years Literacy at Richmond West Primary School

Abstract

Our purpose was to investigate how we could improve student outcomes in literacy (especially in writing, with low achieving boys). To do this we immersed students in a range of real life literacy experiences and used mentors to engage students in literacy activities and enhance their perceptions of themselves as writers. . As stated in DEECD, 2007, "Student motivation and engagement, and self-efficacy are important for improved literacy outcomes." P19.

Students also worked in production teams to create an animation suitable for a Prep to two audience. In doing this we hoped to develop positive relationships and collaboration among students and 'experts' in a learning community.

We also used the 'snapshot strategy' (Debbie Sukarna) to increase student engagement in writing as boys feel more comfortable and do better, when asked to provide short answers and short pieces of writing as "Speed counts in important ways within the new literacies....." (DEECD, 2007, P10)

Background to the Project

In contrast to previous years, in 2007 two thirds of our year 5/6 students are boys. This has created a different dynamic within the area and so it was important for us to re-examine our usual practices in order to better cater for the variety of needs exhibited by this cohort. Many of the students showed a lack of interest in literacy activities and our challenge was to engage them more fully in this area of the curriculum.

If this need wasn't addressed we feared students could become disengaged with their schooling and develop antisocial and apathetic behaviour. It could also mean they would enter secondary schooling unable to cope with the increased literacy demands required for successful and fulfilling learning to take place.

It is hoped through the implementation of this program all students will feel more positive about their literacy achievements. This includes a number of new arrivals who are desperate to be accepted by their peers and complete similar work but at the same time struggling with their literacy.

We hope to increase student confidence, competence and self esteem and engage them in a range of literacy activities that they see as relevant, exciting and above all achievable.

In doing this we hope the increased engagement will result in positive behaviour and increased learning outcomes for the whole group.

How did the Project Operate?

The teachers set out to expose students to a variety of literacy activities with a focus on males who engage in and excel at different areas of literacy. These males were involved across a range of occupations and were chosen because they appealed to interests traditionally engaged in by boys such as sport, ICT and music. All had a focus on providing direct and inclusive experiences. We wanted these experiences to develop real world connections using interesting and varied tasks and to encourage positive relationships and collaboration so students had many opportunities to gain positive feedback (DEECD, 2007)

These included:

Authors; Michael Wagner, Leigh Hobbs, Terry Denton, Phillip Ardagh,
Illustrators; Andy Griffiths, Heath Mc Kenzie, Tony Bones
Animators; Graeme Base, John
Puppeteers; John
Motivational speakers; Mike Spears
Actors; The Bamboo Flute live performance at the Arts Centre, Leaping Loonies.
Athletes: Peter Romaniw, students of Kangan TAFE, presenters at several Sports clinics
(badminton, football, squash, hockey, lawn bowling, basketball
Musicians; Musica Viva, Ogham Soup

Students also had the opportunity to interact with and be mentored by two significant male role models, Terry Griffin, the performing arts teacher at our school and Joseph Ramsey a male intern who was placed in the school during term 3.

What have been the benefits of the project?

When considering the success or otherwise of our project we have kept in mind

“...the multidimensional nature of literacy, no single tool or type of tool...can provide all necessary information. No decisions about an individual’s education should be made on the basis of test scores alone; there is a need for multiple sources of evidence” (American Educational Research association, 2000 as cited in DEECD, 2007)

Much of our assessment has been based on the collection of work samples, anecdotal notes and observations of student engagement in literacy tasks. But most importantly it is also based on the student’s own reflections and evaluation of their tasks, both oral and written and the increased appreciation, pride and enthusiasm they display towards their work and the work of others.

Individual students

- Use personal experiences as a *launching pad* for literacy activities (Writer’s Seeds).
- Brought students closer to family (through biography interviews and increased interactions)
- Increased relevance and connectedness of school curriculum content to student’s lives.
- Increased self esteem
- Increased engagement in literacy activities
- More active exploration of texts through research, the use of ICT and performance.
- Improvement in quality of writing
- Use of Writer’s Tools such as idioms, similes, metaphors, synonyms,
- Expanded vocabulary
- Improved literacy outcomes (AIM)
- Fewer absences from school
- Fewer behaviour incidents

School

- Increased awareness of the need to address the issue of boys’ literacy.
- Extra support for students through the use of partner work, teams and support personnel.
- The effective embedding of positive literacy strategies within classrooms, to meet the particular needs of individual students.
- A renewed focus on policies and practices within the school which have an impact on student literacy.

- Improved literacy outcomes (AIM)
- Fewer absences from school
- Fewer behaviour/disciplinary incidents

Wider Community

- Competency in literacy has enabled students to develop an increased interest and engagement in the wider community.
- Students have been able to see how their learning at school links directly to the wider community

Resources

Digilearn

Snapshot approach to Writing

Monkey Jam (animation program)

A range of excursions, sports clinics and visiting performers

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The Great 8 – The Raviv Method of Learning to Learn Richmond Primary School

The Great 8 – The Raviv Method of learning to learn

After Sue's return from the UK, children with learning difficulties were identified and two children from Richmond Primary School, and an ex-student and a colleague's child were selected to participate in the project.

The Raviv Method has developed after dramatic discoveries were made in the cognitive sciences. Various leading academics researched brain function during learning and reading.

Using these findings alongside Professor Gardner's understandings of multiple intelligences and how these develop sequentially through early human development, Nili Raviv from Israel developed the Raviv Method for Developing and Correcting Learning Abilities.

She found that corrections can be made to the brain because of its plasticity. So she developed exercises, breathing and skills training to synchronise brainwaves and coordinate and create contacts between different parts of the brain.

Using these techniques Sue's project was to create new neurological connections between the neuron nerve cells in her four students.

Background

The four students selected had various difficulties. Student A, an eight year old boy had dyspraxia that affects the messages going from brain to muscles. Speech and fine and gross-motor movements were impaired. Also learning, particularly reading and writing was delayed. Organisation and time management were also an issue. Student B, a 12 year old boy was diagnosed with dyslexia. This student struggled with reading, writing and mathematical concepts. He also had organisational and time management concerns.

Student C, a 13 year old boy, has various learning difficulties with possibly undiagnosed ADD. He had severe organisational and self-esteem difficulties. Student D, a 12 year old boy had dysgraphia problems and mathematical difficulties. His reading level corresponded to his year level but his writing and spelling were behind for his age. These four students had low self-esteem, low achievement in various areas and were not reaching their full potential.

To assist these students to reach their potential the Raviv Method was employed. Each student had an hour session with Sue Wilson and practised at home for 20-30 minutes each day. It has been well researched that children with learning difficulties often grow disaffected with society and end up in trouble with the law, disengaged from the community, unable to communicate and living on the fringes of the community. To avoid this with these four students, to help them reach their potential and become productive, engaged members of the community the project was deemed essential.

The Project

A small room was chosen and equipped with witches hats, a TV/DVD, CD player, DVDs, CDs, stationery, balls, balloons, tables and chairs.

Allocating time proved difficult with Sue having to use two hours of her APT and two hours after school.

All four students were allocated an hour each week with a one-on-one session with Sue. During these sessions the students participated in various exercises and breathing regimes

Each student before commencing the program must be able to cross the mid-line. An exercise of cross-marching was undertaken with each student.

The 8 walk(a walk in the figure of eight while focussed on a point at the midway) was then implemented and the students were expected in addition to the session with Sue to undertake home practice for up to 20 minutes a day. Breathing exercises were introduced to activate the brainwaves, relax and increase energy levels. Games were played to increase attention, concentration, controlling thoughts and impulses. Music was used to produce different moods, create rhythm and controlled movements and pace. To correct reading skills, establish two-dimensional perceptions and create an increase in the use of the left side of the brain a 2D exercise was carried out each week using different letter symbols. To establish direction, sequence and phonological perception needed for reading exercises were performed to increase the understanding of symbols/letters and spelling. This exercise created pathways to improve photographic memory. Sequential thinking, logical and mathematical skills were included in the program as was graphic and hand-eye coordination exercises.

Student A

Student A was a male, aged 8 diagnosed with dyspraxia. This condition affected speech, fine motor and gross motor movements. In addition this student was struggling with reading and writing. He also presented with attention difficulties. His mathematical skills were above expected level.

Initially Student A had difficulties crossing his mid-line and completing the 8 walk. He gradually improved in his coordination and balance to complete 20 minutes of the walk.

Following practise at the 8 walk, writing pattern practise and ball games his hand-eye coordination and handwriting skills have improved. Teachers, speech pathologist, aides and his mother have noticed an improvement in his speech. Behavioural issues arose during the program and it was decided to give him a break. He has since recommenced the program. A reading assessment is to be carried out by class teacher. Reports from his class teacher have been excellent and he feels that participation in the program has improved Student A's motor skills, reading and writing ability.

Student B

Student B was a male, 12 years old and repeating Grade 6. He struggles with dyslexia. This student's dyslexia affected reading, writing and numeracy progress. His self-esteem was low and he had difficulty maintaining social relationships.

Student B commenced the program in February 2007. He initially had difficulty crossing his mid-line but repeated efforts enabled him to cross-pattern effectively allowing him to move on to the primary part of the program.

Student B practised the eight- path walk at home each day and attended a session with Sue Wilson. During these sessions he practised his breathing exercises, making sure each breath was done in the correct direction with the stomach distending when breathing in and deflating when breathing out. He participated in exercises to assist him in working in 2D. Many dyslexics have difficulty 'seeing' 2D and operate in 3D mode. This slows and impedes reading progress. Student B practised counting, skip counting forwards and backwards, ball skills, sequencing games, recall games, word games and writing patterns. Writing patterns help the brain to assist hand eye coordination in preparation for formal writing.

These exercises assisted student B to progress in numeracy, reading and writing. He was pleased that the speed at which he was able to do his work improved. In fact this was the first noticeable change in all students- speed of cognition. Student B went on to present a 45 minute power point presentation to the class on his trip overseas. A feat he would have struggled to do previously. Reading intervention is continuing and noticeable improvements are happening. Further reading testing is to take place.

Student C

Student C was a 13 year old at secondary school. He had multiple difficulties- dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia and ADD. He had initial difficulties cross-patterning but after practise and persistence he managed to cross his mid-line and could then commence the program. Student C had extremely low self-esteem, was being bullied at school and presented in a depressed state. This impacted on his levels of practice in the early stages and consequently improvement was slow. Once he started practising his eight-path and breathing consistently his concentration improved and his speed of working increased. Student C initially had difficulties separating letters in sequencing such as spelling words in order from the board. He asked if they could be written alternately in lower and upper case so he could differentiate them. A compromise was reached as the spacing increased between each letter. Ten weeks later he was able to 'spell' up to 8 letter words by practising first and then with eyes averted and was able to 'see' words with conventional spacing.

Student C, after about 20 weeks in the program, achieved a very good score on his maths results. This boosted his self-esteem and his confidence in the program.

Student C has been on the program for 30 weeks and improvements in cognition, concentration, sequencing, spelling, maths skills, motor skills and reading ability have been noticeable. He is currently having spelling tuition and is finding learning to spell 'easy'! Student C will finish the program in December 2007 and further tutoring will boost his achievements as his brain is now ready to learn using the new pathways created by the program.

Student D

Student D was a student at a local secondary school and an ex-student from Richmond Primary School. His family were concerned about his progress, particularly his maths, writing and reading. He was earlier diagnosed as having mild dyslexia. Student C was keen to participate in the program and after initial difficulties crossing his mid-line he performed the eight-path well. His motor skills were good but he had difficulty with writing. The program has a series of writing patterns to help students who have dysgraphia and associated problems. Student commenced on these. His posture and hand position were corrected as he held the pencil tightly using more energy than was needed. This program continued over the twenty-four weeks Student D was in the

program. He noted his writing speed increased, his hand was less sore and his writing became more legible. This led to more output and better results.

Student D was also a reluctant reader but after fifteen weeks in the program began to read novels, ask for particular novels from the school library and read novels of immense length.

Student D also had trouble remembering number facts, particularly his tables. Exercises practised during the program improved his recall and sequencing improved.

Student D became depressed during the time participating in the program. He was disillusioned with school and resented the fact he got little or no feedback about his progress. He lost respect for his teachers and rebelled against going to school. His parents sought help from the school with little success. His parents talked about moving him to another school and all this had an unsettling affect on Student D. The outcome was to keep him at school and monitor his progress closely with his class teacher. Because of little feedback from his school it was difficult to assess the effect the program had had on his progress.

Student D's feedback was that his output speed had increased, his maths had improved, his writing was more legible and he was reading more. His parents were pleased with the outcomes and it was suggested to them that further tutoring would improve progress as new pathways in the brain were now formed.

Summary

The program was devised to develop and correct learning and attention difficulties. Recent develops in research in the cognitive sciences are improving the understanding of the development, structure and functioning of the brain. The Raviv program helps to create specific neural structures require for the learning process, provide strategies for controlling brain activity, to develop two-dimensional perception and to improve memory. Each student attend the program for 16 to 24 weeks, although students with attention difficulties will require longer.

The four students who attended the program participated in activities, breathing techniques and skill development.

Each student presented with different difficulties and various degrees of difficulties. Sue Wilson found that although the basic program remained the same for each student, each student required a different focus. The outcomes from the program relied on each student practising each day. Sue found that students with attention difficulties took longer to settle into the routine of practise and to be able to walk the eight path for 20 minutes each day. This delayed improvements in behaviour and learning. The program for these children will need to be extended.

Overall, Sue Wilson found that the program improved the student's learning outcomes. She found that each student had made progress with the speed of output, writing formation, maths skills and motor skills. Self-esteem, confidence and social skills also improved. In the case of Student A speech production improved. One area of concern was no visible improvements in spelling ability, however, Student C is currently having spelling tuition and is finding learning to spell far easier than before. This may indicate that the program, having put pathways in place, may need to be followed up by extra tuition. This is the case for maths skills and may follow for spelling and phonological skills.

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Kewley, Geoffrey, *ADHD Recognition, reality and resolution*

Neanon, Chris, *How to identify and support children with dyslexia*

Clayton, Pauline, *How to develop numeracy in children with dyslexia*

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A Middle Years Maths Project at Collingwood English Language School

- To update and refine our Primary Maths Curriculum in accordance with VELS
- To improve teaching and learning outcomes

Background to the project

In 2003 there was a major focus on Maths in order to lift the profile of Numeracy in the Primary Sector. Initially we completed an audit of the Maths Curriculum in light of CSF 11. We then developed and trialled an initial assessment, which was subsequently reviewed. We developed a summary of the Number Overview as well as Student Checklists detailing individual progress. We organised a PD session on Maths strategies and games. Following this, the staff had many opportunities to make and explore further resources. Commercially-produced resources were purchased, including teacher texts, student workbooks and Maths charts for all primary classes. The storage of these resources was completely updated and reorganised to provide easier access.

The existing situation

Undertaking the project was important because we needed to update our Curriculum in light of VELS and also we needed to inservice /induct quite a few new staff on existing Maths Curriculum/resources and strategies. (50% of the staff are new to the CELS program since 2004.)

It was also very important for our teachers to keep abreast of mainstream initiatives ie DEECD requirements.

Also feedback from our Transition surveys highlighted the need to focus on further equipping students with better skills in problem solving and understanding written problems and the processes involved in these before exiting the program.

How did the project operate?

The Project Leaders:

- Developed and implemented A Maths Questionnaire(Survey) for all Primary Staff (See attachment 1)
- Analysed the Maths Survey feedback/results and devised/planned ways of addressing the needs of our students and teachers.
- Organised and co-ordinated some working groups (Learning Action Teams) to address survey outcomes.
- Organised practical PD sessions for sharing strategies and making resources.
- Encouraged staff to attend PD
- Purchased Maths resources that incorporated VELS and purchased computer software for outpost use

Sessions and Professional Learning organised for Staff.

We developed and trialled a Maths Planner for the term with a particular focus on group work. In sector meetings we developed individual student goals based on the student's initial Maths Assessment. This led onto teachers sharing their Maths Goals and planning documents, some of which were placed on our intranet.

Initially, the more experienced staff at CELS presented some very practical sharing sessions based on strategies learnt from PD in 2004. (Some teachers had attended sessions in 2004 led by Charles Lovitt, Barbara Keld and George Booker.) These sessions took place at sector meetings and on Outpost Day.

Also at Sector and Outpost Days staff were shown and given the opportunity to investigate relevant Maths Websites. (See attachment 2)

Gillian was involved in planning and organising a Combined Language School Maths PD in Term3 for Graduate and new teachers of New Arrivals. (See attachment 3) This involved mentoring the staff attending, as they were required to present a Maths strategy that had worked well for them. For practise, the above group of teachers presented their strategies at a staff meeting. This enabled them to refine and incorporate feedback into their presentation. This day was most successful with many teachers from other settings, and the organisers, affirming our teachers' efforts with requests for handouts and offers of future professional exchanges.

External Professional Learning

Two members of staff attended all day sessions led by Michael Richards. One session linked good Maths teaching strategies with VELs and the other was more focused on the Thinking Curriculum. These were extremely informative and greatly assisted us with our LAT work.

Outpost teachers and co-ordinators investigated useful resources and gathered good ideas and strategies from host schools.

Learning Action Teams (LATs)

In term 3 we grouped staff to address and complete our review goals. ie continued our work on Maths at sector meetings and at our Outpost day.

As part of these LATs all groups appraised and reflected on the Maths Continuum and progression points and their relevance to our Curriculum..

The LATs worked on:

1. Updating our Initial Assessment
2. Reviewing our Number Overview in accordance with VELs Documents-Level 1,2 &3 (three groups)
3. Installing open-ended Problem solving strategies and word problems on the intranet
4. Reviewing and updating our Language of Maths Documents in light of VELs
5. Reviewing our Language of Maths documents

What have been the benefits of the project for individual students, your school and the wider community?

Staff Feedback

The PD organised this year has helped all staff in developing their professional knowledge of Maths and current initiatives. It has been evident, through teachers' planning and increased knowledge and understandings, that the benefits of the project have flowed on into classroom teaching practices.

Staff have been enthused and demonstrated their capacity for learning through the work they have presented at Sector meetings, joint PD and Performance Review portfolios.

The resources purchased have assisted staff in their planning and class lessons.

The documents placed on the intranet have further assisted staff in organising their Maths Programs.

This, we feel, has effectively addressed our major focus (Nurturing a high capacity staff) that is an important component of the CELS Annual Implementation Plan.

Student Learning

This has been monitored through;

- engagement through games, activities and computer programs
- working cooperatively to solve problems
- work samples, Maths Journals and assessment tasks(including self- assessment)
- individual learning goals successfully met
- graphic organisers used to help solve number problems
- the development of independent learning strategies

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Additional Information – see attachments

Attachment 1

Maths Questionnaire

1. What Maths documents/books do you use on a weekly/regular basis ?

- Number Overview*****
- Student Checklist*
- Victorian Signposts*
- K Drive****
- Range of texts we have*
- Outpost Resources
- Teachers' guide for Oxford Maths
- Gillian and Anne's Maths folder
- Personal game kits on Number
- Number lines
- Initial Assessment
- Maths Plus

2. What other texts/documents do you use for reference?

- Dice and Decks games
- Barbara Keld games-CELS games/ideas (Christine from Moreland's games)
- Learning Centres –Rigby *
- Personal Maths folder**
- Victorian Primary Maths
- Maths cards
- Maths Goes Mental
- Internet* – Edhelper
- Host school resources
- Super Maths
- Number Charts
- Time Saver resources
- Maths Bingo

3. How many sessions do you allocate to maths each week? How long?

- 2 x 1 hour***
- 3*or 4* sessions***
- 3 sessions and some oral problem solving
- 2 x 1½ hour sessions

4. How do you organise your Maths sessions? How do you manage different levels/groupings?

- Ideas to be shared in group discussion.

5. Do you have access to appropriate Maths equipment?

- Yes – it's fine*****
- Yes – but things get lost.
- No- I make my own resources
- I would like Super Maths CD*
- Mostly – but I'd love some unifix and re-usable number lines

6. What is working well for you in Maths?

- Maths Games***
- Learning Centre Activities
- Variety of activities to cater for range of abilities/interests/previous experiences
- Good space to work in
- Resources –accessible
- Oral Maths problems
- Age-appropriate students like to enjoy Maths hands-on and computer.
- On-line worksheets
- Group work*
- Super Maths is super*
- MAB
- Maths booklets on K Drive
- Numerate, age-equivalent students
- Problem solving

7. What Maths PD would be useful for you? (Large group or 1 to 1 mentoring ?)

- Further work on MAB
- Both large group****or 1 to 1***
- How to teach a multi-age setting
- Help with planning
- 1 to 1- developing and adapting and trialling and sharing materials
- Practical PD on activities because you always pick up good ideas.
- Maths planning to ensure I cover all areas.
- Ideas on working with 2-3 groups

8. Do you need some support/help with planning/implementing your program?

- No*
- Yes*- I'd like someone to review my term plan and provide input for improvement*
- I'd like extra help in the classroom – but otherwise ok.
- Support is always needed and I feel I can ask when I need assistance.
- Help with organising resources.
- Help with planning.

9. Are there any areas/things you think we need to work on as a team- or some suggestions for Anne / Gillian to follow-up?

- Enjoy sharing practical ideas
- We do great PD/time is for sharing
- Classroom support for literacy students and individual needs
- Provide outposts with better resources- set of calculators, MAB etc
- 1 to 1- developing and adapting and trialling and sharing materials
- Have the folder you have put together in the Resource Room – even if it is not completed (I've already pinched a few good ideas!!)
- Current mainstream trends
- Complete Maths worksheets under headings for Number.**
- Developing Maths resources
- Improve planning and implementing a sequence appropriate to Middle Primary.

10. Add other ideas !!

- Have a Maths PD here at CELS to share what others have done/are doing with Maths.
- I'd really love to work on more open-ended problem-solving because it involves lots of discussion and language practice.
- Students need help in solving word problems

Some Good Maths Web Sites

(From Michael Richards PD- Thinking About Maths –VELS)

- <http://www.wfu.edu/~mccoy/NCTM99/>
- <http://www.cut-the-knot.org/index.shtml> (problem-solving)
- <http://nlvm.usu.edu/en/nav/vlibrary.html> (skill development, virtual manipulators)
- <http://www.thelearningfederation.edu.au/tlf2/>
- <http://www.nzmaths.co.nz/BrightSparks> (problem solving)
- <http://www.10ticks.co.uk/> (newsletter)
- <http://www.math.hmc.edu/funfacts/>
- <http://nrich.maths.org/public/index.php>
- http://www.literacyandnumeracy.gov.au/2006/for_teachers_numeracy.htm
- <http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/support/teaching.html> (VELS)
- <http://www.pbs.org/teachers> (U.S.A. equivalent of ABC- log in and join for free)
- <http://www.rubistar.com> (rubrics)
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/>
- http://eshowcase.unimelb.edu.au/eshowcase/FMPro?-db=esgiwcase,fp5&-format=featured_search_results.htm&-lay=web&-sortfield=product_ftitle&featured=yes&-find=
- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/teacher/default.htm> (skill development- Vic. Education Channel)
- Google- Digilearn
- http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/teachingresources/maths/maths_continuum (Maths Continuum)

Writer's Notebook and Snapshot Writing

Teachers in the Yarra Consortium have engaged their boys and girls in writing using a combination of Writer's Notebook and Snapshot Writing. Below is a summary of the ways they have encouraged their students to become independent, thoughtful writers.

To read more detailed information and research look at- ***Guiding Readers and Writers***, Irene C Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell, publisher Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH and ***First Steps Western Australia, Second Edition - Writing***

Value for boys:

- Focus on short relevant piece of writing
- Allows for choice
- Writing should be based on something of importance to the writer
- Can be based on anything they care about or are connected to
- A "snapshot" of a moment
- Visually based – students build up a picture of what the picture is like, what do you think, feel, hear? – It is a focus on noticing our surroundings
- Encourages self assessment and reflection – does your writing sound right? Does your writing make sense?

Teachers:

- Provide text type structures and model writing for students
- Observe children's behaviours during a writing session – jot down what you notice
- At the end of the session share with the children the things you noticed and the things they discovered

Questions to pose for Notebook entries:

For each entry-

- Something visible – picture, ticket to a show, bottle top, flower, drawing
- Children answer – I think, I feel, I wonder about each entry
- Then unpack the text types

Additional questions to pose -

What is the thinking involved?

What else does it make us think about?

What else does it make us wonder about?

Writer's Notebook

Writer's Notebook is a resource for student independent writing – filled with memories, ideas and thoughts. Things you wonder about, hope for or wants to know more about. It is also a place for students to collect observations, ideas, feelings, facts, lists.

They act as a place to preserve ideas so they will be available for future writing.

Not limited to print can include sketches, photos, diagrams, artefacts, or any kind of material that can stimulate writing.

Examples:

- ✓ Record memories
- ✓ Capture beautiful and interesting language or images
- ✓ Freeze moments in time – Snap shot writing

- ✓ List ideas
- ✓ Store special documents such as letters, photos, clippings or poems
- ✓ Write a response to a piece of literature, film, current event, work of art
- ✓ Note useful information
- ✓ Record questions
- ✓ Experiment with different forms of language and writing
- ✓ Describe characters
- ✓ Plot ideas
- ✓ Write letters or notes to self and others
- ✓ Record favourite poems or favourite book passages
- ✓ Keep top 10 lists
- ✓ Sketch
- ✓ Mindmaps, webs, concept maps etc

How to do it

- Start with a class writer's notebook and model it, particularly with younger students
- Introduce the writer's notebook early in the year and encourage the students to generate as many ideas as they to use at a later point
- It is important to TALK with them about the different types of writing they will be doing during the term
- You could work with your class to develop a list of purposes for the notebook which can be posted on a classroom wall
- Once the students have some content and have begun to use their ideas in their writing, invite them to write an introduction to their book which is glued in the front.
- This should be modelled by the teacher –

My writer's notebook is filled with my thinking. Sometimes I share my thinking in words and other times in sketches. I share what is important to me, what I notice, what I hope for, what I have read and thought about. Sometimes I share things about places I have been and people I have met. I fill this book with ideas that are precious to me and that I will look at for inspiration for future writing.

Getting into writing

- Select a topic
- Write a *discovery* draft
- Revise and edit subsequent drafts – use self assessment and peer assessment
- Publish

Snapshot Writing

Starting Out - A quick engaging way to start the process is *snapshot* writing

Begin with a picture, sketch, object that contains descriptive details that paint a vivid picture for readers.

Writers imagine that they are focusing binoculars or taking a photo on a particular moment.

- What is happening?
- What are you thinking?
- What do you see?
- What do you hear?
- What do you feel?
- What do you touch?
- What do you smell?
- Be there in it.

Use mini lessons to explore the craft of writing* –

- Finding something to write about
- Learning from writers/illustrators
- Using a Writer's Notebook
- Developing a sense of audience
- Learning about perspective
- Learning about purpose
- Crafting the Writing Project
- Revising
- Editing
- Final Draft
- Publishing
- Integrating research skills
- Writing in different Genres

* See – ***Guiding Readers and Writers***, Irene C Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell, publisher Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH

Acting Locally, Thinking Globally – an integrated project at Lynall Hall Community School in 2008

This Project hopes to:

- Improve **literacy + numeracy** at Lynall Hall Community School
- Expand the use of ICT
- Further promote and consolidate the teaching of **VCAL** in the school
- **VELS** rich program/ inquiry based learning
- Improve student **attendance and engagement**
- **Have middle years focus as well as Success for Boys**
- Promote **mentoring** and role modelling Yr 10 – Yr 7/8
- Promote and ensure ties with **two school campuses (Lynall Hall main campus Number One)**
- Engender positive links with **wider community** and school community

How the Project will operate:

- Year 10/VCAL group will work on the project (i) in the classroom (ii) on the Number One campus with Year 7 students (iii) in the IT+ multi media classroom
- Improved student **attendance + engagement** through a dynamic unit of work of classroom based tasks and active learning
- Improved **literacy and numeracy** in Yrs 7 – 10 – students apply classroom learning + knowledge through application
 - <listening + learning ⇒ action ⇒ sharing + group work ⇒ evaluating and articulating>
- Student group generated multi media displays – applied learning
- Student produced surveys and statistics
- Students able to see tangible results of their work –green environment at number one campus, displays + short films, etc
- Greater sense of ownership + belonging, through team/group work and building natural environment at number one; creating group multi- media products

The success of the project will be determined by:

- **strong teaching team**
- wider **school support** - through promotion and information of project, and funding
- preparation and planning of **booklet** + preparation of **resources**
- **specialists** + field training i.e. from CERES + Vic Indig. Nursery
- adequate **equipment+ materials**
- each student to maintain **visual and written journal** – self/group evaluation throughout project and at end of project.
- Student **surveys**
- School **data 2008/2009** – connectedness of students, attendance etc

For further details and information, please contact

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5. Focus on Student Mentoring and Wellbeing

*What's the use you learning to do right, when it's
troublesome to do right and ain't no trouble to do wrong,
and the wages is just the same?*

MARK TWAIN, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Student mentoring at Yarra Primary School

Abstract

The literacy mentoring program involved male students from Year 5 reading picture story books to Prep male students, on a one-on-one basis. The Prep students selected the books, and they read together for pleasure.

The goal was for the older students to have the opportunity to flourish in a literacy environment, and also to enjoy leadership opportunities. Additionally, the goal for the junior students was to have another opportunity for positive literacy experiences, and to establish more connections with students in the school to increase their comfort in the school environment.

Background to the project

Staff had identified that some junior students felt a little disconnected in the school, and would benefit from further connections with senior students. Additionally, it was observed that some of the elder students would benefit from leadership opportunities. The students selected for the program, were students who also had some challenges with respect to their literacy.

How did the project operate?

After planning the program, I selected 12 male students to participate in the program. The Year 5 boys selected were identified by their teacher as those who are struggling with their Literacy, and who would benefit from the leadership opportunities. The Prep students were selected by myself and chosen as they would benefit from positive male role models and extra one-on-one time for Literacy development in a positive environment.

I met with the older boys and discussed the format of the session and outlined some guidelines for their interactions. I subsequently met with the Prep students and did a similar thing. Then students were paired in the library and the Prep boys selected books for the Year 5 boys to read to them. This continued in various locations every fortnight. The sessions were extremely casual and my involvement in these sessions was minimal.

On occasion a junior student would select a picture story book that the senior student found too difficult to read. Depending on the context I would either assist with a few words when requested or suggest an alternative book. I endeavoured to keep the senior boys feeling expert in these partnerships with respect to their reading, and wanted the reading experience to be overwhelmingly positive.

What have been the benefits of the project for individual students, your school and the wider community?

The project worked well from the students' perspective. They generally articulated excitement and eagerness to participate in the program and were enthusiastic, engaged and happy throughout the sessions.

From a teaching perspective, it was hard to find suitable times where the teacher could run the program, as it needed to be a time when they were not teaching, but when they did not remove the students from any specialist programs which may affect the students' keenness to participate in the program. Additionally, we had the added difficulty of then finding a time which suited the older and the younger boys.

As with many other programs, it is hard to measure the changes that this program specifically brought about. However, at this stage in the year, the boys from Prep are

engaged in Literacy, eager to read and their reading levels have come up. Additionally, the Prep students have articulated their increased comfort in relating with the older students and seem to be much better settled at school.

Please refer to the evidence outlined below.

A Peer-Mentoring Literacy program could be adopted by any school, pending the ability of the school to provide suitable release time to a teacher to run it. Alternatively, the program could operate like a volunteer parent reading program and be modified to operate one morning a week or such.

Testimonials

Senior students

D - "Pretty good – T's improving – got a good memory" "books pretty easy but T finds hard words" enjoyed getting out of class would definitely like to do it again next year.

G – "at first felt a bit nervous because I thought I was going to read a long arse story but now getting used to it – by reading these books that I read ages ago when I was in prep" enjoy reading to the preps "sometimes they laugh at some of the books and sometimes they get bored – when read heaps"

P – "Good and fun, being with the preps and reading to'em" yes – know the preps better now – definitely like to do it again next year – "I like the preps and they enjoy all the books"

B – "I liked it – it was good" "Ne has improved – got lots of friends, made heaps of friends – he's a pretty good reader" – "he knows his numbers" yes definitely – "I like it how we just sit down and read together, and sometimes we just read one page each, and sometimes we just look at the pictures together" definitely do it next year "He has improved a lot".

R – "Fun, was a bit nervous at first, cos I have a bit of trouble with reading, I'm dyslexic" "A bit easier now" been – ok, probably would like to do it next year.

I – "Its fun, except would have preferred to be with J because he's my buddy" N is going pretty good except I read him about half the book and then sometimes he'll go "I don't want to read this book – because he's not patient" I'd like to do it next year. "My readings going good and I also read at home and it helps with my reading".

Junior students

Ne – "I think B's doing a good reading at me. Well, because he knows all of us and everyone." "When I see him, he just says hello to me and then he plays on with my friends." "Used to didn't know me even though I know why I know him so much, cos I've been to his dad's work cos I saw him there."

N – "Good, good, because I like it – its fun, because it's not boring"

T – "Good, um I don't really know" I look forward to it because it's good listening to books". D reads well.

J – "Fun, um because every time I say "read a big book" he just reads it" He reads well. Helps me to understand how to read"...and sometimes I read easy books and he doesn't". Would like to do it again. "Yes I feel like I know the boys better"

Je – “I don’t know, actually I do like doing it because there’s lots of fun books and stuff like that” “I like R a lot because he’s my buddy’s’ friend” “He just speaks with me when he’s reading with me”.

A – “Good, because P’s doing a good reading” “because he misses some words”. Wouldn’t want to do it again because I want to just go back.

Reading levels

Junior Students	July	November
N	1	1
T	3	10
Je	2	5
Jo	2	6
A	1	4
Ne	2	5

Observations from teacher

I have found that the students are so much more settled in the playground. Also the students’ reading is getting better and better (although hopefully this would have happened around this time of year anyway

Additional Information

Resource list

- Give it a go girl 2002. Sarah Calleja with Nina Calleja.
- Ask-kids Inventory for Children. Aspects of self-knowledge about activities. Dr L J Bornholt ACER Press 2005 Victoria
- Friendly Schools and Families
- Bullying: A Whole School Approach

Courses undertaken

- Success for boys: Mentoring
- Success for boys: Literacy

Evaluation tools

- Anecdotal notes
- Photographs
- Running records
- Interviews with students
- Observation
- Teachers observations

Thank you to Zita Pinda and Pam Burton who guided the project and to Julie Miller for support with the project design. Thanks must also go to Steve Westley for releasing his students to participate in the program.

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Health and Wellbeing at Collingwood English Language School

Guiding Principles and Values

Collingwood English Language School (CELS) is a major provider of the New Arrivals Program in the northern region. It is a combined primary and secondary school, which provides full time, intensive English courses for newly-arrived migrants and refugees prior to their enrolment in a mainstream school or further education.

The main aim of the school's program is to provide a cooperative and supportive learning and working environment to enable students to develop the language and skills they require to move successfully into mainstream schooling. A secondary aim is to introduce students to Australian society and culture. The school values the diversity and richness of cultures represented in the school and implements policies that support the provisions of racial and religious tolerance, sexual harassment and equal opportunity legislation.

Student Welfare

Many of our students have experienced war, interruption to their schooling and economic hardship; all have experienced the dislocation of migration. As a consequence CELS places a high priority on meeting the welfare needs of students through:-

- A strong pastoral care system
- Provision of sight and hearing tests and vaccinations if necessary
- The use of Multi Cultural Education Aides and interpreters
- Regular communication with families
- Regular visits from educational psychologists
- Use of outside support agencies such as the Foundation for the Survivors of Torture and Trauma..

Abstract

Summary of project:

- Student engagement and well being.
- Improve student attendance.
- Investigate, develop and implement programs and processes to enhance students health and well being.
- To adopt a holistic approach to student settlement and well being that encompasses all aspects of student engagement with the school.

Background to the project

Healthy Living

Our students' population has changed over the last few years to include many refugees who have suffered trauma and have lived long periods of time in refugee camps without education and adequate life skills and understanding related to personal hygiene and nutrition. This has had a significant impact on healthy living choices our students make during settlement particularly during their first year. It has impacted on their learning where students are often tired, lacking in concentration or hungry.

Many incidents during sports and activities events eg athletics day have occurred where students have not eaten before school and have competed. Consequently some have required medical attention as a result.

We decided to develop healthy living units as part of our secondary curriculum to increase our ability to meet the health and settlement needs of our students in a more holistic way. Through language learning about food and nutrition we aim to raise awareness so healthy choices are made.

This extends to knowledge about drugs in the community and about gaining resilience skills. Not addressing this now would mean we would be dealing with more issues in the classroom and within our sports and activities program. The health and learning needs of our students would not be met adequately in the long term. A positive outcome to be gained would be for students to gain a good knowledge of healthy choices for their future lives in mainstream schools and beyond.

Topics covered:

- Personal Hygiene
- Drug Education
- Food and Nutrition

How did the project operate?

1. In Secondary Sector staff brainstormed areas to cover as part of Healthy Living LAT.
2. Staff prioritized and created subsections
3. Staff selected an area of focus they are interested in working on as part of a LAT.
4. Each group worked to come up with a goal/aim for their chosen area of focus
5. Staff worked in teams to develop curriculum materials and unit plan.
(Staff who had already developed work from previous terms shared their expertise and resources and were provided with time release to complete a unit plan of work)
6. Each LAT team presented completed work to staff in sector meeting time.
7. Most work completed was saved on to CELS K-drive on school computer network for all staff to access.
8. Resource files/new materials set up in teacher resource room.

What have been the benefits of the project for individual students, your school and the wider community?

- Opportunity for staff to develop materials to use in class regularly at S1C-E level on topics identified as a need.
- Staff were able to access time to work together to develop materials-beneficial PD opportunity.
- For staff to be able to teach new topic areas not previously covered in classroom teaching.
- Introduce students to curriculum topics taught at mainstream schools as part of Health and PE.
- Opportunity to update and purchase new materials in those topic areas.

Additional information

- New unit planner document which incorporates VELS outcomes was developed and completed by Learning Action Teams.

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Improving School Connectedness at Yarra Primary School

Abstract

The overall aim of the project was to improve school connectedness, which would then in turn directly off set to providing support and nurturing the well-being of the students at Yarra Primary School.

The area I chose to focus on was the whole school assembly period. This time is an excellent opportunity to provide an arena for the students to take control. It had the potential to be providing a time where students achievements can be celebrated and shared with the whole school community.

This was also a time where students could build on many skills, such as public speaking, and working towards a finished piece to present. It provided a time to be able to display work as well as present to a large group of people.

Why was undertaking this project important?

It was thought by a large majority of the staff that the school assembly was not serving any positive purpose. It was very rigid and at times boring. This meant that the children would become restless and disinterested. It was fostering bad behaviour when the school was together as one, making it difficult to bring in guest speakers or have presentations.

What would be negative consequences of failing to do something?

The children were losing the respect and not understanding the importance of the time when the whole school was together. Without changing the format of the assemblies children, especially juniors, would not learn the basic behaviour expected when the whole school came together. The school assembly needed to be changed to make it informative, useful and above all enjoyable.

What is the positive outcome to be gained?

The aim is to create an assembly period that promotes the school. It creates confident outgoing children, who feel proud of presenting to their peers and school community. It encourages and fosters the continued support of the school community, as it includes the parents in the school life.

How did the project operate?

Before the assembly could begin in a new format, Jacqui Halpin had to work with the staff, students and school community. For this assembly to be a success, the support of all components of the school was essential. A student action team was formed, so as to make the changes to the assembly as student centred as possible. The four school leaders were chosen for this role, as it was also their responsibility to lead the assembly.

It was important to involve the whole school community in the changing of the assembly, so that everyone felt ownership. After interviews with the student action team Jacqui was able to gage the student's thoughts on the current assembly structure.

"The assembly is not interesting; you can see the students are bored because they begin to talk."

"Each week it is very repetitive, you always know what to expect, student of the week, birthdays and announcements, same, same, same"

"It needs to more exciting and interesting." (Stephanie, Year 6 student)

"Students need more involvement in the assemblies"

“We should include new and exciting things.” (Dion, Year 6 student)

“We need to make assemblies more fun, with new things like songs that everyone enjoys.” (Ella, Year 6 student)

“More interesting, a lot more school involvement and introduce new things.” (George, Year 6 student)

The action team discussed different strategies on what changes could be made to the assembly. Each member filled in a Project Action Plan, pooled the ideas and then divided up tasks that each member would take on so the plan to be put into place. (see attached hard copy action plans)

It was agreed that the opinions of all areas of the school community needed to be valued to make the change a positive experience for everyone. The student action team developed a survey for the students in grade five and six on their thoughts of the current assembly, ideas for a new model and suggestions for a new time.

Similarly the staff, who had already agreed on a new format were surveyed on their preference of a new assembly time. A survey was also sent home in the school newsletter, asking parents what their preference of assembly time was.

The reason there was a focus on the assembly time was that if a new format of class presentations was to begin, perhaps Monday morning (the current assembly time) didn't provide sufficient time for the class to be organised.

We received overwhelming support to change the assembly format, many suggestions indicated the assembly needed to be more interesting, student centred and enjoyable. However we received a mixed response regarding the time of the assembly. After continued discussion with the Yarra Primary School staff and the student action team it was decided that the assembly would continue on a Monday morning.

The next step was to organise the specifics of the new assembly. The student action team decided what aspects of the old assembly still needed to be included but how we could improve them. For example:

- Include the Australian Anthem however with a new backing CD to make the singing more enthusiastic.
- Include birthday announcements however give each child a special birthday pencil to make their day special.
- Student leaders continue to run the assembly, however they have a clear script and individual duties and roles they are familiar with.
- A decision was made that each week a different class would present at assembly.

It was decided we needed to set clear guidelines of what was expected of each class when they were to present at assembly, and a roster was implemented to give teachers plenty of time to organise presentations. (see attached hard copy guidelines and roster.)

The action teams aim was to have the new assembly up and running by the end of term two 2007.

What have been the benefits of the project for individual students, your school and the wider community?

The project has worked really well, we are now in the fourth term of the school year and assemblies have been running successfully and smoothly for over two terms.

It has been interesting to watch individual students' self confidence improve after their class has done two to three presentations. Students are learning how to project their voices appropriately and talk confidently in front of a large group.

The whole school community is interested and engaged by the assemblies each week.

Students work is being show cased each week and students are visibly proud of their achievements. As well as this it provides a window into different classrooms around the school, showing everyone what they have been working on.

Response from teachers at Yarra Primary School...

"The new format has revolutionised assemblies. I enjoy the expectation of creating an exciting presentation; it has been a great learning experience for the prep students. I have had a lot of positive responses from parents." Emily Saunders, Prep classroom teacher.

"Entertaining, hilarious, audience friendly. It has provided an avenue to acknowledge successes, including academic, sporting and creative." Valletta McDonald, Art and Physical Education Teacher.

"You can see the children are really proud of their achievements and glad to be able to have this avenue to showcase their work." Isabelle Szer, Year six Classroom teacher.

Resources

- Australian Youth Research Centre, *Student Action Teams: Learning in the Community (a 'How to' manual)*. Faculty of Education, The University of Melbourne May 2003

People who provided assistance and had influence on the project

- Zita Pinda
- Julie Miller
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Assertive Discipline in the Yarra Primary School Classroom

– The Flip Cards System

Abstract

The implementation of an assertive discipline program in my classroom and also in a classroom at Fitzroy PS aims to show the benefits that the 'Flip Cards' system is capable of producing. 'Pre-implementation' and 'post-implementation' statements are shown to highlight the effectiveness of the program and colour photographs of the system are also shown. The project was run throughout terms 2 and 3 (2007) and involved approximately 50 students. Daily data has been collected for each individual student and is also shown to document behavioural change.

Managing negative student behaviour and encouraging and facilitating appropriate student behaviour in the classroom forms the central theme of this project. The assertive discipline program I have running in my classroom is what I am seeking to display and promote.

Background to the Project

The teachers taking part in the project have expressed interest to be involved as a way of better managing student behaviour within their classrooms. Disruptive student behaviour and teacher stress seem to be common issues that yearn to be addressed. Failure to act towards affecting positive change could possibly lead to an undesirable status quo being maintained or an escalation of the above factors with negative connotations.

An effective discipline program should provide a structured approach aimed at managing student behaviour. It should provide teachers with a stable framework with which to work and allow students the opportunity to take more responsibility for their own behaviour.

How Did The Project Operate?

Flip cards and dot charts

The teachers involved in this project have set up 'behaviour areas' in their classrooms that manage inappropriate behaviour *and* reinforce desired behaviour. This is achieved by having the 'flip card chart' placed next to some 'colour dot templates' that the children get to fill in for exhibiting positive behaviour. The 'dot charts' represent the combined positive behaviour efforts of groups of 4 or 5 children and a reward is achieved once the dot chart is complete. In addition, there are also positive values, anti-bullying, You Can Do It! and self-help statements and strategies on display within this area of the classroom. The behaviour area is a powerful place in the classroom as it offers the opportunity for social and emotional growth.

The Flip Card System

- The system works via each child having a behaviour card that fits into a slot bearing their name.
- The cards contain the traffic light colour code of green, amber and red.
- Once fitted into the slot the green dot is visible and each child begins each day at school with a green dot showing, giving the child the opportunity of a fresh start every day.
- Inappropriate behaviour is addressed as it arises however, if it continues a verbal "Warning!" is given and the child is reminded that their card will need to be flipped to amber if the child continues to choose to behave in an inappropriate way.

- When the child actually has to flip their card to amber because of their own behaviour choices then they must walk over and flip their own card in full view of their peers.
- If the behaviour issue continues another verbal “Warning!” can be given before asking the child to once again flip their card, this time to red, resulting in the child having 10 minutes time out to reflect on the choices they have made and the consequences they are experiencing.
- After the 10 minutes time out the child is asked to rejoin the group.
- Should the child finally flip their card to double red then they are asked to leave the classroom and go to another teacher’s classroom who would finally send the child to the Principal if the negative behaviour continued in their room.
- A class list is used to record the daily ‘flip card’ data via colouring a green, amber or red dot against each child’s name. This data is also quite useful when discussing or reporting on student behaviour as a visible, accurate and readily available daily behaviour record.
- All cards are then returned to ‘green’ ready for a fresh start the next day.

As indicated, the child receives many opportunities to reflect upon and change *their own behaviour* before being removed from the classroom.

What Have Been The Benefits Of The Project?

- Improved student behaviour in general.
- Improved listening and attention during mat time.
- Greater individual empowerment and intrinsic motivation.
- Improved individual behaviours, choices and decision making skills.
- Parental awareness of, and support for the program.
- Collegiate awareness and interest.
- Data generation.

Additional Information

The Importance of Consistent Consequences

Every classroom needs to have a fair and agreed understanding of behavioural expectations that will usually need to be worked towards achieving. It is important that mutually understood consequences for undesirable behaviour be implemented in a consistent way. Consistency promotes a sense of expectation and fairness that helps define our sense of responsibility, that is; our ‘ability’ to ‘respond’. It is our response-ability. Fostering this sense of self-confidence about our own capacities assists us to realise success and deal with disappointments through developing resilience. This in turn further develops our character and helps us to better understand ourselves through playing our role as a member of a class/school community and learning to interact successfully in a positive and sustainable way.

Encouraging, acknowledging and rewarding appropriate behaviour choices are also very important. Celebrating the positives is just as justified and necessary as implementing consequences for negative behaviour. It leads to explicit examples of *right actions* being identified and highly valued in direct contrast to more questionable behaviours that we value to a lesser degree.

Learning is dynamic. It is a great *paradox of development* that already ‘is’ and is also ‘becoming’ at the same time. It is a focus *and* an objectivity that must both be maintained as foundations of self that one may succeed and concede with dignity. Students need consistent consequences that they may reflect on experiences that have challenged them in some way. If they are not using reason and logic all that effectively yet in their thinking then teachers need to help them to understand in a way that they can realise and celebrate

success. When you are consistent with children they feel secure and know their boundaries. They yearn for acceptance and learn through experience as they are compelled to develop and grow. When a child is asked to stand and walk in front of their peers to meet a consequence for behaviour, they are empowered to begin accepting more responsibility for their own behaviour because they want to be considered as normal and fit in with the group, conform and be noticed and accepted. Let us help them to realise their social/emotional potential through consistent consequences that allow them to conform with dignity whilst maintaining and enriched sense of self.

Other possibilities

- Flip card system additions such as a 'thinking chair' or 'resilience activities' may well suit a particular need in a given student or classroom situation. Also, grades 5 and 6 may well benefit from including strategies and consequences such as 'behaviour thinking plans' that would help maintain the validity and effectiveness of the system in senior grades through written reflection.
- A 'whole school' Flip card implementation strategy would provide a uniform consistency of behaviour management across the entire school. This approach may also lead towards a similar strategy extending outside into the playground. It may well assist to address and resolve behavioural issues that occur outside the classroom and possibly even help to address the issue of bullying.

I am a Child

I am a child.

I yearn for sustenance and for guidance for I am growing and I am trying.

I am developing rapidly and acceptance is crucial to me.

I am caught in deliberation but I yearn to conform and to be good.

As my parent and my teacher I ask you to help me to help myself that I may see clearly and keep to the path.

Shout at me and I will learn more deeply the feelings of guilt and anxiousness as I develop my skills towards blame and anger.

Be consistent with me and I will learn to trust and accept for I will know my boundaries and come to understand the nature of self control.

Consider my feelings and show me compassion.

Accept me for who and how I am, that I may learn to value and accept the feelings of others and act accordingly.

Help me to think and feel and behave as I should and I will play my part in the creation of a better world.

I am a child.



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Classroom and Playground Management at Fitzroy Primary School

Abstract

The project consisted of 3 components:

- 1) Playground behaviour
- 2) Punctuality
- 3) Classroom behaviour

Playground behaviour was a major concern, as one child in particular was quite aggressive in the yard. He did not know how to play sensibly without hurting others.

Another child often came to school late. He missed out on vital information and learning that took place during the Literacy block. This then led to unacceptable behaviour in the classroom, not only by this child but others also. Lateness caused disruption.

Following simple classroom rules was another concern. This involved the whole class as some required constant attention; walked around the room wasting time; called out unnecessarily or annoyed others by disrupting those who wanted to learn and complete their work.

2

Background to the Project

Behaviour is a big issue at Fitzroy Primary School. Teachers are constantly challenged to improve both classroom and playground behaviour.

The Prep/1 class consists of some challenging children. One child's playground behaviour in particular was unacceptable. He was quite aggressive, and other children constantly complained about him to the teacher on yard duty or the classroom teacher. He often disrupted games and hurt others.

In relation to punctuality, another child in the class was always arriving late to school. His average attendance time ranged from 9.20am – 2.00pm. This became extremely disruptive, not only for the classroom teacher, but also for the children working in the classroom.

The teacher sensed that this child felt uncomfortable arriving late and would hesitate to enter the classroom. Instructions had to be given again by the teacher in order for the child to complete the set activity.

The classroom behaviour of the class in general also had to be improved. Some children required constant attention, as they walked around the room wasting time; called out unnecessarily or annoyed others by disrupting those who wanted to learn and complete their work.

Undertaking this project was important, because the opportunity for all the children to achieve to the best of their ability in a safe and secure environment was being compromised.

One person's behaviour, whether positive or negative, affects everyone around them. For this reason, it was important to undertake this project in order to improve the wellbeing of the teacher as an educator, and the children as learners functioning successfully in a school environment. Some of the skills will have a life-long effect, eg. problem solving skills.

The positive outcomes to be gained through this project would involve addressing the school's values that consist of:

- 1) Diversity
- 2) Respect
- 3) Co-operation
- 4) Self-esteem
- 5) Engagement
- 6) Independence
- 7) Resilience
- 8) Equal opportunity

How the Project Operated

A 'Star Chart' was compiled for both students, although they were administered in different ways.

With regards to the child with behaviour problems in the playground, the chart was a weekly one, filled in on a daily basis. This was placed in a clipboard and carried by the teacher on yard duty. Recess and lunch times were created in 15 minute blocks according to yard duty times. If the child played nicely, he would receive a star from each teacher (6 in total per day) and his daily award was 15 minutes on the computer.

If he misbehaved, the teacher on duty would write down the problem as a form of communication for me to know the reason/s for not receiving a star. Depending on the severity of the behaviour, he either missed out on computer time and/or was placed in 'Time Out'.

If he managed to get at least 2 or more days filled with stars, he received a certificate. These were given in class, and when he received a full week of stars, he was presented with it at Assembly. This gave him recognition for excellent behaviour in front of the whole school.
(See Appendix A)

With regards to the student who was coming to school late, his Star Chart was very basic, broken down into a daily, hence weekly chart. If he arrived at school on time, he received a star. If he received 5 stars, he was awarded a certificate. Days when he was absent didn't count against him, eg. If he was away for a day and received 4 stars, he was still entitled to a certificate.
(See Appendix B)

A Daily Behaviour Chart (See Appendix C) was used and is still being used to improve overall classroom behaviour on a daily basis. This is based on a colour coding system:

- 1) green dot = fresh start
- 2) orange dot = warning

3) red dot = thinking chair (in the classroom)

4) 2 red dots = another classroom

Benefits of the Project

The project overall was extremely beneficial. It not only benefited individual students but the class as a whole. Students were given boundaries and knew what the consequences were if they misbehaved.

There was a major improvement to the child's playground behaviour using the Star Chart. He started playing nicely with the other children. On the 20/05/07, he played well and his award was to spend time on the computer. After 5 minutes on, he decided he didn't want to continue, but preferred to play maths games with his peers. On the 31/05/07, even the Reading Recovery teacher noticed his improvement, not only with his reading but overall behaviour too. He had been off the Star Chart for a while and on 16/07/07, the teachers on yard duty praised his development. He has matured and is responsible for solving his own problems. Lately however, he has gone off the rails and has had to go back on the Star Chart. His progress is being monitored regularly.

The daily punctuality Star Chart worked wonders. On the 16/05/07, it was noted that the student had success coming to school on time for 2 weeks. A certificate was awarded after each successful week. He has been a lot more enthusiastic and excited about school.

By the 16/07/07, he came off the Star Chart. My anecdotal records show that: "He is so happy to be back at school and has produced some amazing writing." The principal was shown and he received an award. Further comments from my anecdotal records prove that: "His beginning of the year attempts were scribbles, and now he's actually writing – up to a page! Off the Star Chart for punctuality".

Once the program is explained, it is extremely easy to follow. I found it helpful visiting Kevin Hunt (a colleague) at Yarra Primary School where the process was explained. Once you see it visually, you are able to comprehend how it works and how to apply it in your classroom.

The Daily Behaviour Chart has been ongoing. Since putting this system in place, I have seen a major improvement with the children's' behaviour overall. They are constantly reminded about the coloured dots once they have been given a warning, and they strive to remain on that dot for the rest of the day.

This system would also be beneficial in other schools. Each classroom teacher could adopt it and thus the process would be consistent throughout the entire school. This would mean that the children are aware of all teachers' expectations regarding behaviour.

Positive reinforcement has been used through the use of a Heart Chart that is displayed next to the Classroom Behaviour Chart. A heart was used as it signifies the fact that teachers 'love' good behaviour. This is a constant reminder that I am looking for good role models. If they are caught doing the right thing throughout the day, they have the opportunity to place their name in the heart. They are acknowledged at the end of the day with praise and on occasions given a reward such as a sticker. If the whole class manages to remain on a green dot all day, they will be given some kind of treat, such as a video or extra free time. They have come close on many occasions.

The Daily Behaviour Record (See Appendix D) has also been extremely helpful for me to refer to when needed. I am able to have a quick look and reflect on how the class has behaved that particular week, month or term. It has been beneficial when reporting to parents about their child's behaviour, along with report writing. This information is often shared with the children as well. They are told about how many 'orange' dots for example they have had that week and that their behaviour needs to improve.

It has also been helpful having both the Heart Chart and Behaviour Chart side by side. This way the children are reminded about their behaviour constantly, and strive to improve if necessary. Some children are still a challenge, however perseverance is essential!

Professional Reading

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Student Mentoring at Richmond West Primary School

Action Research Task – Mentoring for Success

Aim: To develop a group of ICT leaders /mentors to demonstrate a range of software to peers.

Background – How did the project operate?

The teachers at Richmond West Primary school had participated in Teacher Professional Learning Partnership with Soundhouse personnel. The program aims were to create innovative classroom practices and multi-literate approaches to student participation and engagement. Staff were provided with Professional Development (2 x 2 hour after school sessions) in using Stop Motion Animation, Monkey Jam, Windows Sound Recorder and Movie Maker software. Students from grades 3-4 were then chosen to become mentors for their peers and Grade 1 / 2 students (1 hour training) and to participate in a 2 hour school based training session with John McMillan the Animation consultant from Soundhouse.

Criteria for selection of mentors in the Grade 3 / 4 Area

- good communication skills
- competent ICT skills
- confident /persistent behaviours
- team player
- developing leadership qualities
- good role modelling skills (organization skills & credibility with fellow students)

Mentors /Leadership student group

There were twelve students selected to become ICT Leaders.

Grade 3: Scott, Kevin and Ricky - Haidee.

Grade 4: Paul, Cang, Van and Ayemen - Diem, Lydia, Nhu-Quynh.

During term 3 each of these abovementioned students worked with a partner on completing a design brief which included developing a short animation (30secs+).

These students also trained the remaining students from this area over a two week period on a one-to-one basis in using the available software. They were also the onsite experts for all students to call upon as necessary, throughout this unit of work.

Students worked consistently over the term on a variety of tasks

- writing a narrative,
- planning a storyboard,
- making props, characters and backgrounds,
- Interviewing and completing a survey.

Assessment and self evaluation of each part the process was also included.

What have been the benefits for the individual student, your school and the wider community?

The mentors were very enthusiastic and highly motivated after there initial training session with John. Most of these students had access to a computer outside of school and many also had web cameras and were very au fiat with this technology. Many of these students during this initial phrase downloaded the free software (Monkey Jam) available to them at

home. Students independently worked on practising animation techniques and discussed their ideas and problems at school. The level of engagement was high. One student Ayemen had taught his mum to use this program. He had spent many hours after school working on his animation and extending this through to adding credits and titles. He brought along his memory stick to show the class his animation.

The individual students who were selected as leaders became very capable and knowledgeable in using this software and also in assisting their peers with their various requests. All students in Grade 3 / 4 enjoyed the various processes involved in producing an animation. The experience has left them wanting to explore this medium more and learn additional skills for example adding titles / credits , video clips, photo's and music.

The staff at Richmond West Primary actively participated in the two Professional Development sessions. In pairs teachers worked through the processes and quickly produced a short animation. The second session provided an opportunity to put Audio in the movie using Window Sound Recorders. The four teachers involved in the Grade 3-6 area have become quite competent in their ICT skills as the term evolved.

The grade 5 / 6 students presented their animations to parents, fellow students and the wider community during the school's Art Exhibition evening held in late November, 2007. The students in the Grades 3 – 6 were aiming to hold a film festival focussing on animation to celebrate their achievements at the conclusion of the unit of work.

Outcomes / Evaluation

I have included the trained mentors PMI's as part of my evaluation and a few students who were trained by the mentors as well to provide feedback. I also have taken many photos of the students at work during the animation process to provide evidence of their participation.

The successes of the mentoring program have clearly demonstrated many qualities our boys possess and provided opportunities for these students to develop and implement leadership skills.

Successes:

- positive relationships / team work (Andy & Ayemen) (Andy & Milk)
- independence & achievement (building on strengths – Diem, Haidee, Cang)
- hands on activities (100% effort / participation)

Andy Sam: Ayemen / Milk (Skills displayed: co-operation, patience and focus)

Milk: Mary Rose & Haidee (Team building, allocation of roles within team)

John / Aidan (Aidan assisting John on writing tasks – modelling writing strategies)

Diem / Haidee (Skills displayed: self esteem and confidence)

Paul / Andy (willingly co-operating on oral reading activities)

Follow on examples: Literacy: Partner readers / peer coaching

Twice a week students rehearse a book and read to partner 15mins duration.

Students make comments on oral reading and assist with developing strategies for decoding and fluency.

Evaluation Y Chart – Mentoring in action using ICT

Y chart = Mentor

Looks Like
Confident
Friendly
Focused
Role Model
Clear vision of common Goals

Sounds Like

Enthusiastic
Encouraging
Problem solving

Feels Like

Responsible
Happy / secure
Constantly supported

Additional Information

Early in term 4, 2007 the students in the Grade 3-6 were provided with the opportunity to meet Graeme Base at ACMI. The presentation provided many examples of taking a great narrative text (Animalia) and using various characters, setting and adventures as a basis for producing a film narrative / animation. This was an excellent opportunity for students to see a brilliant writer and his expert animator colleague discuss ideas and the processes of producing an animation. They showed computer storyboards, drawings / models of characters before the work of planning scenes, action sequences etc.

As a teacher he provided an opportunity to gain an insight into how I could further develop students ICT skills using various well known texts as a basis for providing a narrative to students for their next animation project. Purchasing the DVD of Graeme's animation currently screened on TV would be a vital resource for the school library.

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Circle Time at Richmond West Primary School

Background to the project

Following a very powerful Professional Development on *Restorative Justice* and *Restorative Practices*, it became apparent that there might be a link between using this approach to improving the behaviour within the grade, particularly in mediating between some of the boys, and improved oral language. There was room for improvement in the oral language of many of the children in the grade, particularly the boys, when articulating playground disputes.

The aim of this project was to enable the students to voice their opinions, feelings and concerns and listen to others.

How did the project operate?

The plan was to use the circle as a forum for conflict management as often as possible, but also as a means of discussing *responsibility*, particularly relevant to children's understandings of themselves and others.

Restorative Behaviour seemed to offer an alternative for children for learning to manage their own behaviour. In expressing their feelings about certain scenarios, children are presented with an extended vocabulary of options relevant to their conflicts:

"What happened....?"

"How did you feel when.....?"

"Was anyone sad when.....?"

"What were you thinking at the time.....?"

"Who has been affected.....?"

"What do you think needs to happen to make things right.....?"

As a means of combating bullying, the process had the potential to work really well by repairing relationships without laying blame. It involved talking together about the harm that had been caused by someone's behaviour.

Circle time could also be used to reflect collectively on class activities. The idea was that children could take a risk by speaking up without any 'put-downs'.

What have been the benefits of the project for the individual students, your school and the wider community?

A boy friendly school offers boys:

- A sense of self
- An opportunity to enhance relationships
- Confidence
- A positive identity
- Acceptance
- A sense of being valued by significant people in their lives
- A feeling of connectedness
- A caring attitude
- A school that is relative to its students
- Time with its students
- Recognition of and support of differences
- Balanced classrooms that are fair and diverse

A boy friendly school offers boys discipline that is:

- Non-confrontational
- Collaborative
- Rebukes in private but praises in public

- Improves interpersonal relationships

Circle Time has been incorporated in the grade in varying forms for three months now and huge gains have been made. *Circle Time* has been used as a means of resolving issues and discussing problems with the grade on a regular basis. The children have adopted it and the rules involved, really well.

Initially the principles of *Restorative Justice* were adhered to quite closely, but as with any program with young children, it was adapted to their needs. One problem had been the need to use the methodology to resolve *issues*, but the playground squabbles were not occurring. The grade was 'too good'. The approach was then adapted to be a forum for any issues that the children felt like raising. It was even used to discuss philosophical opinions.

Children were all expected to abide by the simple rules: only one child to speak at a time and 'no put-downs'. A child could reply to a comment but any comment made had to be respected.

Outcome

At the beginning it was very much a girl centred forum. They were the ones who had problems. They were the ones who wanted to discuss their problems in this type of setting. The boys would listen and add comments but it was rarely their issue that was the central theme of the day.

As we proceeded with *Circle Time*, so the boys began to articulate their playground disputes or concerns. Their language had begun to develop to a point where they felt they could raise an issue, have it discussed and come up with a solution to the problem. Their confidence had grown to the point where they could introduce an issue without feeling self-conscious.

Following this trial I believe that the *Circle* is perfect as a forum for conflict management and also as a means of discussing with children, *responsibility*, particularly relevant to children's understandings of themselves and others. By being active listeners, rapport and respect between the participants of the group is developed. It enables the group to develop a connectedness between one another. It is hoped that it also improves their feeling of resilience.

Restorative Justice is a means of repairing relationships without laying blame. It involves talking together about the harm that has been caused by someone's behaviour.

The aim of my project was to enable my students to voice their opinions, feelings and concerns and listen to others. I feel this was most certainly achieved but in a slightly different way than at first expected.

Additional Information

Course: 'Restorative Practices. Rethinking Behaviour Management'-

Presenter: Marg Armstrong

Contact details

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Kindergarten to School Transition at Richmond Primary School

Abstract

To research and summarise various material relating to Kindergarten – School transition, including differing viewpoints, and to present recommendations based on survey results.

Background to the project

The role of Kindergarten-School Transition Coordinator at Richmond Primary is itself, in transition. A rapidly retiring body of staff has required slick succession planning for incoming graduate teachers. Foresight and circumstance have allowed a two year overlap from the pre-existing to current transition co-ordinator, which has been extremely beneficial for the graduate staff member. This project has enabled the new co-ordinator a greater in-depth exploration of the issues surrounding transition, providing her with a stronger voice and direction based on her findings.

In addition to the changeover of staff, the Richmond Primary parent community is itself in transition, with increasing numbers of both parents working full-time and their children therefore attending child-care and crèche for long periods from early infancy. Also, the parent population has a growing component of affluent professionals who perhaps have greater demands and expectations than previous generations of parents. All these factors have contributed toward a particular need to review and redress transition protocols.

Whilst inaction with regard to the “transition of transition” could result in fewer enrolments in the school, and by extrapolation, decreased funding and eventually closure, the most immediate impact is on the children themselves, followed by their parents and teachers. Feelings of self-worth and attitudes to learning are largely born of our early school experience. Facilitating a smooth transition into the preparatory year is paramount for the provision of effective learning and socialisation. Failing that, students may enter their subsequent years of schooling damaged and disillusioned, a tragedy that must be avoided at all costs. Thus, the role of teachers, as ever, is one of huge responsibility but also one of immense honour.

Successful transition aims to produce bright, shiny students, eager to start school and nostalgic but ready to leave eleven to thirteen years later. It also aims to enlist the trust and respect, not only of the students, but of the parents, whose influence cannot be underestimated and whose partnership is invaluable.

How did the project operate?

The project operated in parallel to the induction of the graduate into the role of transition co-ordinator. Therefore, it worked in symbiosis with the normal workload of the classroom and did not compete for time with the new role itself.

Professional Development modules were attended, surveys completed, articles and books read and professional opinions sought. The time to observe and reflect, were significant in the success of the project.

What have been the benefits of the project for individual students, your school and the wider community?

The project has underpinned everything which the role of transition co-ordinator entails. It has brought insight and breadth of knowledge to the graduate, whose lack of chronological experience may be misconstrued by incoming parents as insufficient, particularly in the

immediately ensuing transition programs where the pre-existing coordinator may or may not be present.

The project has highlighted the needs of students, parents and teachers during the tender stages of transition. Those needs may now be continued to be addressed in the extremely professional manner in which they have already been dealt with, including the incorporation of yearly survey suggestions.

Perhaps one of the most pressing issues is the need for better communication and parent education. Most schools would benefit from investing time and/or money into providing audio-visual and hard copy material on transition issues to parents based on yearly survey results. This year's survey revealed many things, including the need for children and parents to access the school psychologist due to the ongoing matter of separation anxiety. Further recommendations specific to Richmond Primary School may discussed in person with the author.

Resources

Please contact the author for particular recommendations.

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Year 7 and 8 Campus at Lynall Hall Community School

The School

At Lynall Hall we seek to develop the potential of each student as an individual and as a member of a group by recognising and addressing their specific educational and wellbeing needs in a nurturing community environment based on the principles of mutual respect.

Abstract

In 2008 a Year 7/8 Campus of Lynall Hall Community School will be developed at the No 1 site. Planning has begun although the process of implementation will continue throughout Term 1.

The teaching and learning program will reflect Lynall Hall's vision statement and will be based on the following understandings developed from Yarra Schools Network Student Learning Protocols.

Understandings:

1. Positive outcomes for students are dependent on a supportive, productive and safe school environment
 2. There is a direct link between social/emotional health and learning which can be developed by explicit teaching of values, behaviours and social skills
 3. Quality learning leads to increased connectedness to peers, school community and the wider community
 4. The classroom is a community of learners where students learn with, through and from others
 5. Effective and supportive transition arrangements offer students the best chance of adjustment to secondary education
-

For implementation this means:

1. Positive outcomes for students are dependent on a supportive, productive and safe school environment.
 - Environment will be welcoming
 - Students will have ownership of the environment and its management
 - No students out of grounds unless supervised movement to main campus and back
 - Accurate record keeping for attendance, welfare issues/meetings
 - Students will undertake most learning programs at No 1 campus and will only move to Lynall Hall for afternoon specialist subjects
 - Limited range of teachers
2. There is a direct link between social/emotional health and learning which can be developed by explicit teaching of values, behaviours and social skills
 - High expectations
 - Consistency with approaches to teaching and to student management
 - Preparation and planning of lunches at No 1

- Consistency in environment – remain at No1 as much as possible
 - Good role models
3. Quality learning leads to increased connectedness to peers, school community and the wider community
 - Focus on learning particularly literacy and numeracy
 - Individual program for all students – ILPs for all
 - Meetings with parents/carers negotiated and visits every term
 4. The classroom is a community of learners where students learn with, through and from others
 - Teaching and learning program based on best practice
 - Student centred learning
 - Integrated units based around literacy and numeracy and the needs of students
 - Good communication
 - Close connection with community organisations
 5. Effective and supportive transition arrangements offer students the best chance of adjustment to secondary education
 - Need knowledge of student history
 - Close links with primary schools
 - Reduced numbers of teachers and student movement
 - Warm and supportive, stable environment with clear expectations and strong support structures

Contact Details

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Beyond Telling Off - Positive Behaviour Management at Lynall Hall Community School

The School

At Lynall Hall we seek to develop the potential of each student as an individual and as a member of a group by recognising and addressing their specific educational and wellbeing needs in a nurturing community environment based on the principles of mutual respect.

Abstract

A six week positive behaviour management trial was undertaken during Term 4 at year 7/8 level. The program was based on a simple understanding that all students have the right to a learning environment that is well structured, well organised and uninterrupted.

Four simple and non-negotiable expectations were developed:

1. Students will attend all classes
2. Students will arrive to class on time
3. Students will remain in the classroom throughout the lesson
4. Students will behave in an appropriate manner in the classroom.

Membership of the classroom group was to be earned through compliance with these four expectations. The consequence for non compliance – exclusion from participation in the group.

Background to the project

Lateness, both to school and to class is a continuing issue at Lynall Hall. In addition, students frequently enter and leave the classroom at will. Attendance is inconsistent with absences ranging from extended periods of time to students selecting which classes they will or will not attend throughout the day. It is almost impossible to provide a consistent and structured learning environment and the resultant challenges for teaching and learning programs are immense. The most significant implication of the varying and inconsistent class numbers and the constant interruptions to the classroom is that students who are attending are being deprived of the right to learn.

How did the project operate?

Expectations were agreed amongst all teachers and made clear to students and parents.

A set of implementation strategies was developed based around the use of a supervised 'focus room' for students excluded from participation in the group. In the 'focus room' students were to write a brief report as to the reason for their exclusion from class and students were given work to complete. Students remained in the focus room until the next class.

All exclusions, whether for lateness or classroom disruption, and absences were communicated to parents immediately. If a student was excluded from class three times, a parent interview was convened.

'Out-of-class' passes were carried by all teachers and given to students on the rare occasions that they needed to leave the classroom.

What have been the benefits of the project for individual students, your school and the wider community?

Within a four week period attendance at school and class improved significantly. Class numbers remained consistent and lateness was all but eliminated.

Students remain in the classroom throughout the lesson and on the few occasions they need to leave they would not consider doing so with the 'pass'.

The result – teachers are able to teach and students are able to learn.

The 'focus room' is rarely used.

Additional Information

A proposal has been put to staff for implementation 7 – 10 in 2008

Contact Details

Year 7/8 Team: Cate Burke, Kieran O'dwyer, Peter Kavadias, Rylie Connaughton

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6. Focus on ICT

To promise not to do a thing is the surest way in the world to make a body want to go and do that very thing.

MARK TWAIN, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

Filmmaking at Richmond West Primary School

Background to the project

There are a number of boys in our school who are quite disengaged and underachieving. They tend to see the school as irrelevant and their primary focus is on peer acceptance. Anger management is an issue with a number of boys in the upper area of the school. They tend to have low self esteem and believe that teachers have little interest in their needs. The arrival of a number of boys of African backgrounds has exacerbated these problems. These students are very active and can challenge teachers with their behaviour and attitude. Their main interest in school is sport. Their academic progress is limited and they generally lack motivation to improve their academic results or persist in tasks, often being unwilling to put effort into work. They focus only for limited periods of time on any one topic.

The challenge therefore is to help them see that:

- School is relevant to them.
- Teachers are willing to listen to them and adapt to their needs
- School can be fun as well as a place of learning
- Most importantly- that they can achieve

These students need to learn to work on tasks over a longer period of time, to learn to revise and improve their work and to be able to persist in a topic to achieve a goal.

Importance of this project

Several of these students are in, or will soon be in the transition stage to secondary school. They need to see themselves as not only capable of achieving and being able to make a contribution to the group but also to be able to produce something that no one else has done at our school and be seen as an expert in an area. I feel that if this is not done, their chances of engaging effectively in secondary school is limited.

For the school these students need to be engaged in order to improve the culture and overall behaviour of the school in general.

Setting up/choosing the task

The task needed to be of high interest: something that did not challenge them too greatly in the literacy area but had a literacy focus. It needed to incorporate technology and have a very active hands on component to ensure that it engaged the students..

The Project

The project was to introduce these students to the use of our new technology (digital video cameras and pinnacle software) to create a movie about Boys: what they like and what would interest them at school. Their assignment was to teach the community what types of activities in school would make boys interested and excited, via the medium of a short movie entitled 'Boys Stuff'.

The students were asked to become 'class expert' in movie making so that they could teach other members of the class both how to use the camera and how to use Pinnacle Studio for editing (this has a very similar in format to Movie maker which will be used as an introduction.)

Stages involved in implementing the task.

A group of 4-6 students were chosen from the grade 5/6 area, two from each of the grades 5/6 classes.

They were introduced to short documentary movies and discussed the features of these which could be introduced in making a boys movie.

Steps to be undertaken were:

- Initial survey of each student involved in the project regarding their feelings and attitudes toward their school life. This was repeated at the end of the project to assess any changes in attitude.
 - View a range of short documentaries
 - Discuss and brainstorm ideas that could be incorporated in the movie.
 - Introduce students to manuals (edited for their use) on film making through the ACMI website. Student would need knowledge of filmmaking terminology, camera work, scripting close ups etc.
 - Preliminary work with Movie Maker creating digital photo stories.
 - Become familiar with the camera through filming the puppet plays created by the other 5/6 students from the class.
 - Create storyboards for each scene prior to shooting
 - Shoot the scenes
 - Edit the movie using Pinnacle Studio
 - Format movie onto DVD format
 - Discuss screening ideas
 - Evaluate the project.
- Written self assessment - impressions of the venture
Repeat Pre movie original survey

Problems encountered

Two of the boys chosen were not interested in taking part, despite my best attempts to 'sell' the idea to them.

Technology issues became a major issue and took a very large amount of time to solve. These issues included:

- The computer not reading the camera
- Running Pinnacle Studio Software. This major problem was a lack of processing speed in our hardware. At least 5 mg or ram is needed. We then updated our computer to 1 gig of ram memory. This computer was also set aside as our Movie making computer only to ensure enough memory to cope with this program. Problems still persisted with the computer freezing.

Lack of Continuity – The boys interest did vary at times- due to:

- Our technology problems
- My lack of access to students as I am in a specialist position
- The boys were not keen to give up lunchtimes.

To alleviate this problem I needed to seek support from classroom teachers who needed to be very flexible with their time.

Links to literacy

The project did not link into literacy domain as much as I had hoped. Students were very reluctant to undertake any writing on the topic as they saw this as a chance to do something different and not have to "*write reports and stuff*"

This problem may have been alleviated by asking them to keep a little journal throughout the event. In retrospect, this could have been part of the 'agreement' for them if they were to be chose to undertake the project.

Time limits and access to the students also meant I did not have the opportunity to ask them to write a small booklet / story as I had initially planned them to do at the end of the project –“ How to make a movie- Instructions for Kids”

Benefits of the project

The boys did feel that they were special and were envied by many other students

They felt very positive about themselves when using the equipment.

They were very positive about the end result and had lots of ideas about making their own movie. This was reflected in their self evaluation of the project.

They began to see the need for storyboard planning (although never really keen on this aspect)

They reflected verbally about the challenges filmmakers must face and the huge amount of time it must take.

They became very skilled at operating the pinnacle Software.

They began to make good choices in the editing stage of the movie keeping the audience and the original task of the project in mind.

They enjoyed teaching a group of girls how to use the video equipment.

The initial survey results that were quite unfavourable have definitely improved showing a growing sense of belonging and improved concepts of self worth

Students responded in writing at the end of the project although comments tended to be brief .They were obviously pleased at the chance to undertake the project and felt a sense of pride in their achievements.

Bibliography and references

Key filmmaking guidelines -	ACMI website
Short documentaries found on -	ACMI website
Software used Pinnacle Studio 10	

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Digital Storytelling Project at Collingwood College

Abstract

The Digital Story Telling Program targeted students in Year 7 in Collingwood College's mainstream program during Terms 2, 3 and 4 of 2007. The students created their own stories in digital and printed form. The result was published copy for each student and a copy for the school library.

Background to the project

The challenge for teachers at Collingwood College is to develop the students' literacy skills through the provision of meaningful language activities. Many of the available resources are pitched at students who have grown up in a Western world. These unfamiliar contexts make it difficult to engage ESL students and to develop their literacy skills, particularly adolescents, for whom the texts they are able to read are often not age appropriate. Similarly, for those students for whom English is their first language, but have difficulty with literacy, most texts they are able to read are not appropriate to their interests or lives.

The program aims to improve the literacy skills of students in Years 6, 7 and 8 and to provide a means for the creation of accessible language resources for the students. By recording their 'stories' students create meaningful language. In print form, this language can then be shared, read and understood. Digital story telling allows students to create texts that truly represent their lives and acknowledge what they do, what they know and what they think.

If access to the written word remains problematic, many students will remain disengaged from the world of literature and disempowered by their inability to read and write effectively.

The value of The Digital Story Telling Program to raise students' self-esteem, to increase cross-cultural awareness and their knowledge of the world, to develop their literacy, ICT and thinking skills and to create high quality resources, is exponential.

The project in operation

In the first phase of the program 23 Year 7 students were put into two groups, each with a teacher, Mary-Ann or Chris. Mary-Ann's group worked in pairs and wrote stories related to the class topic 'Saving Water at School'. The ESL students and those most in need worked with Chris and wrote stories about themselves. The program operated for two hours per week.

In the second phase of the program, from half way through Term 3 to Term 4, a smaller group of students were involved and wrote about a subject of choice. The subjects of all storybooks were non-fiction, ranging from sport, musical instruments and students' countries of origin to family life, personal interests and hobbies. Mary-Ann ran the program at this stage, with two student teachers who assisted for four weeks.

Benefits of the program

The students involved in the program learnt to plan a story book using a story board, they learnt how to construct greater meaning through the inclusion of photos and other images, they learnt to use a digital camera and enjoyed the freedom of taking photos in different locations around the school. Some students interviewed people, took surveys and collected other data, recording these results in their books. They learnt to import photos from a camera, a USB and the Internet and they learnt to use Microsoft PowerPoint. A number of students learnt how to access relevant information from the Internet and to summarise this information. Some practised proof reading, editing and self-correction.

Through teacher conferencing, correct grammar, punctuation and spelling were reinforced. The students successfully created books that look real and follow the conventions of real books. When the Year 7 students finally had access to their books they were able to share them with one another and gain cross-cultural insights and knowledge of the world.

The program has been a huge success in terms of student engagement, improvements in Literacy, ICT and Personal Learning and attitudes towards school and learning. The students proudly showed their books to others, obviously feeling a sense of achievement. This is confirmed by qualitative measurements: the positive attitudes evidenced in the final PoLT Survey and students' self- assessment and written reflections.

With access to computers, the Digital Story Telling Program could be integrated into almost any learning program. As seen in the students' books on 'Saving Water at School', students can record their findings and synthesize their learning. The book itself is valuable evidence of student learning.

People who influenced the project

In 1997 Lawry Mahon from Victoria University introduced SWIRL (Story Writing in Remote Locations) into Central Australian schools with the assistance of IBM who provided computing equipment. Lawry had noticed that stories about Aboriginal culture were missing from the local schools' teaching resources. The idea of Swirl was formed. Every year groups of Victoria University students visit Central Australian communities and run workshops in over 18 schools, encouraging local children to develop their literacy and computing skills by documenting day to day activities around their community.

In the initial planning stages of the Digital Story Telling Program at Collingwood College, Mary-Ann De Carlo contacted Lawry Mahon who visited the school early in Term 2 and conducted a workshop for some of the Middle School staff. Using the knowledge they acquired from the workshop, Mary-Ann and Chris Doquile introduced the first phase of Collingwood College's Digital Story Telling Program to the Year 7's.

Qualitative Evidence

Students' comments

The best part of this piece of writing is...

Aish: That I got to write about Delhi and I remembered when I was there.

Muzi: The best part was looking at the pictures on websites.

Abdi: ... Getting the photo and writing about it.

Sam: ...Using computers and being able to write about a topic that I know about.

Tugce: ...Getting photos off the Internet and writing about them. That was the funnest thing in my story.

Mike: ...Using the brain plus I love to write.

Sophie: ... Designing the slide to match the information and images. Searching up information about famous musicians

Lyn: ...Writing about me, my friends and searching on the Internet for information. Taking photos and putting them on the PowerPoint is good.

"Should the Digital Story Telling Program continue?"

Aish: Yes it should because it gives you skills of writing and summarising.

Muzi: Yes we should do it again because it is fun and we are allowed to do whatever.

Abdi: Yes because it's good for the grammar and English.

Tugce: I liked writing and putting pictures into my story. It was just fun writing and getting lots of pictures. It is just fun!!! We should do it again next year because it is good for your learning.

Mike; Yes we should do digital story telling again because it's fun to do. People love your book and you become famous.

Sophie: I liked the Digital Storytelling group because I learn and I design what I like, I improved things I'm not good at. Great group! I think we should gather the group together again because the learning is very useful and I had lots of fun.

Lyn: I like doing the Digital Story Telling because I got to do my own story and have fun with the group! It's fun to do it and helps for your learning in the future!

Sam: We should do this next year because it is a lot of fun.

The Teacher's Reflections

May, 2007 Mary-Ann:

"... I started thinking about the types of texts available that would appeal to ESL teenagers. I drew a blank. I then started to think about story writing... students writing their own stories. It was at this point I remembered Victoria University lecturer, Lawry Mahon's success with digital story telling with the Central Australian Aboriginal children – the SWIRL program he founded 10 years ago. This would be an appealing, totally engaging program for our ESL students and other students having difficulty engaging with text. I would call on him to discuss the suitability of his program for our students. Perhaps he could in-service interested staff" at our school."

May 23

"Some of the students are asking: 'Why are we in this group?' Is this the group for the dumb kids?' Chris responded that some of the students in the smaller group needed extra help with their writing. I realised our grouping was stigmatising some of the students. In future I would ensure the digital story telling groups comprised a greater range of mixed ability students, otherwise their self-confidence would be undermined."

May 28

"The excitement is palpable. The students love the freedom to take their own photos. These students are really engaged and there is a lot of cooperation between students working in pairs. Their story plans seem to be really guiding them; they set to work straight away with a clear idea of what to do."

November 22

"Michael's book is nearing completion. I am amazed at how professional it looks. He has effectively organised his subjects into chapters. He has selected interesting, relevant information about the history of different sports and summarised some of it into his own words including photos to complement the text. Earlier in the year I was concerned about Michael's lack of engagement and his inability to complete a piece of writing of any satisfactory length or depth. In the first phase of the storytelling program Michael lost his almost completed story about himself. Following this, Michael took full responsibility for writing his book on sport, often working independently at home and saving his story on a USB to bring to school. Over the course of the project, I have observed amazing improvements in his reading comprehension, writing, ICT and personal learning. In addition, he has improved his research skills and learnt a lot about the history of sport. Other students have shown similar improvements in their engagement and learning."

December 9

"The students have had a chance to read their published books. They are so proud of their achievements and excited that their books will soon be available for borrowing from the school library. It's great to see the interest they are showing in each other's stories. They have eagerly enquired, 'Do we get to keep them?' Students in Year 6 and 8 have asked, 'When are we going to get to do one?' "

December 11

“What will I do differently in future? As this pilot program is a success, I will do many things in the same way . I will continue to work with mixed ability groups to avoid stigmatising lesser ability students and I will encourage students to create story plans before taking photos, researching or writing. For most students these have served as a useful guide. I will teach students to record their sources of information and include a bibliography and a contents page where appropriate. On completion of stories I will find a more expedient way to measure, cut and bind the printed pages. We will launch the books and celebrate the students’ success.

A Teacher’s Reflection – Chris Doquile (Involved during the first phase of the program)

December 9

“The excitement the students felt at getting to go out and use the camera and talk about themselves showed the level of engagement this project engendered. The students literacy skills developed in a natural context that was purposeful and personally meaningful. The students were keen to proof read to produce a professional published book. They wanted to get it right. This desire came from them; it was not directed. We gave assistance in the final stages when requested. They had great pride in the outcome and learnt various technologies and literacy skills through the process.”

PoLT Survey

The students were surveyed in July and again in December. The students were just beginning their stories in July and responses on the day the survey was taken were somewhat negative. At this stage none of the books had been printed and bound. The results of the December survey were significantly more positive. At this point in time the students had the opportunity to read published copies of their books. The finished product for the students had been realised and they gained a lot of enjoyment from holding and reading their books. In response to the survey question: “Do you like learning at school?” in July 5 responded ‘Yes’, 3 responded ‘Sometimes’ and 1 responded ‘No’. In December 8 responded ‘Yes’ and 2 responded ‘Sometimes’.

Attendance

As Year 7 student attendance was good before and during the program, no information can be gained from this measure.

It is obvious from the students’ comments that the Digital Story Telling Program is highly regarded and the students would like to see it continue.

Mary-Ann De Carlo would like to continue the program in 2008, with a view to gain more concrete data in relation to improvements in students’ literacy levels through their involvement in the program.

Students’ Self Assessment

How did my planning guide me in my writing?

Aish: It helped a lot. It saved a lot of time.

Sam: It gave me a lot of ideas.

Tugce: Well not that much because afterwards I changed my plan. Well, doing my story, it helped a bit.

Mike: It helped me a lot to do my digital story telling, like it told my topics then I got the idea.

Lyn: My planning didn’t guide me in my writing. I just got it myself.

Abdi: It helped me to know what to do and what to do next.

Sophie: I planned so I won't stand there and not know what to do. So I can have an image in my mind of what to do.









Gai: It was very easy to write and that was good.

Storyboard Photos

The storyboards on the following pages show the student's initial planning.



All about me

<p>Photo </p> <p>How I look <i>good and sexy</i></p> <p><i>Home photo</i> ↓ <i>Memory stick</i></p>	<p>Photo </p> <p>My Family <i>Bro James, Sister Elly, Dad Deni, Mamma Kathy</i></p> <p><i>Home</i> → <i>Memory stick</i></p>
<p>Photo </p> <p>My friends <i>Muzi, Aldi, Mick, Aish, Dec, Selena, Wit, Alex</i></p> <p><i>Tues</i></p>	<p>Photo </p> <p>My hobbies <i>footy, Bball, old school, bikes</i></p> <p><i>Home photos</i> → <i>Memory stick</i></p>
<p>Photo </p> <p>I am Unique because <i>cause I laugh alot</i></p> <p><i>Muzi ✓ to fake</i></p>	<p>Photo </p> <p>I am Good at <i>Footy ✓</i></p> <p><i>Muzi to fake</i></p>
<p>Photo </p> <p>How I travel to school <i>Car or train</i></p> <p><i>Home</i> → <i>Memory stick</i></p>	<p>Photo </p> <p>Where I live <i>Bulleen</i></p> <p><i>Home</i> → <i>Memory stick</i></p>

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7. Focus on Hands on Learning

The elastic heart of youth cannot be compressed into one constrained shape long at a time.

MARK TWAIN, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

“The Great Race” at Fitzroy Primary School

The Project

“The Great Race” involved 38 grade 5/6 students from two grades. There were roughly equal numbers of boys and girls involved. The comparatively small class sizes at the school was definitely a factor that helped in the undertaking the ‘hands on’ aspect of this project. The teachers are conscientious, proactive and vocal advocates of boy’s education. With the launch of the Success for Boys program, the school seized the opportunity to particularly target a small group of somewhat disengaged boys with this excellent initiative.

The Inspiration

“The Great Race” was born out of round table discussions held fortnightly between the Yarra Schools Networks Success for Boys schools. The project involved the construction of a small balsa wood cars driven by a battery with the aim being, a race day in which the cars participate.

Primarily the unit was about reigniting learning, making it fun, active and allowing the students an independence that drove the learning outcomes rather than being inhibited by them. It also freed up the teaching staff allowing greater interaction with individuals and taking away the “look at me” aspect of teaching.

“The Great Race” was implemented as a direct result of some students, specifically boys, feeling disengaged from the curriculum, resulting in behavioural issues and absenteeism. The Fitzroy Primary School teaching community recognised the importance of “refuelling” boys in grade 5/6 with regard to school and what it has to offer, which can often take second place behind growing up and finding and operating within an appropriate or as may be the case inappropriate peer group.

Failing to act was not an option. The school prides itself on support and empathy and the teachers on making strong and lasting relationships with their students.

Positive Outcomes

“The Great Race” resulted in greater student engagement, fewer absentees.

Teachers involved were able to reflect on their practice and some changes were made that practice as a result of participation. Important outcomes of the project included further development of integrated curriculum approach. At the stage when the whole upper school was involved as audience at the culmination of the project there was a perceived improved sense of connectedness and general school harmony. There was concomitant recognition, particularly among some of the boys participating, of the importance of schooling and a reassurance for transition students who had been experiencing some trepidation as they prepared for high school.

How did the Project Operate?

The teachers researched similar projects involving the construction of solar cars. The resources were then gathered from school suppliers. These included balsa wood, wheels, wire and plastic straws and from Jay Car (an electronics shop) battery cases, plastic propellers and electrical wire.

The initial introductory lesson involved the modelling of how to construct a model car. Included in this was the measuring of wire, the cutting to size of balsa wood and the explanation of how an electrical circuit worked. Sessions during the week included a practical lesson (constructing the car, painting the chassis) and theory (explanation of different forms of propulsion and an investigation into a form of transport of their choice). The emphasis was on a collective, enjoyable, productive environment.

Learning outcomes were set in place and negotiated with individuals as long as every one had a car to race. In some cases, where a student had a significant record of absenteeism, the regular participation in these sessions as part of the overall project represented a significant outcome in itself. In one case a student who showed a proficiency in art was guided in achieving outcomes that revolved around this strength. The pursuit of improved Literacy and Numeracy outcomes were embedded within all stages of the project. Technical drawings and working to scale became an important area of exploration in maths sessions. One creative writing session explored the predicting of an emotional response to the question, "What might happen if I won?"

Conclusion

"The Great Race" was a worthwhile learning experience for the year 5 and 6 students of Fitzroy Primary School. It allowed for a significant level of engagement for both boys and girls and "ownership of learning" for all the students. It also inspired the teachers to reflect and develop their pedagogy, particularly in relation to boys' education. The challenge now is the upkeep of the enthusiasm and the development of similar programs in the future.

Contact Details.

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Collingwood College Solar Car Project

Abstract

As part of the VET Certificate II in Applied Design in Industry, a group of 20 year 10 & 11 students designed, built and tested a model s car. Working in teams of 5, the students competed with their cars in the annual Victorian Model Solar Car Challenge, held at Scienceworks.

Background to the project

To deliver the VET Certificate II, a year-long project was required, so that the students could achieve a number of competencies required by the certificate.

It was decided that the Model Solar car would provide a good context for this.

Students who did not attain the competencies did not receive the certificate.

How did the project operate?

Every Wednesday afternoon, the VET class ran from 1:30pm – 5:00pm.

Students worked in teams.

For each session, the team had to develop each individual's work plan.

The two staff members acted in an advisory capacity.

What have been the benefits of the project for individual students, your school and the wider community?

Students were able to:

- Work co-operatively in teams.
- Developed a range of problem solving skills.
- Develop organisational skills.
- Develop project management skills.
- Practise conflict resolution strategies.

The school benefited by:

- Having a context through which to deliver the Applied Design Certificate.
- Forging links with the industry.

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Active Guided Reading at Richmond West Primary School

"We are always asking boys to draw, respond and write."

This is a thought that struck me after a recent Success for Boys Professional Learning session. Does my own teaching reflect this? The answer was yes. Was this the reason why the boys in my class need constant reminders to stay task focused?

On further reflection I decided that it was time for me to change the type of activities that I gave them, but even further questions arose in my mind. When in the day would I do this and how? Guided reading time became an obvious choice for several reasons:

- Smaller groups
- The chance for deeper understanding and enjoyment
- Opportunities for hands on approaches leading to discussions
- Exposure to new concepts and experiences
- Opportunities for students to follow procedures independently

Six months on and the results are evident. A small group could not wait to read the factual *Concrete* book again. They had experienced making concrete. They also enjoyed the following:

- Making and eating toasted sandwiches
- Chewing bubblegum and blowing bubbles
- Observing live snails,
- Making simple science experiments including a microscope
- Making their own magic show
- Using computers
- Construction activities

Not only did these children enjoy these activities enormously but they also gained a deeper understanding and insight into the books read. They were fully engaged and there was no need to remind them to stay task focused.

The results have been two-fold; my workload has increased as I have needed to source and provide these materials. However, in classroom practice, I spend less time working with these children to get tasks completed. They have become self-motivated, independent learners.

To have 98% of the children in my class benchmark for literacy in 2007 is my reward and I am convinced my program of literacy activities has been a resounding success. When we engage in literacy sessions the children are keen, eager and excited not knowing what activity will follow. Not all groups and books lead themselves to hands on activities but when they do, I take the opportunities and encourage the children in my care to do the same.

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A Snap Shot of the Kitchen Garden Project at Yarra Primary School

The class of 5/6 students gather beneath the old peppercorn tree and are seated on the circular brick wall facing out towards the garden.

They are quietly chatting among themselves. I introduce a new garden volunteer to the class, we briefly talk about how the garden is looking after the weekend rain-falls. The groups set off with their volunteer helpers on a variety of tasks and for the next 35 minutes they are totally engaged in their activities. Isabel and her group plan how they will arrange the selection of herbs around the seating area. There are lots of discussion and decisions to be made. I leave them to work it out and as I leave they are smelling the basil and reflecting on the foods they have tasted with basil. Caroline's group have wandered off to the propagating house to plant some capsicum and tomatoes nearby. Some of the boys are investigating the pump action water bottles in the hot house. Typical.

Not long after they have settled into their task of pricking out tiny mesclun lettuce seedlings and re-potting them. It's a very delicate operation which requires gentle fingers and careful handling. Robyn is delighted to be planting sunflower seeds with her group along the fence line near the sweet corn. She shares her enthusiasm and engages her group in the task of preparing the soil, planting the seeds and watering them carefully. They read the information I have prepared on sun flowers. Someone remembers seeing fields of sunflowers and corn in France. Mathew has connected with his volunteer helper and together they discuss worldly matters of green-house gases, the relationship of manure and the ozone layer, and the donkey poo compost they are digging into the garden.

The time has flown, the jobs are done and the children gather once more beneath the peppercorn tree to share their experiences. The recess bell rings, they say cheerio to the volunteers and wander off chatting among themselves.

Another garden class is over. In two weeks time they will harvest some of the vegetables and prepare some delicious fresh food in our new kitchen area. These dishes will then be shared around the table bringing together the purpose and connection between growing fresh food from the garden and the food on the plate.

The garden classes are giving the students the opportunity to develop different skills and understandings in a setting outside their classroom. Some of my observations so far -

- Connections between growing fresh food, harvesting, preparing and sharing
- Social skills development and working in different teams with volunteer helpers
- Sharing the work to get the jobs done
- Short tasks with a purpose and an end result
- Learning about different plants and how to care for them
- Respecting the environment
- Sense of ownership
- Physical activity in the fresh air
- Having fun, relaxing and reflecting

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8. Focus on Community Action Projects

*Work consists of whatever a body is OBLIGED to do,
and...Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do.*

MARK TWAIN, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

A Middle Years Student Action Team Approach at Abbotsford Primary School

Project abstract

There are twenty one students at the grade 5/6 level at Abbotsford Primary School. The coordination of Middle Years and Success for Boys has been undertaken by the grade 5/6 teacher. Due to the small cohort and combined network coordination roles a student action project was undertaken to form the basis of the action research project for both initiatives. Although a combined student project, specified areas of research were undertaken specifically addressing middle years and boys education with the interrelationship between both informing each research component. The Success for Boys component/ project 'fed' into the Middle Years Project, with the skills and dispositions developed in the Middle Years complimenting Success for Boys.

Student Action Project

Development, coordination, implementation and evaluation of student action project Triple S- Saving Shelter Shed by grade 5/6 student action team

Middle Years

Focus: whole class to successfully participate in the implementation of project from conceptualising, developing, coordinating to implementation and evaluation using a student action model

To produce a work folio demonstrating phases, processes , actions, skills, learnings, and evaluation

To confidently articulate project to the school and wider education community

To incorporate 'Triple S' Photostory produced by S4B team.

To inform and support S4B team members – skills, dispositions and learnings

Engagement

Leadership

Co operation

Skill development

Presentation

Success for Boys

Focus: production of PhotoStory documenting/ chronicling student action project

To confidently articulate project to the school and wider education community

To inform broader Middle years team presentation through/ utilising ICT skills- general, Photostory

Peer tutoring

Design , production

Presentation

Engagement

Leadership

Co operation

Skill development

Presentation

Other areas curriculum/ initiatives supporting projects: Digilearn, Thinking skills- eg Philosophy for Children-Community of inquiry, Habits of Mind , range of thinking tools, Civics and Citizenship, PoLT, assessment and reporting documents, and VELS strands, domains and dimensions. These curriculum /initiatives have supported the project; and learnings in these areas have also been further developed or enhanced during this project.

Background to project

A student action project was implemented as a way of meeting student learning needs in both the Middle Years and Success for Boys initiatives. The schools' teacher opinion survey had identified student leadership as an issue that needed to be addressed. This had been a concern over the past few years. The grade 5/6 teacher had knowledge and experience in student action approach and thought this would be an effective way to develop leadership skills and as well provide a rich task that would incorporate a range of VELs, skills and dispositions. Also it would meet the student learning needs identified in the Middle Years and Success for Boys initiatives and employ appropriate documented strategies for student engagement.

The grade 5/6 teacher had knowledge and experience in student action approach and thought that a student action team project would be an effective way of developing leadership skills as well as provide a rich task that would incorporate a range of VELs, skills and dispositions. It would also meet the student learning needs identified in the Middle years and Success for Boys initiatives and employ appropriate documented strategies outlined for Middle Years and Success for Boys student engagement.

Expected outcomes were:

- student directed /engagement
- learning opportunities,- skills , knowledge and understanding across the curriculum
- leadership opportunities – responsibility and management
- building positive self concepts
- boys engagement
- building of positive relationships with peers, teachers

Without the implementation of this project students would not have had the opportunity to develop their leadership skills. The JSC was not addressing student leadership development due to limited numbers on JSC. Council membership was restricted to 2 students in grade 5/6 and representatives from other grades. It was primarily tokenistic and lacked real leadership and decision making opportunities. At best leadership opportunities were limited and fragmented.

Also the school runs a healthy relationships program with allotted time each week for students to be involved in activities around relationships and values. In first term the grade sixes displayed a reluctance to participate in the Healthy Relationships program and had become disengaged. The student action project was initially timetabled for this timeslot. The continuance of the standard Healthy Relationships program for these students would have led to disenchantment and disengagement in an important area of personal and interpersonal learning and development.

How the project operated

Triple S -Saving Shelter Shed project followed a student action team approach where all students were responsible for decision making and management. Each decision made followed democratic processes and was discussed to ensure that students were accepting of each decision.

An overall action plan, with tasks and timelines was developed by the class.

The class divided into five teams- management, finance, public relations, design and launch to take on related tasks and responsibilities. Each group worked cooperatively to achieve their goals and deadlines. Team action plans were developed to support the class action plan. Each team worked in partnership with each other, for example each team provided the finance team with their own budget, and team action plans were provided to the management team who were then able to coordinate personnel support for teams

during other team down times. This cohesive coordination and interrelationship between the groups allowed for the smooth running of the project.

Regular board meetings were held where each group would report on progress, make request or take suggestions from the whole class. Each student had their own diary where they were able to record team meetings, personal actions and personal reflections on the project as a whole, their team, their role and contribution.

The teacher role was to facilitate and support student skill development and understandings in the project, for example, memo writing, budgets, photostory, action plan components, graphics.

All students individually contributed to the grand opening of the games room, including master of ceremonies, a range of speakers and table tennis demonstrations.

The project has been recorded as a big book journal and a photostory to celebrate and share with others.

Project presentation

Big book journal

Photostory

Presentation at Getting Clever with Student Learning- Yarra Network

Benefits of the project for individual students, your school and the wider community

"Hi, now I am going to tell you about our class' experiences and reflections on working on the shelter shed.

- *A lot of people said that they learned to be more cooperative and it was a great experience.*
- *Team work was important and being kind.*
- *We learnt to work in groups better.*
- *Other people learnt from each other.*
- *Everybody learnt that you can't leave anybody out in a group project.*
- *We learnt to preserve and be patient.*
- *It built our confidence.*
- *It was about friendship.*
- *We learnt to work through problems and to be confident that it will work out.*
- *Learnt how to order things and about purchasing.*
- *It involved a lot more thinking.*

Everyone had so much fun working on the shelter shed.

We all enjoyed the experience and we hope others will get to enjoy what we have done after we leave.

Thank you for listening. "

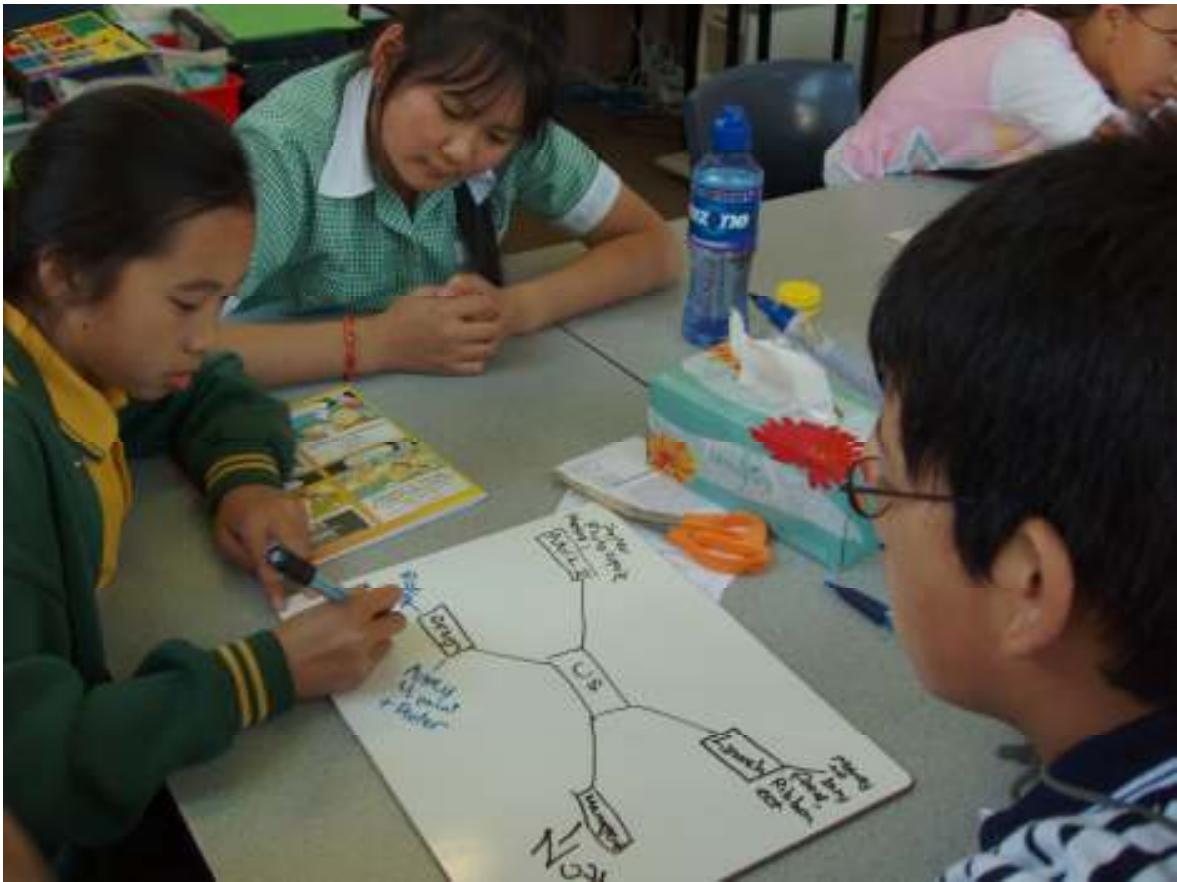
Reflections & experiences speech written and given at the grand opening of the APS games room

Communication- contacting people, using directories, memo, briefing, requesting support, answering questions, persuading, protocols, writing letters, public speaking, local protocols and processes, event organisation

Management- conceptualising, timelines, action plans, budgets, coordination of components, prioritising

Dispositions- cooperation, thinking, perseverance, initiative, responsibility

Curriculum- –VELS- *Physical, Personal and Social Learning*: interpersonal development, personal learning, civics and citizenship; *Disciplined based learning*: The Arts, English, Humanities(Economics), Mathematics; *Interdisciplinary Learning*: Communication, Design, Creativity & Technology, ICT, Thinking



The project will serve as a model for future student action projects in the school and could serve as a model for other schools. It has supported the Middle years and Success for Boys initiatives and strategies by providing an example of

- students being capable of leadership and decision making,
- students respond responsibly and enthusiastically to authentic learning tasks
- boys responding to 'hands on' learning tasks
- boys responding to leadership and group challenges positively
- the student action team model as an integrated learning rich task

The project has also provided a usable space for students to use at recess and lunchtimes, providing them with further management opportunities in regard to monitoring, maintenance, organisation and management. It has left a legacy from the grade sixes and an excellent example of why it is important to put back into your community and how it can be achieved. It has provided the grade five students with the skills and dispositions to act as peer support for incoming students next year.

Additional information

Resources

Student Action Teams- Learning in the community -A how to manual

Australian Youth Research Centre The University of Melbourne

Connect - supporting student participation –student action magazine

Values education- professional development activities and support materials Curriculum Corporation DEST

Discovering Democracy Handbook- case studies- grants school program

Victorian Discovering Democracy Project Roger Holdsworth, Susan Mellor DEECD/DEST

Philosophy for Children- Lipman (correct title/ ref to be forwarded)

Habits of Mind Costa (ref to be forwarded)

Civics and Citizenship national assessment statement DEST /ACER

Victorian Essential Learning Standards DEECD

Principles of Learning and Teaching documents

Network activities/meetings and workshops

Evaluation

PoLT Student Learning and Perception surveys pre and post project

Post action team survey- teacher devised project action plan survey

Project action student books Reflection/ self & team action entries

Teacher observation/anecdotal entries

Collegiate support

Pam Burton

Zita Pinda

Network colleagues eg snapshot writing, thinking skills and tools, general support, 'listeners'

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9. Some Useful Resources

Using the Conceptual Framework



Areas To Be Addressed

1.

2.

3.

**Conceptual Framework for Improving Boys' Literacy –
Focusing on Boys' Sense of Self**

	Possible impact	Necessary Action
Reconfiguring the Classroom as Active and Embodied		
Allowing Choice and Utilising Personal Experience		
Fostering Boys' Sense of themselves as Learners		

RANK & REASON

1. List all of the items
you wish to prioritise

	RANK	REASON

2. Rank each item from most
important to least important

3. State your reasons

Y CHART



Looks Like



Sounds Like


Feels Like










Write your topic/idea in the box
and then describe how it
looks, sounds and feels

http://www.readwritethink.org/student_mat/index.asp
Student Materials Index

ReadWriteThink offers a collection of online Student Materials to support literacy learning in the K-12 classroom. These interactive tools can be used to supplement a variety of lessons and provide an opportunity for students to use technology while developing their literacy skills. Click on the name of each interactive for a brief description of the tool and a list of the ReadWriteThink lessons that use the tool. From there you'll also be able to directly access the tool and use it in your classroom.

<p><u>Acrostic Poems</u> This online tool enables students to learn about and write acrostic poems. Elements of the writing process are also included.</p>	
<p><u>Alphabet Organizer</u> Alphabet Organizer has numerous applications for classroom instruction. Students can use the tool to print an alphabet chart or pages for an alphabet book.</p>	
<p><u>Animal Inquiry</u> Supporting inquiry-based research projects, the Animal Inquiry interactive invites elementary students to explore animal facts and habitats using writing prompts to guide and record their findings.</p>	
<p><u>Circle Plot Diagram</u> The Circle Plot Diagram can be used as a prewriting graphic organizer for students writing original stories with a circular plot structure as well as a postreading organizer used to explore the text structures in a book.</p>	
<p><u>Comic Creator</u> The Comic Creator invites students to compose their own comic strips for a variety of contexts (prewriting, pre- and postreading activities, response to literature, and so on).</p>	
<p><u>Comparison and Contrast Guide</u> The Comparison and Contrast Guide outlines the characteristics of the genre and provides direct instruction on the methods of organizing, gathering ideas, and writing comparison and contrast essays.</p>	

<p><u>Doodle Splash</u></p> <p>Doodle Splash combines the process of drawing with analytical thinking by pairing online drawing with writing prompts that encourage students to make connections between their visual designs and the text.</p>	
<p><u>Drama Map</u></p> <p>Students analyzing a play can map out the key elements of character, setting, conflict, and resolution for a variety purposes. An updated version of the Story Map, this interactive is aimed at secondary students.</p>	
<p><u>Eye on Idioms</u></p> <p>Eye on Idioms can be used to introduce students to idioms. The activity includes a series of exercises, in which students view the literal representations of seven idioms and then examine the metaphorical meanings of the idioms.</p>	
<p><u>Fact Fragment Frenzy</u></p> <p>Fact Fragment Frenzy provides elementary students with an online model for finding facts in nonfiction text, then invites students to find facts in five sample passages.</p>	
<p><u>Flip-a-Chip</u></p> <p>Flip-a-Chip is a novel approach to word study that promotes vocabulary development. The activity provides hands-on practice with affixes and roots, and also promotes comprehension through structural analysis and vocabulary in context.</p>	
<p><u>Graphic Map</u></p> <p>The Graphic Map assists teachers and students in reading and writing activities by charting the high and low points related to a particular item or group of items, such as events during a day or chapters in a book.</p>	
<p><u>Hints about Print</u></p> <p>Hints about Print demonstrates the process of evaluating a nonfiction print resource to determine its appropriateness for a research project.</p>	

Letter Generator

The Letter Generator is a useful tool for students to learn the parts of a business or friendly letter and then compose and print letters containing all the essential elements needed for both styles of correspondence.



Letter Poem Creator

The Letter Poem Creator provides an online model for the thought process involved in creating poems based upon a letter; then, students are invited to experiment with letter poems independently.



Line Break Explorer

The interactive explores the ways that poets choose line breaks in their writing. After viewing the demonstration, students are invited to experiment with line breaks themselves.



Literary Elements Map

Students can map out the key literary elements of character, setting, conflict, and resolution as prewriting for their own fiction or as analysis of a text by another author in this secondary-level interactive.



Literary Graffiti

Literary Graffiti, a high school version of the [Doodle Splash](#) student interactive, also aims to teach students to visualize what they are reading to help them develop as readers.



Multigenre Mapper








Teaching multigenre is a natural way to incorporate reading, writing, and research into the content areas and other disciplines. This interactive invites students to create original multigenre, multimodel works—one drawing and three written texts—and allows writers to name the genres for each section, making the tool flexible for multiple writing activities.



Persuasion Map Fantastic for Analytical Writing

The Persuasion Map is an interactive graphic organizer that enables students to map out their arguments for a persuasive essay or debate.



<p><u>Picture Match</u></p> <p>Picture Match is a matching game that reinforces the concept of beginning-letter and short- and long-vowel sounds by prompting students to identify a series of pictures and match them to the first letter or the vowel in the words they represent.</p>	
<p><u>Plot Diagram</u></p> <p>The Plot Diagram is an organizational tool focusing on a pyramid or triangular shape, which is used to map the events in a story. This mapping of plot structure allows readers and writers to visualize the key features of stories.</p>	
<p><u>ReadWriteThink Printing Press</u></p> <p>The interactive Printing Press is designed to assist students in creating newspapers, brochures, flyers, and booklets. Teachers and students can choose from several templates to publish class newspapers, informational brochures, and flyers announcing class events.</p>	
<p><u>ReadWriteThink Webbing Tool</u></p> <p>The Webbing Tool provides a free-form graphic organizer for activities that ask students to pursue hypertextual thinking and writing. The tool provides a quick way for students to trace out options and rearrange connections in prewriting and post-reading activities.</p>	
<p><u>Riddle Interactive</u></p> <p>The Riddle Interactive outlines the characteristics of riddle poems and provides direct instruction on the prewriting and drafting process for writing original riddle poems.</p>	
<p><u>Shape Poems</u></p> <p>In this online tool, elementary students can write poems about different shapes. Elements of the writing process are also included.</p>	
<p><u>Stapleless Book</u></p> <p>Designed for teachers and students alike, the Stapleless Book can be used for taking notes while reading, making picture books, collecting facts, or creating vocabulary booklets . . . the possibilities are endless!</p>	

Story Map

The Story Map interactive is designed to assist students in prewriting and postreading activities by focusing on the key elements of character, setting, conflict, and resolution.



Timeline

Students can generate descriptive timelines that can be plotted with their choice of units of measure (date, time, event, entry, or other). Entries on the timeline automatically become links that allow students to easily navigate from one point on the timeline to another.



Venn Diagram, 2 Circles

This interactive tool allows students to create Venn Diagrams that contain two overlapping circles, enabling them to organize their information logically. Students may edit and print their finished diagrams.



Venn Diagram, 3 Circles

This interactive tool allows students to create Venn Diagrams that contain three overlapping circles, enabling them to organize their information logically. Students may edit and print their finished diagrams.



What's in the Bag?

What's in the Bag? invites primary students to play with vocabulary common to their environment.



Word Family Sort

This online activity helps students recognize word patterns by having them sort a series of words into short-vowel word families.



Word Maker

Using Word Maker, students generate words by adding a beginning letter or blend to a word ending. This engaging tool helps students with letter-sound correspondence.



Word Mover for Holes

This interactive invites students to create a found poem by grabbing tiles of words from the novel *Holes*.



Word Mover for "I Have a Dream"

This interactive invites students to create a found poem by grabbing tiles of words from Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech.



Word Wizard

Word Wizard uses themes from four popular U.S. children's books to create word puzzles that students solve by unscrambling letters and considering related clues.



Improving Boys' Writing

When leading for improvement in boys' writing consider the following:

1 Schools as Learning Organisations

- When teachers question their practice, plan collaboratively and regularly review their curriculum organisation boys more likely to succeed in literacy
- The role of the Principal is vital in this and usually determined the way the school functions as a learning organisation
- 2 constant features characterised schools where boys learning improved
- Departmental/Year Level focus on improving teaching and learning
- Emphasis on developing teaching techniques which are rooted in specific coherent lesson organisation and centred in pupils' independent learning

2 General Teaching Principles-

Teacher confidence and expectations

- Teacher input
- Teacher confidence about their own teaching combined with effective planning
- Explicit explanation of language use

Lesson Planning and organisation

- Short, sharp and finite
- Tight structure
- Well focussed lessons
- Clear targets
- Achievable targets
- Structured tasks – templates, genre samples, graphic organisers
- Brisk start to lessons
- Clearly stated, shared objectives
- Well maintained and appropriate pace
- Varied activities in clearly phased stages
- Teachers modelling writing
- Cooperative learning – jigsaw etc
- Class shared headings, structures and sentence stems for note taking

Discipline

- Non-confrontational
- Approaches to discipline
- Collaborative classroom
- Shared approaches
- Rebuke in private, praise in public especially groups as well as individuals

3 Explicit Literacy Teacher Practices

Teacher Knowledge and Belief Systems about Literacy.

- Effective teachers emphasise the importance of meaning in their literacy teaching and have developed subject knowledge about how to represent content to their pupils.
- The impact of teacher's belief systems in boys learning is potentially huge. It can determine the success or failure of strategies that at face value are perceived as universally beneficial for example the use of drafting practices, writing frames and ICT. Our attitudes make this difference!

Explicit teaching about language

- Teachers need to explain features of good writing and grammatical structures

A range of strategies for Writing

- Stepped instructions using mini plenaries, task cards

- Paired and cooperative learning
- Use of drama to explore character, setting, plot, freeze framing.
- Kinesthetic activities floor games, line-ups, human bingo
- Talk time for writing to discuss, shape and direct text prior to beginning writing
- Author's chair

Topic Selection in Narrative Writing

- Needs to be based on real life experiences
- Students own expertise important
- Boys build imaginative worlds based on a "real" starting point.
- Boys perform best when they choose the narrative topic
- In story writing a step by step thinking process helps boys achieve a more considered narrative structure
- Effective scaffolding is helped by talking with a partner before writing and making a choice about the context
- Consciously considering the language which might be used prior to writing, giving choices, use writing frames and prompts

Oracy

- Oral work plays a vital role in the development of writing and can provide open ended opportunities for the independent formulation and articulation of ideas is important to boys

Importance of Literature

- Experiencing emotionally powerful texts and engaging narratives is a prime factor in the development of writing for all pupils.
- Oral environment is important – reading aloud to students so they hear poeticised language which is memorable and contains powerful rhythms.
- Traditional tales with strong narrative structure is important in the early development of boys writing

Planning Writing

- Boys are motivated where planning and drafting have clear aims
- Medium Term Planning
Planning frameworks which are specially adapted to meet pupil's needs in their different stages of writing development and based upon the actual context of the writing

Drafting

- Effective drafting is rooted in a range of strategies involving whole class groups, paired and individual work
- Explicit teaching of drafting skills important through the use of photocopied scripts for editing exercises
- Separate presentation (i.e. handwriting) from composition.

Writing Frames –

- Are most effective where they are modified to meet the specific needs of an individual, group or class to provide a suitable framework
- As confidence grows, frame should be gradually withdrawn

Active Learning Tasks – VATK, MI, Thinking skills

4. Goal Setting, Self Assessment and Reflection

Goal Setting

- Targets, monitoring and mentoring groups and individuals can improve the writing of under performing boys
- Sharing assessment with pupils and parents
- Assemblies with a specific focus on boy's achievement
- Staff discussions
- Mentors allocated to targeted students
- Homework and revision clubs

- Students develop self assessment strategies
- Students use rubrics and writing frames to self assess

Pupil Consciousness Raising - Reflection

- Use of Metacognitive approaches improves boys writing

5 ICT and Visual Technology

Use of Visual Media

- Boys work well when given opportunities to use the language found in cartoon, TV and video games. Focus however on the methods used by the visual media to convey action rather than retelling the story. This dramatic dimension to their writing is accompanied by more effective use of language, adverbs and complex sentences in comparison to girls writing.
- Film as text studies focus on Directors use of movement, music, colour through the cameras lens can be used o create similar effects with the pen.

ICT

- ICT motivates boys especially multi-media authoring.
- It supports writing, improves reading and spelling and develops story writing skills
- Boys see ICT as a means to improve presentation of work and increases self confidence
- Overcomes teacher disapproval of handwriting
- Spell checkers give Instant feedback, which boys like
- It is however the alterability of text on screen that offers the most impact in the linguistic choices pupils make, supporting the teaching of composition, for example using the highlighter and font facilities to focus on topic sentences, vocabulary chains and cohesion of expression.

6 Other Males

Students

- Older pupils as male role models; at least 2 years difference in age.

Adults

- Grandparents, sports stars, teachers, special visitors, local experts, retired professionals (see Rotary and Probus)

Alternatives Possibilities Choices

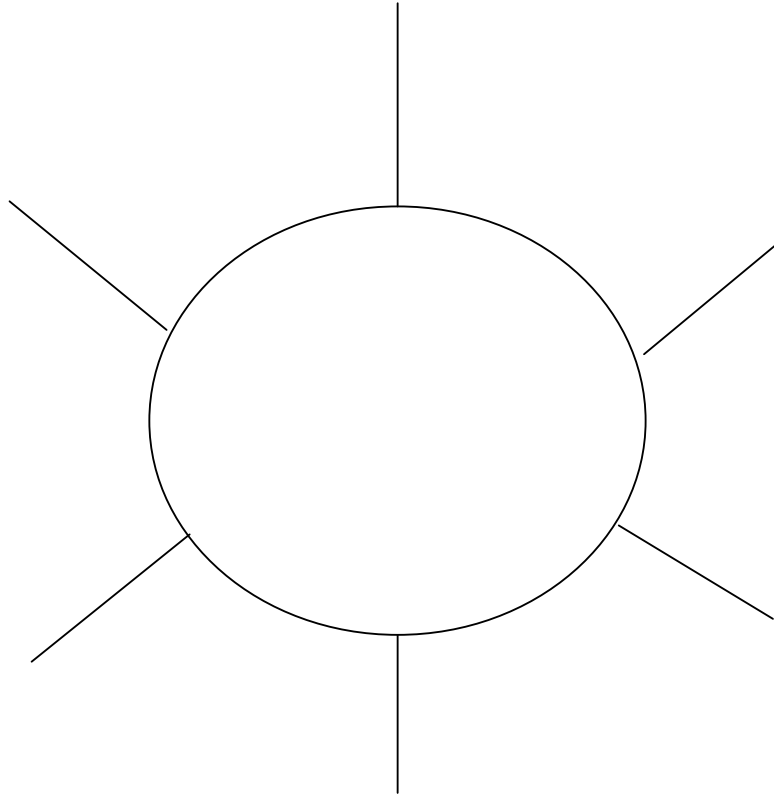
Alternatives

Possibilities

Practices to
Improve
Boys'
Engagement

Choices

Defining Multi-Literacies



Our definition:

10.The Schools of the Yarra Schools Consortium

The Schools of The Yarra Schools Consortium

Abbotsford Primary School

Abbotsford Primary is a small inner city school located in the City of Yarra and mainly services families from the areas of Richmond, Abbotsford and Collingwood, with a smaller number of students travelling from other areas to attend the school's Chinese Bilingual Program. Abbotsford Primary School was first established in 1877.

The fundamental goal of Abbotsford Primary School is to ensure that all students have the opportunity to develop to their full potential, in a caring, supportive environment in which respect for the rights of everyone is encouraged. The educational, physical and emotional development of each student is a priority and the school provides a challenging environment, which aims to encourage students to become considerate, responsible and self-reliant.

Collingwood College P-12

Collingwood College is the only Prep to 12 college in the City of Yarra, and is one of three public secondary schools in this inner city local council area. It has a current enrolment of 540, which includes a diverse student population, socio-economically, ethnically and culturally. It has first class facilities and superior resources supporting its curriculum.

To prevent students from feeling overwhelmed by the Prep to 12 structure, students are given a sense of place through the college's separate Junior (Prep to 5), Middle (year 6 to 8) and Senior (year 9 to VCE) sub schools.

Collingwood College is an accredited international school (CIAS) and is committed to being a school that motivates each student to pursue learning by continually thinking productively at the highest level.

The College offers four streams:

- Prep-12 primarily based on VELs but incorporating a Reggio Emilia inspired approach to learning in Junior School.
- Prep to 10 based on the teachings of Rudolf Steiner.
- The Island Work Education Unit offering education and training for students over 15 years of age who wish to develop the skills to undertake apprenticeships or traineeships.
- Collingwood Alternative School for students 13 years to 16 years who have experienced problems in conventional schooling.

Collingwood English Language School

Guiding Principles and Values

Collingwood English Language School (CELS) is a major provider of the New Arrivals Program in the Northern Region. It is a combined primary and secondary school, which provides full time, intensive English courses for newly-arrived migrants and refugees prior to their enrolment in a mainstream school or further education.

The main aim of the school's program is to provide a cooperative and supportive learning and working environment to enable students to develop the language and skills they require to move successfully into mainstream schooling. A secondary aim is to introduce students to Australian society and culture. The school values the diversity and richness of cultures represented in the school and implements policies that support the provisions of racial and religious tolerance, sexual harassment and equal opportunity legislation.

Demographics

The school's target enrolment on base is 78 secondary students and 39 primary students with the period of enrolment for students varying from 6-12 months depending on individual student needs and pressures from student waiting lists.

Students come from all over the world with over 30 countries represented during the last three years. The highest proportion of students in recent years has been from Mainland China followed by Vietnam. There have also been significant numbers of students recently from Africa, Iraq and former Yugoslavia

Role in the Northern Region

The school responds to the needs of newly-arrived students primarily in the Northern Region. CELS also provide off campus ["Outpost"] programs in primary schools with high numbers of new arrivals as the need arises. Changes in settlement patterns affect the provision and content of these programs. Outposting is provided in a single school or for a cluster of schools. In term 1 2007 the following Outpost programs were operating: Preston North East Primary, Bethal Primary, Fawkner Primary, Thomastown Primary and Upfield Primary.

Fitzroy Primary School

Fitzroy Primary School (George St) was established in 1855. The Junior Campus (Napier St) was officially opened in 1970.

The school is situated in a vibrant and culturally diverse inner city area. The population (130 students) is drawn from local public and private housing, as well as a number living outside the area, but whose parents work in the immediate vicinity.

Currently the Senior Campus (Grades 3-6) is located at George St and the Junior Campus (Grades P-2) is located at Napier St. Eighteen languages other than English are represented, including Turkish, Somali, Vietnamese, Hmong and Chinese.

The philosophy and values of the school are based upon inclusiveness, acceptance of diversity and responsiveness to the real needs of individual children and families as they enter the school community. As a result, apart from the range of teaching and learning strategies that exist, a significant and key feature is the extra curricular experiences and links to the community that are integral to the school.

Many of these additional programs and links to the broader community, reflect the key principals of learning and teaching, (POLT) by ensuring that the learning environment, and staff interactions are meaningful, truly relevant to the local community and relate to the values and experiences of children, as they move from their local context into the school environment.

Some key values are embraced and upheld throughout the school. These include

- Care and appreciation of the environment and sustainability
- Social justice and equity
- Acceptance and celebration of the multicultural diverse backgrounds of all children and families in the school
- Acceptance and focus on students of all abilities (including a significant number of students funded under the DE&T Disabilities Program)
- Active connectedness to the wider community, ensuring links from the wider community enhance and extend the learning and experiences provided to all children
- Importance placed on the development of physical, personal and social skills

Key examples of the community based learning experiences that are integral to the major pedagogical tools used across the school include:

- Kitchen Garden Program, supported by ANZ
- Big Buddy Reading Program, supported by Macquarie Bank
- Healthy Food/Breakfast Club Program, supported by KPMG and Red Cross
- Indigenous Garden developed and maintained with the support of the local community
- Arts projects, eg. Mosaic tile mural, garden sculptures etc. supported by Rotary and Artists For Kids Culture
- School Choir performing across wider community, supported by The Songroom and The Gertrude Players
- Weekly tennis lessons, supported by Kids Tennis Foundation
- Blue Earth Self Esteem Program, supported by City of Yarra
- KidsZone after school care program facilitated by School Council

The school has a high Student Learning Needs Index (SLN) with 63% of the students coming from Non English Speaking Backgrounds (NSB). Over 87% of the school families are in receipt of government assistance through the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). This places the school in Like Schools Group (LSG) 9.

Lynall Hall Community School

Lynall Hall Community School is a small school located in Richmond, with convenient access to all forms of transport. Lynall Hall caters for students who for a variety of reasons are seeking an alternative to mainstream schooling.

Lynall Hall provides an alternative secondary education to an enrolment of approximately 100 students from across the metropolitan area. The school's size and pragmatic blending of social and academic learning are key ingredients to its ability to service the needs of otherwise disengaged students.

Lynall Hall Community School provides a broad curriculum encompassing relevant aspects of the Key Learning Areas for Years 7- 10 with a balanced mix of core and elective studies. A range of VCE and VET subjects is offered at years 11 and 12 and students in year 10 have the opportunity to study at least one VCE or VET subject. There is also considerable flexibility in teaching strategies.

As members of a school community which emphasizes mutual trust and goal based learning strategies it is considered important that students develop productive behaviour and attitudes, enhanced skills and abilities, and realistic views of their strengths and weaknesses.

Melbourne Girls' College

Located beside the Yarra River in Richmond, Melbourne Girls' College was established in 1994, with the aim of providing an exemplary environment for the education of girls. In emphasizing Science and Technology, with a focus on students developing Scientific and Technological literacy during their middle years, the curriculum provides opportunities for girls to prepare for leadership roles in areas where women have been traditionally under-represented. The emphasis on Information and Communication Technologies is incorporated across all areas of the curriculum.

With an enrolment of 1220 students, the college is divided into two sub-schools: Middle (Years 7 to 9) and Senior (Years 10 to 12). In the Middle school, students experience a curriculum incorporating interdisciplinary, integrated units where the focus changes according to the different developmental needs of the learners. The Senior School offers a wide range of VCE and VET options. Literacy and Numeracy Support programs operate in the Middle School. A whole school daily mentoring program has been implemented to scaffold the development of students' social competencies and to enhance their understanding of and their ability to take control of their own learning.

The College provides an extensive co-curricular program to meet the educational, developmental and social needs of the girls at all levels.

Richmond Primary School

The vision of Richmond Primary School promotes integrity, lifelong learning and attainment of excellence. The values that form the basis of our actions are, integrity, trust, cooperation, self-esteem, excellence, learning and respect.

Richmond Primary School is located in Richmond, an inner suburb of Melbourne. The school was opened in 1874. In the late 80's Brighton Street, Burnley Primary School and Cremorne Street Primary were amalgamated and the new Richmond Primary School was formed.

. The majority of the students are from the immediate locality, but a significant proportion of the enrolment comes from outside this area. The demographics of the school are changing with many two professional working parent families replacing a highly multi-cultural community. Whilst the school still has a multi-cultural presence, many of the children come from second and third generation migrant families. The school provides excellent programs in all areas of the curriculum but is very highly regarded in the area of The Arts.

The organisation of classes varies, depending on the numbers of children at each level, gender balance, maintaining friendship groups and ensuring that there is equal distribution of ability throughout the grades. Usually grades are composite groups, which encourage and enhance individual achievement and social development.

Over the past three years one of the school's priorities has been to improve our Information Technology Program by providing ongoing professional development for staff, and

adequate hardware and software resources. We are well resourced with computers (1:2 ratio), and support ICT hardware such as digital cameras, scanners, and data projectors. We have a well-documented whole school program, which encourages regular and consistent usage and enhances classroom programs and student learning.

In striving for continuous improvement, Richmond Primary School is committed to maximising the educational opportunities for all students, with ongoing staff professional learning playing a vital role in achieving this.

Richmond West Primary School

Richmond West Primary School is located in the North Richmond public housing estate. 68% of families are eligible to receive the Education Maintenance Allowance and 88% of students are from families with a non-English speaking background. The school is in Like Schools Group 9. The current enrolment is 150 students. The predominant ethnic groups are Chinese, East Timorese, and Vietnamese. The first Sudanese students were enrolled during 2005.

A highlight of the curriculum is the well-established bilingual program that supports and encourages children in the development of their first language, as well as English as a second language. The English/Chinese bilingual program operates in Years P-2, and the English/Vietnamese program operates in Years P-1. The school also offers two comprehensive LOTE programs – Chinese in Years 3-6, and Vietnamese in Years 2-6.

The school strongly focuses on literacy and numeracy teaching, and uses an integrated curriculum approach in its teaching and learning programs. The integration of ICT into classroom teaching strategies has enhanced student skills and learning outcomes.

The school places a high priority on student welfare focusing on attendance, engagement and wellbeing.

Yarra Primary School

Yarra Primary School is located in the City of Yarra at the northern end of Richmond. A state primary school has been operating on this site since 1888 providing schooling for the children of the changing community.

A commitment to providing the community with accessible educational resources and responding to the educational needs of the community is the underlying ethos of the school.

The school community includes Victoria Street and its Asian commercial activity and the Greek precinct around Swan Street. The school population reflects this rich diversity of cultural, social and economic backgrounds.

Approximately 50% of students come from backgrounds where English is not the main language. The school also has a high transitory population, partially due to the high number of surrounding rental properties, but also as a result of a women's refuge and community housing in the local area. The school is committed to meeting the special needs of these families. In addition, 45% of the families using the school are eligible for Educational Maintenance Allowance.

The staff is committed to the maintenance of an inclusive learning environment that engages students in the process of becoming active, independent and skilled learners who are involved in and enjoy school life. We are committed to active partnerships among students, parents/carers and staff. The intention of these partnerships is to achieve successful outcomes, both academic and personal, for all children regardless of gender, ethnicity, socio economic background or other special needs.