



Taking It To The Next Level

*A Strategic Plan for Marist College Canberra,
2007 - 2011*

Learning and Teaching Renewal

School Visit Reports

December 2007

Marist College Canberra, December 2007

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Background

As part of the work undertaken by the *Leader in Learning Priority Working Group* a number of schools were visited to explore a range of learning and teaching options already in place in schools. Schools were chosen as exemplars of best practice that had been identified from a number of sources including: The Association of Independent Schools Victoria; Australian Council of Educational Leadership; and contacts within the Marist network and from conferences attended by staff.

Having collected a great deal of information from the College community the following areas were selected as particular focus areas to look at when visiting the various schools:

- Middle years of schooling
- Year 9 alternative programs of learning and teaching
- Senior years – especially transition for Year 10 students
- Staff professional learning
- ICT innovation
- Vocational education
- Implementing school change

From this a range of schools were selected and then visits arranged over a number of weeks. Thanks is extended to all staff involved with these visits which included members of the Leader in Learning Priority Working Group and Heads of Department in the Senior School. Following are reports from each of these visits.

The findings from these visits will assist in formulating our direction as we move to implement change beginning in 2009. Details of the changes are provided in the document titled *Learning and Teaching @ MCC in 2012*.

Ian Hewitt
Director of Learning and Teaching
December 2007

Belmore South Primary

Staff Attending

Kirsty Bell, Cameron Tarrant, Sue Lavery, Keith Mullumby

Focus Area

ICT Innovation

Context

98 % NESB

Award winning for student engagement and staff engagement with own PD

Positive Impressions

Organisation of Teacher engagement and release targeted to reflection and stage based focus groups AS WELL AS planning.

Focus on engagement of students

Lit and Numeracy tests show marked improvement this year.

Student Perceptions

Engagement

Love of using blended ICT and traditional learning eg writing own scripts, then filming/ writing own stories and producing as digital stories

Staff Perceptions

Those teachers we met very committed to use of new technologies in learning and teaching

Principal very involved in skilling teachers - gives 2 hrs RFF/week, (1 for focus groups) and teachers commit to 1 hr/week out of hours for targeted PD as decided by exec and staff

Conclusion

A chance to see seamless integration of classic and new methods of learning, and students enthused and engaged with their learning.

Lots of class modeling before individual or group use of technologies

Brighton Grammar School

Staff Attending

Ian Hewitt, Carmel Luck, John Heaney, Kerry Todd

Focus Area

Year 9 Program, Middle years of schooling, Senior years (10 – 12), Staff professional learning

Context

Brighton Grammar School (BGS) is an Anglican school for boys with an enrolment of 1220 students from ELC – Year 12. The maximum class size is: Years 4 – 10, 24 students; Years 11 & 12, 18 students. The fees for a Year 7 boy are \$16 398.

School is arranged into the following: ELC; Junior School, Prep to Year 6; Middle School, Years 7 - 8; Senior School, Years 9 – 12. The timetable is set with a cycle of 10 days and no ‘non-days’. That is, Day 1 & 5 are always a Monday etc. Each day comprises 6 x 60 minute lessons.

Teachers are able to teach across all year levels from Years 7 – 12 within the timetable structure although many teach in one area of the school for most of the time. This is particularly the case with the Middle School.

Positive Impressions

Year 9 Program

The Year 9 program ‘Sea Change’ is to be implemented from 2008. The program is new for BGS but the Year 9 coordinator has run a similar, successful program in another large independent school over a number of years.

Sea Change is a blend of a wide range of academic and non-academic curriculum activities designed to meet the developmental needs of adolescent boys, assisting each to gain self confidence, self discipline and leadership skills. The program includes four 5 or 6 day ‘off campus’ Explorations.

Explorations

Exploration – Community

Gaining an appreciation of the responsibility that comes with being part of the local and global community is at the forefront of this *Exploration*. Those who select the local option will spend 2 days working with Urban Seed supporting the disadvantaged of Melbourne and 3 days at the BGS Eco Centre at Labertouche re-vegetating bush land and clearing waterways. Those who select the global option fly to Papua New Guinea to undertake maintenance of classrooms at the Martyrs’ School – a school supported by BGS for more than 25 years.

Exploration – CBD

Each day for 5 days the boys commute to the city to explore first hand how government, commercial, legal and faith structures shape their lives. The theme of the sea recurs again with activities at Melbourne Port and the Aquarium to study Melbourne water and marine ecology.

Exploration – Sea

Choice is an important aspect of this 6 day exploration. Boys can select from a range of sea-based activities such as sailing the tall ship *Enterprise*, gaining a SCUBA diving qualification, surfing and studying marine biology at exotic locations.

Exploration – King Island

Boys will gain an appreciation for and understanding of different natural environments while on the 6 day *Exploration* to King Island. This outdoor education *Exploration* is comprised of an expedition component and adventure activities; each boy will be challenged to take risks, and learn to work effectively as an individual, in teams and as part of the community.

Academic Focus

The Sea Change program is based on the Victorian Essential Learning Standards framework comprising

- A rigorous academic basis in preparation for further studies in Senior School
- Diverse learning experiences in community settings
- A mix of core and elective subjects

The integration of the sea theme into the curriculum gives coherence to the year without compromising individual subject disciplines.

Service

In addition to the Explorations and Academic Focus all boys are involved with a service component every second Friday afternoon. Students are given a choice from, Cadets, St John Ambulance, Artists in Residence (Music, Drama or Art)

Senior School

The Senior School at BGS comprises Years 10 – 12. From Year 10 students are able to study VCE subjects which allows for an additional year of studying some of these subjects. This also allows for Year 10 to be a transition from the Year 9 program to Year 11 & 12 studies with students able to have a ‘taste’ for some VCE subjects before selecting their final VCE studies. BGS also has most of their students (around 90%) studying what we would call a Tertiary package in the ACT.

Middle Years

BGS has a Middle School for the students in Years 7 – 8. This is situated in a separate area of the senior campus with their own library, hall, science lab and playing areas.

The main focus for this section of the school is to have some core teachers teach the boys a number of different subject areas. For a number of staff this is working well but the staffing across Years 7 – 12 often determines the staffing allocation in the Middle School. That is, the Middle School is often used to ‘fill up’ a teachers load rather than necessarily providing the Middle School with the consistency of staffing that is required to maintain core teachers who can teach a number of subject areas to the boys.

The curriculum is very much designed to make a real connectedness between the learning and the outside world that the boys interact with. There is also work done on learning styles such as Habits of Mind.

Professional Learning

There are a number of opportunities provided/required of staff throughout the year to involve them in both professional learning and goal setting.

There are 2 x 2 day conferences in the year where whole of school areas can be addressed for professional learning. These have included: emotional intelligences; rubric and assessment development; thinking skills and the teaching of these; and time for round table discussions/debate.

In the past this has resulted in a ‘thinking skills’ program being developed and implemented which begins in the Junior School. Through this a common language has been adopted with Habits of Mind and de Bono being used as the basis for this program. There has also been work done in the area of higher order thinking with staff and students. Year 10 students have all undertaken a learning style survey and this is being used by staff in their learning and teaching.

There is a staff appraisal system in place for all teaching staff where they set goals for the year and the submit a professional learning plan to assist in realizing these goals. Each staff member meets with a member of the school leadership to discuss these.

Staff Perceptions

Staff spoke very enthusiastically about the Year 9 program that is to be implemented in 2008. The actual need for this program has been identified as a time in which students need to have a break from the institution of schooling that they have had for 9 years prior to commencing Year 9. It is not necessarily a maturity issue as a number of girls schools are also implementing specific Year 9 programs.

The Middle School model is a worthwhile model from a staff perspective but it is important that the staffing needs of this part of the school are given a priority. That is, it is important to have staff who: can relate to this age of student; who can teach across a few specific subject areas and are where possible only allocated to teaching duties in this one section of the school to assist in creating community.

Conclusion

The experience of visiting another school was very much appreciated. The group came back enthusiastic about aspects of the curriculum, particularly the Year 9 program and

look forward to the “disruptive” changes that maybe made to Marist Education, including timetable, electives, and curriculum overall. In implementing a program such as Sea Change it will be important that all content be questioned and that some content be taken out that is not considered to be essential. This is considered necessary to ensure sufficient time is allowed for the integration of any new programs. In adopting any title or theme for the program it must kept in mind that this should not put limitations on the program that are undesirable. Perhaps a more broadly based theme or title would be appropriate to allow flexibility in the exact nature of the experiences offered.

Another consideration with a revamped Year 9 program would have to be the transition then provided for Year 10 students as they will not have the advantage that BGS students have in being able to study some VCE subjects as a taster for Years 11 & 12. MCC should look at ways of making Year 10 a transition year where the courses offered allow students to explore all options, both Tertiary and Accredited in preparation for their senior studies.

Images showing points of interest



Covered courtyard – with banners & seating



Covered courtyard – adjacent to canteen area, roof allows for ventilation on all sides

Canberra Grammar School

Staff Attending

Christine Robertson, Joanne Evans, Chris Foley

Context

CGS will implement a new curriculum structure in 2008. Their handbook defines “curriculum” as the total experience of a Canberra Grammar School education, and they have developed the concept of “domains” as an organizing construct for all the experiences a student enjoys during his years of schooling.

The Years 7 – 10 curriculum includes academic, co-curricular, pastoral and spiritual domains.

The following Curriculum Integrators describe the knowledge, skills attributes and values that each student needs to develop or experience:

*Identity *Thinking & Knowledge *Communication *Citizenship & Futures.

Time within the curriculum will be distributed across five Domains. These are Body, Mind and Spirit; Languages and Culture; Humanities; Mathematics and Science; and Creative and Performing Arts.

All academic subjects have been assigned to these learning areas. There will be compulsory experiences and elective subjects will also be offered in each domain. Each student in Years 7 – 10 will study a maximum of eight courses. Currently, boys study nine courses.

The new curriculum structure offers much greater student choice and semester units are offered in this new model. Students may choose subject disciplines that continue as year-long courses.

Positive Impressions

The new curriculum, incorporating wider student choice, has been developed in order to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Foreign language study has traditionally been a feature of the CGS curriculum but it had become evident that not all students in Years 7 - 10 were suited to or enjoyed LOTE courses. (The school still expects all boys in Year 8 to study at least one foreign language and the majority will study two.)

Student Perceptions

I did not have the opportunity to speak with any students. I had a long conversation with CGS’s Director of Teaching and Learning and he commented that students are enthusiastic about increased elective choice and greater flexibility, which will enable them to select courses and units that will better suit their interests and talents.

Staff Perceptions

The process of curriculum change and renewal was embraced enthusiastically by the majority of the staff. The attitude of some members of the teaching staff was not helpful, and a few were openly opposed to the proposed changes. One department fought a “rear guard action” and there was particular hostility because the subject discipline would be offering more elective and fewer compulsory modules.

Conclusion

It was interesting to learn that Canberra Grammar School is to introduce a curriculum structure that has some common elements with Marist’s present Year 9/10 curriculum which has been in place for 15+ years. (although CGS may decide not to form mixed classes.)

The school has mapped the new curriculum against the Essential Learning Achievements identified in *Every Chance to Learn*, the draft curriculum framework for ACT schools. They are confident that the courses and structures to be introduced in 2008 will meet requirements for both the essential content and markers of progress applicable to the early adolescence and later adolescence bands of development.

Other areas of interest for possible future follow-up:

- * The CGS Learning Portal

- * The Year 7 Program – Year 7 is organized as a transition year. Two thirds of the students come from their junior school, the remainder from other primary schools. All Year 7 students are placed in one of two houses. Teams of teachers work with the boys. There are structured opportunities for parents to meet the Year 7 teams and for students to present and showcase their work.

Marist Parramatta

Staff Attending

Anne Fulton, Jane Haigh, John Folan

Focus Area

Year 9 Reality-Based Learning program.

Context

All boys, day school for Years 7- 12.

Positive Impressions

Br Patrick visited the Nappa Valley Foundation, California several years ago. He was impressed by the way in which students were engaged by the learning projects that were developed there.

He passed on his enthusiasm to the rest of the staff and arranged for several of them to visit Nappa Valley and see for themselves. Ten staff did a week long training program in Nappa Valley. On their return they set about developing Reality-Based Learning units for Year 9 students. They combined English and Geography, IST (Information, software and Technology) with Catholic Studies. Science also developed RBL units while Maths, elective units and PE were not included in the program. The teachers who undertook the training made a commitment to stay at the school for at least two years.

The teachers who are delivering the science program did not attend the training and there is a concern that they will struggle to maintain the spirit of the program and might lapse back into the old-style talk and chalk method.

Marist Paramatta has refurbished three classrooms into one large room able to accommodate two classes of 25 boys each in one large room. Each student has his own networked computer. The room also had a staff area set up like a manager's office at one end of the room. Staff using the facility did not leave their teaching materials and other equipment there permanently. (These alterations meant that the senior boys common room had to be relocated.

The school has built a dedicated server just for use with this program, with a technical area for loans and maintenance of equipment. They have also set up a room with a blue wall specially for recording student videos that will be included in their project work.

Classes are timetabled into the room for the Year 9 program for the first three? periods of the day – the best time for teaching/learning.

Student Perceptions

Trials have taken place this year with one group and has been enthusiastically received.

Students worked in groups and signed a contract – developed by the students -detailing their responsibilities and were held to it by the students themselves. Positive peer pressure was seen as a good influence on boys' work ethic.

Student privileges - if they misused the computing facilities then their speed of access was reduced dramatically.

Staff Perceptions

To produce a unit takes considerable time and effort. They have now established frameworks that can be used in the future for development of new units.

A big concern is that preparation time is too great and could lead to teacher 'burnout'.

Units were all based on 'real-life' information, events and issues.

Team teaching was seen as desirable and stimulating.

Working with colleagues with different skills bases gave staff the opportunity to develop new skills and confidence to introduce work with students where they were not the expert but could call on that expertise.

Conclusion

The work being done at Parramatta is worth keeping an eye on and some aspects of it may be directly relevant to our situation. A second visit later is recommended.

Saint Ignatius College, Riverview

Staff Attending

Anne Fulton, Jane Haigh, John Folan

Focus Area

“Middleschool”

Context

All boys, day and boarding Years 4- 12 over three adjoining campuses.

Positive Impressions

Riverview is arranged over three site; Years 4-6, Years 7-8 and Years 9-12 – each campus had its own head and was largely a separate entity.

The middle school is, literally, placed between the other two sites and is very close to the Yr 9-12 site.

Year 7 classes are taught mostly by the same teacher – home groups. Teacher was also responsible for pastoral care. Some of these teachers were originally primary teachers which had advantages for literacy and numeracy improvements. (Future Year 7 and 8 teachers may not be primary trained)

Boys are placed in their house group when they first enter the school. Boys in Years 7 and 8 have some activities with their house but are not under the direction of the house master who looks after Years 9-12 only.

Keeping the Year 7 and 8 students in their own area reduced stress and reduced the possibilities of older boys bullying them.

Student Perceptions

Lively, messy young boys. Rooms not particularly clean.

Staff Perceptions

Positive and confident that their arrangement was right for them – only been in place for about 4 years.

On one day per week boys started school later to allow staff meetings.

Conclusion

The “middleschool” provided a ‘buffer area’ to allow gently transition into Years 9-12.

The idea of teachers teaching their tutor group is worth strong consideration

St Leonard's College

Staff Attending

Ian Hewitt, Carmel Luck, John Heaney, Kerry Todd

Focus Area

Year 9 Program, Middle years of schooling, Senior years (10 – 12), ICT innovation

Context

St Leonard's is a Uniting Church co-educational school with an enrolment of 1700 students from ELC – Year 12. The maximum class size is: Years 4 – 10, 25 students; Years 11 & 12, 16 students. This is a high fee paying school.

There are two campuses for the school, the main Brighton Campus in suburban Melbourne and the smaller Cornish Campus set in a semi-rural area on the outskirts of Melbourne at Patterson River. The Brighton Campus comprises: Junior School ELC to Year 4; Middle School, Years 5 - 9; Senior School, Years 10 – 12. The timetable is set with a cycle of 10 days and no 'non-days'. That is, Day 1 & 5 are always a Monday etc. Students in the Middle School are located in two distinct areas within the campus – Years 5 & 6, with the Junior School and Years 7 - 9 within the Senior School area of the campus in their own purpose built classrooms.

Teachers are able to teach across all year levels from Years 7 – 12 within the timetable structure although many teach in one area of the school for most of the time. This is particularly the case with the Middle School.

Positive Impressions

Year 9 CUE Program

All Year 9 students participate in an experiential program that involves a series of off-campus activities. Students progress through three 'domains' of the program – Community Service, Urban Exploration and Environmental Sustainability. This program is known as CUE. The program has been running at the school since 2003 with great success.

This experiential program involves students in a series of off-campus activities, spending one day per two week cycle over a period of approximately ten weeks on each domain as they work their way through the three domains:

- Community service
- Urban exploration
- Environmental sustainability.

Students will also have one period of the timetable allocated in the alternate week for reflection and further development of the program. In term four students are involved in the 'Big Experience' which draws all the elements of the CUE program into an overseas

or Australian-based experience. More information on the CUE program and the ‘Big Experience’ is distributed throughout the year.

Objectives

The CUE program aims to:

- engage students in positive learning and social experiences beyond the classroom
- explore new ideas and accept new challenges
- instill in each student, a positive attitude toward self, the community and their world
- give students greater independence and develop life skills and qualities considered important in independent learners and workers.

The skills and attributes important for independent learners and workers that are developed through the CUE program include the ability to:

- accept and act responsibly in a variety of settings
- communicate with others
- be independent
- show initiative in managing problems and new situations
- negotiate with others for successful outcomes
- plan and organise time and activities and get work done
- adapt to changing circumstances or situations
- evaluate their own performance and reflect on change and personal growth
- effectively make decisions in a variety of situations
- think creatively and solve problems and challenges
- work effectively with others and also in a team setting
- effectively use appropriate technology, including information and communications technology

CONTENT

Community Service

Having nominated their own preferences, students will be allocated a community service organisation. Each fortnight students will visit and assist their placement as they learn how it serves the community. Students will be responsible for traveling to and from their placement to further develop their independence. The nineteen placements currently used by the College incorporate a range of services including; nursing homes, places catering for disabilities, opportunity shops and primary schools.

Urban Exploration

This domain requires students to reflect upon what makes a city by both day and night; how it looks, how it feels, how it acts and how it interacts. Students engage with transport, immigration and leisure as economic drivers to focus on the development of the Port and City of Melbourne. Public transport will be the main mode of travel and it is

expected that students will become competent users of Melbourne's public transport system.

Environmental Sustainability

Whilst investigating issues of water sustainability it retains a marine based theme at various locations around Port Phillip and Western Port bays. Students will investigate inter-tidal and subtidal regions, using snorkeling skills and kayaking skills to get to the areas to monitor the flora and fauna. Information collected will be used to build a data base and will be collated by Melbourne Water and Parks Victoria.

LEARNING AND TEACHING METHODS

The CUE Days Out held every second Wednesday are for the whole day. This allows the students and staff to be involved in an activity or experience that would not otherwise be possible. Whilst the focus is on experiencing the activity and learning through that experience there is also some formal instruction when appropriate. Reflection is an important aspect of the program and is formally incorporated in the single period in the alternate week when students will reflect on and plan their CUE Days Out. Learning and teaching methods vary to cater for the specific needs of the activity and the needs of the students. Students are assessed and reported on relative to the criteria of the aims of the program.

THE BIG EXPERIENCE

Students and their parents choose one of the options available, which may vary from year to year and in 2006 were:

Thailand- a journey of contrasts

Students begin this experience in Bangkok and gain an understanding of this city, its history, culture and diversity. They begin to travel north through many interesting towns with specific cultural and agricultural significance. Students visit Sukhothai, Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai to study the differences in these major towns. The itinerary includes a visit to the elephant restoration village in Chiang Mai, which has gained world recognition for its work with abandoned elephants. Then the students travel south to the island of Koh Samui and will develop a community project with the local community groups for several underprivileged schools and a Buddhist Temple.

Fiji- a traditional village

This Big Experience involves a village stay in Matakawalevu where students stay with local host families. Students will experience Fijian life and learn about the culture while sharing time with the families, participating in daily activities and attending the local school to mix with the younger Fijians. There will be a stay at Oarsman Bay with snorkelling to survey and monitor the marine reserves. Students will also spend some time in the capital, Nadi.

Vietnam- beyond the brochures

Students are immersed in the culture, history and life of Vietnam over the three weeks. They will experience the traditional lifestyle in rural areas and the more modern life of those in the cities. Students visit some of the country's main cities and regions and see

how Vietnam is growing and developing as a nation. Students will be involved in a community service activity of building a house or other facility for a village in a remote area.

Melbourne and beyond – experiencing the domains

Students spend the first week in and around Melbourne, exploring their world class city. From markets to media, transport to theatre, students will experience and gain confidence accessing what it has to offer. Students will be involved in several community service projects, during which they will experience different ways of contributing to various groups in the community. There is an overnight stay in Echuca with a visit to an indigenous centre. At Jindabyne, students will experience a profound sense of achievement when standing on the top of Mount Kosciusko, exhilaration when abseiling down a cliff face, the wonder of the beauty of the Australian Alps, enjoyment and challenge of mountain bike riding and hiking.

There is also an Outback Australia and an Outdoor Adventure based option for 2007 which involved visiting and living in an aboriginal community.

Middle Years (Years 7 & 8)

The Middle School is actually structured from Years 5 – 8 but on two different parts of the campus. When visiting we focused on Years 7 & 8 as Years 5 & 6 are involved with the IB PYP and hence the structure is largely determined by those requirements.

Year 7 & 8 are called a Foundation Sequence where students are introduced to the full range of learning opportunities over years 7 & 8 with minimum choice, before specialising in later years.

An enrichment program is also offered to all students every second week for $\frac{3}{4}$ of a day. The Enrichment Program aims at enhancing the students' learning opportunities within and beyond the classroom curriculum. Students will explore ideas associated with their metacognitive, emotional and spiritual development as well as participate in activities to explore different types of technology.

Content

Indigenous Studies – to complement the History curriculum

Art Gallery – to complement the Art curriculum

Technology – experience with design using wood, metal, fabrics, acrylics and computer technology with robotics

Exploring the brain – investigations of how a healthy brain works through completing a 'Learning Style Analysis' and working with students in the Junior School

Community health – investigations into physical and mental disabilities and how people overcome obstacles in their lives

Market Forces – excursion to the Victoria Market to choose fresh food on a budget and to prepare a meal for the family

Surfing – physical and mental challenge and connecting with the environment

LOTE – activities to complement studies in a second language

EQ – exploring relationships with self and others and dealing with life’s challenges.

Within the caring and supportive environment of the Middle School, students are encouraged to become actively involved in a wide variety of activities and to make the most of all opportunities presented to them throughout the year. As students involve themselves and as they mature, they will be able to participate fully in school and community life, making decisions with confidence and being aware of the outcomes and consequences of such decisions.

Small teams of teachers will be working with a particular class to ensure that the pastoral care and the teaching and learning is of the highest quality. During the year the teams will work together, making connections between learning areas and providing greater choice and responsibility for the way in which students undertake and demonstrate their learning.

All students as a class group and together with their form teacher, participate in the outdoor education program at Ibis Lodge, the College’s camp situated on the Banksia Peninsula. This unique opportunity allows students to get to know each other and build positive relationships and a sense of community while developing skills in the outdoors and outdoor pursuits.

All year 7 students are part of a Peer Support Group which meets regularly with selected and trained year 11 student leaders to ensure that younger students feel part of the school environment and to encourage development of social skills, self-discipline and self responsibility. The Peer Support Program ensures that younger students know and relate to the older students and can benefit from their experience and understanding of the school system in a very positive manner.

Senior School

The Senior School (Years 10 – 12) sees approximately 30 students who choose the IB Diploma program with the remainder of students studying their VCE with almost all students wishing to continue with tertiary studies.

Year 10 represents the second year of what is called the Transition Sequence (Years 9 & 10) in the secondary school. Whilst there was some choice in Year 9 that choice is broadened for Year 10 students with some requirements for a balanced program. The Transition Sequence provides an adequate foundation for the students to make an informed choice about their subjects in Years 11 & 12.

Cyber Approach to Science Curriculum (CASC)

The ‘CASC’ project involves the addition of online delivery to Year 9 science students. This project provides students with the opportunity to develop higher order thinking skills in the classroom and beyond. It also increases the way the faculty can cater to students’ diverse learning styles by letting them learn at their own pace.

The provision of the CASC online environment allows for:

- The transfer of higher levels of control to the learner
- Learning situations to be made more realistic
- A greater diversity of learning goals, projects and outcomes to boost student interest and motivation
- ICT to be combined with an appropriate pedagogy
- Extension of the classroom to a learning community to facilitate the social nature of learning
- A higher level of interaction and communication to enhance collaborative learning

The CASC project ensures that ICT is fully integrated and seen as a natural and normal part, not just a fill-in activity. Some catch phrases they have adopted for this are:

Let the learner decide

An opportunity to provide options to suit every taste

CASC provides Roots and Wings to the learner

Staff Perceptions

Staff spoke very enthusiastically about the Year 9 program that has been implemented especially with regard to the high level of engagement that it provides. The impact of the program on the students is significant and prepares them well for their Senior studies with Year 10 proving successful as the final part of the ‘transition’ phase at St Leonard’s.

The Big Experience is a very worthwhile component of the program but staff believe that an experience which would cost far less and not involve an overseas trip could achieve the same outcomes. It is important though that the Big Experience still draws on the components of the program that have been covered throughout the year – it must be a culmination of all that has occurred through the year. In the initial years of the CUE program Action Learning Initiative in Jindabyne provided the services required to deliver the Big Experience in the Snowy Mountains.

Studying VCE subjects in Year 10 is seen as being of little value educationally to the students, although the idea of transition to Years 11 & 12 is important. The reason for studying VCE over three years is a marketing tool that other schools have been using and so it has been necessary to make the same offerings to ‘match the competition’.

The Middle School does provide the students with a sound foundation within an environment which provides some consistency of teachers and a structure which allows for a depth of studies within the courses offered. Staffing of the Middle School is given a priority to ensure that staff who can teach a variety of courses and who relate well to this age group are allocated classes.

Conclusion

The Year 9 program, CUE was a very interesting approach of offering an integrated and alternative program for this group of students. By using the themed approach the College has successfully been able to provide a consistency through the year whilst allowing for flexibility as the needs and interests of the students change over time.

There were many aspects of the College which were obviously successful and a number which are worth considering as we embark on changes at MCC over the next few years. Whilst we could not simply ‘transplant’ the ideas the following are worth keeping in mind as we develop our own College: Middle School with Enrichment program; Years 9 & 10 as transitions years; and the Year 9 program.

Images showing points of interest



Environmental reminder about where litter goes that is dropped on the ground



Computer room – large work space in centre of room



Science Lab – note distant benches with 'round end' for notebook use



Courtyard – with seating and shade

St Patrick's College, Ballarat

Staff Attending

Ian Hewitt, Carmel Luck, Beth Smith & Janet Williamson

Focus Area

Year 9 Program, Senior years (10 – 12), Vocational education

Context

A Catholic boys school conducted by the Christian Brothers. Enrolment of 1055 boys (Years 7 – 12) with 30 boarders. The fees are approximately the same as MCC. Of the students who complete Year 12 approximately 50% of students continue to tertiary studies and 50% undertake a trade.

The timetable is set with a cycle of 10 days and no 'non-days'. That is, Day 1 & 5 are always a Monday etc. Arranged into the following: Junior School, Years 7 & 8; Middle School, Year 9; Senior School, Years 10 – 12.

Teachers are able to teach across all year levels within the timetable structure although many teach in one area of the school for most of the time. This is particularly the case with the 'Year 9 team'.

Teaching areas arranged around year groupings thus restricted movement of students in corridors (Yr 7-8 kept bags in classroom on top of shelving, each student had an open shelf where books were on display – smaller lockers were kept in the corridors for lunch, wallets, etc)

School buildings were a mix of very old classrooms (yr 9 immersion group) and new buildings for seniors and specific purpose classrooms/areas eg science rooms, TAS block, library according to strict OH&S requirements; it seemed that renovation and improved use of existing buildings was successful .

Science classrooms were effectively designed – carpet oasis for all seating at desks with linoleum wet area all around which housed the science benches. **Chairs used in all of the new areas were of solid design and supportive of good posture.**

TAS Department was designed to allow 360 degree view from internal circle-shaped TAS staffroom which had glass waist to ceiling walls. Where construction was taught there was a wet room for painting and staining, a large storage area for near-finished jobs, a designated cutting room with large saw and timber supplies which was operated by a teacher assistant who supplied timber to measure through a serving area. Air conditioning, extraction equipment and ventilation in all areas. Three teacher assistants

worked in the TAS area which offered; metals, electro, woodcraft and construction, design & tech – all as VCE subjects.

Positive Impressions

Year 9 program ‘Stepping Stones – Boyhood to Manhood’ provides opportunities for the boys to become independent and active learners.

On sitting down with staff from the College in the first instance, it was clearly evident that the school caters for a diverse number of students from Years 7- 12. The school first became of the need for “change” some 5 years ago when they became more aware of the need to further engage students at Year 9 level. They collected evidence of this need and then executed a new program called Stepping stones which has been running for five years.

It is based on the 3 values of respect, awareness and responsibility. Students study English, Maths, RE, fitness (3 mornings a week), sport and 3 electives. These are generally over a semester. There are 8 pastoral groups in Year 9 and the program is taught by a team of teachers. Generally, students will have the same teacher for at least 3 core subjects. I was particularly impressed with the amount of time students spend outside the traditional classroom. Camps and excursions are an integral part of the program, One week, “Discover Melbourne” was especially interesting with students having to find accommodation and transport to Melbourne. Each day would begin with a new meeting place for all students to assemble at. Worksheets are then distributed and students are given a set time to complete tasks. At the end of the day, they meet again and then must find their own way back to their accommodation.

Vocational Education is offered to students in Year 10 where they can gain certificate 1 in a number of subjects, including Hospitality and Building Construction. Students then have an opportunity to further their skills in Years 11 and 12. St Pat’s in not an RTO so St Pat’s outsource this component.

Year 10 students are also given the opportunity to begin some of there VCE studies. The reason is twofold. Firstly, this allows students to begin their work placements as a part of their Cert II training and have all of this completed prior to Year 12. The students Year 12 studies are therefore free of any work placement interruptions. Students are also able to have a ‘taste’ of their possible VCE package and then make any changes identified for their Year 11 studies.

Staff Perceptions

Staff spoke very enthusiastically about the Year 9 program as a whole and the focus that this has provided with this group of students who were previously disengaged with their schooling. The workload for these staff is significant and suits a younger group of teachers who are more able to be away with the students throughout the year as required with the various times off campus.

- Principal, Assistant Principal and Year 9 coordinator considered that the Year 9 program had engaged the students.
- Senior student surveys showed that students rated it as a highlight. The Year 9 coordinator saw positive changes in Year 9 attitudes and engagement.
- Principal and Assistant Principal commented on the dilemma of providing teachers with movement from junior to senior classes when they have been restricted to teaching in specific year groupings eg the Years 7-8 or the Year 9 program. The timetable allows for this but the experience needs to be maintained.
- It was said that Year 10 students found it difficult to settle back into a normal program.
- Principal said that it was costly to run the program as parents were not asked to finance the extra activities which made up the immersion program.
- Year 9 coordinator said that the staff for the program had to be suited to it - does not work for all teachers.
- Year 9 coordinator described the input of the immersion staff as high in terms of the out-of-school time
- Involvement for camps and the extra meetings after school for weekly planning of immersion.

Conclusion

The experience of visiting another school was very much appreciated. The group came back enthusiastic about aspects of the curriculum, particularly the Year 9 program and look forward to the “disruptive” changes that maybe made to Marist Education, including timetable, electives, and curriculum overall.

The TAS area design and the organization/staffing are a useful model for consideration, as is the design of the science classrooms. Further investigation and planning should be undertaken to see how the Year 9 immersion activities offered at Ballarat could be implemented for the Year boys at MCC.

Images showing points of interest



Electronics room – bench set up



Workshop – machine safety markings



TAS Staffroom – total glass to workshops



Staff Office – words/sayings on glass



Workshop – benches, safety area, air & power overhead

Trinity Grammar - Melbourne

Staff Attending

Jan Hutchison, Liz McGinnis

Focus Area

ICT innovation – particularly IWB use, staff professional learning

Context

Trinity Grammar is an Anglican all boys Prep-12 school with 1200 students in the senior school. It draws on a middle class professional parent base. It is a laptop school with 55 IWBs at present and has plans to have them in every classroom by the end of 2008. There is also one available purely for staff training in a room like our Conference Room (but smaller).

Curriculum has four staff one of whom is part of the Executive. Within this team there is also a Head of Professional Learning, who produces booklets of professional readings for staff, and a Coordinator of Teaching and Learning Strategies (Heather Evans). We met with Heather Evans and the Deputy Principal.

Professional Learning is funded to the value of an extra staff member. Every member of the staff teaches, including the Principal, who takes four lessons with every Year 7 student (on smoking and health) along with Advanced Science in Year 6.

The classes are not streamed but enrichment programs are run by withdrawing talented students for one lesson per week (two per ten day cycle). In Year 10 a dozen boys are selected to do a mini thesis mentored by staff members. This replaces one of their 'normal' units.

Positive Impressions

The introduction of IWBs occurred because staff had seen them at conferences both within and outside Australia. The school culture is open to frequent change based on a high level of staff professional development. The majority of the IWBs have only been in the senior school this year but began in the kindergarten about three years ago and have gradually moved up the school.

The use of technology has been a priority for the past five years with the employment two days a week of an outside IT consultant (Stuart Deane) who was a primary school teacher until leaving the profession to start an IT business. He had two years experience in the commercial world learning new software applications before making himself available to schools, which are now the vast majority of his work. The concept was based on 'just in time' learning and was funded largely through QTP funds.

Trinity Grammar went as far as changing their timetable so that whole departments could meet with the consultant for 80 minutes per week during the school day. This demonstrated the commitment by the school through the payment of relief teachers. Each staff member was expected to make two after school appointments with the

consultant per term for one on one training at whatever level and for whatever software they were interested in learning. Also, staff were expected to visit each other's lessons twice a semester (across faculties). The nature of Stuart's support was to spend some time introducing new concepts and then allow staff to play with and experiment with the new technology and ask questions. This approach meant that even the most reluctant staff members became much more proficient within twelve months. Staff were encouraged to have a "Stuart Book" where they kept notes that were meaningful for them on how to perform certain computer tasks.

The consultant emphasised the importance of starting with quality commercial software (eg www.ideal-resources.com.au) so that teachers could start using it quickly. He suggested that initially the IWB should be used for about 20% of the lesson time. It was also necessary for staff to realise that through converting word documents to pdf files they could make use on the IWB of their existing materials. Prometheanplanet.com was also beneficial. The Deputy Principal, however, preferred One Notes for humanities subjects. We were not able to see a demonstration of this.

The IWBs were located in rooms where staff were keen to have them. Those staff were timetabled into the rooms for all of their classes. The advantage was that the interested staff became functional quickly and then promoted their use to other staff. It was suggested that the ideal person for the trainer was someone with a good personality who had been a teacher rather than a skilled technician. Positioning of the boards was important because of short staff!! The new boards can be moved up and down. The quality of what appeared on the board was strongly related to the quality of the camera/data projector. Explicit teaching of how to 'work the board' for example how to hold and use the pen, was necessary for staff and students.

Student Perceptions

We observed two lessons – one on inequations and one on fractures in first aid. The teacher felt that the boys learnt well in this mode especially the weaker students. The students commented that they found the use of the IWBs made the lessons more interesting: "they may not learn more but it was more enjoyable". An example quoted was reading a scene of Shakespeare and then watching it immediately on the screen – the quick transition of the technology was emphasised several times when comparing old and new techniques. We saw a lesson using flipcharts which moved seamlessly from notes, to a video clip, to a photograph of boys from a previous lesson, to hands on activity away from the IWB, back to another video clip and, finally, notes for a future test.

In a rowdy maths class of mixed ability Year 7s symbols and number lines were on the IWB, boys came to the board to manipulate them and numerous examples were provided as both teaching and reinforcement. There was nothing new in the presentation of the topic but some of the boys did seem to enjoy going to the board. However, maintaining the attention of the rest of the class was problematic. Our observation was that many in the class were off task frequently. Some did say that the IWB helped them look forward to their maths class more than previously. The boys still used traditional textbooks and exercise books. Their comments indicated that, in most lessons, the IWBs were used for presentations of powerpoints etc, watching videos and highlighting text. The Consultant was not concerned about this as it was 'a start'.

Staff Perceptions

- There is a need to relinquish control especially for a few minutes at the beginning of the lesson while the computer is connected.
- The students who volunteer to go to the IWB are not the ‘usual’ volunteers.
- Low achievers stay on task longer.
- Made little difference to top students
- Although some of the findings were disputed by Heather Evans, staff survey results indicated that IWBs did not help students in
 - making predictions,
 - working cooperatively,
 - learning autonomously and
 - intercultural understanding.

Conclusion

The use of new technology does have anecdotal support for improving learning outcomes, especially for the less able student.

Investment in thorough and timely professional learning for staff is crucial.

IWBs are not a magic bullet and will not replace all current practices.

Staff need to start with commercial products and gradually incorporate their own materials.

Centre for Learning Innovation

Staff Attending

Kirsty Bell, Cameron Tarrant, Sue Lavery, Keith Mullumby

Context

Produces and locates quality products for use by Teachers of all sectors, parents and students in NSW public schools and TAFES.

Helps and encourages the use of technology in education.

Positive Impressions

Excellent resources available through Tale, and opportunities for teachers to collaborate and create own product with simple user friendly tools.

Stage specific and easily located

Links with the world – galleries, museums, real life sites etc

Conclusion

Worth pursuing as to what is involved to gain access to such a quality repository of resources, copyright ok, and quality checked.