Penguin Cluster 5-8 Literacy/Numeracy Project:
Plan for 2014

Introduction
The Penguin Cluster 5-8 Literacy/Numeracy project undertook a number of joined-up professional learning activities in 2013 (See Appendix A). Plans for 2014 seek to build upon the successful partnership foundations established in 2013, continue to involve ALL Year 5-8 teachers within the cluster, and respond to feedback from staff. The planning for 2014 is also informed by the Department’s ‘Four Key Actions for Every Teacher’ professional learning principles.

Context:
In 2013 the over-arching focus of the project was upon multi-level planning - enhancing planning approaches for literacy and numeracy at the whole school, year group, and individual class level. Our planning research question focus was:

How can more focused planning – at the strategic, year group, and classroom level – contribute to wider improvement in children’s achievement in literacy and numeracy?

The other more specific research questions in 2013 were:

How can we improve written mathematical reasoning through problem-solving and working through some students’ linguistic misconceptions around maths problems?

How can we improve persuasive and extended writing (Yr 5 – 8) piloting new approaches and enhanced use of assessment for learning principles?

How can we trial new strategies best enable students to comprehend information texts, especially in terms of drawing inferences from more complex texts?

These areas of focus were negotiated with the agreement of the school principals and a representative group of participating teachers from (then) Penguin PS, Riana PS, and Penguin HS. They were guided by areas of weakness identified in the schools’ NAPLAN data and teacher ‘buy in’. Negotiated PL activities were directed towards these areas.

2014 Focus
The 2014 activities and plans for the organisation of professional learning are framed by a changed structural context. The amalgamated Penguin District School will have a variety of teams working across year groups, including a Years 5-8 team. Thus there will be additional regular, natural, and calendared opportunities for collaboration and professional conversations about learning amongst a team of teachers who have started to work together more closely in 2013. It is intended that every opportunity be taken to involve Riana teaching colleagues in these conversations and meetings as much as possible.
In 2014 a planning focus remains in place - especially in terms of ensuring closer linkage between the 5-8 project objectives and the School’s developing Literacy and Numeracy development plans.

As in 2013 the cluster would like to focus on some specific areas of Literacy and Numeracy but with a slightly different focus:

For Literacy the focus will be upon extended writing + related opportunities to link to aspects of spelling and grammar. Spelling was an area of weakness identified by the NAPLAN data that the group consciously parked in 2013 but would like to address in different ways in 2014. The cluster is also committed to continuing to experiment with different approaches to helping students comprehend information texts.

New Literacy question: Through Writers’ Workshop (and other relevant programs), how can we systematically address students’ developmental needs in relation to spelling and grammar through all forms of their extended writing?

In Numeracy the area of continuity will be the continuing initiatives to create (different) rich authentic mathematical tasks with real-life applications.

New numeracy question: Through Maths 300 (and other relevant resources), how can rich and authentic mathematical tasks, with real-life applications, enhance students’ proportional and other mathematical reasoning?

Map of Terms 1-3 Professional Learning (PL) Activity
We plan to operate a slightly different model in relation to the organization of the PL time across the year. Because of the numbers of teaching staff involved – a strength of the cluster’s work in terms of enhancing teacher capacity – the project had adverse effects in relation to the disruption to students’ learning and quantities of required relief teaching in 2013. It is anticipated that as a result of the request from teachers of a ‘little but often’ model of PL (a preference for c.90-100 minute sessions) more of the PL sessions will be organized as twilight or maximum half-day sessions.

There will be three days (equivalent) of formal inputs – which may equate to around 9-12 PL learning events across Terms 1-3. The following areas have been discussed as relevant and professionally valuable possible collective activity within the Years 5-8 meeting space:

- A Writers Workshop in action/modelling event;
- A briefing by representatives from the P-2 and Years 3-4 teams to the Year 5-8 team around spelling strategies and interventions [and how to use the single word spelling test for diagnostic purposes];
- The differences between narrative and persuasive writing – and different strategies which might be implemented to support the former;
- A sharing of the features of high quality NAPLAN persuasive writing produced in Tasmania [How can we help our students to write like this?];
- Collective reflection on the range of ‘comprehending information text’ strategies introduced in 2013;
- ICT opportunities (and practical frameworks) to support/enhance extended writing;
- A brief/focused ‘How to use the NAPLAN toolkit [and relevant PATR and PATN data]’ briefing;
- Ideas for ‘Assessment for Learning’ strategies to enhance Literacy and Numeracy;
- An opportunity for individual teachers to ‘tell the story’ relating to their class’s data, share their conclusions from this narrative, and possible next steps;
- Reflection/feedback space to share successful Maths 300 learning sessions and agree a co-ordinated Year 5-8 curriculum of Maths 300 lessons)
- The virtues of ‘messy learning’ and how this idea might enrich literacy/numeracy learning;
- An input from UTas tutor Associate Professor Helen Chick around the teaching of ‘place value’ and linked practical ideas around proportional reasoning (more likely a half-day event) with discussion of follow-up implications.

Sessions along these lines, and adapted from this ‘menu’, will be calendared across Terms 1-3 in negotiation with the Year 5-8 team in keeping with our consultative principles which consistently seek to encourage teacher ownership of the project.

A parallel PL process in 2014 will pilot a new model of flexi-PL days - four days (equivalent) from the project’s allocated PL days. This time will be devoted to negotiated activities (within the project aims and framework). Year 5-8 teachers will have a 20 hours envelope of PL time to spend upon agreed areas of professional learning linked to the project’s 5-8 literacy/numeracy focus. Examples of the use of this time may include:
- collaborative planning;
- peer observation;
- resource development;
- team teaching;
- teacher exchanges across the (increasingly porous) primary/secondary divide;
- year group project development.

Teachers within the cluster have strongly supported this idea. Teachers would not take these flexi-days all at the same time (reducing staffing disruption).

Teachers will be accountable for the use of this PL time. The project will be drafting some guidelines, expectations and working protocols around the use of these flexi-PL days; how to apply for them; and the window(s) in which they might take place. This process is likely to align with the schools’ normal performance management and individual professional target-setting processes.

A final PL day will be devoted to project review/reflection/ and ‘wash up’.

The teachers within the cluster have also agreed that it would be good in 2014 to seek to drill down into the NAPLAN and PATR/PATN data in greater depth including at the level of individual student misconceptions. They hope to target 3-4 under-achieving or plateauing individual students in their classes (possibly at different levels of attainment) as case studies around the project’s literacy and numeracy interventions.
Teachers have also committed to collecting a representative portfolio of students’ work throughout the year as an additional source of evidence to support evaluation of the project’s impact.

**Where are we at now?**
The project has commenced its 2014 activity with an internally-led re-launch and review of 2013 activity. The UTas liaison academic (Peter Brett) has met with the cluster’s Principals and Departmental lead teacher liaison. We plan to firm up details of the PL calendar and the protocols for the use of the PL flexi-days in the next two-three weeks. There are a few new members of the Years 5-8 team and the plan outlined here will be further refined with the whole Year5-8 team of teachers in the near future.

**Sustainability**
The cluster is very conscious of planning for sustainability of processes and a continuing rigorous focus upon key aspects of enhancing literacy and numeracy beyond the period of funding allocated to this project.

We anticipate that embedding the working practices of the Year 5-8 team; action research principles; a more rigorous approach to the uses of data, developing the leadership capacity of individual teachers in relation to aspects of the project; and the cumulative impact of classroom experimentation will all contribute positively towards sustaining the aims of the project.

We also hope that we are putting in place a variety of good-practice structures around the content, nature, and impact of professional learning that will sustain well beyond 2014.