The TDS Project

UTAS has worked with TDS to develop an action research project aimed at addressing challenges associated the transition across years 5 – 8, and to build teacher capacity to plan for, teach and assess student outcomes that demonstrate the extent to which these have been or may be overcome. TDS chose to focus on numeracy rather than literacy or a balance between the two: as a small district school with a small number of teachers, the focus was by necessity narrow, and the one area seen to be of principal concern (via NAPLAN and PAT-M) was proportional reasoning. Having said that, initiatives developed via this process will enable new teacher capacities to be applied across the numeracy spectrum and more widely throughout the curriculum (acknowledging numeracy as a cross-curriculum priority) and the focus often included reference and activities related to literacy.

TDS participants include:
Martin McRae – Grade 7/8 Maths
Ben Vaughan-Williams – Primary AST, Grade 9/10 Maths
Lydia Graham – Grade 5/6 Teacher
DJ Boost – Grade 4/5 Teacher
Valma Fannon – immediate ex-Principal
Ted Barrance - Principal
Ken Eldridge – Lead Teacher

UTas participants include:
Dr David Moltow – UTas Liaison
Associate Professor Helen Chick – Mathematics education
Dr Tracey Muir – Mathematics education
Dr Noleine Fitzallen – Mathematics education
Mr Bruce Duncan – Mathematics education
Ms Dorothy Walker – Planning and literacy education
The TDS inquiry question, curriculum focus and strategy

The following project elements were developed collaboratively, under the guidance of UTas academics:

- Inquiry Question: *How can the development of collaborative learning communities enhance transition and student learning for years 5-8 at Tasman District School?*

- Curriculum Focus: *Plan, implement and monitor lessons to improve student knowledge of proportional reasoning.*

- ‘SMART’ goal: *to implement a collaborative planning process by December 2013 that informs the way we teach to enhance transition through years 5 – 8 at Tasman District School.*

- Strategy: UTas to support the TDS team to build a Professional Learning Community structure that includes a fortnightly meeting schedule to discuss and plan the teaching and assessment of curriculum priorities across the years 5 - 8. The principles, processes and protocols refined during this process will inform the achievement of the ‘SMART’ goal identified and refined collaboratively.

- Key data were collected at fortnightly meetings, analysed and disseminated to inform future meetings (via the action research loop) and, ultimately, a refined, transferable model for collaborative planning.

With the appointment of a new principal and the implementation of a new vision for the school as a learning community, it is anticipated that the early part of 2014 will be dedicated to determining how best to weave the model into the school’s ‘new’ fabric (a ‘culture of learning’).

Professional learning days:

To date, in addition to professional visits, UTas FoE has facilitated four Professional Learning sessions comprising two days each (eight days in total):

- During the first two-day PL session, UTas academic staff introduced the project, facilitated discussion aimed at developing a research project and questions, helped the TDS team refine their own aims and method, and engaged TDS teachers in
preliminary PL around pedagogies associated with proportional reasoning (Associate Professor Helen Chick, Dr Tracey Muir, Dr David Moltow).

- By the second two-day PL session, TDS had developed their research project, questions and methodology, and on the first day UTas staff facilitated discussion around the refinement and implementation of these, including goal-setting, procedural protocols, record keeping and critical reflection strategies. TDS teachers and leaders were also consulted on the development of the action research instrument which constitutes the principal reflective tool (Dr David Moltow & Ms Dorothy Walker). The second day was devoted to specific PL around the planning, teaching and assessment of proportional reasoning (Dr Noleine Fitzallen & Ms Dorothy Walker).

- The third two-day PL session was devoted almost entirely to PL around the planning, teaching and assessment of proportional reasoning, especially in relation to the TDS collaborative planning model. Time was also dedicated to the input of critical reflective data used to inform the action research instrument (Mr Bruce Duncan, Dr David Moltow).

- The fourth two-day PL session was for the larger part devoted to explicit PL around planning for, teaching and assessing proportional reasoning in the classroom, and how the principles involved could be used to inform wider approaches to numeracy more generally. Approximately half a day was spent facilitating discussion around the 2014 approach, with specific reference to how the achievements of 2013 could be consolidated and adapted more widely in 2014.

Discussions are in progress concerning the format and structure of PL sessions in 2014, with stakeholders looking forward to a flexible approach that consolidates the gains made in 2013.