The 5-8 project: Improving Literacy and Numeracy

Faculty of Education seminar

Sharon Fraser
The 5-8 project: Improving Literacy and Numeracy Project Team

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<th>Project members</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sharon Fraser</td>
<td>Project Leader</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scottsdale Cluster Liaison</td>
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<td>Kim Beswick</td>
<td>Project Leader</td>
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<td>Peter Brett</td>
<td>Penguin Cluster Liaison</td>
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<td>David Moltow</td>
<td>Tasman Cluster Liaison</td>
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<td>Tracey Muir</td>
<td>New Town – Ogilvie Cluster Liaison</td>
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• With additional and important contributors from Faculty staff leading individual cluster professional learning throughout the two years
• With Ian Hay and Rosemary Callingham pivotal in the first year (2013) of the project and the former being the original Project Leader and instigator of the proposal.
Project Goals

Throughout 2013 and 2014 the Faculty worked with the Tasmanian Department of Education:

• focussed on improving literacy and numeracy across years 5-8
• in response to the outcomes of the NAPLAN results in years 7 and 9.

The project aims were to work with schools in regional clusters to:

1. improve literacy and numeracy outcomes of high school students, targeting the transition from primary to high school;
2. focus on teacher professional learning through an exploration of issues, sharing best practice pedagogy, beliefs and practices; and
3. develop and trial initiatives that may be transferable to all Tasmanian government schools.
Project Clusters

- Penguin Cluster
- Scottsdale Cluster
- Ogilvie-Newtown Cluster
- Tasman Cluster
Project Negotiation: initial steps

The Project Leader, Professor Ian Hay and the other members of the original bid selected Education staff members to participate as Cluster Liaison:

- Appropriate and relevant expertise and where possible, were conveniently located to the Cluster Districts.

Subsequently, Ian Hay and the Cluster Liaison:

- Met with each school cluster leadership group to commence the scoping of their project.
- The school leaders were asked to:
  - Review the objectives of their projects;
  - Confirm both their selection of participating teachers, and their targeted area of concern that impacted on transition from primary to secondary school.
Project Negotiation: Cluster partnership

Cluster liaison worked closely with teachers from each of the cluster schools and their Literacy and Numeracy Lead teachers.

The initial goals were to:

- Identify and trial agreed upon in-school and in-class initiatives and negotiate appropriate professional learning;
- Monitor the on-going development of the projects and the outcomes associated with each setting;
- Set curriculum milestones, student learning outcomes, and school and professional benchmarks;
- Evaluate formally and informally each agreed upon initiative over the course of the project.
Project Focus: Cluster activities

• Exploring issues, sharing best practice pedagogy, beliefs and practices:
  • investigate how the performance of students in Years 7 and 9 can be improved;

• Engagement, transition, and retention:
  • through a common approach to literacy and numeracy within cluster schools;

• Transition from primary to high school:
  • key determinant of likely success (curricular and pedagogic transition around literacy and numeracy practices; social/cultural transition);

• Identifying specific areas of literacy/numeracy as areas for development:
  • analysis of NAPLAN achievement data.
Project Methodology

• Action Research (AR) approach was adopted:
  • with the specific focus of each Cluster AR project negotiated with teachers and principals with reference to the specific aims of the umbrella project.

• Work undertaken:
  • had a strong focus on teacher professional learning and capacity building of teachers,
  • Utilised school principal as curriculum leader and key middle leaders as project drivers,
  • Focussed on sharing practice and disseminating learning.

• Department of Education data (NAPLAN; PATR; PATM) used to inform overall/cluster project focus.
## Project Methodology: Cluster questions

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<th>Cluster</th>
<th>AR research question</th>
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<tr>
<td>New Town - Ogilvie</td>
<td>In what ways can quality practices, that are consistently implemented across grades 5-8, improve student achievement?</td>
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<td>Tasman</td>
<td>How can the development of collaborative learning communities enhance transition and student learning for years 5-8 at Tasman District School?</td>
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<td>How does the consistent use of strategies that make thinking visible across Grades 5-8 improve students’ comprehension and problem solving abilities?</td>
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<td>How can more focused planning – at the strategic, year group, and classroom level – deepen student understanding around comprehension of information texts, persuasive writing and the language of mathematics and contribute to wider improvement in children’s achievement in literacy and numeracy?</td>
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Project Methodology - 2013

• Cluster Liaison worked closely with their groups:
  • Utilising 8 professional learning (PL) days available to each cluster (paid for by the DoE);
  • Format negotiated with the participating principals and teachers – 2 days per term;
  • aligned with the needs / status of the individual project.

• Cluster liaisons met outside of the PL days, to plan and debrief project progress.

• Literacy / english and numeracy / maths experts were co-opted as the AR unfolded to work with whole groups or individual teachers.

• Work was undertaken during term time in classrooms
Project Methodology - 2014

• Cluster Liaison worked closely with their groups:
  • Using the hours of available for 8 professional learning (PL) days but utilising them differently (e.g. 2 full time day as a group with flexi-PL throughout the term).

• Focus of the project moved from individual teacher capacity building to:
  • Building on 2013 learning;
  • Embedding sustainable practice within participating schools;
  • Student learning outcomes;
  • Dissemination and transferability.
Project Cluster Research Question: Penguin

How can more focused planning – at the strategic, year group, and classroom level – deepen student understanding around comprehension of information texts, persuasive writing and the language of mathematics and contribute to wider improvement in children’s achievement in literacy and numeracy?
Project Cluster Summary: Penguin

• Range of professional learning to model best practice and explicit teaching of classroom strategies;
• Plenty of joined-up activity [See next slide];
• Creation of a Year 5-8 team, meeting on a weekly basis;
• In 2014, flexi-PL time provided for collaboration and focused activity;
• Children’s work and action research ideals and the centre of our thinking;
• The project seated within – not bolted on to – evolving school structures and systems.
**Penguin Cluster 5-8 Literacy/Numeracy Project, 2013/14**

- **Professional Learning**
  - Project set-up
    - Commissioned UTas-led sessions (half day and twilights)
    - Negotiated/flexi PL (10-15 hour envelope of time)
  - PL Principles/Evidence base for work
  - Comprehending information texts
  - Language and thinking of Mathematics
  - Underpinning support structures and processes

- **Teacher collaboration**
  - Persuasive and extended writing

- **Spelling**

- **Comprehending information texts**

- **Language and thinking of Mathematics**

- **Underpinning support structures and processes**

- **Persuasive and extended writing**

- **Teacher collaboration**

- **Explicit teaching of structure & Models of persuasive writing (Damon Thomas PL);**
- **Ideas development/graphic organising**
- **Use of children’s work to reflect upon progression challenges**
- **Linkages/synergies with Writer’s Workshop (Gill Pratt)**

- **Heidi Bush PL**
- **Promotion of whole school approach**
- **Department/University liaison and ‘embedded’ individuals as advisors**
  - Links to Department Literacy/Numeracy frameworks and whole school plans
  - Synergies with wider school objectives e.g. Future Search process; merger realisation

- **Consistent with international research evidence as to what makes for effective PL (See Stoll, Harris, and Handscombe, 2012 – slide on great PD)**
- **Hattie’s visible learning**
  - Led by student assessment data
  - Framed by Tasmanian Literacy & Numeracy Framework

- **UTas led PL – David Shorter and Wendy Wilson**
  - Various strategies Trialled especially Years 5 & 6: Hunt the Text; Picture This; Main idea sorts; ABC Vocabulary; Facts and opinions; Graphic overlays; Note-taking frameworks

- **UTas PL from Rosemary Callingham (student NAPLAN misconceptions) and Helen Chick (problem-solving)**
  - Maths 300-sourced innovations e.g. Grade 5 Four-Cubed Houses; Grade 8 Chocolate Chip Cookies
  - Estimation; reasoning; working in teams; problem-solving; analysis; language focus

- **All Year 5-8 teachers involved**
- **Project work mediated (2014) through a 5-8 team**
- **Horizontal AND vertical Collaboration – primary/Secondary observation.**
- **Promotion of more targeted Collaborative planning by teachers**
Project Cluster Research Question: New Town - Ogilvie

In what ways can quality practices, that are consistently implemented across grades 5-8, improve student achievement?
Project Cluster Summary: New Town - Ogilvie

• Increased communication between schools;
• Common language - Consistency of terms/vocabulary;
• Terminology – no need for students to “relearn” in high school;
• Consistent use of concrete materials (decipipes etc);
• Confidence - Good to realise that we are all “on the same page”;
• Collective shift in some of our thinking/language;
Project Cluster Summary: New Town - Ogilvie

- We have more understanding of where place value sits in the curriculum;
- Benefit in seeing how different schools operate and teach place value;
- More aware of what grades above and below are doing;
- Sharing across grade levels to know where students need to get to …;
- Development of common lesson plans.
Project Cluster Research Question: Tasman

How can the development of collaborative learning communities enhance transition and student learning for years 5-8 at Tasman District School?
Project Cluster Summary: Tasman

- To plan, implement and monitor lessons to improve student knowledge of *proportional reasoning*;

- ‘SMART’ goal: to implement a collaborative planning process that informs teaching to enhance transition through years 5 – 8:

  - 2013:
    - a schedule of fortnightly meetings
    - focussed on planning for achieving the teaching and assessment curriculum priorities
    - unpack and refine the principles, processes and protocols of the ‘SMART’ goal.
Project Cluster Summary: Tasman

- Used an AR Reflective Tool - principal reflective tool for the project

- 2014
  - Uni-assisted peer review
  - Uni-assisted (scaffolded) facilitation of observation, feedback and review cycle:
    - Piloted successfully in Term 2 rolled out in Term 4, 2014

Leading to a community of practice approach to collaborative planning, implementation and review for improved student learning and transition
Project Cluster Research Question: Scottsdale

How does the consistent use of strategies that make thinking visible across Grades 5-8 improve students’ comprehension and problem solving abilities?
Project Cluster Summary: Scottsdale

Reconceptualisation of Literature Circles (LC) as Numeracy Circles (NC) for enhanced comprehension;

Enhanced process and supporting documentation developed for LC and NC:

• Increased teacher and student capacities for undertaking LC and NC;

• Evidence of enhanced proficiency of children engaging with LC (SHS – 2014);

• Improved teacher confidence in children’s ability to solve problems and comprehend texts;

• Draft assessment LC and NC rubrics implemented;

• Enhanced development of both curriculum skills and 21st Century capabilities e.g. collaborative learning, critical thinking, reflective practice.
Project Cluster Summary: Scottsdale

- Enhanced development of both curriculum skills and 21st Century capabilities

Enhanced processes for and understandings of transition within the NE cluster:

Enabled “systemness” throughout the NE cluster:

- Building of shared purpose, thinking and practices with agreed goals and actions with a focus on sustainability of initiatives.

Enhanced leadership of NE cluster principals.

Creation of draft LC and NC resource pack for distribution.

Creation of draft LC and NC comprehension framework for distribution.