
Venue: Penguin PS 9.15-2.30

Present:

The day focused mainly upon strategic and forward planning for 2014 and the focus and processes of work to be undertaken around Literacy and Numeracy in the middle years linked to the UTas action research project.

Tino was thanked for co-ordinating an excellent presentation at the State meeting at Oatlands on 8 November. The presentation had highlighted positive student and staff feedback and the extent of project-related activities undertaken in 2013.

A research assistant was due to visit the cluster on Tues 3 December. Peter would share the questions and various research ethics and information sheets beforehand. Jenny would help to organize an interview itinerary.

Outcomes

We summarized and celebrated 2013 successes, the elements from this year that we were pleased with and what we would like to retain (for example, the continuing involvement of all Year 5-8 teachers – 8 teachers involved in some kind of numeracy intervention in 2013 and 9 teachers involved with piloting different approaches in relation to comprehension strategies and/or persuasive extended writing.)

Peter showed an AITSL-sourced clip of Professor Louise Stoll exploring and sharing strategies for developing creative professional learning communities with Australian school leaders
http://aitsl.us5.list-manage.com/track/click?u=674ca1d695f15e6b9fd33571a&id=8781e008ac&e=c31a1579ce

This was reassuring in highlighting that in relation to incorporating good PL practice, our cluster is implementing many of the recommended approaches and philosophies.

In terms of areas for development, the group highlighted the following areas as being useful prompts for review:

- The importance of role clarity (who is driving for the cluster on literacy?);
- Challenge – good PL can mean challenging thinking and promoting creative dissonance;
- Impact of our PL being front and centre in our thinking;
- The power of ‘letting go’ (cf flexi-PL days below)
- Sustainability – the project funding has been extended for a second year but will end at the end of 2014. How could we ensure that innovations in literacy and numeracy practices and structures could be embedded and sustained beyond the period of funding?
Revised Aims and focus: The Penguin Cluster 5-8 project - building upon the successful partnership foundations established in 2013 aims to move forward with the following areas of focus. Each of these areas has an accompanying (draft) research question. These areas of focus were negotiated with the agreement of the school principals and a representative group of participating teachers from Penguin PS, Riana PS, and Penguin HS. They are guided by areas of weakness identified in the schools' NAPLAN data and teacher 'buy in'. The amalgamated Penguin District School will have a variety of teams working across year groups, including a 5-8 middle years team. Thus there will be additional opportunities for collaboration and professional conversations about learning amongst teachers who have started to work together more closely in 2013.

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. 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. However, an additional over-arching element in 2014 will be a focus on the principles of assessment for learning (AFL) - with teachers committing to be more explicit in their identification of learning objectives, clearer in highlighting to children 'what success looks like' and in the sharing of assessment rubrics. There was support within the group for PL which linked this AFL focus with the promotion of 'messy learning' and 'personalised learning'.

Our planning research question focus from 2013 remains in place: 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?

New over-arching research question: How can more systematic thinking about assessment for learning create more engaged literacy and numeracy classrooms and promote raising student attainment in these areas?

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 attack 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: 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. The cluster aims to invite UTas academic Dr Helen Chick to the NW of the State to deliver specific PL around proportional reasoning. And drawing upon lessons learned from the Scottsdale cluster some teachers are interested in experimenting with work around Maths speaking circles.
New numeracy question: *How can rich and authentic mathematical tasks, with real-life applications, enhance students’ proportional and other mathematical reasoning?*

**The 2014 PL days.** We plan to operate a slightly different model in relation to the organization of the 8 PL days across the year. There will be three days with a theme and formal inputs - these days will be devoted respectively to assessment for learning/messy learning/personalised learning [A general enhancing pedagogy day with Literacy/Numeracy applications]; Literacy (extended writing across the curriculum; opportunities for spelling interventions; a tailored Writers’ Notebook workshop; sharing successful literacy strategies of early years teachers); and Numeracy (Proportional reasoning).

**Action:** These three days need to be calendared across the first three terms.

In 2014, however, piloting a new model of flexi-PL days - four of the project PL days 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 to be used e.g. for collaborative planning, peer observation, resource development, team teaching, teacher exchanges across the primary/secondary divide; year group project development. A final PL day will be devoted to project review/reflection/ and ‘wash up’.

The teacher representatives on the group strongly supported this idea. Teachers would not take these flexi-days all at the same time (reducing staffing disruption).

**Action:** Jenny agreed to draft some simple 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 happen (or not happen).

**Other Issues**

- The pre- and post - PATR and PATN data was available but had not yet been analysed.

- The teachers 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. It would be good to target 3-4 under-achieving or plateauing individual students as case studies around the literacy and numeracy interventions.

- The group supported the notion of reviewing the Year5-Year 8 Literacy and Numeracy schemes of work, identifying strengths and areas for development with a view to making some tentative recommendations for developing revised units in agreed areas. Peter and Sarah agreed to meet up and do this for the Literacy area before Christmas. Tino would pull together the Maths documentation and — subject to her agreement — use Associate Professor Rosemary Callingham as a critical friend.
- It would be even more important in 2014 with the amalgamated school to ensure that relevant Riana PS staff were fully included in PL conversations and continued to feel centrally involved in the 5-8 project.

Action: Donna be included as a member of the 5-8 team and kept in the loop as to meeting and ongoing PL conversations

-Sarah updated the group on key Department messages (including ‘Four Key Actions for Every Teacher’)

Some additional feedback from individuals
- Had seen development in some of her students through the ‘Stepping Stones’ materials.
- Had appreciated the time to devote to collaborative planning. Had become more aware of horizon learning.
- Felt that she had a more developed sense of students’ prior learning
- Felt that in relation to the work of the 5-8 group there were useful lessons to learn from other cohesive, high functioning teams such as the Science team – who had developed a range of hands-on, authentic, teaching and learning resources
- Had appreciated the opportunity to trial/experiment with AfL and open-ended Maths approaches. Wanted to keep experimenting with rubrics and showing children ‘what success looks like’.

What next?
Action: We need to schedule a meeting early next academic year (mid-February) in order to:
- Confirm the PL calendar
- Create space for dialogue around the working of the 5-8 team
- Agree dissemination mechanisms for 2014 5-8 Literacy/Numeracy focus
- Re-connect and re-focus
- Feed back on Literacy schemes of work review
- Review and consult on draft 2014 Literacy/Numeracy Plans.

Peter Brett 12 December 2013