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Collaborative Literacy Learning Communities (CLLC)

Case Studies

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The full documentation from the research into the CLLC Project includes a report in the form of a series of PowerPoint slides which present the background to the project, the aims, the research design, a discussion of data and the conclusion. It is titled ‘The impact of professional learning on teachers and their students’. It is recommended that this be viewed first.

**Impact of professional learning on teachers and their students**
Collaborative Literacy Learning Communities (CLLC) Research Report
by Dr Anne Cloonan

available online at
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Foreword

From 2010 to 2012, based on the priorities in their School Improvement Plans, 21 primary and secondary schools throughout the Archdiocese of Melbourne have participated in the Collaborative Literacy Learning Communities (CLLC) Project. The central purpose of CLLC is to engage participants in inquiry oriented learning as a means of improving student literacy achievement.

The Project involves professional learning for years 5–8 literacy leaders and teachers, structured school visits from CEOM staff, a dedicated online social network and the option of undertaking accredited units of study in a Masters program through Deakin University.

Given the innovative nature of the Project and the preliminary impact on teachers’ practice, Dr Anne Cloonan, a Deakin University Language and Literacy Education academic, was engaged to research and document the learning of the initial 2010 CLLC group and to depth this research through closer scrutiny of three case-study schools. The research aims were:

1. To investigate the impact of CLLC on participating teachers’ professional learning
2. To gather evidence of the relationship between teachers’ engagement in professional learning, subsequent changes to their pedagogies, and any consequent impact on student learning.

The Case Studies

Three case study schools were selected to represent diverse geographical and socio-cultural contexts: St Francis Xavier Montmorency, St Andrews Werribee and Nazareth College Noble Park.

Findings

I recommend these case studies to you as powerful descriptions of the learning that happens when teachers collaborate to create knowledge, to distribute leadership and to build each other’s capacity.

The work of these three case study schools reflects a system sensibility and an understanding of our collective responsibility for all children in Catholic schools. They have indeed designed collaborative literacy learning communities with improved literacy outcomes for students.

Steven Elder
Executive Director
Case study: St Francis Xavier Primary School, Montmorency
Developing student comprehension through the use of digital technology
School context

St Francis Xavier Primary School is a Catholic, co-educational day school located in Montmorency, a north-eastern metropolitan region of Melbourne, Australia. Established in 1932, the school currently caters for over 380 students in Years Prep–6.

The school is committed to building a learning culture to enhance student learning and wellbeing. Students are expected to contribute to their own educational journeys with inquiry being a major vehicle for this. The school’s commitment to teacher professional learning, teamwork and team planning is supported by the development of a dedicated centre and planning rooms.

The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) (ACARA, 2011) indicates that nearly half of students (46%) come from advantaged families with parents employed in either professional, or skilled/trade fields. Almost all students were born in Australia, with just 6% with a language background other than English.

Prior to their participation in the CLLC, staff had been involved in the Literacy Assessment Project (LAP) offered to teachers through the Catholic Education Office Melbourne. The school continues to use student results tracked against the Progression of Reading Development (PRD) to inform literacy pedagogy (see table 1).

Table 1: Progression of Reading Development (PRD)

![Table 1: Progression of Reading Development (PRD)](image)
First cycle of participatory action research: Teacher learning of interactive whiteboards to enhance literacy teaching (2010)

At the onset of this program in mid 2010, the professional learning team (PLT) comprised mid-to-late career teachers who lacked confidence in the effective use of interactive whiteboards (IWBs). The PLT developed an inquiry focus that emanated from the installation of IWBs into all classrooms. While this was accompanied by 30 hours of professional development provided by the manufacturer, the team was specifically interested in the literacy learning opportunities afforded by the IWBs. The purpose of the first cycle of teacher inquiry was to skill the team through researching the use of interactive whiteboards to further enhance literacy in the Years 5-6 area.

The 2010 focus question was:

How can we use the professional development provided with the interactive whiteboards to further enhance literacy in the Middle Years?

The team sought to engage their students through contemporary technologies and enhance their literacy program, specifically within an ongoing commitment to the use of Literature Circles. While this inquiry produced some rewards for teachers, there was some frustration with the professional development provided by the IWB manufacturer as it addressed general use rather than being specific to Years 5-6 literacy teaching and learning.

Towards the end of 2010, the incoming 2011 Years 5 and 6 team participated in a CLLC program day. The new team of four classroom teachers were all in their first four years of teaching. One was also the school e-learning coordinator and another was the school numeracy coordinator. The school literacy coordinator, who was not a classroom teacher, had a strong literacy teaching background. All classroom teachers were confident in the use of interactive whiteboards.

As a result of participation in a reflective exercise (see illustration 1), the new team questioned the decision to focus solely on teacher learning arguing that it failed to account for the impact that teacher learning had on students’ learning. They decided that the focus question was too broad, did not have sufficient depth or consideration for student learning, and was not relevant to the new team. There was also a desire for greater congruence between the Learning Assessment Project and the CLLC. For this reason the greater part of this case study will focus on the second cycle of participatory action research.

Second cycle of Participatory Action Research: Developing student comprehension through the use of digital technology (2011)

The team developed the following inquiry question to guide their work in 2011:

How can the use of digital technology further develop students’ comprehension along the Progression of Reading Development?

The team used evidence of student learning according to the Progression of Reading Development as a beginning point for their inquiry. They designated that any student tracked against levels A–D were comprehending texts below expected level; students tracked against levels E–F were at expected level; and students tracked against G–I were above expected level. While the spread of evidence of student learning from the beginning of 2011 (see table 2) showed that 49% of students in Years 5 and 6 were operating at what the team decided was ‘above’ the expected levels of comprehension thinking, they saw catering for the spread of student learning needs as a challenge as 10% could be considered as below and 41% at the expected level.

Table 2: Student comprehension results: Progression of Reading Development (March 2011)

Illustration 1: Visual representation resulting from reflective exercise
The team worked to ensure that a range of data informed their decision making. This required maintaining evidence, so that individual student progress and needs were monitored and reflected on and learning experiences planned which would allow students to operate in their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Following input on student voice in the CLLC program, the team saw evidence in increasingly broad terms. To gain evidence of student perceptions about their capacities as readers and to determine ways to offer them further support in their learning, student interviews were undertaken with three students from each class: one each considered to be below, at and above the reading comprehension levels defined by Progression of Reading Development. The team viewed the interviews together. The student responses highlighted for the teachers the difference in intensity of engagement with reading. Many students who were performing at lower standards were obviously disengaged from print literacy practices and failed to see them as meaningful. Teachers were eager to address these negative attitudes through the use of digital tools with the ultimate aim of improving students’ reading capacities.

The team developed plans for teacher and student learning that they hoped would lead to student engagement with reading through digital tools. This included goals for student learning and actions for teachers to develop their understandings of the rationale for using a range of digital tools and the confidence to use them to enhance literacy learning. These plans were continually refined to reflect teachers’ growing understandings.

Aims for student learning included:

- to engage with multiliteracies with a focus on digital literacies
- to develop reading capacities skills within their zone of proximal development using the Progression of Reading Development as a guide
- to apply the elements of digital literacies to other learning
- to become more reflective through the use of journals.

Working in collaboration, teachers discussed and developed understandings during fortnightly literacy team meetings undertaking collaborative professional reading in the areas of contemporary literacies and assessment for learning. They also had sustained team meetings once per term during classroom hours. They developed and deployed a common language to discuss reading comprehension and digital literacies and continuously focused their efforts on evidence of student learning, and setting goals and tracking student achievement during these regular meetings. These discussions informed the direction teachers took to further student comprehension.

Teachers tracked and monitored students and brought evidence of their progression to each meeting for further intervention. Four of the five team members enrolled in accredited Master of Education units associated with the CLLC and completed assignments related to their participatory action research. Two team members undertook to engage in digital literacy professional development and took responsibility for sharing their learning with other team members. All team members kept reflective learning journals.

From its formation the team displayed a strong commitment to professional behaviour and distributive leadership. This is shown in the active participation of all team members in group reflective discussions and decision making. It is also evident in quotes such as:

*We believe in empowering everyone to make his or her job more efficient, meaningful and effective. We believe under distributive leadership that everyone matters and we value tapping into the expertise, ideas and effort with everyone involved in our team.*

They also valued collaboration beyond the team. As well as valuing each other, the team members listed the following as partners in their participatory action research: the school leadership team, other staff including specialist staff and the school computer technician, the Catholic Education Office literacy project officers, academic staff associated with the project and other CLLC project schools.

### Pedagogical changes

The team built cohesion throughout their curriculum offering by linking e-learning, literacy and class inquiries. They situated their focus on improving students’ reading comprehension through digital tools within their class inquiry. For example, the team designed an inquiry topic titled ‘Imaging the future: How will contemporary technology change our world?’ They used literacy contracts as a major organiser for literacy learning (see illustration 2). Teachers developed a number of tasks – including comprehension-based tasks – related to the inquiry topic. These included ‘must do’ and ‘can do’ tasks, offering students choice.

As all members of the team were comfortable with the use of interactive whiteboards, they introduced iPads and iPods containing audio books into each classroom. They developed intranet sites for each class, which linked to information such as contracts and homework tasks for students.

Students read about, responded to and analysed texts about various technologies (e.g. smart phones). They listened to and analysed texts on iPads and iPods; read, played and analysed Internet games about cyber safety; and over time became engaged in analysing and writing weblogs (blogs), glogs (interactive online posters) and wikis. The students were engaged in creating a range of texts.
An example of the texts introduced into the tasks in the literacy contract and the focus of these tasks included:

- newspaper article ‘Phones Grow Up’: Considering the evolution, affordances and impact of smartphones in response to literal, inferential and evaluative questions
- newspaper article: ‘Fact or Fiction: Australia in 2020’: Reader response involving making predictions about how characters’ lives might by change the year 2020 as a result of technology
- Cyber Netrix game: Developing knowledge about safe behaviours in online environments through a web-based game.

At the outset of the research, the school did not allow student blogs. Following a discussion with another CLLC school who were using blogs and glogs, the team decided they needed to start by building teacher confidence and understanding. The team invited a teacher from another school to share knowledge on developing and maintaining a blog, focusing on the issues of parental permission and cyber safety. They also invited a past student (now in Year 9) who had written a cooking-focused blog (see illustration 3) to speak to the students about blogging protocols, discourse and maintenance. They emphasised the importance of correct grammar and punctuation as well as the purpose for the writing:

We learnt that in a blog you have to spell correctly. You’re not allowed to use any texting. It actually has to be written correctly and spelt correctly. It has to be perfect as it’s a published piece. Anyone in the world can see it! We tell each other, ‘you forgot your full stop or capital letter’ – to make sure it looks right. (Year 5 student)
Students and parents expressed reservations, as they were concerned about issues such as cyber bullying and identity theft. The staff worked to develop the students’ knowledge of the online space and the need for protocols which empowered students to protect themselves, such as only using first names, security of passwords, access for parents and being aware of identity theft and inappropriate behaviour. Parents were invited to student goal setting meetings, which enabled teachers, students and parents to discuss concerns, and understand the potential of social media as learning tools.

The teachers created a blog for each of the Year 5/6 classrooms and teachers explicitly taught students the discourse of writing a blog post. They used the blogs as a means for collaboration; for example, obtaining student input on their learning. They posted links to items of interest such as YouTube videos related to current and future technologies and wrote reflections on their learnings. See illustration 4 for an example of collaboration on a blog.

Illustration 3: Year 9 student blog
Teachers also used cameras to record students and teachers working; the recording would be re-played as a provocation for teacher and student reflection. This became yet another type of evidence of student learning. As one of the teachers explained:

> Teachers film literature circles including the sharing of thoughts and ideas about books. The class watches the recording and gives feedback on the quality of discussion. We’re seeing the complexity of understandings grow … and their capacities to articulate them. (Year 5/6 teacher and numeracy coordinator)

The initial impact of these pedagogical changes was evident: there was a change in the level of engagement for all students, regardless of their print literacy capacities. Students who had been disengaged from reading were willing, even eager, to undertake the technology-based reading tasks which were part of their literacy contracts. However teachers were aware that while they were engaged, they continued to need explicit teaching and support in developing more complex reading capacities such as inferring. As one of the Year 5/6 described:

> There’s been a big change in student engagement. They are all very excited and desperate to be able to use the technology … the students who aren’t quite able to do inferential reading need more support and assistance. Even though that the technology is helping engage them, they still need support in looking for inferences. They are happier to try though. (Year 5/6 teacher and e-learning coordinator)

Late in 2011, the teaching team received the results of the students’ testing against the Progression of Reading Development. In comparing the results from student data collected in March and September 2011, a marked increase was evident in students’ comprehension capacities (see table 3).

| Table 3: Student comprehension results in Progression of Reading Development (March and September 2011) |
The percentage of students in all four Year 5/6 grades considered below the expected level fell from 10% to under 1% between March and September. The number considered at the expected level fell from 41% to 8% in the same time period. The number of students considered above the expected level increased from 49% to 90%. As the literacy leader said:

The Literacy Assessment Project post data for 2011 is phenomenal and as a school we are so proud of the progression that the students have made in the area of comprehension. We congratulated ourselves but then said ‘okay we can do better’. Next year we’re going to move our below, at, and above levels higher and to look at areas not assessed by the test results.

In discussing the test results, teachers were delighted at the growth obvious in the students’ capacities, but also eager to further improve. They were also eager to highlight growth in areas not covered by the test results. As the teacher/e-learning coordinator pointed out:

In terms of taking responsibility it has allowed us to see those who will take a risk and will give it a try and those that really look to others for support. Students have become known experts at things – something like attaching an email, or downloading images. It’s very powerful for students to know they are experts and to learn from one another, not just from the teacher. And that print literacy is important but so are other things.

What surprised the teaching team was the expansion of their own understandings of literacy and how they had developed, moving from a focus on print literacy to a focus on digital literacies. Other modes present in the multimodal texts such as visual and audio meanings were now seen as contributing to the overall meaning in texts. As another team member explained:

We’re looking at digital literacies but we’re not incorporating that in our assessment. There are new skills that come with digital literacies such as interpreting pictures and inferring or reading between the lines of what music in a text is implying. The writing on its own doesn’t always give you the full story but when that picture is added or when that sound effect is added, or when that music is added, it creates a whole new meaning. (Teacher in her second year of teaching)

All teachers, including those in their early years of teaching, were challenged in using the technologies as pedagogical tools. Their own experiences as school students had not prepared them and they had differential personal experience of using technologies – they felt their students were more attuned to contemporary technologies than they were despite their relative closeness in age. The teachers’ work has been characterised by ongoing engagement in teacher learning of both tools for literacy learning and literacy pedagogy. As the teacher in her second year of teaching explained:

When we were inquiring into the history of technology the students asked me what computers were like when I was in primary school. I told them it was just a box with a little black screen and green writing. One boy asked me how old I was when I got my first phone. I said 18. He said he got his when he was 8! They’re like ‘wow, how old are you?’ I’m not old! The difference is it’s a part of who they are; who they always have been. We know about blogs, etcetera but had never developed them. We have learnt so much this year – what to teach and how to teach it.

Digital technology has not been a part of their literacy learning at school in the same way it may have been in their out of school lives. As students from a focus group explained:

When we had literacy groups in Years 1 and 2 the most technological thing was a little tape and you would wear earphones and be listening to the story and answer questions about it, which if you think about it, that’s not very technological at all… before last year when we got the interactive whiteboard, if the teacher wanted to show us some writing or a video, everybody would have to squish up to actually see the small screen.

The students themselves reflected on the technological tools introduced over the course of 2011 and how they supported their vocabulary development and capacity to infer meaning from text and contemporary literacies:

When you’re reading an iBook you can double tap a word you don’t know and look it up in the dictionary. That helps you read and understand … there are apps [applications] that say a word you don’t know for you … computers help when you need to find information like on contemporary technology because book dictionaries are out of date and you mightn’t know technology words that have just been made up, so you look them up on Google dictionary … I now know how to infer because I like reading contemporary writing like I know not all the answers are in the text, sometimes you’ve just got to think about the words and they may tell you a little clue but you’ve got to use your brain skills and work it out yourself … blogging is contemporary literacy we can work from home go on the internet with your iPad and look at our class blog and see what she writes and post comments. (Years 5/6 students from focus groups)
The students also reflected on changes to literacy pedagogies and how they impacted on their literacy learning:

> We now have personalised learning and the teachers survey us for ideas of things we don’t usually do and then we got to choose ... we have choice and independence, tight timelines and it has to be tip-top quality ... we do a lot of team work but also work just you and your own brain - a mixture ... the teachers are trying to find things that we’d like to put into the work to help us learn ... They read everybody’s work and can see the mistakes we’ve made then they come up with a task that has something to do with that ... we are doing more detailed work now in literacy using technologies if we want to ... it’s more creative and you can bring your own interests to it ... I spent longer on my work and I’m prouder of my work ... I learnt a lot about technology and about reading and writing ... it’s been a great year for us. (Years 5/6 students from focus groups)

It is evident that the teacher responses and the test results resound with the feedback collected from the students during focus group discussions with the researchers.

**Conclusion**

In terms of the question investigated by the team as to how a focus on digital literacies can impact on students’ comprehension, a number of types of evidence point to the conclusion that in this case student capacities in comprehension improved. The context in which this was achieved can be described as a team of teachers committed to enacting the ‘three big ideas’ that underpin the CLLC:

1. collaboration within the school and with colleagues and other support people beyond the school
2. a commitment to distributed leadership which is manifested through an expectation that everyone will share their strengths for the benefit of teachers and students
3. a culture of inquiry in which all are seen as ongoing learners determined to investigate their practice and improve it despite the discomfort and challenges which this can produce.

However the learning of the team of teachers and their students went beyond simply addressing their question. In the process of undertaking their investigation, teachers developed expanded notions of comprehension and literacy. They reconsidered what constitutes comprehension in contemporary times when ‘readers’ are making meanings from texts that combine meanings through the interplay of spoken and written language, visuals and audio; and considered the additional literacies required of students when working in an online environment.

It is evident that teachers and students engaged in deep and ongoing learning about comprehension and digital literacies through their research, learning which was replete with challenges that were addressed collaboratively. The collaborative approach to learning can be described as cultural change. Perhaps the final word on this can be left to the Principal who reflected that:

> The major impact of the CLLC has been cultural whereby we’re seeing, we’re valuing, we’re affirming, we’re celebrating the fact that our teachers are learners and they are gaining expertise and they are sharing with each other and colleagues throughout the profession.

**References**


The challenge for literacy educators is to consider to what extent digital technologies can be incorporated within classroom literacy programs without reducing the importance of the rich, imaginative and cultural knowledge that is derived from books (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

Students of today will need to be able to continually adapt to new technologies and to those literacy practices needed for each development (Walsh, 2010).
Case Study: Nazareth College Middle School, Noble Park North

Engaging students and differentiating the English curriculum through a focus on assessment for learning
School context

Nazareth College is a Catholic, co-educational, secondary day school, located in Noble Park North, a south-eastern suburb of Melbourne. Established in 1986, the college currently caters for approximately 1000 students in Years 7 through to 12. The college comprises a Middle School and a Senior School. The Middle School caters for the students in Years 7–9 and the Senior School for the students in Years 10–12.

Middle School students are required to complete core subjects including English, Science, Mathematics, Art, Technology, Music and Language subjects, with opportunities for choice at Year 9. In the Senior School, the focus is on completing the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) or the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). At the end of 2009, 38% of exiting students sought university places and 41% pursued Tertiary and Further Education (TAFE) and other vocational studies.

At Nazareth College, study for the VCE is usually undertaken over two years. The school recently instituted an acceleration program that allows high achieving students to study one Year 11 subject in Year 10. The desire to cater for such students has been one impetus for staff involvement in the Collaborative Literacy Learning Communities (CLLC) professional learning program.

College results for the National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) in 2009 indicated that the school was performing close to similar selected schools and to the all Australian schools’ average in Reading, Writing, Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation, and Numeracy in both Years 7 and 9, with Year 7 students substantially above both these indicators in Spelling. NAPLAN results in 2010 showed that the new Year 7 cohort maintained closeness to similar selected and all Australian schools in the assessment. There was an increase in Year 9 results against both categories of schools in Grammar and Punctuation and in Writing. Year 9 students showed increased performance substantially above all Australian schools in Writing.

A School Improvement Plan was developed to focus on improving literacy and numeracy capacities of students in the Middle School. The College had evidence that some of their high achieving students were leaving to enrol in select entry schools once they had completed Year 8 or Year 9. The school is an area where select schools (e.g. Melbourne High, Nossal High School and John Monash Science School) and independent schools such as Haileybury College draw high achieving students. As one of the leadership team described:

We’re definitely getting a brain drain at the top end and so we’ve got to try and address that – it’s a big challenge for us.

First cycle of Participatory Action Research: Refining collection of student data and using it as evidence for student learning (2010)

During the latter part of 2010, a team of teachers, including the Middle School Director of Learning and Teaching, a Middle Years English/Humanities teacher and a Middle Years Mathematics teacher, joined the Collaborative Literacy Learning Communities (CLLC) professional learning program. This learning team decided to focus on Assessment for Learning and how their data could be used to inform changes to teachers’ pedagogy and curriculum implementation in an effort to improve student literacy learning outcomes. The team were determined to bring productive change to the use of student data. The research question for the action research to be undertaken by the team of teachers as part of the program was:

How can we improve student outcomes in literacy by using data more effectively?

In former years, staff had collected data including students’ responses to testing within the school and external NAPLAN testing, but the team believed that this information had not been used in the best diagnostic manner. The learning team was keen for data to be used as evidence of learning, and to more productively guide pedagogy to improve student learning and student engagement in their learning:

We had all the data but we didn’t tell the staff about it or they weren’t using it as widespread as they’re currently using it. (Middle School Director of Learning and Teaching)
The first cycle of change began with changing the testing routines: students are now tested in literacy and numeracy in the latter part of the year (October, November) rather than both early and late in the year; students entering Year 7 are tested on their orientation day at the College in the year prior to commencement; and other new students are tested in February. The results of literacy and numeracy testing are now made available to parents at the Student Progress Meetings. A proforma to show how each student is performing against state levels (much like the NAPLAN visual representation) in Literacy and Numeracy was also developed by staff and included with student reports.

This formalised testing sits alongside the teacher’s classroom knowledge of student achievements bringing objective evidence of student outcomes to support teacher judgements and to guide investigation when there are discrepancies between test results and consistent classroom behaviour. Each student is now able to be ranked against Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) progression points to clarify if they are below, above or meeting expectations according to this assessment guide. To fully address the learning team goal of assessment evidence being used to elaborate upon student outcomes, testing data is linked with information gathered about the students’ wellbeing and any home situations which have the potential to impact on attitudes towards learning. This helps to build a broad and holistic picture of each student.

This information is published in a register of all students at the College which is distributed to each staff member. The register clearly designates whether each student is below, average or above expected levels of literacy and numeracy achievement. There is an expectation that this information will urge teachers to differentiate their curriculum in the design of units of work and to ensure that each student’s learning needs are considered within classroom lessons. Differentiating pedagogy to meet these three levels is a whole-school outcome and movement towards individual learning programs being designed and implemented. At the end of 2010, the staff reflected on their outcomes, noting the impact upon:

- **Students**: those with learning difficulties are being catered for and there is a need to focus on high achievers; overall student engagement was low; increasing numbers of students leaving to attend select entry schools.
- **Staff**: the learning team group was surprised at how well low literacy and numeracy achievers were being catered for and saw catering for high achievers as a challenge. For a holistic approach they decided to involve other teachers in discovering what the data have to offer believing that to be the most effective way of ensuring data are used. They also identified the need to work with Middle School teachers on differentiating the curriculum - at a minimum to cater for low, average and high abilities in classrooms but also to investigate other options.
- **School**: there was a need identified to inform the school body of the NAPLAN successes.

The learning team decided to look more closely at evidence of student engagement and pedagogy alongside their test-based evidence of student learning for the second cycle of participatory action research. In order to address the needs of higher achieving students, teachers saw a need to deliver a curriculum that better challenges and engages them, meeting the ethos of the school motto: ‘Raising the bar by learning together’.
Second cycle: Engaging students and differentiating the curriculum (2011)

Continuing to retain a focus on the value of using evidence of student learning to inform teaching and learning strategies, as is common in many action research studies, the initial plans of 2010 were refined and redrawn considering school and CLLC program influences:

It’s something about refining our use of data to inform our teaching practices. And then dot points re identifying gaps in curriculum; identifying student needs and teaching strategies to cater for students … and after the last [CLLC] PD, ensure we’re addressing contemporary literacies in there somewhere; and student engagement. (All members of learning team)

The refined question read:

How can we refine the use of data to more effectively inform our teaching practice by:

- identifying gaps in curriculum
- identifying student needs and teaching strategies to cater for students
- addressing contemporary literacies and student engagement.

The learning team looked at how their work might be developed and broadened through other staff members becoming involved in the program:

... we’d like to form a little group of people who are interested at looking at how to cater for the various levels within our classrooms. [We asked] anybody interested to let one of us know, and then we’ll formalise as a PLT (Professional Learning Team). And then we’re not sure where we’re going from there.

Other teachers have become involved with representation on the learning team expanding to include staff from Science, Languages other than English (LOTE), Mathematics, Special Education and English disciplines. This has deliberately been on a voluntary basis as they wanted teachers to say ‘Yeah, I want to be part of this’ (Mathematics teacher). The initial response was small. The expanded team was informed of former directions, given access to professional reading and educational consultants with expertise in the area of differentiating learning. Members of the learning team have been encouraged to trial strategies and techniques which particularly target students with higher ability and to then share this trial and its outcomes with a learning partner and then within the team. This collaboration between staff has begun to show results with the designing of differentiated units of work in Mathematics and English/Humanities. As one team member explained:

They actually planned it [the unit] with different students in mind. They thought about entry points for lower achieving students; our average; our high. So they actually planned the whole unit of work with three different levels in mind.

As the team has focused on testing data to give evidence for direction, the same value is being applied to ‘student voice’. Teachers developed an anonymous survey to gain evidence from students over time regarding their responses to teachers’ attempts to differentiate literacy learning. Teachers also engaged students in a ‘stop-start-continue’ exercise to gain feedback on changes students would like to see implemented – practices they would like to see stopped, started and continued to support their literacy learning.
Sample of student feedback from the stop-start-continue exercise

**Things my teacher needs to STOP doing to improve my learning**
Nothing

**Things my teacher needs to START doing to help improve my learning**
Start giving more examples
Help catch up when people are away
Not just visual or auditory learning
More activities

**Things my teacher needs to CONTINUE doing to help improve my learning**
Helping us
Talking to us and giving us confidence and help
Giving us feedback on all our writing pieces
More computer work
Finding humour in things
Being yourself because she makes class fun and enjoyable
Explaining things well
Constructive criticism
Advice on what we need
Doing what you do
Caring
Helping with writing text responses
Teaching us writing structure
Putting in expression as you talk as it sounds more interesting
Letting us work in class

In response to the survey results which indicated that many of the students lacked engagement with classroom tasks, and feedback from the stop-start-continue exercise which suggested a range of tasks could be more engaging, the English/Humanities team decided on a more deliberate focus in the use of technology to engage the students and differentiate their literacy offerings. It was an aspect staff felt was underutilised, as one teacher explained, ‘[The students are] so technologically based and we don’t use technology as often as they would out of school’. A workshop session with primary teachers also helped develop teacher understandings of the ways that the curriculum could be differentiated:

I was wondering whether having three different level groups is the only way to cater for high achievers. I asked primary school teachers how they cater for their high achievers and a lot of them said through open-ended tasks and I said ‘what do you really mean?’ They gave examples and I think it really gelled with me, this open-ended approach.
Teachers enacted this increased emphasis on technology through a Year 7 integrated English and Humanities unit concerning caring for the environment. Students were asked to demonstrate their understanding of a class text, the film ‘Finding Nemo’. Students used animation to create possible deleted scenes from the film. Students worked in groups where each student was encouraged to take on a role that allowed them to develop their expertise in a particular field. As the use of animation as a response to a literacy task was a new experience for the group of students, teachers were aware of the need to scaffold the students by explaining how the animation could be set up and then allowing them the time to explore and investigate various sites which gave insight into animation processes.

After this initial exploration of how the technology could be used, storyboards were drawn up and the process began. The teachers gave the broad guideline that the ‘deleted scene’ must reflect the true storyline and characters of the original film, but that each group would be able to present their own interpretation of the scene. The animation process was very much initiated by the students with support from staff, when needed, to manage the animation process. As each group was able to select the process that best suited their skills and approach, there was variety in the students’ final presentations. These presentations allowed the students to demonstrate their understanding of features of the study of the film in a new medium of presentation for the classroom. The choice of interpretation allowed each group to pursue their own understanding of features they wished to stress and in a medium that was challenging, engaging and rewarding. Teachers involved in this activity saw the outcome as a positive step in their push to bring differentiation, creativity and engagement into student learning and as a means of providing challenges for the higher achievers.
A positive change in student engagement was evident to teachers very quickly. Over the course of the project, teachers noted an increased level of student responsibility, greater collaboration, less need for teachers to discipline students and a higher quality of student work:

I think the quality of the work [is due to] the mere fact it’s been left open. And the excitement as they’ve been doing it. I was quite amazed at the very high level of engagement. They’re taking responsibility for their learning more. Last year this task had no options. This year we’ve allowed for that creativity and choice – being able to use a variety of different forms. Their roles have been diverse – not just on the computer – collaborating, creating.

Once teachers saw the impact of increased student voice and differentiation of English curriculum through open-ended tasks they began to reflect on and review the tasks they set in Humanities. Teachers were increasingly open in relation to their own work and the tasks they had been setting for students.

The level of what we’re asking them to do is a lot higher than with our old assignments. The original Humanities assignment was an information report – regurgitation – boring! As far as using their full potential, the new assignment has given students a lot more scope. Now they are investigating … we said to the students, ‘We’ve done all this investigation. We’ve learnt about this. So what? What action are you going to take? What are you going to do about it? Do it and report on it. Show us that you’ve done something!’

The teachers see the new tasks bringing student agency to the fore. Teachers are responding to the feedback they are seeking and valuing student voice. In response they see that students are undertaking more responsibility for their learning and engaging more deeply in set assignments. The teachers see a marked difference in student work which is of a higher quality than that previously produced.

These judgments resound with responses sought from student focus groups at the College. When asked about the changes in teaching and their responses, students from the focus groups made the following comments:

Our work has changed a lot because we used to just do things about a book mainly listening to the teacher. Now we are much more involved; we are writing and making our own deleted scene to a film. The teachers are doing things that are more interactive … It’s more involving and satisfying because we are using our imaginations … We are learning new skills like shot sizes and analysing movies … Books and movies are both good learning tools you need both. The variety is interesting … Books are more descriptive but movies are more enjoyable … Before we might have got to watch them but now we get to make movies … It’s probably changed because the teachers are finding new ideas about what to teach us and how to teach us … This is our first technological thing for English … Often we get taught in a very specific way and you can’t try anything so it’s limited but with making the deleted scene we have choices … It’s so involving and imaginative – better than sitting at the desk and listening to the teacher talk. I am much prouder of my work.

The students experienced greater involvement (engagement) and pride in their work, appreciating the opportunities for interaction, choice, and analysis and creation of a broad range of texts. This feedback coheres with the teacher judgments in relation to engagement (involvement), impact of increased student voice, responsibility for learning, and the quality of work produced.
Conclusion

In terms of retaining students who may be attracted to select entry schools, at the beginning of 2012 as this case study goes to print, it is too early to see trends. However, what is evident is a preparedness by a team of teachers to engage in deep, sustained professional learning and researching which directly impacts on their pedagogical practices, mainly at the Year 7 level. Over the course of two cycles of participatory action research, teachers developed their capacities as researchers, refining their questions and responding to evidence as it emerged. They collaborated with primary teachers who supported development of their understandings of open-ended tasks. They undertook and reflected on actions which included refining the collection of student data, and organising, distributing and leading discussions around the data. Additional data from students was sought. Reflection on the evidence of student learning led them to review their curriculum offerings and undertake pedagogical change that addressed student agency and contemporary literacies.

The focus on assessment data to drive a deeper understanding of the potential of each student at Nazareth College has been instrumental in raising the whole staff’s awareness of the diagnostic importance of data. There is an emerging open-mindedness as to how this information can be used to improve pedagogy and design of classroom learning tasks. The team hope that as positive outcomes are demonstrated to other members of staff, the learning team will expand further. The team is keen to show other teachers that pedagogical change in response to evidence of student achievement can lead to a differentiated approach that engages and caters for students’ differing learning needs.

References

Case Study: St Andrew’s Primary School, Werribee

Personalised development of word knowledge and higher order thinking within an inquiry approach
School context

St. Andrew’s Primary School is a Catholic, co-educational day school located in Werribee, a growing south-western suburb approximately 35 kilometres from Melbourne. Under the direction of the Sisters of St Joseph from 1908 until 2005, it now has an enrolment of 371 students, with slightly more boys than girls.

The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) (ACARA, 2011) shows that 47% of students are drawn from language backgrounds other than English; 31% of families are in the bottom quarter of advantage, and 16% are in the top quarter (ACARA, 2012). The demographics of the school population have changed substantially since 2005, when 99% of students were drawn from English-speaking backgrounds. Cultural (language) groups in the school community now include Filipino (Tagalog), Sri Lankan (Sinhalse), Sudanese (Arabic), Syrian (Arabic), Sudanese (Dinka), Egyptian (Dinka), Ugandan (Dinka) and Kenyan (Dinka).

The School Improvement Plan Review Report for 2008 describes how the shift to a lay Principal in 2005 resulted in a number of educational reforms to build teacher effectiveness and improve student learning outcomes, including:

- inquiry-based learning
- participation in the Children’s Literacy Success Strategy 7A intake, including establishment of Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) in the junior school (2006)
- extension of PLT structure throughout the school (2009)
- a distributed leadership structure.

To support this reform in the Middle and Upper areas of the school, a previous literacy leader participated in the Learning Assessment Project (LAP) in 2009, providing some opportunities for the Years 3-6 teachers to engage in professional dialogue through the comparison and analysis of student data. However, staff turnover had been an issue and the current literacy leader had not participated. Two teachers participated in Reading to Learn, with these teachers implementing the strategies and sharing aspects of good practice as a result.

On entry into the CLLC in mid 2010, the Years 5 and 6 team listed LAP ‘rocket reports’ and National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) literacy data as informing their reading and writing program. They undertook moderation of student writing samples each term. On entry to the CLLC, the perceived challenges in improving literacy teaching and learning were:

- to embed good teaching practices
- to develop a whole school approach to continuous improvement
- to instil good learning and teaching practices which meet the needs of all students.

However questions were raised regarding what the data was indicating and how these indications could inform teaching. As the literacy leader noted:

Whilst there was dialogue taking place it appeared both through classroom observations and personal discussions that teachers were not using any of the data to actually inform their teaching practice. Teaching and learning opportunities remained stagnant. All elements of literacy were being taught in isolation. Reading groups rotated over the week with all children completing the same tasks. The writing hour consisted of three basic genres being covered over the course of the year; these were narrative, recount and procedural text. Grammar and spelling were taught in isolation and activities were drills taken from text books ... and followed in sequence from start to finish over the year.
The first cycle of participatory action research: Assessment for learning that involves higher order thinking through teacher reflection

The team, which consisted of a mid-career literacy leader and four mid-to-late career teachers (two Year 5 teachers and two Year 6 teachers), agreed to focus on assessment for learning that addressed higher order thinking, which they hoped to achieve through teacher reflection. After extensive professional dialogue, the team developed three interconnected research questions to guide their initial cycle of action research:

• How can we build and transform our literacy pedagogy and practice through reflection?
• How can we ensure our pedagogy is enacted through assessment for learning?
• How can we consolidate students’ basic literacy skills whilst placing an increased focus on higher order thinking?

Initial efforts went into developing processes and protocols for the team, using the ‘three big ideas’ of the CLLC teacher inquiry, collaboration and distributed leadership – as underpinning principles. After completing a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis, the team designed and implemented an intervention plan that sought to develop a self-managed, authentic, reflective and practice-based professional learning team. As a result a number of changes took place to the professional learning team and to teacher pedagogical practices.

Changes to professional learning team processes included:

• protocols developed for weekly meetings
• focus on literacy data and students’ learning trajectories
• teacher-led professional reading and dialogue (focus on assessment for learning and contemporary literacies)
• use of reflective journals to record and reflect on practice, observations and readings (see sample reflective prompts)
• a move to collaborative unit and lesson planning
• undertaking peer lesson observations and peer feedback.

What developed was a greater emphasis on team dialogue and a sense of collaboration within the team; as the literacy leader explained ‘a sense of trust, openness and honesty began to infuse our meetings’. Influenced by the CLLC program materials and collaborations with other schools, shared professional reading formed a focus for their team discussions. Teachers were willing to discuss openly their values, feelings and concerns about student learning. Teachers started questioning what they were doing in their classrooms and engaging in reflection with colleagues. Shifts in thinking were evident. There was a genuine belief that they were all equal, all had a voice and shared a common purpose.

In turn, changes were evident in teachers’ pedagogical practice as a result of the focus on professional learning team processes. These changes included:

• a less reductive approach to literacy learning
• embedding of student literacy learning in authentic learning tasks
• an increase in student responsibility for literacy learning
• a move to personalise literacy learning based on evidence of student learning.
• an increase in the use of contemporary texts.

Their shared inquiry focused on the needs of their students and their own professional learning and teaching.

At the end of the first cycle, the team presented to the CLLC group and were asked to document their research in a visual way. Their presentation illustrated a less reductive approach to literacy learning. Literacy learning was situated within authentic contexts with evidence of integration of multimodal literacies and incorporation of student voice. There was a shift to personalised learning with students expected to take more responsibility for learning. They represented their research as a lotus flower (see illustration 1). As the literacy leader described:

Our research is three-dimensional, multi-layered and yet transparent, not flat and lifeless. It’s action-focused – we, the students and teachers, are at the core.
The second cycle

Personalised development of word knowledge and higher order thinking within an inquiry approach

Having instituted some significant changes to the professional learning team processes and to teacher pedagogical practices in the latter part of 2010, the team began 2011 by reviewing student literacy data to determine the direction of their second cycle of inquiry. Student engagement with the writing process had been strengthened through a focus on student inquiry and higher order thinking, however teachers were concerned about student spelling results on NAPLAN, on student work samples and in classroom assessments. This led to the formulation of a new question and a plan to address it while maintaining a focus on the earlier inquiry questions. The new question was:

To what extent can a research-based program impact on students’ spelling abilities, whilst focusing on teaching literacy through inquiry?

The team examined taken-for-granted school practices such as the regular administration of a standardised spelling test at the beginning and end of each year, after which results were documented but no diagnostic analysis undertaken. They reflected on the following questions:

- Is the current collection of student data improving student learning outcomes?
- Could the summative assessment be used in a formative way to inform learning and teaching?
- Are we collecting multiple sources of evidence?
- Are we monitoring and making judgements about student progress that inform decisions about teaching?
- As teachers, do we engage in processes that ensure a shared understanding and consistency of judgement about learning standards?

The teachers decided that they required multiple forms of evidence of student learning; that they would strive to use assessments in a formative way so informing teaching; that they would investigate, discuss and reflect on professional reading regarding spelling in the curriculum as a means of developing a shared language and shared approach.

Interviews were conducted with students to gain an understanding of their perceptions about what spelling is, their capabilities, the strategies they found useful and their improvement goals for spelling. These interviews were filmed and watched by the team gaining valuable insight into student learning, attitudes and strategies. Survey results were collated and analysed. Questions and sample student responses used are included in table 1.
What is spelling?

Examples: letters; putting letters together to make a word; learning words, blends, prefixes and suffixes; remembering words.

How do you see yourself as a speller?

Many students ranked themselves in the class. For example: in the class I’m an average, top, low speller. Some related their ability in relation to their reading.

Describe the spelling strategies you use.

Examples: Poor; getting there; good at remembering; confident.

Visual strategies, rote practices, listening for sounds in words and checking strategies. Use of dictionary to find spelling of word.

What are your weaknesses as a speller/in spelling?

Discussed the length of words and the difficulty in spelling.

Examples: hard words; meaning of the word; forgetting them; reversal of blends.

Set a future goal for yourself as a speller

Able to articulate a future goal as a speller. Self-driven to improve spelling.

Examples: practise reading words from a wide range of books; become better at decoding words; practice my spelling everyday; become better at using a dictionary and find the meaning of the word.

**Table 1: Students’ spelling survey/interview questions and sample responses**

Teachers were also surveyed to identify approaches taken to teaching and assessment of spelling. (See table 2 for examples of teacher feedback.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Describe your current classroom practice in relation to spelling.</th>
<th>Students give teacher words and a list is devised on a weekly basis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What determines spelling instruction?</td>
<td>Daily activities around these words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All students have same words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Words which require attention are gleaned from children’s writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We identify sight words and blends; sometimes they are linked to our inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Devised from writing through individual need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spelling is not a focus, there are other needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you monitor student progress?</td>
<td>Test is given once a week and result recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children’s confidence – attempting activities they wouldn’t before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children utilising strategies to help them with their writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Teacher survey and survey responses: Spelling classroom practice**
In analysing the responses from the teacher survey, the team found that there was no consistent approach to teaching spelling across the team. Some teachers interviewed their students and the recordings were shown to the team. Viewing and discussing these recordings made a strong impression on teachers. Many admitted that they were unsure how to help students improve; some admitted they had no rationale for testing each week. Others revealed that they simply indicated to the students whether the words they wrote were correct or incorrect without supporting them in learning how to learn to spell words correctly.

In response to these pedagogical concerns, team dialogue and reflection were undertaken during which the habitual use of a dictation test (Peters & Smith, 1993) to compare student progress was challenged. After engaging in professional reading on the diagnostic affordances of the test, the team analysed student dictations during one of their meetings using the associated diagnostic grid. This grid offers an analytic framework of student spelling attempts consisting of plausible-readable attempts, unreadable attempts, invented attempts and random attempts. Undertaking this analysis gave teachers further insight into how students were developing as spellers and the type of support they required. It also gave them the confidence to independently analyse six of their own students’ work. These analyses would be brought to a future team meeting for interpretation and analysis.

Further professional reading was also undertaken to develop teachers’ pedagogical capacities to teach spelling, including ‘Diagnosing specific spelling difficulties’ (in Peters & Smith, 1993); First steps: Spelling developmental continuum (Education Department of Western Australia, 2001); and ‘Spelling’ (in Winch, Ross-Johnston, March, Ljungdahl & Holliday, 2004).

With greater confidence resulting from the professional reading and reflection on evidence of student learning, the teachers brainstormed pedagogical actions to support students’ spelling capacities. Their literacy pedagogies had moved to a focus on student inquiry and higher order thinking in the previous year. Drawing on the learnings from the professional readings, they decided that any actions had to engage students as independent, self-motivated learners. They wanted students to develop interest in and knowledge of words, to be more resourceful and to take responsibility for written attempts.

These expectations prompted the introduction of word walls. Word walls were expected in the junior classrooms, however many of the teachers had never considered using the visual aid in the middle and senior school. They decided that word walls would expose the children to words they encounter and need regularly in their inquiry learning and help them take ownership of their spelling. New or unusual terminology used in maths and other subject areas would also be added.

Word journals were suggested as an approach which a team member had previously used. The team undertook further professional reading and agreed that the implementation of journals could vary between classrooms but serve a consistent purpose.

Daily silent reading and related discussion of interesting words was introduced to build an interest in words. Purposeful writing experiences were fostered which encouraged the use of words from the word wall.

Team members designed strategies to focus attention on the word structures and spelling patterns of words students were using in their inquiry unit. The words varied for different students. Strategies included:

- breaking words into syllables
- identifying meaningful word parts including base words
- building words using prefixes and suffixes
- analysing words to find base words
- dictionary usage
- word searches
- writing nonsense sentences, correctly punctuated

Teachers gave themselves ‘permission’ to accept plausible and readable attempts in student spelling in the first instance with a focus on meaning. Incorrectly spelt words were added to the word wall for later study. Teachers focused on them during ‘short, sharp, spelling strategies’ sessions and students focused on them in their spelling journals. This was a shift from previous practice where the emphasis was on correcting misspellings.

In summary, the teachers agreed to implement a number of actions:

- analysis of students’ spelling using the Diagnostic Grid
- focus on words from class inquiry and other subject areas via a class word wall
- daily personal reading with a focus discussion on word characteristics
- implementation of personalised word journals
- daily sessions of ‘short, sharp spelling strategies’.

In summary, the teachers agreed to implement a number of actions:
Teachers undertook learning walks to observe changes in one another’s classrooms. In reflecting on these observations, a Year 6 teacher said,

It challenged us as teachers not only to talk the talk in team meetings but allow others to be witness to the changes occurring within our individual classrooms. We had to show how we were providing a consistent approach to developing word knowledge. We were also able to show-and-tell the learning that was occurring within the classroom, with team members asking and posing questions.

Teachers continued to use their reflective learning journals throughout the processes of planning, acting and observing. Over time, teachers gained the distance required to see the changes occurring in their professional understandings and practices and in students’ attitudes and writing. As the following extract from a teacher’s reflective journal shows (see illustration 2), responsibility for learning was increasingly taken up by students. Teachers were more explicitly involved in supporting student learning:

Through classroom observation, teachers saw changes in the students’ capacities and a positive response to taking on the responsibility for their own development. As a Year 5 teacher describes:

The impact of the visual word wall has been significant. The students have expressed enthusiasm at being responsible for their own development in spelling and motivated to improve their individual performance.

In a focus group conducted with students, students were asked to describe the changes that teachers were making to their teaching in literacy:

Student 1: They’re explaining it a bit better.
Student 2: And telling us to ... to remember to apply our learning, they say we weren’t really applying but now they are like helping us to apply.
Student 3: Like in term one we weren’t applying enough but they weren’t showing us how.
Student 4: Yeah, my teacher has given us new ways ... finding new strategies of how to teach us.
Student 5: And telling us to think outside the box and take control. Like if someone has done like a really good thing to help them learn, then we should try and like improvise on that or think of something different to see if it helps us learn even better.

The responses, as exemplified in the extract above, suggest that students experienced greater clarification, support and permission to take responsibility for their learning. Students appreciated the teachers’ efforts to differentiate the curriculum and understand students’ personal learning needs. However, the students indicated they wanted increased opportunities to discuss their individual learning with their classroom teacher.

When asked what impact the changed pedagogies had on their learning, students’ responses included the following:

We use journals to think about how you did your work and what you did ... well we just choose our own spelling words this year we’re getting them from our topics and our work, not just random words ... like here we’ve got systems using all these words relevant to the cycles. We are getting better because we’re seeing them every time we turn the page in our inquiry and all around the room on things – like on our bike system and our work on the word wall ... the tasks help us improve our spelling like add endings, find the base words in our inquiry words ... if we have problems like saying the word, like ‘respiratory’ we like split it up and get like syllables then do it quicker ... we remember what the base word is so it helps us with the spelling, like ‘respire’... if you know the meaning it helps ... it will help with high school – knowing I can understand the meanings of long, hard words and I will know how to learn to spell them.

Illustration 2: Extract from teacher reflective journal
The pre- and post-testing undertaken by teachers with students using the Peter’s dictation test, like the teacher and student responses, point to an improvement in student spelling abilities as a result of changed pedagogical approaches.

Table 3: Student results on Peter’s dictation test.

The overall data appears to indicate that most students experienced improved scores on the dictation test with the average growth of 9 points. The growth for individual students ranged from 2 points to 42 points with results in the range from 3 to 100 points. This compares favourably with previous years which have indicated an average growth of 4 points.

While the overall results showed growth, the literacy leader was concerned about the variation of growth in different classes:

> The spelling actions discussed by the team were not implemented consistently across classrooms which could explain the variations. We need to keep working on teacher commitment and consistency so all students get the benefit.

Plans for the future include attending to classroom inconsistencies and continuing to work from a basis of student evidence of learning in developing pedagogy.
Conclusion

The question investigated by the team addresses the extent to which their research-based program could impact on students’ spelling abilities, whilst focusing on teaching literacy through inquiry. The research-based program drew on evidence of their own students’ learning gleaned from sources including teacher judgment from student work samples, NAPLAN, student survey and interview responses and teacher survey responses, as well as research discovered through professional reading.

Careful planning, explicit actions, structured observations and reflections resulted in changes in literacy pedagogies that led to an increase in overall growth in students’ capacities as evidenced by a range of measures.

The context in which this growth occurred was a relatively recent cultural change with the professional learning team characterised by a shift to student inquiry and a focus on personalised pedagogies which foster higher order thinking and student responsibility. As well as the changes in teacher pedagogies and student capabilities, student agency and responsibility for learning obviously developed. Shifts were also evident in teachers’ preparedness to collaborate with honesty and trust and lay their beliefs and pedagogies open to interrogation. Teachers demonstrated an ongoing commitment to reflection and began to structure opportunities for peer observation.

References


