Sabbatical Leave Report

Literacy Professional Development
Jacqueline Dromgool

Fulfilment of Goals
Implementation at Holy Cross School
2005

Goals for Melbourne Visit:

- Attend CLaSS Conferences in Melbourne with Deputy Principal, Celeste Hastings, 10-12 October 2005 (Peter Hill and Carmel Crévola)
- Discussions with Martina Tassone, Literacy Advisor to Catholic Schools using the CLaSS system, about research and the way forward.
- Teacher in-service and the use of and structure of Professional Learning Teams.

Goals for Sydney Visit:

- Visit with Assistant Principal, Robyn Duignan, to schools to view the teaching of Text Types in the Upper School (Jecadula Project).

Out comes :

- Incorporate literacy learning in new Strategic Plan 2006-2008
- Implement any additional learning from CLASS Conference
- Plan ongoing professional Development 2006-2008
- After discussing and viewing research from CLASS incorporate learning from AtoL to plan more robust assessment procedures
- To provide resources to aid the teaching of Text Types in Middle and Senior classes in dedicated Literacy Block and to encourage integration of literacy with other areas of the curriculum according any new learning from Sydney Schools.

**Seminar for Principals and Literacy Facilitators of Catholic Schools
CLaSS (Children's Literacy Success Strategy)
Melbourne, 10th October 2005
Peter Hill and Carmel Crévola**

**Seminar for School Literacy Co-ordinators
CLaSS
Melbourne 12th October
Carmel Crévola**

CLaSS is a systematic, whole school design based approach for maximising the literacy achievements of all children in the first three years of school, especially those at risk of not achieving success.

Both these conferences dealt with the **beliefs and understandings** underpinning the CLASS system of Literacy teaching, **the role of the Coordinators**, **Professional Learning Teams** and **a consideration of the way forward.**

1. BELIEFS AND UNDERSTANDINGS

- All students can achieve high standards given *sufficient time* and *support*
- All teachers can teach to high standards given the *right conditions and assistance*
- High expectations and early intervention are essential
- Teachers need to be able to articulate *what* they do and why they teach the *way* they do

2. THE ROLE OF THE CLaSS COORDINATORS

Leadership and Coordination

- Assume role as lead learner
- Ensure fidelity and progression of all CLaSS elements
- Ensure leadership meetings occur weekly
- Liaise with CLaSS Advisor and School Management Team
- Participate in the planning and follow-up of leadership action plans
- Act as coach and mentor for teachers
- Prioritise areas of need and address in a timely manner
- Maintain meeting agendas, minutes and future topics
- Prepare for CLaSS school visits according to School Visit Guidelines

Standards and Targets

- Ensure minimum standards and targets are known and understood by all teachers and support staff
- Track progress of students

- Align country standards to ClaSS expectations
- Establish targets for those students above minimum standards

Assessment and Monitoring
- Train and assist staff in ClaSS assessment procedures
- Oversee pre and post testing
- Collect, collate, analyse and interpret data
- Ensure correct data entry
- Ensure compliance with all specified testing windows and due dates
- Assist teachers in analysing and interpreting data and the implications for instruction
- Establish realistic Continuums of Improvement for at-risk students
- Establish on-going monitoring

Classroom Teaching Program and Resources
- Regularly model instructional strategies for teachers, support personnel and classroom helpers
- After modelling a strategy, ensure that the strategy is then implemented and practised by the viewer
- Observe and evaluate literacy teaching practices, identify successes and challenges
- Maintain daily schedule to ensure classroom visits and participation throughout the Literacy block
- Oversee the establishment of individual classroom libraries and/or central resource room

Professional Learning Teams
- Establish PLT meeting format and guidelines
- Plan and facilitate weekly PLT meetings
- Organize and support coaching teams
- Ensure PLT topics are based on current student/school data and/or instructional needs
- Set collaborative tone of PLT meetings
- Establish and oversee "buddy" partnerships
- Set weekly team priorities

School and Class Organization
- Participate in the selection and organization of Focus Classrooms
- Organize and distribute literacy materials
- Ensure the compliance of the workshop model (e.g. whole class-small group-whole class, Task Management Boards)

Intervention and Special Needs
- Oversee the development of the Learning Improvement Continuum for students identified as needing additional assistance

- Liaise with Reading Intervention (Reading Recovery) regarding the selection and progress of students
- Ensure regular communication between literacy support staff and classroom teachers

Home/School/Community/Partnerships
- Act as resource for administration, parents, staff and community
- Cultivate partnerships with agencies, businesses and volunteers from the larger community
- Disseminate information to the school community
- Organize and conduct training of classroom helpers and literacy volunteers
- Participate in the planning and delivery of parent literacy workshops

3. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TEAMS

Most changes that come about in schools come through teachers being aligned with the professional beliefs and understandings of educators in schools. Within the ClaSS Design project there has always been non-negotiable elements but considerable room has been left for professional judgement, adaptation to local contexts, growth, development and improvement.

ClaSS makes use of four key strategies to facilitate change and growth:
- An off-site professional development programme
- Class Facilitators who work off-site
- School-based ClaSS Coordinators
- Professional Learning Teams in schools

Characteristics of the ClaSS professional learning model contain the following emphasises:
- Data driven improvement
- A focus of change and development of teachers as the key to effective teaching
- Professional development is embedded with a whole school design for improving student outcomes
- Achieving systemic change through six tiers, the student, the classroom teacher, professional learning team, the school, the project facilitator outside the school and the system of structures and funding.

Apart from the off-site professional development, which is considerable and funded by the Federal Government and the Catholic Education Office, the Project has built into itself a purposeful, robust and on-going in-school professional development plan. This structure is called Professional Learning Teams.

Teachers come to understand more fully key instructional strategies learnt in off-site meeting by practising, discussing, modifying and refining them in the classroom. Their understanding is developed through interaction with their peers and coordinators.

Cooperation and collaboration are inherent in the philosophy of ClaSS. Professional development must become an experience that is embedded within the teacher's work. ClaSS provides within its structure the intention that all teachers become part of a professional learning team (PLT) within the school. The team is expected to meet weekly to review progress, work jointly on problems, share ideas and experience, plan together and assume shared responsibility for literacy outcomes for all students and each other's professional growth and development. Team members provide both pressure and support to improve.

ClaSS coordinators play a vital role in consolidating and further supporting teachers' learning by creating opportunities for modelling, demonstrating, coaching and monitoring. The provision of **time release** for individual teachers to co-teach, mentor, observe each other, is an important component of on-site professional development within ClaSS.

A simple PLT Meeting form has been set up to ensure each PLT plans and follows up after the meeting.
It involves the Identifying of the General Discussion/ Professional Input/ Key Issues for the meeting and the strengths and challenges from the discussion. After the discussion members are expected to consider recommendations, strategies and actions to be taken during the following week. A date of review is also set up at the end of the meeting.

4. THE WAY FORWARD

It was noted that the conversations about literacy standards were still not connected to changes in instruction. Hill and Crévola admitted that it is still very difficult for reforms to penetrate into classrooms and to effect lasting change in classroom practice. The answer always lies in the professional development of teachers and it is very expensive to get this consistent message across. There are still limitations in interpreting data as low decile and socio-economic factors come into play. Hill and Crévola suggested many ideas in the last presentation of the day;

 CLaSS: What comes next?

- Encourage professional reading
- Make time for professional discussion
- Intensify professional development
- Apply to other levels in the school
- Work out what is needed to move to the next level
- Pay more attention to oral development

- Develop Literacy Leaders
- Ensure adequate release time for Literacy coordinators and teachers
- Follow-up Reading Recovery students
- Don't dilute the structures
- Have a passion for equity and excellence
- Keep classroom doors open and encourage teacher to teacher dialogue
- Never stop looking at what students NEED
- Make sure the Principal "walks"
- Remember that listening comprehension precedes reading comprehension
- Use Task Management Boards to their fullest
- Model
- Assess for Learning
- "Most important things are without doubt the most difficult to implement"

Visit to Sydney Schools
Implementing the teaching of Text Types from the draft teaching resource
Language Features of Text Types

Schools visited:

St Therese's, Lakemba
St. Paul of the Cross, Dulwich Hill
St. Jerome's, Punchbowl
St. Mary's, Concord
St. Dominic's, Flemington
St. Michael's, Belfield

The classes visited at these schools were the senior classes as Holy Cross was endeavouring to "marry" the ClaSS programme coming through from the Junior and Middle School with the curriculum demands of the Intermediate Section of the School. So the emphasis of the visit was to look at literacy practices within the Senior area of the schools with particular reference to the teaching of text types. As the Literacy Block was already in place at Holy Cross it was of particular interest to view the way the Literacy blocks were structured in the Sydney schools, and to view the integration of Literacy with other curriculum areas and technology.

The text types identified were:
- Procedure
- Information Report
- Exposition
- Discussion
- Explanation
- Recount
- Description
- Personal Response/ Review
- Narrative

Main areas, then, that were focused on throughout the visit were:
- Stage 3 literacy practices
- ICT integration
- Library and technology
- Special needs and ESL
- Gifted Education
- Integrated unit teaching
- Literacy blocks

- Lexile reading programme
- Science and technology wi5th text type integration

The Sydney Schools attribute their literacy success to the following features:

- A targeted and system-wide response to literacy teaching
- Strong culture of review and development
- Recognition of cultural, linguistic and educational; diversity of students
- Development of whole-school literacy plans focusing on the needs of students
- A balanced, structured and cross-curricular approach to teaching literacy
- Explicit, focused teaching of reading and writing
- Development of strong links between home and school
- Collection of appropriate and meaningful data which is used to track and monitor students' literacy learning
- An analysis of assessment data to identify needs
- Targeted use of financial and advisory services
- Priority being given to teacher professional development

Key ideas that came from the visits were:

- The importance of thematic teaching to reduce workload and a crowded curriculum
- Focussed teaching of genres
- Learning intentions
- All schools are struggling to do justice to our gifted students
- The need to make the library a focal point for learning especially with the integration of ICT
- The structured literacy block provided the time to make a difference in literacy skills
- The importance of meeting the needs of at-risk students in the senior school
- It is necessary to provide language and the focussed terminology involved in each genre which needs to be displayed for student reference (text types)
- Detailed, focussed teaching – teachers must have the background knowledge of where their students are at in order to meet their needs
- ESL group dynamics and the importance of involving ESL with mainstream (groups or partners etc.)
- Assessment – the need for students to review their skills and become aware of their next learning step
- Articulation – equipping students with the oral language required at this level for communicating what they have learnt

Actions to be considered for 2006

Planning for next year will involve:

- **Professional Development with Martina Tassone. (March)**
- **Focus one will be on Oral Language**
- **Focus two will be on Professional Learning Teams that have already been set up Term 4 2005**
- **Atol Professional Development Contract will continue and will refine testing of reading through AsTTle and Star to complement the regular use of Running Records.**
- **The Documentation Folders will ensure regular recording of data to promote and plan effective learning. These will be up-dated and regularly checked by Syndicate leaders ensuring that Reading/Spelling programmes etc. are being planned to meet the needs of students and promote excellence in literacy achievement**
- **Use of Learning Intentions and success criteria will lead to better, more focussed teaching.**
- **Use of Learning Intentions and Success Criteria used in all lessons.**
- **Continued use of the whole class-group-whole class approach to Literacy as set out by ClaSS fully implemented with the use of Task boards and other strategies of ClaSS which are understood by teachers and classes**
- **Target groups for reading identified and monitored**
- **Literacy Folders- to be fully utilised by teachers as a working document.**
- **Professional Learning Team meetings will alternate with Syndicate meetings and will run along the line of CLaSS recommendations**
- **As far as possible release time will be arranges for the two literacy coordinators so they can carry out the duties listed at the beginning of this document**
- **Target Library and Computer Suite as a Literacy Centre**

Holy Cross is committed to continue ClaSS school-wide and adapt its structure to include the Senior School. A dedicated two-hour block as seen in both Melbourne and Sydney will be a non-negotiable but some integration of Literacy and other curriculum areas during this time in the Senior School will be a given. Holy Cross will continue to provide focussed professional development in this strategy to ensure that its

aims, content and structure are familiar and well implemented at Holy Cross

Jacqueline Dromgool, 2005