Cultural Literacy and Languages

inside this issue:

- Cultural Literacy - a whole school approach: Conversation around the Discussion Paper
- Indigenous Perspectives and Cultural Literacy
- Tongue-tied
Editorial

Intellectual and cultural enfeeblement...these seem to be the opposite of what we would hope to be the outcomes of education. Luke Slattery (The Australian Financial Review [p.34, 28-29 April, 2007] has used these words to describe Australia's competence in communicating in other languages in order to participate in a globalised economy... ‘the state of languages education in Australia is an international embarrassment’. His article suggests non too subtly that we will be left behind in the future unless urgent attention is paid to the learning of languages and through language to becoming culturally literate. In our world today and tomorrow, an understanding of other cultures is essential in order to participate fully as global citizens and to live in harmony.

Comments emerging from a National Summit “Languages in Crisis” (Canberra 7 July 2007) call for urgent leadership and action on Australia’s language capability. “Languages should be taught for all the well-established reasons: cultural insight, intellectual development, curiosity and exposure to literature and history. These are as important and relevant today as ever. Language education can have a substantial transformative effect on students – particularly children – who develop a confidence in negotiating life in a diverse global community. It is a powerful tool for social cohesion through the positive effects of language learning on cultural understanding”.

At a local level, Kathe Kirby [Asian Education Foundation] explains that 91% of parents recently surveyed believe that the ability to communicate in an Asian language is of critical importance. The National Statement for Engaging Young Australians with Asia in Australian Schools (Curriculum Corporation) discusses how we need new skills, knowledge and understanding to engage with Asia in order to meet the challenges and opportunities of living and working in the twenty first century (2006).

Indeed, learning a language -any language - is seen as an essential part of the curriculum schools offer young Australians. How do we respond to this with the resources we have? Do we know what resources are available? Major Michael Stone, a young service man who was the subject of a recent Australian Story (ABC television) talks about the significance of global partnerships – of building cultural intelligence in the context of his experience in East Timor ... “Words are more powerful than a rifle”. This experience may be replicated in a number of countries and cultures throughout the world, however it is the potential to be a global citizen and to understand others that motivates many of us to teach and learn a language and another culture, and to live in harmony.

In the near future, Brisbane Catholic Education will be publishing a discussion paper on intercultural understanding and intercultural communication. The paper (Cultural Literacy Within a Whole School Approach) will give you an opportunity to consider concepts raised, and discuss these in terms of what is ideal and possible in the provision of a holistic education.

Articles in this edition showcase the activities of some schools in the Archdiocese who are responding to the need to develop global citizenship skills and intercultural understanding. Finally, an article is included by Dr Helen McGrath and reprinted from WORDS a West Australian Primary Principals’ Association journal on the topical issue of students repeating a year.

We hope you might enjoy and be informed by the articles. I would like to thank the authors and especially Olga Duque, Education Officer Languages and Culture for her assistance in composing this edition.

Fran Ralston, Editor
fralston@bne.catholic.edu.au
I have heard that there is to be a discussion paper on Cultural Literacy released soon. Can you describe what this is about?

The Discussion paper Cultural Literacy Within a Whole School Approach will revisit the value and importance of Cultural Literacy as a cross curriculum priority. It is hoped that the paper will motivate schools to reflect on where they currently are in terms of where Cultural Literacy fits into their curriculum.

**What is Cultural Literacy?**

Cultural Literacy is about developing the skills of intercultural understanding and intercultural communication. Acquiring these skills enables people to participate and negotiate with others in a variety of contexts. In a global society, we would want young people to be prepared as active and informed citizens in ways that are sensitive to the diverse nature of our own cultures, those of the regions in which this country is located, and of other countries. These might be countries in which we interact in some manner and in diverse ways – in learning history in order to understand the political situation, in geography perhaps as we try and understand climate change, through travel, entertainment, sport, commerce, politics, outreach, and communication – to name just a few. It means that we will have an awareness of differences, are able to respect these and have an empathy for people from other cultural backgrounds. More importantly, the acquisition of cultural literacy does not represent an abandonment of your own culture and language. It provides an opportunity to know and understand your culture and another’s and have the skills to interact and move between the two.

**What are the challenges the paper might pose?**

The paper challenges schools to see if Cultural Literacy is taught explicitly in their school curriculum and to reflect on how well this is being planned for across each class, subject, or year level.

In a nutshell, the paper is restating the need for Cultural Literacy to be planned for and taught explicitly.

You have mentioned the term ‘Languages Education and Language teachers’?

In Australia, Languages Education has replaced the term ‘languages other than English’ (LOTE) and it includes Australian Indigenous languages, AUSLAN and classical languages.

However, as I have stated, students need to recognise that opportunities for learning to be an active and informed participant in a global society occurs across the whole curriculum – and is not solely as part of engaging in lessons about languages.

Is Cultural Literacy learned as you study languages education?

Yes. This is certainly the best way of developing the skills of intercultural understanding and intercultural communication, and then in turn becoming culturally literate. However opportunities for developing intercultural understandings are present across the curriculum – in SOSE for example, in Religious Education, in aspects of the Arts...and in fact in most Key Learning Areas.

It is not just the Languages teacher who has the responsibility for teaching Cultural Literacy. So we are not claiming that the learning of cultural literacy is achieved solely through languages education, but we are recognising research which says this is the most effective way of achieving a deep understanding of intercultural understanding and intercultural communication.

Is planning for Cultural Literacy to be embedded across the curriculum likely to be a challenge?

There are a number of articles in this edition of Curriculum Matters that illustrate different ways of embedding cultural literacy in aspects of learning. They show how planning is deliberate and intended as part of a range of learning activities. There are some schools in the Archdiocese where intercultural literacy and understanding is a recognisable part of the school’s culture. The discussion paper however, will open up the topic of Cultural Literacy in the wider school curriculum.

So, the Discussion paper will generate discussion – and then what?

The Framework for Cultural Literacy across the curriculum will be revised and updated and material will be available for schools to support and resource their planning. This material and will not necessarily be limited to units of work.
In summary:
A deep understanding of Cultural Literacy is arrived at through learning a language. We have a culture of targeted languages being taught as part of the curriculum in Archdiocesan schools, and this is expected in years 6 and 7 (refer Staffing Schedule, p.4). Cultural Literacy is a priority area across our curriculum.

We learn about a culture through a knowledge and understanding of a way of life as we learn the language. We need to recognise that ‘doing Cultural Literacy’ is only a start in the approach to gaining an understanding of and empathy for the people of another culture. This is why planning opportunities for explicit teaching of Cultural Literacy through a whole school approach, is critical.

Africa is not a country!

Vanessa Radcliffe
St. Francis College, Crestmead

In 2006, I identified some issues surrounding St. Francis College’s recent intake of African refugee students. While the primary cohort’s welcome to the newcomers was extremely enthusiastic and overwhelmingly friendly I soon realized that there were some deep misunderstandings concerning the concepts of being African and being a refugee. Little was known about the diversity of African cultures, African geography, how people became refugees, or how they came to Australia. Indeed many of the younger refugee students themselves would say they came from the country of Africa. To counter some of these perceptions I decided to develop a program entitled Africa is not a country! A Brisbane Catholic Education Leadership grant for African Refugee schools facilitated the implementation of the program.

The first step involved forming the African Cultures Group. The group included 7 students from Grades One to Seven, composed of two boys and five girls. Our first goal was to learn about the different cultures in the group. As part of achieving this goal we prepared a library display which included a giant map of Africa. On the map we attached a photograph of each member of the African Cultures Group with speech bubbles explaining where they and their family members had been born and where they had lived before coming to Australia. There were family members born in Sudan, Uganda, Congo, Australia, Liberia and Guinea. Families had also lived in Egypt and Kenya. The map definitely helped the students identify themselves and show their peers the complexity of their backgrounds.

The group members soon stopped referring to themselves as African. Instead they identified themselves as of Sudanese background or Liberian or Congolese. The group also facilitated interesting conversations about languages. Two Grade Seven Sudanese girls discovered they could both understand English and Arabic but spoke different home languages. For many of the older members of the group English is their third or fourth language.

Once the group had a firm grasp on their own cultural identities we decided to share even more of the African cultures with the primary cohort. To promote further understanding and to develop friendships I organized an excursion to Mila Arts – School of African Culture, Dance, Music and Art at 349 Montague Rd, West End. Each African Cultures Group member invited two friends to go with them. There the students learned to dance the Ohangla, make goat skin shields, build a djembe (a drum, see illustration) from scratch, string jewellery, play a variety of drums, and sing Jambo Bwana. Thanks to Sam...
and Kate at the Mila Arts – School of African Culture, Dance, Music and Art, the day was a fantastic success. It was good fun and gave many of the target students opportunities to be seen as experts and leaders. Benita (Grade 1) translated Swahili to English for the whole group and Nelson (Grade 5) built a large djembe which was later given to our Head of Primary School as a gift. Feedback from parents voted this activity as an extremely rich learning experience for their children.

Cultural sharing continued with an African Cooking Spectacular. Over seventy plates of Sudanese cuisine was hand delivered by the African Cultures Group and their friends to staff and their classmates. Compliments flowed freely with lots of suggestions that the mums should open a restaurant.

The final part of the Africa is not a country! program involved adding resources to the College library. A selection of CDs and musical instruments from a diversity of African cultures was purchased and made accessible to students. Armed with these quality sound recordings the girls quickly formed a dance group. They were a hit with their dance performance at our College Arts Festival when they performed with their big sisters from the high school. The audience was blown away by their rhythmic hip swiveling. Two students have continued the African dance tradition into 2007 under the guidance of Primary ESL Support Teacher Vanessa Ryan.

Thanks to the grant we received St. Francis College’s students are no longer so confused about what being from Africa means and have new tools to celebrate their diversity.

Vanessa Radcliffe was the ESL Teacher and is now the Primary Arts Specialist at St. Francis College.

Mila Arts – School of African Culture, Dance, Music and Art

“Mila means ‘culture’ in Swahili, a language spoken mostly on the East Coast of Africa. Mila is a pathway to a global culture of music, movement, rhythms and art. With roots firmly in Africa, Asia and now Australia, Mila has a vision to educate, share and inspire through different African and Earth mediums” (Mila Arts website).

Sam Okoth and Kate who staff the Mila Art Centre, offer a wide variety of programs for adults and children ranging from Chui Children to African Dance. The website contains information on the variety of activities and programs available for a range of age groups http://www.mila-arts.com.au/

The Chui program – ‘Chui’ means leopard in Swahili, is a class for young people aged 5 to 12 years. The children learn African rhythms, songs and culture, through percussion and movement.

A school visit such as the one by St Francis at Crestmead featured in this edition of Curriculum Matters and on the Mila Arts website, would include a wide variety of activities such as dancing, craft and jewelry making, drumming, drum making, and singing.

Schools interested in visiting the Mila Arts – School of African Culture, Dance, Music and Art should contact Sam or Kate at

The Mila Arts – School of African Culture, Dance, Music and Art
349 Montague Road, West End, Brisbane 4101
Phone: 07 3113 3870
Email: sam@mila-arts.com.au OR kate@mil-arts.com.au
Promoting Cultural Literacy at St Peter Claver College

Paul Mackay and Huong Bui

St Peter Claver College is a diverse community in the Ipswich - Brisbane corridor. Cultural literacy has every day meaning for staff and students. The College student membership has significant Indigenous, Samoan, Vietnamese and Latino minorities as well as a scattering of students from many other cultural backgrounds. Indigenous and Pacific Islander Liaison officers play an important role working with students and staff to celebrate culture, promote understanding, negotiate conflict and foster learning.

Teaching requires great flexibility as learning is often interpreted and understood very differently across the different cultural communities. The College seeks to foster pride among the different communities through the ownership of our shared values of concern, love and justice reflecting the spirit of our patron saint, St Peter Claver who worked to ease the plight of African and Indigenous slaves in Colombia. Indigenous and Samoan dance groups and Latino music often accompanies special events at the College.

Our Language Other Than English (LOTE) is Japanese although Latino and Vietnamese students may also study their home languages as senior subjects. The Japanese language has proved a useful vehicle for whole school activities to promote cultural literacy. Each year, we host visits from two Japanese schools. Structured activities such as Indigenous and Samoan welcome ceremonies provide an opportunity to demonstrate the multicultural nature of Australia and to promote interest in learning about other cultures.

The English and SOSE Departments have developed a curriculum designed to value and understand cultural diversity. Our SOSE Coordinator, Ursula Russell and our Junior English Coordinator Patricia Field have further developed the ‘Genuine Aussies Unit’ from the Cultural Literacy Pack into an exciting unit in which all students can see the place of their own heritage. Senior English and ESL Coordinator, Sheelagh Crone has introduced many texts to the English curriculum which present a range of cultures. Teachers believe that a variety of new texts should be included in the curriculum so that all students have the opportunity to identify with key characters and understand culturally similar and different ways of constructing meaning.

Below is a part of a presentation, one of Claver’s English teachers, Huong Bui, is giving at the 2007 National English Teachers’ Conference in Canberra.

“On my first teaching day of 2007, I was faced with a unique and diverse group of Year 8 students. There were 26 new faces in total, and as nervous as they were on their first day of high school here at Saint Peter Claver College, I too was nervous in anticipation of the kind of class I was inheriting for the year ahead. One by one they appeared at my classroom doorway with much excitement mixed with concern. By the end of the lesson I had learned that my eclectic mix consisted of students with Italian, Greek, Fijian, East Timorese, New Zealand, Aboriginal and Samoan origins, just to name a few of the backgrounds that would bring life into my classroom.

So why should we be incorporating other cultures into our school work programs? In our ever-changing society, students who enter our classrooms today are more than likely to be culturally and ethnically diverse. To accommodate and recognize the multiculturalism in schools, educators can incorporate cultures through choice of texts used in the classrooms and through planning units of work which reflect multiculturalism. By doing so, we are able to enhance students’ understanding, tolerance, awareness and empathy of other cultures. This also strengthens the students’
contribution towards harmony, partnership and co-operation in our local and global community. Through the study of diverse cultures we are preparing students to engage globally, be comfortable with diversity and be able to operate effectively across cultures by developing good relationships and by being good neighbours.

At Saint Peter Claver College opportunities to expose students to the diversity of cultures are highly promoted in a number of the school’s academic departments. In the Junior school, texts like the novel ‘Boy Overboard’ by Morris Gleitzmann and units of works such as ‘Advanced Australia Fair’ are used to integrate cultural learning experiences and an awareness of multiculturalism in Australia. Newspaper or media related units promote access to diversity through selections of articles related to other cultures and these help to engage students in discussion on representations of culture in the media. Myths and Legends is a unit which allows the teacher the opportunity to explore a number of other cultural stories. The Senior school uses texts such as the novel ‘Only the Heart’ by Brian Caswell and David Phu An Chiem to continue the students’ understanding and critical discussion of text construction relating to migrants’ experiences of living in Australia. These are just a few of the ways cultural studies may be incorporated into the school work program.

Reflections...

Multiculturalism is a strong part of the Australian cultural identity and therefore it is important to open opportunities and to expose students to the diversity they are likely to encounter, not just at school but in the wider community. Not only does it provide awareness but also appreciation of other cultures that coexist in our Australian society. Usually, I take advantage of teaching situations to share and impart my Vietnamese culture. It has helped me to engage my students in insightful discussions where they may enquire about, and further their understanding of my own and other students’ cultures. It is rewarding to share our own cultures as we all do in some little way through our teachings. Whether it is through our own experiences or through the texts we read, students are able to learn and understand what we open up to them. Therefore, it is important for schools to provide and make it possible for students to access, culturally diverse learning experiences”.

Indigenous Perspectives and Cultural Literacy – What makes a Sustainable School?

Leree Mazzer, APRE
Nene Morgante, Teacher Librarian
Holy Rosary School, Windsor

‘Inspired by Holy Spirit, we challenge those we educate to live in communion with God, others and the whole of creation in prayerful, sacramental, just, peaceful, inclusive and reconciling communities’

In responding to this challenge, Holy Rosary at Windsor has infused cultural literacy into a whole school approach by actively embedding indigenous perspectives into all areas of school life. Because we acknowledge the critical place of Indigenous history in Australia’s cultural heritage, we actively engage with the Indigenous community in a range of ways.

As a school community we have a common belief in the value of Indigenous spirituality and culture and we acknowledge the lessons we learn about being stewards and caretakers of the earth. This is further enriched by our high percentage of Indigenous students and collaborative partnerships with Indigenous staff members.

We believe ownership of the learning should be shared. Learning needs to be: student centred and student directed; driven by real life contexts; focused on the development of life long learning skills and reflective of the values we need in order to create a more just, peaceful and sustainable world.

In responding to the needs of the community and the nature of the learners at Holy Rosary School, the curriculum focus during 2006 took the form of a whole school response to the question “What is a sustainable school?”. In spite of the fact that resources and school personnel were limited, we were driven by our shared vision and sense of purpose in undertaking this unit as a year long project.
Rationale
Our school has an ongoing approach to curriculum development, building upon learning from previous years and weaving in current contexts to enrich student learning. The orientating phase of every unit is to re-engage students with prior learning experiences in order to connect them to future learning. In this unit, students reconnected with indigenous stories and hands-on experiences as caretakers of the school bush tucker garden. This has formed a foundation upon which to pin further learning experiences related to indigenous spirituality and relationships with the land.

What did we do in this unit?
Our broad general aim for this unit was for students to be able to understand how everything in the world is interconnected so that they could take action to care for our world for present and future generations.

Connected Curriculum
In practical terms students engaged in a range of learning activities across multiple Key Learning Areas:

- **Religious Education** – Morality – exploring the implications of Church teachings and indigenous wisdom and its effect upon personal behaviour within an environmental context.
  
  Related Activity: Students screen printed and sewed green bags to be sold at Expo day and donated money to solar power project in Timor.

- **SOSE – Place and Space** – exploring processes and environments and articulating codes of environmental conduct based on stewardship and the significance of place.
  
  Related Activity: Students developed their own Earth Charter principles to guide their behaviour towards a more sustainable world.

- **Maths – Chance and Data** – analysing real life data pertaining to water usages, energy consumption and recycling practices.
  
  Related Activity: Water auditing and analysis of data informed the placement and installation of water tanks.

- **English – Critical and Operational** – deconstructing persuasive texts and constructing oral presentations to persuade audiences to adopt sustainable practices, and

  **Article 12**
  We respect people for who they are and don’t judge people by their colour, race or gender.

  Marmush and Jacob
• **Arts - Visual Arts** - Worked collaboratively to gather information and produce materials for distribution and display at the Sustainable School Expo.

Related Activity: Students made and displayed images and objects, understanding the functions of a formal display.

• **Arts - Media and Visual Arts** - Making and display images and objects and examining and comparing representations across media forms for specific purposes and audiences.

Related Activity: Students planned mural for courtyard and created a rainforest area.

• **Science** - Science and Society and Energy and Change – evaluating the application of science in their local community and investigating alternative practices to reduce their detrimental impact on the environment.

Related Activity: Investigating and comparing energy sources. Students undertook investigations in composting, worm farming and recycling.

**Significant Demonstrations of Learning**

While students engaged in a range of learning activities, the culminating activity for this unit was a sustainability expo showcasing student learning to the broader school community.

**Reflecting upon the future**

In light of the learning that occurred during this unit, the school has adopted an ongoing focus for sustainability. Critical evaluation of the project outcomes has highlighted the need for further reflection and investigation of indigenous perspectives and values in order to emulate them and work towards more sustainable practices. On all levels, this unit of work has truly “empowered learners to shape and enrich their changing world.”
Since Harmony Day started in 1999, it has grown into one of Australia’s biggest annual multicultural event. Harmony Day is celebrated every year on 21st March and coincides with the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This day is celebrated by the community of nations to focus on our common humanity and the diversity of cultures. It provides Australians with an opportunity to celebrate and appreciate the diverse cultures, languages and lifestyles that make up our communities. The values behind Harmony Day represent common shared Australian values and concepts of harmony, community, diversity, commitment, goodwill and understanding.

St Brendan’s joined other schools and organizations across the country to mark Harmony Day, now in its ninth year. We actually celebrated a Harmony Week which included many multicultural activities, one of which was a wonderful event to showcase the diverse cultures (over 30) represented in the school. Dancers from Tonga, Rwanda and Sudan, and indigenous performers from Stradbroke Island entertained the school and parish communities before the school choir invited everyone to join them in singing two peace and harmony songs.

Another important part of this event occurred when a number of parents from the school community spoke of their experiences and journeys as migrants and refugees to a packed audience, most of whom were wearing the traditional Harmony Day colour of orange.

After the performers and guest speakers, St Brendan’s launched their ‘Welcome to Primary School’ kit to both the school and parish communities. St Brendan’s was successful in obtaining a federal government grant to develop an inclusive orientation kit in order to help parents or caregivers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds prepare their children for school. During the Harmony Day event, the audience, some of whom had participated in the filming, viewed the multilingual DVD from the kit.

Harmony Day celebrations enabled families to buddy with other families to introduce one another and together to design a harmony logo from a piece of fabric. The decorated fabric squares were later sewn together to create a Harmony quilt symbolising a sense of belonging and connection to one another and a reminder of the special evening event. Parents supplied supper made of traditional foods from all over the world.

The school held a number of activities as a lead up to Harmony Day celebrations. Of particular interest and enjoyment for the children were the cooking workshops held by mothers from the various cultures who volunteered to cook traditional dishes from their countries.

Another lead up activity to the Harmony Day Celebrations was a ‘My Favourite Recipe’ competition throughout the school. The children used their artistic skills to decorate a paper plate depicting their favourite dish and these were displayed around the school.

Harmony Day was an important milestone in another project embarked on by St Brendan’s. We were successful in obtaining a $49,000 grant from the Australian Government’s ‘Living In Harmony Program’. The ‘Building Stronger Partnerships’ project included 7 parent cooking demonstrations in the classrooms, a weekly multicultural playgroup and 8 free international cooking workshops facilitated by a dietitian from Nutrition Australia. By joining these activities stronger relationships can form amongst parents who come from many parts of the world including El Salvador, Liberia, Sudan, Vietnam and Laos as well as Australia. Apart from enjoying opportunities to learn about other cultures, parents will meet new people.

The Australian Government’s ‘Living In Harmony Program’ funds community projects and partnerships that create opportunities for people to participate in the Australian way of life and that promote Australian values and mutual respect.

For more information, please contact Mandy Cox, Living In Harmony Project Officer, Ph: 32752081 and 0402 204 509.
Flat Stanley visits the global village by post and travels across the Curriculum.

Tanya McNeill
Marianne Lucas
Mater Dei Ashgrove West

Mater Dei staff have long participated in the collaborative planning of integrated units. In these instances the LOTE teacher has always endeavored to connect her lessons with the major classroom focus of the unit. This year LOTE has recommenced in the Middle years, including Years 3 and 4.

The Year 3 teachers saw this as a great opportunity to further explore cultural literacy initiatives, especially as the children do not experience the diverse nature of Australia’s population within their local and school community. We therefore appreciated the chance to participate in Brisbane Catholic Education’s Teaching Languages in the Primary School Project. This involved planning a connected unit with the Year 3 teachers, the Arts teacher, the LOTE teacher and Teacher Librarian in order that our students develop skills of intercultural understanding and intercultural communication.

A fictional character called FLAT STANLEY (a young boy from the novel by Jeff Brown) became a catalyst for our planning. By virtue of an unfortunate accident FLAT STANLEY becomes flat overnight, and subsequently is able to experience new and unusual adventures, including being posted to a friend overseas for a holiday.

The focus for our unit became ‘ways of communicating’ with neighbours near and far. Level 2 SOSE outcomes refer specifically to our Asia-Pacific neighbours and as the LOTE of choice at Mater Dei is Japanese, we chose to use the Access Asia Snapshot kit to illustrate similarities and differences between our cultures.

In getting to know the students at the beginning of the year, we gathered and plotted data about the children, their features and their families. Typically this information included their age, birthday, house number and address, family size, how many teeth they have lost, body features and a list of their ‘likes’. Collectively this data has helped to complete a Mathematics investigation and build a profile of a typical Year 3 student at Mater Dei. We will use this profile in our communication with our Asian neighbours and hope to receive a similar response from them.

The children will create their own FLAT STANLEY’S and write an accompanying letter to post to various contacts throughout Australia, Asia and beyond. To complement this, the students will also compose a simple postcard in Japanese, using hiragana and katakana script and send them to a buddy school in Japan.

Apart from the language and SOSE content outlined above, this unit has possible links with other KLA’s. Within the Arts, children will explore cultural aspects of Asian communities and how they express themselves. The focus for Religious Education will be on belonging and the variety of ways in which prayer and ritual can express different faiths.

In Science and Maths we will investigate our place in space, and the concepts of time, location and direction.

Information, Communication and Learning Technologies (ICLT) will be embedded in the unit as the children explore various ways of communicating e.g. e-mail and fax. Further they will view an example of a photo story of a typical day in the life of a Japanese student. This will be used as the model when the children create a digital record of FLAT STANLEY’S adventures.

This record along with a display of International dolls created by the children, will form the basis for the celebration of our learning.

Some staff have been so excited by this process that in the future we will endeavour to focus on a whole school approach to the implementation of our cultural literacy and languages programme beyond the Year 3 level.

Tanya is a Year 3 Teacher, Assistant Principal Religious Education and a Curriculum Support teacher at Mater Dei.

Marianne is the LOTE Teacher.
The Bridge
By Kathleen Evans and Maureen Neal-Young
St Oliver Plunkett School, Cannon Hill

“Go to the truth beyond the mind.
Love is the bridge.”

THEN –
On 20th October 2004, Archbishop Bathesby blessed the recently constructed buildings at St Oliver Plunkett School which were officially opened by the then Education Minister, Anna Bligh MLA. As part of the whole school development, the Year Seven students, under the direction of their teachers, Kathleen Evans (LOTE teacher), Maureen Neal-Young and Ron Thompson, landscaped a vacant space on the Camellia Street entrance to the school. Students designed and developed a Japanese-themed garden as Japanese is the Language other than English taught at the school.

The vision statement of St Oliver Plunkett School expresses ideals which foster an open, welcoming interaction between the school and others. The Japanese garden, with its red bridge, signifies the connection between the school community and the Japanese culture. Students learn what it means to be members of a respectful and compassionate community by learning the language and familiarizing themselves with the customs of another culture. A feature of the Japanese culture is the Japanese garden which symbolizes balance and harmony in nature.

A class excursion to Mount Coot-tha Botanical Gardens was undertaken to immerse the teachers and students in aspects of Japanese culture. Students viewed the original plans of the Japanese garden at Mount Coot-tha, learned about Japanese calligraphy, the art of bonsai and shared a Japanese meal. Following this enculturation, the students worked co-operatively in groups to research the significant elements of Japanese garden design such as はし (bridge), つくばい (water bowl) and とうろう (lantern). Based on the knowledge they had acquired, the students designed their own plans for a Japanese garden and orally presented their concepts to the Principal and their year level colleagues. Ultimately, the design of the school’s Japanese garden included common elements from various students’ designs and incorporated skills from a range of Key Learning Areas.

The Year Seven students extended invitations in Japanese to the Japanese Vice Consul, Mr Hiroto Ito, to cut the tape at the opening of the garden. Photographs of this occasion were published in the local paper along with a photograph of Mr. Ron Thompson who designed and built the bridge, a central feature of the garden. The enthusiasm with which the garden was conceived is present in the ongoing learning of the current Year Seven students and the desire of teachers and students to be involved in further integration of LOTE and other classroom learning.

NOW-
In 2007, Brisbane Catholic Education invited schools to participate in an innovative project titled Teaching Languages in the Primary School. The aim of the project was to enhance the whole school cultural literacy programs. The success of the Japanese garden led the current Year Seven teachers, together with the LOTE teacher, to answer the invitation to take part in the project. Involvement of the Curriculum Support Teacher (CST) was sought to ensure an immersion of cultural literacy across the whole school. An initial workshop has been followed by a series of ongoing planning sessions with the classroom teachers, LOTE teacher, Education Officers (Language and Culture) and the CST. It is envisaged that this unit integrating Japanese language, cultural literacy and other Key Learning Areas will be published and made available to schools within Brisbane Catholic Education.

The unit under development investigates youth culture
in Australia and Japan. Students will explore aspects of groups and the ways in which the media has a direct influence on the way that youth feel, think and behave. Students will co-operatively plan and participate in a fashion parade to demonstrate their understanding of youth stereotypes in Australia and Japan. They will individually design their own page in the class year book to reflect the influence of youth cultures on their self esteem and self concept. It is anticipated that the co-operative planning of this unit will ensure that LOTE and Cultural Literacy, taught by a specialist teacher, are integrated with other Key Learning Areas. Rather than ‘stand alone’ units, the LOTE teacher engages students with the same concepts and same contexts as the classroom teacher.

On a wider scale, it is anticipated that these learnings will reflect the Vision Statement of the school which is encapsulated in the school motto ‘Justice and Truth’. The bridge to truth in this context is revealed through the study of another culture. In loving one another as ourselves, we find the way to the truth that lies beyond the mind.

Sister School Project

Lesley Parry, Sacred Heart Primary School, Booval

Sacred Heart, Booval first became involved in the Sister School Project through a connection with Nudgee International College and Barry Clifford who organises trips to Australia for Korean students. Children from Jangdae Elementary School in Daejeon visited our school in July/August 2006 for the first time as a home stay.

The Principal of Jangdae Elementary School, Mr Jeong and Mr Ahn travelled to Brisbane in January 2007 to see how English lessons were operating through Griffith University and to visit Sacred Heart where his students were experiencing a home stay. While at Sacred Heart, Mr Jeong and Mr Guy Dorries signed an agreement to develop a Sister School Project. Mr Jeong invited Guy to visit South Korea in June to view Jangdae Elementary School and to formalise the Sister School Agreement. During the visit to Sacred Heart, Mr Jeong and Mr Ahn discussed educational processes and issues for both schools. Subsequently Gerard Marsh and Lesley Parry were asked by the Principal to visit Jangdae Elementary School in his place.

On the visit, Gerard and Lesley spent time meeting with staff, joining in classes, taking the opportunity to teach lessons and enjoy the experience of a home stay. This experience was beneficial, and we discussed the vision and mission statement for our schools along with sharing curriculum ideas and resources, thus gaining an awareness of our similarities and differences. After the Signing of Sister School Agreement, we made a presentation to the parents of Jangdae and outlined the program for their children when they come to live in the Sacred Heart community in August 2007.

From discussions, the following goals for the project were established for our students:

- To develop Global Awareness
- To develop Life-long Right Relationships with our Sister School
- To develop a philosophy of sharing and giving
- To visit our Sister School in real terms and via cyberspace
- To experience home stay with our Sister School
- To learn about and cultivate an understanding of South Korea and its culture
The goals we are seeking to develop for our staff are:

- To learn and experience the history and culture of South Korea and Daejeon
- To experience the facilities at Jangdae Elementary School
- To home stay with a family from Jangdae Elementary School
- To be involved in an exchange of educational ideas through professional dialogue
- To spend time at Jangdae Elementary School with the possibility of teaching classes while there

The project is in its early stages of development. We have already begun introducing the study of Korean culture in the school through Literacy, SOSE and The Arts. We were presented with Korean artefacts and have them displayed in the school, along with the Korean Flag. We are in the process of obtaining the Jangdae School Flag and it will hang beside the Sacred Heart Banner.

The Sister School program provides the school communities of Jangdae and Sacred Heart an opportunity to grow an understanding of our respective cultures, values and beliefs. This is one way students are preparing for their participation as world citizens and life long learners.

To repeat or not to repeat …

Dr Helen McGrath
Faculty of Education, Deakin University, Victoria, Australia

Introduction

Over the last 75 years a pool of research-based knowledge about the effects on students of repeating a year level has been accumulating. It now overwhelmingly indicates that there are neither academic nor social advantages for the majority of students who repeat a year of their schooling. There is probably no other educational issue on which the research evidence is so unequivocal. There is also no other educational issue where there is such a huge gap between what the research says and the practices that schools continue to adopt. Paradoxically this discrepancy between evidence and practice has never been more apparent than in recent times when evidence-based approaches are being strongly promoted by educational systems across Australia.

The practice of students’ repeating a year level is widely accepted in Australian schools but there are few statistics available on rates of repeating. Kenny (1991) has estimated that approximately 14%-18% of all Australian students repeat a year, especially in the first four years of schooling.

Reviews of research and three key statistical meta-analyses (Holmes, 1989; Holmes & Matthews, 1984; Jimerson, 2001; Shepard & Smith, 1990) have provided the most important information about the effects of year level repetition. The conclusions from nearly all of these studies are clear-cut and unanimous: repeating a year does not improve academic performance, social competency or general behaviour for students at either the primary or secondary level. On the contrary it creates low self-esteem and a negative attitude to school and places students at risk of further failure, increased anti-social behaviour and dropping out of school.

Jimerson (2004) and Owens and Magliaro (1998) have argued that there are significant risks for schools in continuing to follow the unsupported practice of repeating students in the face of such unambiguous research which directs otherwise and warn that such practice may constitute ‘educational malpractice’.

‘One indicator of a profession is that a body or research guides its practice. A body of research exists on the subject of retention, and it should guide our practice. If we are to treat our ‘patients’ professionally, we need to stop punishing non-learners and instead provide opportunities for success.’ (Owings & Magliaro, 1998, p.88)

Research Conclusions about Repeating

Earlier research on year level repetition mostly looked at students’ academic progress during the year in which they repeated and the following year. More contemporary research has used a control group design in which students who have repeated are compared with other students with similar low levels of achievement and/or social difficulties who did not
repeat and who were promoted to the next Year level with their same-age cohort. In some cases these longitudinal comparisons have been made over a period of 21 years [e.g. Jimerson, 1999]. In summary, the following conclusions can be stated:

- Repeating does not improve academic outcomes
- Repeating contributes to poor mental health outcomes
- Repeating leads to poor long term social outcomes
- Repeating contributes to a negative attitude to school and learning
- Repeating results in students dropping out of school
- Repeating decreases the likelihood that a student will participate in post-secondary schooling
- Repeated students demonstrate higher rates of behavioural problems
- There is no advantage to students in delaying school entry for a year in order to increase ‘school readiness’
- There are huge costs associated with students repeating a year of schooling.
- Some students are more likely to be recommended to repeat than others

Repeating does not improve academic outcomes
More often than not, students who repeat never catch up academically. Academic gains for students who repeat at any level of schooling are minimal and short-lived. Longitudinal comparisons have clearly identified that although many repeated students do make some academic progress during the year in which they repeat, these improvements have disappeared within 2-3 years [Jimerson, 2001]. At about the Year eight level, students who repeated a year at some stage of their earlier schooling are achieving at levels lower than or similar to those of matched students who did not repeat and are at that point a year ahead of them [Dawson, 1998; Jimerson, 2001; Shepard & Smith, 1987]. One of the factors that may contribute to this overall deterioration is that repeating is a visible demonstration of ‘failure’ and may negatively influence many teachers’ perceptions and expectations about the student for a long time [Nagin, Pagani, Tremblay & Vitaro, 2003]

Repeating contributes to poor mental health outcomes
Even when handled sensitively and confidentially, students who repeat are aware that they have ‘failed’ in some way and as a result are being removed from their same-age peers. This perception is also held by their peers. For most students this creates a sense of shame, stigma and loss of self esteem [Alexander, Entwistle, and Dauber, 1994; Shepard & Smith, 1990, Thomas, 1992]. This loss of status and sense of shame increases if, as often occurs, many of the younger students in their new ‘repeated’ class out-perform them. Repeating a year is a major source of stress for most students. In one study [Anderson, Jimerson, & Whipple, 2002], students in Year 6 reported that they feared being repeated more than they feared losing a parent or going blind. Studies have also shown that students who repeat also experience stress from: an awareness of being taller, larger and more physically mature than their younger classmates; missing their friends who moved on to the next year level; insensitive and negative comments by family and community members; boredom from repeating similar tasks and assignments [Smith & Shepard, 1988, 1986].

Repeating leads to poor long term social outcomes
The social behaviour of students who repeat does not appear to improve any more than that of promoted peers with similar social difficulties [Jimerson, 2001]. In many cases their social behaviour actually deteriorates. The social disruption that results from repeating appears to contribute to poor long-term social adjustment. Repeated students have to develop new social relationships almost as though they have been transferred to a new school. ‘Having to repeat’ also represents a loss of social status and some studies have suggested that many middle and upper primary students prefer to play with students who have not repeated [Shepard & Smith, 1990]. Many repeated students also have social difficulties with their new younger peers [Byrnes, 1989; Shepard & Smith, 1990] and many are teased about having repeated [Smalls, 1997].

Repeating contributes to a negative attitude to school and learning
Repeating contributes to a negative attitude to school for many students and, in many cases, permanent disengagement from learning [Jimerson, 2001]. Many repeated students associate school and learning with humiliation and threat.

Repeating results students dropping out of school
Students who repeat have a 20% to 50% higher likelihood of dropping out of secondary school compared to students with similar levels of achievement or behaviour who were promoted to the next year level with their same-age peers [Alexander, Entwistle, Dauber, and Kabbani 2004; Eide & Showalter, 2001; Jimerson,
Studies suggest that the increased risk of dropping out for students who have repeated cannot be explained by their poor achievement and is directly attributable to their experience of repeating a year (Grissom and Shepard, 1989). Dropping out frequently leads to less successful occupational lives and lower incomes. Repeating decreases the likelihood that a student will participate in post-secondary schooling. In one study, students who finished high school despite having repeated a year were 50% less likely to enrol in post-secondary education of any kind than similar promoted peers (Fine & Davis, 2003; Jimerson, 1999, 2001). These odds were even worse for those students who had repeated between Years 5 and 10.

Repeated students demonstrate higher rates of behavioural problems. Compared to students with similar problems who were promoted, repeated students are more likely to have behaviour problems and poorer attendance in the long-term (Byrd, Weitzman, and Auinger, 1997; Jimerson, 2001). Nagin et al., (2003) found that the experience of repeating directly increased aggression and misbehaviour in all boys, but especially in those who were already showing early signs of anti-social behaviour. Agnew (2005) has argued that the frustration, disappointment and anger engendered by this kind of visible school failure contributes to students following criminal and antisocial pathways.

There is no advantage to students in delaying school entry for a year in order to increase ‘school readiness’. Research also suggests that the practice of giving students a second year of preschool in order to delay school entry by one year is also ineffective. Graue & Diperna (2000) found that delaying school entry year leads to more negative outcomes than positive ones. For example, students who repeated a preschool year (mostly boys with late birth dates) were significantly more likely to receive special education services further down the track and showed few academic or social gains in return for their lost year. Beck and Trimmer (1995) found that students with birthdays that occurred later in the year in which they were eligible to start school were more likely to have parents who delayed their entry to school by a year. However they had the same level of success in university applications in year 12 as did those students with late birthdays who entered school when eligible to do. They described the process of delaying school entry as developmentally inappropriate.

There are huge costs associated with students repeating a year of schooling. The practice of repeating students is not only ineffective, it is also very costly.

- The costs to students are the negative effects on their wellbeing, academic progress and futures.
- The costs to parents are those financial costs that relate to an extra year of schooling.
- The cost to an educational system is mainly financial but often invisible. Typical accounting processes do not assess the cost of repeating students. Most educational systems identify the number of students at each year level but don’t disaggregate this figure to identify how many years each student has spent at that year level.
- There is also a longer term cost to society because students who have developed patterns of aggression and/or drop out of school are at higher risk of becoming involved in crime, being unemployed and needing welfare support.

Some low achieving students are more likely to be recommended to repeat than others. The key reviews and meta-analytic studies (mentioned in the introduction) have analysed hundreds of research studies and have identified marked trends in the types of students who are more likely to be recommended to repeat than peers with similar low levels of achievement. Briefly, these trends are:

- Boys are twice as likely as girls to repeat
- Students in rural areas are more likely to repeat than students in urban areas [Kenny, 1991]
- Students who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, have poorly educated parents and lower parental involvement in school are more likely to repeat
- Students who have an ESL background and/or are from minority groups are more likely to repeat
- Students who are physically smaller than their peers are more likely to repeat
- Students who are slightly younger than the rest of the grade are more likely to repeat
- [Beck & Trimmer, 1995]
- Students who are later diagnosed with have specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia are more likely to repeat
• Students who have mild intellectual disabilities are more likely to repeat.
• Students who are later diagnosed with a specific behaviour syndrome such as Asperger’s Syndrome or Attention Deficit Disorder are more likely to repeat.
• Students who are described by teachers as under-confident, not socially competent or socially immature are more likely to repeat.
• Students who display more negative classroom behaviours are more likely to repeat.

Why is Repeating Still a Common Practice in Australian Schools?
Most Australian schools continue to repeat students despite there being no supportive evidence of its efficacy and despite the damning evidence that confirms its negative effects.

Many possible explanations can be suggested for this trend and some of them probably interact. In summary, these explanations are:
• Repeating is a traditional practice.
• Schools and educational systems are unaware of the research about repeating.
• Parents and teachers over-focus on short-term outcomes.
• Parents and students are perceived as responsible for low achievement.
• Small differences are exaggerated.
• Teachers and parents underestimate students’ reactions to repeating.
• Parents and teachers make decisions on the basis of unjustified assumptions.

Repeating is a traditional practice.
Repeating has for many decades been accepted by most schools as an effective and caring solution to the problem of students who seem socially immature or who are not learning at the same rate as their peers. Many parents are also steeped in the tradition that says that repeating a grade is an answer to a child’s difficulties and put a lot of pressure on the school to allow their child to repeat. Kenny (1991) found that parents often play an important role in the decision to repeat and that parental requests are often a significant determining factor. In initiating the decision.

Schools and educational systems are unaware of the research about repeating.
This traditional practice has not been significantly challenged in Australian education over the last fifty years because schools have lacked opportunities for access to contemporary research studies that present a very different picture (Jimerson, 2001).

Parents and teachers over-focus on short-term outcomes.
Teachers and parents cannot conduct controlled experiments to see if repeating really does work in the long term. Without controlled comparisons, retention can look like it works, especially if teachers and parents believe it works. Many repeated students do show some academic improvement in the following year. Such short-term and immediate progress would be expected because of increases in age and maturity, as well as the fact that the students are getting more practice on content and skills to which they have already been exposed. Additionally, teachers may make positive but biased judgments about a repeated student’s progress as they are comparing them to a younger peer group. However, most parents and teachers cannot see the potential negative long-term picture for the repeated student. When students repeat at early year levels, the negative effects may occur several years later and thus are invisible to decision makers at the time. They over-generalise from these short-term perceptions to the notion that repeating ‘works well’. Teachers may also give too much credence to anecdotal reports by parents and colleagues on supposedly ‘successful’ repeating situations and pay less attention to ‘unsuccessful’ anecdotes.

Parents and students are perceived as responsible for low achievement.
The belief that students and/or their parents are responsible for low achievement appears to play a significant part in a school’s decision to recommend repeating (Black, 2004). However, less consideration is given to the possibility that the school has not provided effective instruction or support to address an individual student’s diversity. Darling-Hammond (1998) has argued that schools need to abandon the deficit model, which places the problem of poor achievement within the child and their family, and acknowledge that classroom and school practices also contribute significantly to a child’s low achievement.

Small differences are exaggerated.
A small but temporary difference between a student and same-age peers is often seen as a major one. For example, research has shown that in Year one...
the youngest children tend to do less well than the oldest. However, by Year three there are no differences between these same students on the basis of age.

**Teachers and parents underestimate students’ reactions to repeating**

More than two-thirds of the students who repeat do so between them first and third year of primary schooling. In general, teachers and parents believe (erroneously) that repeating a year at such an early stage is less psychologically harmful than continuing to perform poorly academically, socially or behaviourally. However, both teachers and parents are often unaware of how students really feel about having to repeat. Nearly all students who repeat report that they dislike the idea, seeing it as a sign of failure and loss of status. A study by Byrnes (1989) concluded that most students saw repeating as a punishment and a stigma, not as a positive event which adults recommended to help them. Students who repeat also report feeling very fearful of the social changes that they anticipate will occur eg loss of established friends and social connections, new students to get to know and get along with, and the need to find a social place in the new class group. Students who are already socially under-confident will face the challenges of being relocated into a new social setting where their social skills may be even less effective and their social status even lower than before.

**Parents and teachers make decisions on the basis of unjustified assumptions**

There are many false assumptions that both teachers and parents hold that tend to lead them down the path of requesting or recommending repeating. For example:

- Many parents assume, incorrectly, that a teacher working with a repeated student manages that student’s learning in a special way or that additional support is provided to a repeated student. This is usually not the case. Most repeated students are treated as just another member of the new class. Repeating is most often no more than ‘doing it again’ with the same content and skills. If the new teacher proves to be more effective than the previous one it is usually coincidental rather than part of a detailed plan.

- Some schools and parents assume that repeating (or the threat of repeating) will motivate a low achieving student to try harder. Others assume that repeating will raise a student’s self-esteem because they will be the ‘oldest’ in the grade, already have certain skills and be able to take on a leadership role with younger students. However it is more common to find that their loss of self confidence results in their being out-performed academically and socially by their new younger classmates.

- Some schools still erroneously assume that there is a specifiable body of content and skills which exists for each year of schooling and that ‘going up’ to the next level should be ‘earned’ through successful performance compared to standards. However, it makes little sense for students who fail to attain competence in these standards to simply be recycled through the same curriculum in the company of a younger cohort of students. Such an assumption is inconsistent with the principles that underpin other effective school practices such as inclusion and multi-age classrooms. These practices are based on the assumption that the academic and social needs of individual students can best be addressed by placement in a classroom with same-aged, multi-aged peers or older peers.

- Research suggests that many teachers and parents believe that ‘development’ is a physiological unfolding in a series of stages which is governed by an internal timetable and that the age at which a child is able to perform a certain skill is a function of his/her developmental age (Shepard & Smith, 1989). This implies that academic and social ‘readiness’ cannot be accelerated by what happens in the classroom and that very little can be done for an ‘unready’ child. So schools often decide to ‘take the pressure off’ and give the student another year in which to ‘mature’ and develop ‘readiness’. The implication is that social and emotional maturity is most likely to occur when children are placed with other students who, although younger, are of similar emotional, social and academic maturity. However, this view of development is not supported by research. Studies confirm that maturity can be significantly increased through effective teaching and learning experiences. Maturity results from an interaction between a students’ internal timetable and stimulating experiences and learning opportunities. Again this assumption is in opposition to the principles that underpin other evidence-based educational practices. For example, the principle that underpins inclusion and multi-age practices is that if less mature students learn in the same class with more mature students then it is more likely that their development will increase as a result of the modelling of more mature behaviours and being exposed to more mature thinking and learning.
Alternatives to Repeating

Repeating is a narrow strategy that clearly does not address the complex needs of most of the students who are achieving poorly or have social or behavioural difficulties. However, simply promoting a student to the next year level along with their chronological peers, without a structured plan of additional support, isn’t the answer either.

There is no single empirically supported intervention strategy or approach that can be shown to be effective for all students who are achieving poorly. Successful schools use a combination of specific evidence-based intervention strategies and approaches that enhance and support the achievement and adjustment of individual students. Some of the many options that can be included in a school’s overall approach are listed below.

More effective teaching

Teachers can ‘power up’ their whole-class, small-group and individual teaching in a variety of ways such as:

- using cooperative learning strategies (see Murdoch & Wilson, 2004 and <http://www.co-operation.org/>)
- adopting problem-based learning approaches (Blumberg, 2000; De Lisle, 1997; Lambros, 2002, 2004; McGrath and Noble, 2005)
- teaching students to develop and use a variety of mnemonic strategies to assist with recall of key concepts and information (Barnett, Clarizio, & Payette, 1996; Dretzke & Levin, 1996; Forness, Kavale, Blum, & Lloyd, 1997; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1998; Shapiro, 1996).
- the use of rubrics for self assessment
- relating classroom activities and curriculum to students’ backgrounds, current lives and current knowledge

Early identification and intervention

Early identification and intervention has been shown to make an enormous difference and can start at the pre-school level (Greenberg et al., 2003). In particular such interventions should focus on structured and engaging programs that teach basic literacy skills, social skills, emotional literacy skills and pro-social values.

Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

An IEP can be developed each term for every student with identified special academic, social or behavioural needs. These need to be specific plans plus actions and should be developed in conjunction with parents and specialist support staff. IEPs need to be regularly monitored, reviewed and refined. Frequent ongoing informal assessment of student performance and behaviour is also part of a successful IEP.

Individualised specialist support

Individualised specialist support (eg Reading recovery) should be available and ongoing.

Differentiating the curriculum, learning tasks and assessment

The most effective method of adapting curriculum, teaching and assessment to suit individual students is the integration of Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences model with Bloom’s [Revised] Taxonomy (Noble, 2004). Using an MI/Bloom planner (McGrath & Noble, 2005) provides teachers with a strengths-based approach to teaching, supporting, encouraging and developing individual students.

Two or more years with the one teacher

When students are ‘looped’ they spend two or more years with the same teacher. This allows that teacher more opportunity to better understand an individual student, adapt teaching and learning strategies, undertake ongoing assessment, provide instruction to meet their academic and social needs and take a strengths-based approach to their overall development (Nicholas & Nicholas, 2002).

Multi-age Classrooms

Multi-age classrooms include students of several different ages and they can provide opportunities for flexible grouping of some students with older students (eg for peer tutoring) and younger students (for review and consolidation) (May, Kundert, & Brent, 1995). There is no stigma attached as all students are moving in and out of different small groups all the time.

Strategies for increasing motivation and on-task behaviour

There are many different approaches to increasing engagement, motivation and on-task behaviour. Whole-class incentive schemes can be successful, as can the use of educational games and peer tutoring.

Providing compensatory structures, scaffolding and assistive technology

There are many forms of scaffolding, compensatory structures and assistive technology that can support individual students in some areas of their learning. These include:
- laptop computers for note taking and assignment writing in class and exams
- colour-coded notebooks to assist with organisation
• providing summaries of notes from class or taping the lesson to allow student review
• using graphic organisers (including computer versions) which allow students to organise their thoughts and summarise ideas.
• using a dictaphone to enable students to record stories which are then typed up
• voice-activated typing programs
• digital storytelling software
• CD-based books which feature high-interest stories in which each page of the story is read and the words are highlighted as they are read. Additional clicks of the mouse clicking the mouse over a word provides pronunciation, syllabification and a definition.

Whole-class social skills and resilience programs
All students benefit from learning social skills and skills associated with coping and acting resiliently and whole-class approaches work best (McGrath and Noble, 2003). Students with special social emotional and behavioural needs can undertake additional small group work, preferably in groups that also include other class members.

Peer tutoring
Older students can work with younger students to reinforce maths or language concepts and skills through age-appropriate activities and educational games

In Conclusion
Results from research studies during the past 75 years fail to support the use of repeating as an intervention to improve academic achievement and/or enhance socio-emotional and behavioural adjustment. There may be an occasional student who is an exception, but, for most students, providing them with more of what didn’t work for them the first time around is an exercise in futility. Moving forward on this key educational issue involves schools giving consideration to the following directions:

• developing a clear school policy about repeating
• ensuring that teachers [and parents] have access to the relevant research in order to make informed decisions
• using teams of teachers or district panels to make decisions about an individual student’s future in the following school year after considering questions such as: What does the school expect to achieve by repeating this student? What possible positive and negative effects might repeating have on this student’s achievement, behaviour and wellbeing? What more effective alternatives might be implemented instead of repeating? What skills and resources will be needed to enable the school to do this?

This article is reproduced with the permission of the author and the Editor of WORDS [WA Primary Principals Association Inc]

References

De Lisle, R. 1997, How to Use Problem-Based learning in the Classroom, Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development


Lambros,A. 2002, Problem-Based Learning in K-8 Classrooms. Corwin Press, California

McGrath, H. and Noble, T. 2005, Eight Ways at Once: Multiple Intelligences + Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy =200 Differentiated Classroom Strategies, (Books 1 & 2), Pearson Education, Sydney


Noble, T. 2004, Integrating the Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy with Multiple Intelligences: a planning tool for curriculum differentiation, Teacher’s College Record, 106, 1, 193-211.


Look out for the *Cultural Literacy Within A Whole School Approach* discussion paper soon to be released.

Olga Duque, Education Officer: Languages and Culture is available to come to your school to support your staff in working through the discussion paper and assisting you to determine what it means in the context of your school.

She can be contacted on 07 30337486 or email: oduque@bne.catholic.edu.au

The Archdiocesan Commonwealth Targeted Programmes Committee invites Principals, Teachers and School Officers to the 2007 Literacy and Numeracy Pilot Projects Conference.

Tuesday 4 September
9.30 am – 4pm
O’Shea In-service Centre
19 Lovedale St, Wilston

Each year teachers applaud this day as a most practical and useful opportunity to learn from each other. This year the guest speakers are:

Carmel Diezmann on Stimulating numeracy opportunities through classroom investigations inspired by stories.

Brian Dare on “Learning about Language; Learning about Grammar”

**Carmel Deizmann**
Carmel is the acting Assistant Dean (Research) at QUT Kelvin Grove. Her areas of interest include mathematics education in particular spatial visualisation skills required for many classroom tasks as well as science education and getting students to think and work mathematically.

**Brian Dare**
A Private Consultant in language and literacy, Brian has a focus on explicit teaching in the Key Learning Areas. He is one of the writers and accredited tutor trainers for the Language and Literacy Course, a professional development program in functional grammar that has been implemented nationally and internationally.

Register through the BCE Professional Development Calendar under the topic Literacy & Numeracy or contact Lorraine Tunn ltunn@bne.catholic.edu.au. Enrolments close Wednesday 28 August 2007.