**DEECD Innovations Showcase – Convention Centre Melbourne, 13-5-2011**

**There is much to report/ remember and different things will interest different people. To assist, you may wish to know:**

* **Opening addresses – Martin Dixon, Minister for Ed p1**
* **“ “ – Katrina Reynan Innovation & Next Practice Division p 1**
* **“ “ – Elizabeth Kalas Year 12 student p 2**
* **“ “ Geoff Burns & Wayne Ellerton – Indigenous student apprenticeship program RMIT p 3**
* **“ “ Professor Collette Taylor – Melb Uni – Early Years Study p 3**
* **“ “ Monica Scully – Huntingdale PS – Bilingual learning p4**
* **Specialist Science and Maths centres – p 5**
* **FUSE expo – elluminate; State Library online review program; HTAV virtual history site; Ultranet p5 -6**
* **Retention through Individualised Pathways – Drouin SC pg6-8**
* **‘Real Time Student’ Program – p8**
* **Closing Comments and challenges for participants – p8 -9**

Opening session:

The ‘MC’s’ for the event were two female students – obviously Year 11 or 12 – they had been recommended by the state SRC association. This was a clever addition to the event as it immediately had everyone’s attention.

Theme of the opening addresses – WHAT IF? What if everyone who attends find one new idea, meets one new contact, tries one new thing?

Martin Dixon MP – Minister for Education (worked in Catholic Ed before going into parliament)

His main point was that we need to be prepared not only to meet the needs of students, but also to be willing to learn FROM our students.

His department is going to start to use technology more, and to encourage people in education to share the technology. There will be $100,000 grants to schools to be innovative, and in some cases to specialize – but the emphasis will be on them not keeping to themselves, but sharing their learning, knowledge and resultant expertise with others. ( I guess that he was referring to only government schools, though, so my question is, what is the Catholic System doing for their students in respect to such growth of understanding and pedagogy?)

Katrina Reynan – General Manager – Innovation and Next Practice Division ( but this was her last day in the position)

* the world is different – students are different – we need to respond differently to any time in the past.
* Questions to be put to all in education include:

What is required of our schools, teachers and students today and into the future?

What is required of us as leaders (in our Catholic Sector)?

What is the purpose of the learning we offer? As a school? As a sector?

Stephen Heppell, Charles Leadbeater & Valerie Hannan (all from UK)were mentioned as ‘Friends of Victorian Education’. It would seem that these experts are currently some of the ‘driving forces’ in the thinking of the department. It is clear that the department has been consulting with international educationalists – these, plus others like Marzano, Mc Tighe, Hattie etc to reference and guide their thinking. (Who does Catholic Ed look to? Do we just follow on? Does CECV do similar research independently?)

Participants saw a brief interview / recording of Valerie Hannan. Some of the points made included:

* If the old model of education is not working for young people, we need to reconsider what is required.
* The future is a system where education is ‘ not done FOR or TO’ students, but ‘WITH and BY’ students.
* Need to invent new ways for people to learn
* The race is on – the question is whether we can keep up with the children, the world, global awareness & the intracultural understanding required.
* We need to ‘repeatedly reconceptualise’ what we do, how we do it, and why
* ‘The future is already here – but it is currently unequally distributed’ (this point was extremely obvious on the day, and is evident even between just our own schools within the Diocese)

Elizabeth Kalas – one of the student MCs

Elizabeth spoke of the power of having students involved in decision making in their schools. She referred to the 1990 UK convention where it was declared that ‘students have the right to be heard’. This was reinforced through SRC report findings that:

* student learning and outcomes increased in schools where students were involved in the decision making processes; and that
* having students involved in decision making processes improves wellbeing and students’ feelings of safety within their school environment

She explained that it was a ‘stereotypical message that the learners always have to listen to the educators’ and was no longer appropriate or workable. Elizabeth asserted that ‘not all student ideas should be implemented, but they should be heard.’

When teachers have new ideas about what to offer in schools, or how to do something – they should first ask the students what their thoughts and responses are to the proposed ideas. The challenge put was ‘what might happen?’

Geoff Burns & Wayne Ellerton – RMIT Indigenous student apprenticeship program

Geoff & Wayne run a plumbing apprenticeship program for indigenous students – early on in the program they found that they were losing 50% of the participants each year and wanted to prevent this. They employed a part-time indigenous mentor who was able to act as a go-between for the students to help them learn and understand why participants weren’t connecting and continuing the course.

They also were able to engage a staff mentor from Darwin who educated them about the culture of the indigenous students – this is still considered an ongoing learning for them. Some of the things they have learned include:

* having to come to terms with English being a second language for these students
* thus, simpler language was necessary – especially in assessments
* they use a lot of visual images to assist the students – not DVD or video as they tend to just put the students to sleep
* they need to ‘put a story’ to everything and constantly consider ‘why would students want to learn this?’
* they had success with small practical tasks with the students, but had to bring in ‘story’ for more theory or complex tasks. Eg Wayne used the imagery of a river flowing ( he checked which river ran through their homeland), to explain the flow of water through plumbing systems and the need for gradients etc.
* they have to break all assessment tasks down into very short sentences – no longer than 5 -6 words together.
* They use point-of –view glasses to record what the students do for self assessments – this was originally a mess and not very successful, but once the students started viewing them and sharing ideas about what they saw, it became much more successful
* They use Microsoft wordsearch software to help the students find the essential words in assessments from other places, or more formal than their own internal assessments, and this has been very advantageous.

By going to these lengths to understand the students’ culture, perspectives and starting points, they have now achieved a reality of 70% retention rates in the apprenticeship course they offer.

Professor Collette Taylor – University of Melbourne

This was a pre-recorded presentation. It outlined the E4kids study that is currently underway – tracking 2000 children for 5 years, and their families, to explore how the quality of their early childhood education influences their lifelong learning capacities, social behaviours and thus their health, education, economic and social outcomes. The study includes some children who have had no prior involvement in education of any sort outside the home before prep.

The study is using the CLASS framework to examine the experiences of the children, and while they are currently only very early into the study, some suggestions so far include:

* an improvement is required in ‘Instructional support’ for early childhood learning
* particularly in feedback and modeling
* also in terms of modeling ‘self-talk’ and ‘think-talk’

Monica Scully – Principal Huntingdale PS

At Huntingdale, they have taken the concept of immersion learning to a whole new level – they have created a truly bilingual environment for their students. In their Japanese immersion program 30% of every day is delivered in the Japanese language.

Monica explained that this began when they asked themselves – what does the school day look like, sound like and feel like for the students within their school?

They worked to align the foci for the English and Japanese programs together. They were searching for the missing link of why their NAPLAN testing wasn’t reflecting research suggestions that bilingual learning should enhance the internal literacy results of the school.

A slide was shown indicating that in:

USA – Language learning seen as a problem

Canada – language learning is seen as a right

Finland – language is seen as a resource.

Reference – Garcia 2009

As a result, they changed to a system where they don’t’ just have LOTE classes, but they now teach other subjects in Japanese – eg Science, PE etc are taught with the teacher speaking and writing the usual curriculum in Japanese. We saw footage of this in play – it was very impressive.

Lessons they have learnt:

* advocate for ‘Mother Tongue’ – always encourage students to continue to use whatever their first language and culture is
* it is not the model that is important – but the quality of the teaching
* the importance of student engagement – which necessitates differentiation, and the use of appropriate IT

At Huntingdale - BELIEFS = ACTIONS

The challenging question that Monica closed with was:

Do we see bilingual and cultural differences as problems or resources and possibilities?

The opening session of the conference was closed through a performance involving string instruments and dancers from the Victorian College of Arts Performance. It was stunning!

Specialist Science and Maths Education Centres –

This workshop / session turned out to be an Expo-style event where a number of the recently developed Education Centres could share what they are doing and can offer to other schools.

The two that are geographically usable for schools in our Diocese are:

Ecoline at Bacchus Marsh SC – contact, Suzanne Clark, at:

[www.ecoline.vic.edu.au](http://www.ecoline.vic.edu.au) and,

EarthEd at Mount Clear – contact, Bob Hartman at: hartmann.robert.j@edumail.vic.gov.au

These centres aim to provide access to all students, and to provide experiences that individual schools could never resource. All of the programs also provide assessment tasks to go with the programs.

They can offer Teacher PD and/or programs for teachers to deliver and run with, or they can provide the actual experiences for the students on an excursion basis.

Topics currently include things such as:

* Natural Disasters
* Water
* Tsunamis
* Paleontology etc

They are also starting to look at and develop programs related to some VCE Graphic Design and Textiles subjects for the future.

The session turned out to be basically Science related, rather than including Maths, but it might be that these offer two great opportunities for schools from our Diocese. Most of the programs at this stage are aimed at the Middle Years students – Years 5 – 8, although they spoke of developing both the lower and upper levels in the future.

\*When I inqured directly, I was told that there would be a charge for Catholic schools, but it would not be prohibitive of them using the centres. This is something that schools will need to investigate if they are interested.

FUSE EXPO:

* ELLUMINATE – program that allows for distance delivery – eg. Anne from Hawkesdale P- 12 was manning the stand. While a replacement teacher was physically back in her school, she was checking on her students and answering their questions via elluminate while presenting at the showcase.

The handout says –‘free to All Vicotrian P-12 teachers and DEECD strategic partners’. The question is – we need to find out whether that includes us, and our schools!

* State Library of Victoria – through the State Library English teachers and Librarians in our schools may want to encourage students to get involved at:

insideadog.com.au

At this site, students can post reviews of books they have read, and read what others thought about particular books.

* HTAV – the History Association has a new opportunity online for students that may be an alternative to an actual excursion, or could be used before an excursion. At:

[www.virtualhistorycentre.com](http://www.virtualhistorycentre.com)

Students can create an avatar, and then explore a 3D virtual world recreation of the Point Nepean Quarantine Station. It would seem that this would be the start of a number of such learning supports that will be produced / provided.

* I also briefly explored the ULTRANET stand – where the intentions and scope of the Ultranet was explained, but it seems that at this stage it is only accessible to government teachers and personnel. Apparently there is also ‘guest access’ for people who are engaged by the DEECD for specific purpose , but it did not appear that teachers or CEO staff in the Catholic sector could currently utilize this resource. It will be interesting to see in what ways ICON does or does not replicate the navigations of the Ultranet.

Retention through Individualised Pathways – Kerrie Wainwright & Pat Dowty – Drouin SC

Most important thing – relationships!

This team has been together for about three years – these two people + another who could not attend today. The team works closely and collaboratively with students, parents and other staff in the school.

History

* some students as low as in Year 8 were wanting to leave school
* some students at Year 8,9 & 10 were doing poorly at school
* both of these problems were resulting in the students playing out their frustrations through behavior.

This was worst at Year 8, as at least Year 9 & 10 students had some choices in their programs.

Initially, they spent a lot of time discussing the problems and possible solutions with the Curriculum Committee. Through this, it was decided to target ‘ Engagement’. (Sounds like a common discussion that could take place in many of our schools)

They aimed to:

* provide some choices that would link to the students’ interests
* provide some choices to challenge the more able students

They began by linking the Year 10 timetable to the VCE timetable to produce increased flexibility for students to access VCE and VET programs. They followed suit by giving Year 8’s some choice by linking their timetable to the Year 9’s. There was really still only a few places for choice, but just the fact that there was some appeared to have some positive effect.

They started to have students in Year 7 involved in making some choices for their futures, but initiating one period a week that was linked to careers planning activities. This continues throughout the school and in a way is a cross over between a personal development program and a careers program.

They were able to take advantage of the Teacher Professional Leave program available through the government system to ‘study and steal’ ideas from elsewhere. They visited schools that had been involved in the Careers Lighthouse Project and learnt that careers people need to be on Curriculum Committees. They now provide booklets to guide staff involved in delivering the once per week careers lessons who do not have a background in the area. They have learnt how important it is to work to get all teachers on board – otherwise they can rush through the contents of the booklets in a lesson, whereas when Kerrie teaches to it, the same things will take up to six weeks to cover.

They have increased VET numbers – part of this was achieved through dropping the charges to the students for accessing those courses.

There was still a group of students who were not old enough to access the VET & VCAL courses that may have met their needs, but they were disengaged from normal classes – those classes were not working for them.

They created VIPs – Vocational Individualised Pathways – for these students. Mostly Year 10’s, but a few Year 9’s. These students get to take one day out of their usual program and substitute it with a day’s work placement or TAFE day. There are still problems with age for a few students.

These students are not all absent from the college on the same day – they look at the student’s overall program and try to minimize the impact on the regular program in terms of staying in touch with basic subjects like English and Maths, and sometimes subjects that the student is not keen to miss. They are trying to increase flexibility – but not close off options.

They also run a program called ‘Hands on Learning’ – this is mostly boys who needed something separate to the mainstream. It runs completely separate to the general timetable – they are not trying to turn these kids into someone who is willing to go back into normal VCE as this is unlikely to happen. Some do end up going back into normal classrooms, and some go through to VCAL.

Another lesson they have learned is to ‘get help from locals’. When you attend anything – ask – who are you? And what can you do for our kids? Good links include:

* LLENS
* VET Network
* BEST program
* Youth Development Program
* TAFEs
* Work Solutions

They challenged us to label a diagram of a petrol engine – and then explained that most of their VCAL students can complete this task. The message – work to your kids’ strengths! Work against making kids feel dumb – which they often can do until they get opportunities (eg VET) that will allow them to show and explore their own intelligences.

The last thing that they mentioned was ‘MyFutures’ they said that every school needs to get onto this – and that Careers teachers were probably already on to it.

‘Real-Time Student’ program – Ken Stewart, DP Geelong HS, Dr Shanti Wong, Geelong Region LLEN

This program is web-based – pulls together data from a variety of sources – gathers data that is relevant to student learning in a user friendly format.

The development of this program has been a three year long project undertaken by a team including 7 secondary schools (2 of which were Catholic schools) and the LLEN.

It doesn’t replace the ‘Student Mapping Tool’ it is a different thing. The problem was that there was lots of data that was available to teachers, students and their families, but it was not usable, as it had to be gained through too many different avenues. They used Hatties research to conclude that feedback to the student was of great importance, and this would allow that feedback to be informed more easily.

The user can look at attendance, Naplan and recent report results easily and at one time, on one screen.

Privacy issues – had to consult with the Privacy Commission during development, and have to inform parents and have them sign an acknowledgement form that the school is gathering and using the data to support their student’s learning.

This looked like it would be very useful to schools who were have Teacher Advisor Programs, but really this was a pre-insight into the program, as it is currently not available to any schools other than those involved in the pilot program.

Closing of the Showcase:

Participants were challenged to not leave behind their experiences of the day. Also the message was to ‘keep focused on the students – they are our purpose!’

Questions to keep posing regularly:

* What do THEY need?
* How do THEY learn best?
* How can we find out and respond?

And finished with a reiteration of William Gibson’s quote that:

‘The future is here, it’s just unevenly distributed’.

We were finally provided with both entertainment and continued thought provoking material by Anh Do. His presentation was hilarious at times, and at other times nearly brought us to tears as he told stories of his own past as a refugee, a learner, and someone who was taught to absolutely value life and learning by his family. Many of these stories will be replicated in his current award winning ‘Book of the Year’ – The Happiest Refugee – perhaps this should be strongly considered as common /shared reading for students.

Reflections:

This was an extremely busy and varied program, that succeeded in inspiring and challenging me, and no doubt other participants. It was both exciting and frustrating – exciting to see such possibilities, and frustrating to think about all of the ways in which we are not yet being innovative in the way that so many presentations throughout the day were.

Marg MacDonald, also from CEOB, attended too, so may have more or very different observations from the day.

The repeated challenge was to at least take one new thing from the day and try to do something about it. Even from just the things that I attended, there is much to choose from. I guess taking the time to rethink and write this, and now disseminate it to others, is at least a beginning.

Anne Doody – May 16, 2011