ST. TERESA’S PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ravenshoe

Whole School Thinking Plan
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COMMUNITY PROFILE

In establishing the Whole School Thinking plan at St Teresa’s School, the input of all the staff was considered and valued. St Teresa’s Sequence and Scope Document has been formulated as a result of collaboration with teaching staff to support the integration of the thinking tools within the curriculum. The Sequence and Scope document is incorporated within the planning of all KLAs by teachers. Professional learning for staff is an ongoing process which has been initiated by the Diocesan Curriculum team beginning with the Ralph Pirozzo in-servicing.

St Teresa’s School was opened in 1950. It was staffed by the Sisters of Mercy until 1978. Now it is staffed entirely by lay teachers. It has 130 students from prep to year 7. The school consists of 6 classrooms, an office area, library, a tuck-shop, a playing field, an adventure playground and a sports court.

Ravenshoe is a farming community producing beef, dairy, corn, peanuts, avocados and vegetables. It has a timber mill which now only produces plywood, after a history of timber cutting for many years. This large industry was lost after world heritage decisions were made around 1990.

Ravenshoe is a rural community in a remote location. Because of changes in the timber industry and other factors, employment opportunities have become more limited. Travel out of town is common for permanent employment. For the most part, any activities in which children participate after school require transportation to surrounding towns.

Priority Country Area Program (PCAP) has funded the school for many academic and social emotional programs which would otherwise be unavailable to the school. This funding is anticipated to continue until 2012.

St Teresa’s recognizes the role of parents in the education process of the child and desires a high correlation between home and school values. The goal of the school is to work with parents to develop each child academically, emotionally, socially, physically and spiritually.

It is our goal to create an atmosphere inspired by love, a concern for one another and a relationship with God. We are fortunate that our small numbers promote the achievement of this goal.
LEARNING AREA RATIONALE

Catholic Education Services Cairns aims to excite and empower learners to enjoy, shape and enrich our changing world, inspired by the Gospel of Jesus Christ...**HONOURING OUR PAST; INHABITING THE PRESENT; IMAGINING THE FUTURE; LEARNING WITH FAITH AND VISION.**

Further at St Teresa’s our mission is to **ENRICH LEARNING BY –**

- Providing engaging and challenging educational experiences which will lead the students to a knowledge of how to learn;
- Encouraging spiritual, intellectual, emotional and social growth in an environment where the students are safe, valued and respected;

**The Diocesan Learning Framework**

The Diocesan Learning Framework further requires us to develop **INQUIRING AND REFLECTIVE LEARNERS** who are:

- community contributors
- leaders and collaborators
- effective communicators
- quality producers
- designers and creators
- active investigators.

**The Melbourne Declaration:**

MCEECDYA has identified that one of the goals for education of young Australians is that they become **SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS, CONFIDENT AND CREATIVE INDIVIDUALS** and active and informed citizens.

Successful learners are:

- able to think deeply and logically, and obtain and evaluate evidence in a disciplined way as the result of studying fundamental disciplines
- creative, innovative and resourceful, and are able to solve problems in ways that draw upon a range of learning areas and disciplines
- able to make sense of their world and think about how things have become the way they are
• on a pathway towards continued success in further education, training or employment, and acquire the skills to make informed learning and employment decisions throughout their lives.

Confident and creative individuals:

• are enterprising, show initiative and use their creative abilities
• have the confidence and capability to pursue university or post-secondary vocational qualifications leading to rewarding and productive employment
• embrace opportunities, make rational and informed decisions about their own lives and accept responsibility for their own actions

Contemporary Learning in a Catholic school

The Catholic School is part of the mission of the Church and is a sacred landscape where learning and teaching seeks the integration of faith, life and culture. To ensure learning and teaching is appropriate to the needs of the contemporary students we are required to support the learner, through reflective practices, rigorous assessment and a variety of learning spaces, engage the students in the contemporary world and enable the learner, through providing a variety of learning processes and ensuring the development of knowledge, skills and understanding through:

• reflecting and planning
• communicating and collaborating
• exploring, experimenting and creating new knowledge
• thinking and working creatively

It is therefore imperative that teachers at St Teresa’s explicitly teach thinking skills in a sequenced manner to ensure we are able to meet all of these goals for the students in our care.

The Thinking and Engaging Classroom

The thinking and engaging classroom requires both the teacher and student to develop and building relationships.
Teachers:
- successful
- reflective
- valued
- appreciated
- making a difference
- facilitating
- satisfied
- innovating
- having fun whilst teaching

Students:
* happy
* confident
* motivated
* challenged
* wanting to learn
* high self-esteem
* enthusiastic
* self-directed
* having fun whilst learning.

Explain the Taxonomy:
TAXONOMY of Learning

There are more than 10 Taxonomies of Learning including:

- Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Cognitive Domain (B. Bloom)
- Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Affective Domain (B. Bloom)
- Fink’s Taxonomy of Significant Learning
- Gagne’s Five Types of Learning Outcomes
- Jonassen & Tessmer’s Taxonomy
- Kipka’s Taxonomy of Learning Objectives
- Marzano, Pickering and McTighe’s Core Thinking Skills
- Merrill’s Instructional components
- Quellmalz’s Taxonomy
- Solo (Biggs & Collins)

Currently at St Teresa’s the staff are implementing Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives with plans to investigate other taxonomies.

The following books and websites provide useful reference materials and resources:

- ‘my classes’ reference page
- Staff thinking tools resource folder (school generated from a variety of sources)
- Improving thinking in the classroom - Ralph Pirozzo.
- 50 Co-operative Learning activities – Ralph Pirozzo.
- Brainstorms – Tony Ryan
- Mind Links – Tony Ryan
- Teach Thinking Strategies – John Langreher
- Thinking Aloud – Sue Cunningham
- How to succeed with Thinking – Jeni Wilson & Kath Murdoch
- Various charts from Ralph Pirozzo

THEORY OF LEARNING

There are more than 53 Theories of Learning including:

- Multiple Intelligences (H Gardner)
- Conditions of Learning (R Gagne)
- Connectionism (E Thorndike)
- Constructionist Theory (J Bruner)
- Genetic Epistemology (J Piaget)
• Lateral Thinking (E De Bono)
• Operant Conditioning (B F Skinner)
• Social Development (L Vygotsky)
• Social Learning Theory (A Bandura)
• Structure of the Intellect (J Guilford)
• Subsumption Theory (D Ausubel)
• Triarchic Theory (R Sternberg)

Currently at St Teresa’s we are undertaking the practice of implementing Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences Theory of Learning and intend to investigate other theories with a view to implementing them in the future.

The following books and websites provide useful reference materials and resources:

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Broad subject outcomes will be enhanced by unlocking students thinking, enabling them to describe it by modelling, labelling and discussing strategies used in their thinking processes. A thinking skills approach within the curriculum does not strive to produce ‘walking encyclopaedias,’ stuffed with facts, figures, definitions, and formulas. Truly knowledgeable students may possess such information, but more importantly, they possess key concepts and tools for making, using, and communication knowledge in a field. Knowledgeable students have learned how to learn, how to organize information, and how to distinguish between important and less important pieces of information. In sum, they have a working knowledge of a field – a tool chest for the ongoing discovery and construction of meaning – rather than a junkyard of isolated facts.

As a staff we have opted/chosen to embed the thinking skills into the curriculum to improve students thinking, in order to reflect and talk about the thinking we are doing; facilitating, reflection and discussion about the thinking we are doing. Thus we have deliberately chosen to spend more time using fewer activities to encourage depth of thought.
Across Curriculum Perspectives encompass educational and societal issues of significance that cross all curriculum boundaries – ‘the hidden curriculum’. We believe that these issues have a significant impact on the way in which our students will achieve. The best way to improve student’s thinking skills is to embed the skills into a challenging curriculum rather than see it as a separate part of the program.

Defining Features

The overarching purpose of Catholic schools is to bring the Good News of Jesus to all who hear it. In the midst of a world of educational, social and economic change the focus on the holistic growth of the individual remains the surest way catholic schools can prepare students for the uncertainties of the future. (Defining Features, Diocese of Cairns).

As defined by the Diocese of Cairns an identified priority is to further develop our inclusive response to students with diverse learning needs arising from language, culture, religious tradition, disability, giftedness, or socioeconomic factors. An additional priority is to implement classroom planning and teaching practices that identify and respond to the individual needs of every student.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education

The successful embedding of Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum supports the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in education. Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people have rich and diverse relationships with connections to and deep understanding of the Australian environment.

Respect of traditional knowledge and use of practices as well as the changes in tradition since colonisation in unit planning contexts is important. Including information and data relating to indigenous communities, current issues and interpretations as examples in the contexts used to frame scientific learning encourages interpretation of our world from an indigenous perspective.

To provide quality education for all learners at St Teresa’s, it is essential that we ensure active engagement of inclusive curriculum practices which reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, knowledge, histories, cultures and spirituality.

Through our Whole school thinking approach at St Teresa’s staff will develop the competence, commitment and confidence to identify, appreciate and respond effectively to the diversity of our school community.
Sustainability Education

Sustainability education seeks to develop understandings of the environment and positive attitudes towards the earth and the life it supports. The curriculum should provide all students with access to current information about environmental issues and promote a reflective and responsive attitude towards stewardship of the gifts of creation.

Information Communication Technology

ICT is defined as “technologies used for accessing, gathering, manipulating and presenting or communicating information”. (Curriculum Development in the Cairns Diocese) The Performance Measurement and Reporting Taskforce MCEETYA (2006) defined ICT literacy as:

‘the ability of individuals to use ICT appropriately to access, manage and evaluate information, develop new understandings, and communicate with others in order to participate effectively in society.’

This perspective strongly supports the goals of the teaching of thinking skills.

Opportunities to develop ICT literacy include:

- Finding, sorting, critically examining and saving data, statistics using ICTs
- Creating and sharing information using ICTs (e.g. graphing; table making; report writing; diagrammatic illustrations etc)
- Research and presentation of findings

At St Teresa’s school a classroom interactive whiteboard is one valuable tool that may be used to explore, explain and present thinking tools in new and engaging ways.

Information Literacy

The most broadly accepted definition of information literacy states:

“To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information” (ALA Presidential Committee on Information Literacy, 1989, p.1)

Thinking tools have their own practices for dealing with the gathering, processing, recording, applying presenting and evaluating information. Representations are multi-modal and include text, tables, graphs, models, drawings and graphic organisers.

For academic purposes using thinking skills in information literacy are invaluable for deciphering the plethora of information confronting our students in a variety of formats. This information
needs validity via the use of thinking tools due to bias, reliability, and currency.

**Numeracy and Literacy**

Literacy is the ability to read and write, to use written information and to write appropriately in a range of contexts. It also involves the integration of speaking, listening, viewing and critical thinking with reading and writing, and includes the cultural knowledge which enables a speaker, writer or reader to recognise and use language appropriate to different social and subject specific situations.

Whenever possible, the thinking tool experiences will be related to the current needs and experiences of students and be relevant to their school, home and community life.

**Social Emotional Learning**

At St Teresa’s we seek to develop and maintain classroom and school practices that enhance and develop the social and emotional well-being of students and other members of the community. Our whole school thinking strategies are used to respect that all students think in different ways. Our teaching programs will acknowledge and accommodate these differences. Reflective and meta-cognitive thinking tools will enhance learning and give students ownership of learning.

**Inclusive Education**

In accordance with the Strategic Priorities of the Diocese of Cairns, St Teresa’s encourages the sharing amongst teachers of effective and innovative classroom practices that maximise the learning of our diverse school community.

Inclusive Education means providing equitable access to the curriculum for students with physical or intellectual disabilities: those with learning difficulties; students who experience poverty, abuse, neglect or isolation; those who have emotional or behavioural difficulties; and those who experience social alienation. This perspective also encompasses students with particular gifts and talents.

When planning at St Teresa’s, teachers will identify educational adjustments required to accommodate students identified either from the Learning Support Teacher, culturally different, gifted/talented or someone who is known to have a very different learning style to the majority.
**SEQUENCE AND SCOPE**

The St Teresa’s Scope and sequence (Appendix A) will be used by teachers to aid them in their planning for each term. This document provides a summary of the agreed upon thinking tools to be taught at each year level.

For each year level from Prep-7, there is a list of some recommended tools with teachers being able to implement or adjust.

Teachers at St Teresa’s have a hardcopy of the whole school thinking tools folder (school generated) document that is relevant to their year levels. Digital copies of these documents are available on ‘my classes’ in the Catholic Education Services page – Creating Whole School Thinking.
Learning and Teaching Experiences

Thinking communities and the skills necessary to participate meaningfully in them need to be developed. This requires a coordinated whole school approach that is planned, negotiated, supported with professional development and resourced. Thinking skills need to become not only an integral part of teacher planning and programming, but also be explicitly taught to students such that at any given year level teachers can be assured that all students in their class have a sound understanding, skill level and language for particular thinking skills to develop creative thinking and critical thinking at higher levels.

At St Teresa’s a thinking skills scope and sequence was developed. This was developed to allow staff to trial a range of thinking tools and identify and share excellent practice already operating within the school.

A three year implementation plan for phasing in, supporting and resourcing the scope and sequence plan of St Teresa’s will occur to adopt and adapt a number of proven approaches and models for the teaching of thinking skills to inform our curriculum and programming.

Staff will be encouraged to source programs and new tools from a variety of literature, web based sites and other networking personnel. These will demonstrate a broad range of approaches and individual teacher preferences of how knowledge, concepts and skills are developed and integrated within their classes.

At St Teresa’s teachers will first consider the prior knowledge that students bring to their learning and through the use of these thinking tools they will expand on the prior knowledge in order for the students to make connections and become effective participants in their learning.

As summarised by Ralph Pirozzo’s Essentials of Learning and Teaching (2004) the following components of a balanced whole school thinking skills approach includes:

- A deep, meaningful and varied ‘menu’
- Exciting, engaging and challenging tasks
- Cooperative and hands on learning activities
- An interesting, relevant and purposeful curriculum
- Quality learning
- Plenty of aha’s
- Teachers being just ahead of where the child is at...

So to maximise learning outcomes the children and teachers have fun while learning.

He who learns but does not think is lost...

Confucius
ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING

Assessment is the process of gathering and interpreting information about student progress for a variety of purposes including:

- To direct future planning and teaching
- To inform teachers, students and parents about current understandings or misconceptions
- To identify strengths and weaknesses
- To create a ‘point in time’ snapshot of a student’s performance
- To create a record of a student’s learning

Assessment is easier when we understand more about the types of thinking we want our students to do and when we have planned for this as part of our program. Assessment of thinking is assisted by knowing **what** you are looking and listening for.

As teachers we are often assessing a student’s thinking without realising it. But much of what we assess is the product of thinking. When we want to assess thinking we must involve students in the process. They are the gatekeepers of what is going on in their heads, but we hold the key to unlocking their thinking and describing it by modelling, labelling and discussing strategies for thinking and their effectiveness. (Refer to St Teresa’s Agreed Practice for Assessment, Reporting and Record Keeping P – 7)
EVALUATION

Evaluation is the process of making judgements about the effectiveness of teaching programs, procedures and resources. Evaluation is an inherent part of our professional lives as teachers and as a school. At St Teresa’s, teachers will be responsible for completing on-going evaluation of their planning and the thinking tools they have used to compliment units and use reflectively to evaluate whole units of work.

Self-reflection is a higher order thinking skill and enables students to think about what they learned (content), how they learned (meta-cognition) and the value of the learning to the knowledge they previously held (generalisation and intelligence – building). The thinking classroom needs to include time for self-evaluation. Teachers can help students adopt this important process by deliberately including assessment structures that focus on self-reflection.
### St Teresa’s Whole School Thinking Overview.

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(This overview was designed by staff and administration teams of St. Teresa’s School Ravenshoe 2010)

- Reviewed and agreed upon to remain with existing overview – July 2011.