

Key-Makers: Advancing Student Engagement through Changed Teaching Practice

Final Report November 2004



prepared by
David Zyngier and Wendy May - Monash University

for



MONTEREY SECONDARY COLLEGE

and



Contact:

David Zyngier
David.zyngier@education.monash.edu.au
Faculty of Education Peninsula Campus
Monash University
PO Box 527, Frankston, Victoria 3199
Voice: 9904 4230
Fax: 9904 4027
Room A3.38
Mobile: 0411 693 867

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The author wishes to acknowledge the support and assistance of Associate Professor Trevor Gale (Faculty of Education Monash University), Wendy May, Research Officer (Faculty of Education Monash University), Pat O’Connell (Frankston Mornington Peninsula Local Learning Employment Network) and the Principal, Leadership Team, teachers of Team7 and the Year 7 students of Monterey Secondary College in the Keymaker Project.

Introduction

This Final Report is in 6 parts.

1. The *Overview* details the background to the research and the context for the study as well as how the action research program was framed and executed.
2. The *Literature Review* is a summary of a much lengthier study of the various conceptions and discourses seen as relevant in the understanding of *student engagement* and how it is *enacted* in lower socio economic status (SES) schools.
3. The *Analysis of Interviews* covers both the Team 7 individual teacher interviews and the student focus groups from each year 7 group. Anonymous samples of characteristic comments from both have been included as illustrations of the issues raised.
4. *Teacher Survey Analysis* is largely presented through the use of relevant charts that show the self perceptions of the teachers' pedagogical development over the year.
5. A *Staff Development Feedback Workshop* reviewed interim results from the surveys and interview analysis. These were used as a stimulus for further reflection and discussion.
6. *Recommendations* for further research based on the student and teacher data complete the report.

Overview

It is not surprising that The Frankston / Mornington Peninsula (FMP) Local Learning & Employment Network (LLEN) should want to invest resources into teachers in local schools, in the form outlined in this project. The FMP LLEN has the express purpose of contributing to improved outcomes in areas of student/youth attendance, retention and achievement in education and training contexts. These are important issues for the area where student retention, for example, is below the state average.

Good curriculum, relevant to the needs and interests of students and industry, is important in constructing good programs. However, what also emerges from this research is that it matters what teachers do with respect to students' learning. In particular, the research suggests that good teaching can have positive effects on students' engagement with learning, including students who are 'at risk' of academic failure.

Teachers are in an ideal position to research 'what works' with respect to teaching but conducting research has not always been a part of their working experience. Moreover, research about good teaching is not always accessible to teachers, both in terms of sourcing it and in the way it is written. Bringing in *experts* to bring teachers *up to speed* has not always proven to be a successful strategy for dealing with such access problems. Frequently, traditional professional development programs position teachers as without knowledge when clearly many have substantive understandings of the issues at hand.

Project Outline

The research associated with the Keymakers project sponsored in part by the FMP LLEN, the AGQTP and Monterey Secondary College seeks to explore the notion that active and authentic engagement of all students, but in particular those most at risk, can be achieved through enhancing the pedagogical practices of teachers.

This project seeks to address issues of student (dis)engagement through the support of small teams of teachers in one secondary school year seven level, through focussed action research on teaching practice.

Acknowledging that teachers learn most from their colleagues in action and drawing on Bourdieu's concept that cultural capital is attained in the 'right' company over time (Bourdieu 1997), this research focuses on the impact that teachers as 'key makers' can have on both other teachers and their students.

The project addressed the following questions:

1. How much change is needed before there is a "critical mass" created where qualitative change in the nature of the teacher's work and the educational outcomes for students occurs?
2. If we change the quality of the pedagogical experience will this result in a quantitative improvement in student outcomes?
3. How can/does Pedagogy drive change?

In exploring these questions, we understand that pedagogy is embedded at the level of *belief*, which affects how teachers *design* their work and create pedagogical *action* appropriate to their students.¹

Working 'with' rather than 'on'

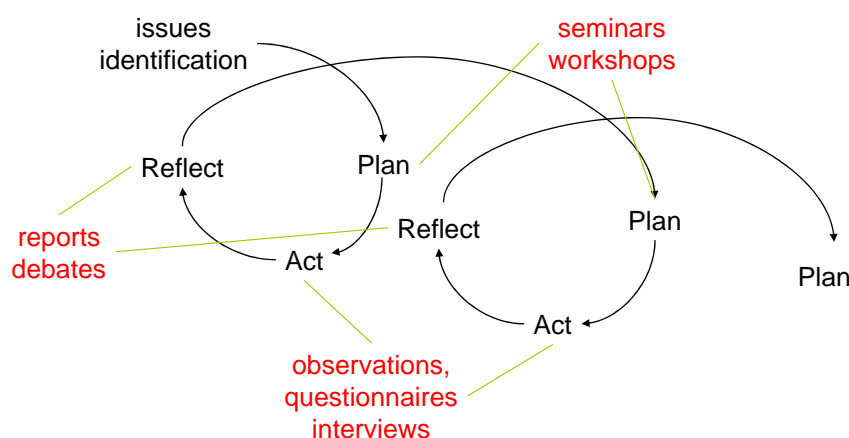


Figure 1 Working with rather than on²

¹ Gale, T. (2002) Perspectives on Teaching: an overview. Seminar, Monash University, 25 July, 2002

Project background

This project builds on programs already delivering improved participation in the middle years and effective transition to the later years in the school concerned.

The group of Year 7 teachers (Team 7) is a voluntary group who were prepared to alter their pedagogical practices. After much investigation into the current teaching and learning with particular emphasis on the Essential Learning document from Tasmania and the Productive Pedagogies model from Queensland, the members of Team 7 have been working through the development of an integrated studies approach that crosses the traditional boundaries of the core curriculum. With considerable emphasis on staff sharing ideas and expertise with the goal of developing units of work that could be used by all, various structural changes have occurred to facilitate this.

In a school where most staffrooms are faculty based, Team7 staff have moved into one staffroom. The timetable across the whole school has moved from one of 6 periods per day of 48 minutes duration to a model where 100 minutes classes occur in the morning and 2 x 45 or 1 x 90 in the afternoon. Team 7 classes – of which there are 6 – each have a home room.

Monash worked with Team7 staff and the School Leadership Team in researching pedagogies (teaching practices) that engage students in their specific locations, across a range of learning areas. Together with the teachers, Monash has researched and documented those pedagogical actions that engage students from the perspectives of the students and as indicated in the literature.

Project development

Ethics approval was granted in March 2004 for this research to commence. The survey instruments were constructed and delivered to Team7 at a briefing meeting.

The school has been most helpful in providing access to staff and students as required. We recognize how busy schools and teachers are and how crowded the curriculum is and certainly do not imply any criticism of teachers! The departure of one of the “key” teachers inevitably caused some delay. Follow up email and telephone communication has together with input from the Principal overcome some initial reluctance to the timely implementation of the project.

Engagement and aspiration levels of students was monitored through focus groups during Term Two and Term Three 2004 and have been analyzed and presented to staff.

A number of teacher interviews have been conducted with the Team7 and were completed before the end of Term Three. The analysis of the survey data and interviews was discussed with the teachers and recommendations/actions for change developed during an afternoon where necessary as a research seminars designed and conducted by teachers informed by what they have learned. Follow up discussion and administration of the second survey instrument occurred in Term Four.

² Gale, T. & Doecke, B. (2004) Future Pedagogies: what is and what could be. Invited presentation, Victorian VET Research and Planning Network Conference, Victorian Department of Education and Training, 15 October, 2004

Working ‘with’ rather than ‘on’

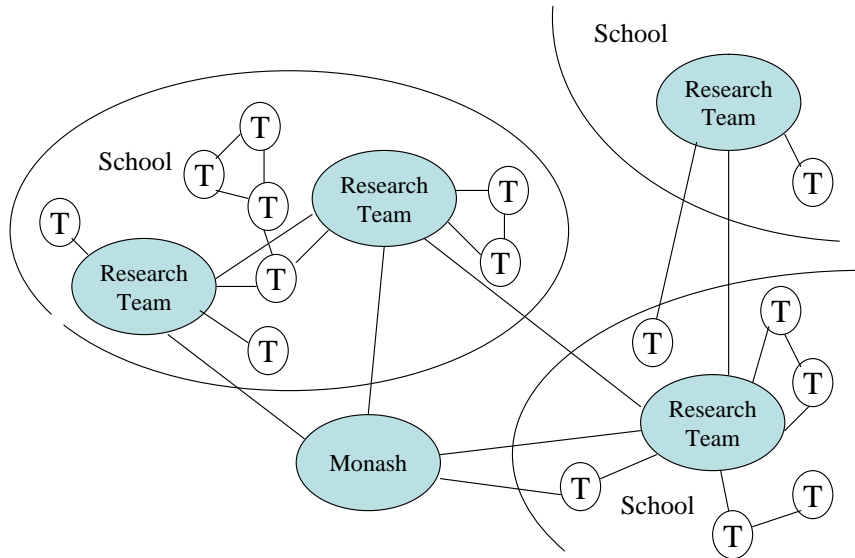


Figure 2 Working with rather than on – detail ³

³ Gale, T. & Doecke, B. (2004) Future Pedagogies: what is and what could be. Invited presentation, Victorian VET Research and Planning Network Conference, Victorian Department of Education and Training, 15 October, 2004

Literature Review

Engaging pedagogies and pedagogues – what does student engagement look like?

The review examines the current research and debates about pedagogies of engagement in the context of current education policy by putting at the very centre the question; engagement for whom, engagement in what, engagement for what purpose and to what end? The answers to these questions not only reveal much about the perceived purposes of education by researchers, but challenge the traditional assumptions and understandings of education, that all that is needed is some tweaking as the system is generally performing the designed functions for society. A key consideration of this review is '[w]hether or not engagement is a key centralising factor in the successful implementation of empowering classroom pedagogies' (McFadden and Munns, 2002). It then proceeds to critically examine the prevailing view that suggests that student engagement is closely linked to academic achievement. Three contesting epistemological constructions of student engagement have been identified and are examined together with acknowledgement of a "student view" in order to answer the three linked questions; (i) whose conception of engagement is most worthwhile; (ii) what actually are the purposes of engagement and (iii) who benefits (and gets excluded) from these purposes. In conclusion, we ask how might we conceive of student engagement in order to achieve the twin goals of social justice and academic achievement? (Butler-Kisber and Portelli, 2003)

Executive Summary

The review's findings are summarised below.

Newmann identified three dominant perspectives to account for engagement. He referred to these as the

- (i) conventional or professional technological perspective
- (ii) the developmental perspective
- (iii) the cultural emancipatory perspective (Newmann, 1986, 559-560).

All may appear in some form in various schools, in various classes at different times (and even perhaps within individual teacher's pedagogies). Each teacher has however a dominant culture and pedagogical perspective, which based on Newmann's original typology and informed by Vibert et al. (2003), can be described as:

- (i) Instrumentalist or rational technical
- (ii) Social constructivist or individualist and
- (iii) Critical transformative engagement.

An engaging pedagogy needs to ensure that what teachers do is:

Connecting - to and engage with the students' cultural knowledge

Owning – all students should be able to see themselves as represented in the work

Responding – not just connected to student experience, but also actively and consciously critiquing that experience

Empowering – students have a belief that what they do will make a difference to their lives and the opportunity to voice and discover their own authentic and authoritative life

Summary

Important work is currently being undertaken in Australia (and elsewhere) on the kinds of pedagogies that improve outcomes for all students, (Lingard et al., 2001a, Lingard et al., 2001b) but in particular those variously labeled as “at-risk” of early school leaving, disadvantaged or from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Rather than cynically theorise over what is wrong in teacher education today, or in urban schools, or in public schools in general, or present another case study relating more of the same, this research suggests a realistic alternative to disengagement and alienation and school failure for many children, particularly those on the margins, through the creation of a generative pedagogy based on and in radical recognitive social justice (Gale and Densmore, 2000).

For young people “at risk”, there is already too often an assumption that they are at best, poor learners. Through their own fault, or their parents’, or decisions made by the school, or blind fate, it is assumed that these young people are able to exercise only limited control over their destinies. Many young people do not (wish to) see it that way (Zyngier, 2004, Brown and Holdsworth, 2001, 117). The lives of these young people who have been termed “at risk” are buffeted, constrained, blocked and diverted by social, human, economic, political and geographical factors. In an uncertain future, these factors may seem to remove any element of choice. Yet these same young people still assert strongly that they are in control: “no-one makes decisions for me”; “we don’t know where we are going, but we’ll get there” (Brown and Holdsworth, 2001, 118-119).

In the end it is about what the students themselves say and think (Zyngier, 2004).

It is the students themselves who will be able to tell us that they are engaged and who will say whether their education is working for them in a culturally sensitive and relevant way. It is the students who will be able to tell us whether the offers that education purports to provide are real or illusionary. It is at the *messy point* of teachers and students responding to each other in relation to classroom discourse and assessment practices where we are truly going to see whether or not students feel that school is for them. It is within this space that education can provide a chance that is not illusionary, and that it can indeed be engaging and lead to purposeful, relevant and productive educational outcomes. (McFadden and Munns, 2002, 364)

It has been too simplistic to define engagement in terms of deficiencies arising in the students. Historically the disengaged were those whose appearance, language, culture, values, communities and family structures were in contradiction to the dominant (white, middle class) culture that schools were designed to serve and support (Hickson and Tinzman, 1990, Alexander, 2000). The struggle over the definition of the term engagement is significant in itself for it reveals the on-going ideological and epistemological divisions among educators and policy makers, and the general public. Research on student disengagement has shown that an exploration of the questions of class, gender, race/ethnicity, power, history and particularly students’ lived experiences and social reality reveal complexity of factors that led marginalized youth to leave school prematurely. It is therefore crucial that questions of power, equity, engagement with difference, that is *recognitive social justice* (Gale and Densmore, 2000), be addressed if we are to improve (learning) outcomes, not just for the most marginalized youth, but for all. The research suggests that the complexity of issues relating to youth engagement (and early school leaving), cannot be fitted neatly into decontextualized accounts of youth experience, school interaction and socio-environmental factors that create in the first instance student disempowerment and disengagement with school (Sefa Dei, 2003, 249).

In order to create a more inclusive and empowering education system, one that engages with and responds to marginalized youth we need to ensure that all students, not just the mainstream majority, feel that they belong and identify. In order to do this we

... need to tap into the cultural knowledge of parents, guardians and community workers - this means that we value the different perspectives and knowledges that all people from all places have and can bring into the school system. (Sefa Dei, 2003, 250-51)

Critically, if students are to successfully engage in school and their knowledge systems, then these systems must connect to and engage with the students' cultural knowledge while also 'affirming the different strengths that knowledge forms bring to classroom pedagogy' (Sefa Dei, 2003). This is critical if those most at risk are to *find themselves* in schools, so that their knowledges, histories and experiences are validated and accounted for. Such student engagement is an empowering one developing a sense of entitlement, belonging and identification. Otherwise students are 'doing time, not doing education' (Sefa Dei, 2003).

For many marginalized students schools are not seen as the sites of engagement, but of disenfranchisement and alienation. This means that our public education system is failing these students, failing to provide them with the necessary equitable environment required for the delivery of social justice (Sefa Dei, 2000, 270). If teachers have low expectations for groups of students it is easy to assign responsibility for the lack of achievement to the home or to the student rather than to what the teacher and the school does (Smith et al., 2001). When the system does not work, there is always plenty of blame to go around.

We will be told that the problem lies with disaffected youth, negligent parents, the (overworked, underpaid) teacher(s), the school environment, et cetera. We could equally look for cause (s) in the many systemic barriers to the educational and employment achievements of marginalized young people. Dodd (1995) suggests that the best advice is to be found in *The Little Prince* 'What is essential is invisible to the eye.' Instead of adding to this cycle of blame which inevitably can lead only to more failure we should be looking to make our education of youth, all youth, but in particular those from the margins, more critically connected to the social and cultural backgrounds from which they come, making it a less alienating and marginalising experience. There is no guaranteed panacea. But for the sake of social justice we must begin to rethink what we do in the classroom, whether it is about schooling - a process where we socialize children to conform to the dominant cultural paradigm or about education - the empowerment of individuals and groups to critically reflect on and remake their society (Sefa Dei, 2000, 271).

Instrumentalist or rational technical engagement



(Winks, 2004)

Fullarton's review of the studies examining the relationship of participation in extracurricular activities with academic achievement in school, concluded that participation is correlated with a number of desirable outcomes, including higher levels of self-esteem and feelings of control over one's life, higher educational aspirations and higher grades, especially among males, in school (Fullarton, 2002, 2). There appears little or no attempt to "go beneath the surface" to understand the meaning that students make of the activity or their motivation to participate. Built on teacher initiation or "doing for, rather than doing with"

these activities are common to most [primary] schools and are illustrative of teachers trying, in various ways to develop both pedagogical and social activities in which students may be both involved and interested. (Vibert A. B and Shields, 2003, 227)

In this view teachers are well intentioned, exhibiting initiative and effort to involve students in numerous activities. Often reflected in this deficit view, is the attitude that students and parents were not competent, nor capable of taking on responsibilities and planning because of their "background". Engagement becomes equated with compliance with adult determined rules and participation in adult determined and led activities. Where the (attributed) deficit is located in the background of the student, then parents too are reduced to being recipients of school-based programs rather than being empowered to be active partners in their children's educational development (Smith et al., 2001, 132).

Fullarton (2002) finds however that it *does* matter which school a student attends; socioeconomic status is a persistent influence on participation, both at the individual level and at the school level. She concludes that students with parents who have the financial resources to allow a wide participation in extracurricular activities obtain a benefit from schooling that those students with less access to financial resources do not.

Social constructivist or individualist engagement



(Winks, 2004)

Student centred pedagogy envisages engagement as implicit in active learning where self-motivation, reflective shared goal setting and student choice is located in the lived experiences of the students. This certainly produces more dignified and interesting classrooms, but does it necessarily raise substantive (and critical) student inquiry that questions the acceptance of official knowledge (Apple, 1996) for all students not just the middle class. Consequently the schools making the strongest claims for engagement (Fullarton, 2002) are located in middle class professional schools (Willms, 2003) where students learn the efficacy of their own values and manners in a system that neatly matches their own cultural background thereby reinforcing the cultural capital of the dominant hegemonic group. If the student is left alone to choose can they alone interrupt officially sanctioned discourses 'where the right choices are powerfully inculcated in institutional habits, routines [and] what in this context might student choice mean' (Vibert A. B and Shields, 2003, 7) in a system of schooling where domination is perpetuated? (Sefa Dei, 2003). Shared decision making is (often) an illusion for students if they are not able to question and interrupt their own marginalisation. A student centered or *social constructivist* engagement defaults to a conservative position and 'may become simply a more friendly method of encouraging on task [passive-compliant] behaviour' (Vibert and Shields, 2003, 8). Too often student centred teaching makes connections between classroom learning and the world outside the school that remains uncritical and in the realm of *make believe* where teachers design activities that 'simulate real-world environments ... so that students can carry out authentic tasks as real workers would ...' (Day, 2002, 23).

Sing and Luke caution that a pedagogy based on 'unproblematic notions of individualism and liberalism which attempt to recognise and celebrate difference per se' (Bernstein, 1996, xiii) can actually conceal the pedagogical practices that are the cause of inequality of opportunity and outcomes for the disadvantaged in schools. Just saying that teachers need to be sensitive to student culture, background and experience (Lingard et al., 2001) does not necessarily mean that the curriculum and pedagogy is inclusive and culturally sensitive (McFadden and Munns, 2002). The "**romp, stomp and chomp**" or **festivals, folklore and food** supplemental celebrations of difference still serves to subsume the *other* in the dominant culture (McMahon, 2003).

Through this miscommunication and tension (grounded in different and differing competing ideological and theoretical assumptions), some attempt to claim a *neutrality* about engagement. This claim for neutrality is itself a politically conservative and techno-rational position on engagement and education (Walkerdine, 1983). Locating engagement in the individual student leads to an essentialisation and reification of engagement; students (teachers and the

community) are therefore engaged when the school is an engaging place. Engagement must not be disconnected from time, place and space and it is not about finding the *reproducible* program (Zyngier and Gale, 2003) regardless of social contexts and ideologies.

Critical - transformative engagement



(Winks, 2004)

While a student centred pedagogy sees engagement through the student's exploration and discovery of individual interests and experiences, a critically transformative pedagogy (Zyngier, 2003) perceives student engagement as rethinking these experiences and interests increasingly in communal and social terms for the creation of a more just and democratic community and not just the advancement of the individual. All students should be able to see themselves as represented in a curriculum that challenges hierarchical and oppressive relations that exist between different social groups. Newmann concludes that all schools can change their pedagogical practices so that they 'deliver [such an] authentic pedagogy equally to students regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, race or ethnicity (Newmann, 1996). Canadian research (Vibert and Shields, 2003, 8) found that the schools where student engagement was conceived critically were more likely to be located in low socio-economic status communities, because these schools had acknowledged traditional responses as notable failures (for an Australian perspective see Zyngier & Gale, 2003) and hence different approaches were required.

This perspective acknowledges that the lives and work of teachers and students (and their families) are inherently political; the lives of children and their communities are a curriculum of life (Smith et al., 1998, 2001) not just connected to student experience, but also actively and consciously critiquing that experience.

Not only is their world valued, but students are given the opportunity to voice and discover their own authentic and authoritative life in order to retrieve the learning agenda (Giddens, 1994, 121). Gale and Densmore explain that this is not achieved through "pedagogic trickery" (2000, 149) or through simply "bolting on" some aspects of so-called *real-life* education experiences into the curriculum. They explain that what is required in the classroom is a pedagogy where

[t]he very nature of what is learnt is mediated by the group; the content becomes entwined in who these students are as people. Moreover, it reworks the test of isolation that students face in the classroom that are organized to (re)produce their disconnectedness. (Gale and Densmore, 2000, 149)

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Analysis of Interviews⁴

All but two members of Team7 consented to be interviewed. Interviews took place through Term 2 and some during Term 3. The semi structured interviews were conducted in private and recorded. The interview questions are attached as *Appendix 1*. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was transcribed. The teacher comments are all taken directly from the transcripts – only identifying names have been removed. The comments are reproduced indented in small italics.

What the Teachers said ...

From the sessions involving staff involved in the Team 7 project, it is clear that they came to Team 7 with a range of experiences as well as specific expectations about how the project would operate, what the purpose of it was, and what the benefits could be. Many of the issues that they raise would most likely be included even if they were not teaching in a Team 7 environment.

PROBLEMS

Many of the problems that related specifically to Team 7 were “administrative” in nature, i.e. not enough planning, no structure to meetings, lack of a common approach to units. Some of the problems would have been experienced even if Team 7 had not been introduced, the skills that students begin year 7 with and differing teaching styles. Other concerns incorporated both of these types of problems, which when experienced within the Team 7 setting resulted in a compounded situation

The main issues raised consistently were:

1. No clear agreement on what the aims of Team 7 were
2. No clear “leader” to provide guidance
3. Reactions from other staff within the school
4. Lack of student engagement
5. Discipline
6. Different teaching styles/expectations from staff within Team 7

No clear agreement on what the purpose of Team 7 was/ lack of leadership. This appeared to be the most specific concern expressed by the staff involved. The general feeling seemed to be that there had not been enough advanced planning, or clear understanding of how Team 7 would run on a day to day basis. Many of the issues had be resolved during the course of the year, but staff felt that time had been lost and because there were no clear “guidelines” that students were encountering vastly differing classroom experiences.

I think one of the problems with Team 7 is that we didn't have a coordinated view on what Team 7 was going to be, but we all came in with our various views

A lot of people had very different ideas as to the way the program was going to be approached, and although we did appreciate having the movement to be able to do whatever it was that we wanted, I think there were a few people that needed a few more guidelines to work within.

I think the original idea was to be able to interchange students between different forms and interchange teachers a lot more that what we do, and also to team teach, or have more than one teacher with a group and these things haven't happened so, I thought it was going to be a lot more, a lot more team teaching where you could have more than group of students or more than one form, but have more than one teacher as well.

⁴ The analysis of teacher and student interviews was prepared by Wendy May, Education Faculty Research Officer at Monash University (Peninsula).

I would like to see somebody, not so much in charge of the meetings, but people having specific roles within Team 7 that they play so this butting of heads just stops occurring

The notion that we would all just work together as a harmonious whole, given that we didn't know each other, well some of knew each other, but no one person knew everyone in the group well, we had very different teaching styles amongst us, and different approaches and so on

I think we jumped into it too quickly and we haven't had the opportunity and time to work out programs and test them out before we go into a Team 7 situation, with last years year 7s.... There was a lot of, there wasn't certainty about which way we were heading, because of the fact that we were led into it too quickly, there wasn't a definite, we weren't sure exactly what we were doing, and that created a little bit of tension and stress

But I would say that it does need someone who is a project manager. Someone who delegates work or tasks, you can have a discussion and say well this is the project, this is the ultimate outcome of the project, these are the subprojects, this is everything that needs to be done,

I don't think we fully understood where we were going, I think we all, we all sat together and all decided we all had similar ideas, there are a lot of things that just weren't practical and we were definitely told "go for it" and there were just things that were never going to be practical and it wasn't until we would go to try them and someone would say "no"

Well I look at the older teachers in our staffroom who are more senior by, they are more mature and that from a cultural background, and I think that they should have had some sort of leadership role, even if it small. Whether they gave direction, whether they didn't want to take it, that was fine. To purposely point in some direction at least, but they were as clueless as any of us.

I don't think we specifically need a leader. I think with a proactive team you will find a natural leader, there just will be someone who will be willing to step up to that plate. Not so much to become "the leader" and I think this is the point probably about the past and present, a good leader is not someone who just says "well this is what you are doing" I see a good leader is a guide more than anything to give direction but giving us the opportunity to be more creative or try some new ideas to bring that back and to have that accepted. Not to say "yes that is fantastic, we will run with it right now" but to say "that is a really great idea that could be a jump start to think of other ways of doing things". That is all it might be.

We did find that quite hard initially at the start. I think because it was such an embryonic concept as well for administration, leaving it open for us was a great opportunity to come up with the concepts that we have now and the way that Team 7 is working, but there are particular members within Team 7 that I do feel need some sort of guidance or some sort of achievable goals to work towards to say OK this is what we need to do, this is the path as to how we are going to go about achieving it.

Look this was a really innovative program and I think it has potential to work but I think now, I'm not sure it will work because I think people have gone back into their cocoons, whereas at the start of the year we might have been a bit freer.

In a perfect world I thought that they would probably sit down and talk about how we were going to do things and we had some initial really great ideas and to just follow it up, my disappointment has been since that people haven't followed it up and there hasn't been very much time

But there are frustrations for each of them in their own separate ways I think, in terms of being out of their comfort zone, about them realising they are not talking to each other enough yet, and there are some things I guess we in leadership are assuming they are doing and they haven't been doing, which is interesting in itself about how much autonomy we give them because the idea was that there would be no leader of Team 7 either, that they would be an autonomous body and that the junior sub school leader wouldn't be the leader,

I felt and I do feel that there are commitment issues from some teachers in Team 7, that they, "Oh I can't stay back, I need to go home" and I don't want to stay late and

he hasn't give us time. "Don hasn't done this, leadership hasn't done that" and I kind of see myself as, you know, idealist in some respects but at the same time very practical by nature, I'll give an alternate solution, people didn't jump at the chance, they weren't positive alternate solutions as in if we stay back a couple of nights in the week, go through what we are going to go through and just you know, I reckon we are going to have a couple of weeks worth off. You know rest time. And they were like "I can't afford to do that" and I understand that they can't afford to do that but I didn't feel that that was the honest truth

Very much so, Suzanne is nominally on top of Team 7 as in curriculum and because Ester is simply, well, she is only on the third year out of whatever but she is trying to do a huge job in coordination of year 7 and it has been really hard for her. Consequently she has had to rely on Suzanne and I don't think Suzanne job description was as precise as maybe it should be, so she has been doing a lot of Ester's work, which meant she hadn't been doing much curriculum work and only in the last month has she been taken over and taking control of our meetings. So now in Team 7 we have actually got a clear agenda, someone who takes the minutes, someone publishes the minutes etc and that has only happened for 2 meetings. So there has been a lot of, no I would say care but no responsibility

I don't think that project was managed properly. When you, I am a believer that when you start out on something, the project was a little bit big to start with and I think people felt overwhelmed, but I think that the project wasn't managed properly.

Because I think that there are a few people in that room who are very pessimistic and very negative and unfortunately it has started to rub off on some of the newer younger staff. I think that sometimes it is easy to get drawn into that and I think that is part of the problem as well.

Reaction from other staff. Because of the relatively quick introduction of the Team 7 program, there appeared to be a preconception from other staff within the school that the staff involved in the project were somehow "different". The same comments, to a lesser extent were made by students outside the year 7 group about the treatment that year 7 students had experienced (better facilities, nicer classrooms etc)

I think we have overcome quite a few negative attitudes from other staff. Team 7 has been made to feel quite separate from everyone else. Not so much as an elite group of teachers, but something that has been removed from the rest of the school community, and that is something that we have had to work towards to fend off different opinions and perhaps different viewpoints and people not understanding what it is that we actually do

It was more to the point that people were passing information on in staff briefing, a few sneakers and a few comments that were made under people's breath. It has come from Administration a little bit, I think, where we involve ourself in staff meetings and we are conducting action research teams at the moment, Team 7 was pushed aside - that is what we do - and the rest of the groups were working together, not so much to achieve a different goal, but it was always made very separate

Tensions within Team 7 caused by differing ideas/teaching styles: staff recruited to the Team 7 project joined with a wide range of teaching skills and experience. Some participants felt that this "broadness" was resulting in a lack of consistency in quality of delivery.

I don't feel that every member of Team 7 has pulled their weight equally. There tend to be a few that will ride on the backs of others

There is a lot of staff here who are proactive, who didn't get a chance to be part of this team and it is, you have got to mix and match until you get the right...and it might be that I am not part of the right mix and that might be the case and that is fine

I think first of all there are particular teachers that need to admit that their classes aren't operating the way that they want to. I have found that to be little bit disheartening sometimes that you can quite clearly see that something wrong is happening in the classroom, something is going on that shouldn't be but the teachers response is "oh no it is ok it's fine" that has been frustrating and you always, or I know that I always offer support, but it does become a little bit disheartening when this person keeps refusing it, to say "thanks but no thanks".

We were floundering something bad, you know like we were trying to do well, we had decided to do.....Instead they have got like one or two people doing this another person doing that, then this then that. There is no cohesion.. See there is a lot of disrespect for the powers that be as well... And there is a lot of "oh if I had known I wouldn't have come into Team 7" because it wasn't really clear what Team 7 was all about and you had to apply for Team 7 but I am not sure if they got the mix quite right and I am not even sure if Team 7 in itself is a good thing

Some teachers are really enthusiastic and willing to give it a go, other teachers tend to focus on the negatives all the time and instead of focusing on the positives, they say, they keep reverting back to issues that we can't resolve. Issues that can't be resolved, issues that we just need to work through and go "well that is the way it is, we need to move on for the sake of the kids". Now I think I am in a position when I can see a bigger picture of the school

Although a number of teachers were selected, there was a lot of need to explore relationships within those teachers and just to sort of start on a good footing and a positive footing because in any situation when you bring people together there are different ideas that come into it, and there will be friction and there has been friction.

I am not too set in my ways, I don't really have all that many ways yet because I am reasonably new to it so I am pretty flexible with what I am going to do... I don't like a quiet classroom, people who generally come in and take my classes will sort of, first thing they will say to me is "geeze they're loud" because if they are quiet I don't really think they are being active,

I think the biggest thing is the fact that I don't feel that they need me to learn. I am there but it doesn't matter what they are doing, they are learning something and all I am doing is facilitating learning in some way or in some direction

Lack of student engagement: all staff expressed concerns that students were not engaged fully in the work presented to them. All recognised that there were a range of reasons for this, from inside the school environment as well as externally. Most staff also believed that there was a range of ways in which engagement could be fostered and encouraged.

Enthusiasm for the task, time spent on the task, time that they are willing to spend on it and output, obviously, how much they have done.

Sometimes it is because they see the future in it, for example, they are excited about it because it is an interest that they like.

To me, student engagement is where you actually get the kids involved. They are on task, they're interested, they're enthusiastic, they are self motivated, they are understanding what they are doing, and not only understanding but they want to do their best, they want to involve themselves, they want to get everything out of it, they want to go further than I ever expected and they want to share this knowledge with people around them and people at home and they are just fired up and so into

I think if students aren't engaged then the outcomes will just reflect disengagement and they just won't be there. I just think kids who aren't interested don't put in the work, or they just put in the bare minimum and you can see it. You can see it in their faces, you can hear it in their voices, you can see it in the work that they produce. It is just really low, it lacks in presentation, it lacks in research, you can tell that you haven't connected with them, or they haven't connected with the work

Part of it, I think, is that their skills are so weak, they are frighteningly weak, that these children can't read, and I have had them read to me, and every time they don't know a word or, if you blackout everything and then you try and read the page like that, you would draw no meaning from it. So if they are given a text to read, if they are sent to the computer rooms to do some independent research, they simply can't and so that is why I think that they, we have really got to work on their basic skills. How can they go off and research independently when they can't read?

It's how you relate to them, whether you have a positive attitude or not, how well you get on with them, whether they trust, whether you trust them, if you show respect.. it is all about also whether they have had something decent to eat, whether they have just been through a terrible time with another teacher in a previous class.

Engagement is all about what they watched on TV last night, how it affected them, who they are friends with, what happened at recess, all of those factors make a difference to when they come in the classroom

I think that student engagement is about having student interest, involvement, a willingness to learn, and an understanding of what is going on, I feel like if the students engaged then they have an awareness of what is happening around them and an awareness of their options, and that is what I personally think engagement is all about

It can be very hit and miss, I can walk in there with something and think it is fantastic and they are all going to love and it can be an absolute disaster

Behaviour of students: a number of staff mentioned the behaviour of students as being a negative aspect of their work. A number acknowledged the link to lack of student engagement to these displays of negative behaviour, while others believed it was indicative of changes in family/society generally.

There is no point in going at a kid for doing something wrong behaviourally, when at the end of it, the goal that you are set out for is to get them to do a particular task or something, because you are dealing too much on behaviour issues and you negate any of the task because that gets thrown out of the window

But what frustrates the hell out of me, is that I can be next door with 7A and I can look across or I can be in the quads and 7B are absolutely, drinking coke, running around, out of uniform, tipping tables up and chairs

They are just a nasty group, they are horrible to each other, there is incredible bullying and misery, they are just not nice.

I have got quite a few students in my class that are not against throwing a chair if it means, and they have learnt this over years at school as well, they behave really poorly, you get sent out, you get this, you get suspended you get, they learn the system really quickly.

Some students have come in with behaviour issues and I think some is also learnt while here at school. You see what other kids are doing in more senior years and you just adapt to that. You think that those type of behaviours are acceptable and they are probably not. Like they see other people doing it, other students getting away with it, so because of that they think it is appropriate for them to get away with it as well

With the best wishes in the world, they will not work independently, they won't work when you are at the front either, but at least you can stop actual physical damage to each other

I really do not know what to do to engage those students. I would say with all their teachers we have all tried a myriad of approaches but we are not getting anywhere, I don't know what the answer is

I am sick of hearing the language that gets bandied about all the time, ..but I think it is really important that our students know how to fit into society. And that it isn't appropriate to use this language in a school.

Right throughout the school there is a disregard for education, there is lack of respect for themselves, for their peers, for authority and I was hoping that we would have that opportunity to mould them

I am sick of hearing the language that gets bandied about all the time, I don't mind what they do, if they are on the playing fields and this is acceptable to the people around them, but I think it is really important that our students know how to fit into society. And that it isn't appropriate to use this language in a school.

I wanted to try and be involved in making some changes in year 7 so they could see what is appropriate apart from the fact that that year 10 class was making that teachers life a misery, they weren't learning a thing, they weren't, certainly academically, but not even socially how to treat people, so that is why I think it is so important in year 7

Teaching outside subject areas: some teachers believed that the opportunity to teach “outside” their previous subject areas offered a great change to broaden their own experience and to learn with the children. Others offered the opinion that it resulted in a lower standard of curriculum delivery.

Others (staff) thought it would be fun to teach outside their subject areas and I still have a problem with that.

Well it might be fun on the teachers part to think “yippee I’ll have a little dabble with this” but while we have one teacher who is teaching French who has never looked at the subject in her life, so she has not been taught it herself, and the other teacher studied until form 2, she is my age and no I think it is all very self indulgent to say “ I want to have fun” but when you know, they don’t know how to pronounce the words and there is no sense of any sentence structure so they will do pictures, you know they made models of the Eiffel Towers, now you know there may be some use in that, but in terms of them developing the skills for a second language it is not happening

I am a French teacher this year. I have not ever learnt French, ever. My extent of French language is what I have heard in movies. Here I am teaching year 7, three classes. I am one step ahead of the kids, my pronunciation is not that perfect... but my kids are excited.

I don’t see myself as a maths teacher, there is no question that if I am teaching maths and a trained maths teacher was teaching, where the students are going to get a better deal

BENEFITS

All of the staff could see at least some benefits of working in Team 7, and most believed that if some of the “issues” experienced this year could be ironed out that future year groups would be more likely to achieve the kind of positive results that had been hoped for at the start of this academic year. Some of the issues raised as “problems” by some staff were considered benefits by others. This crossover appeared to reflect the range of teaching styles practiced by those staff involved.

1. Development of a “team” during the year
2. Increase in cross curricular work
3. Improved classroom environment for students/reduction in movement around the school
4. Improved student engagement
5. Opportunity to develop better relationships with students
6. Improve transition from Primary school

Development of “team” working during the year

I know within my class that I teach that they really enjoy the work that they do within the class, they like having all of the teachers that they come into contact with in one classroom.

If the person (student) is not working to perhaps take them to a senior class, but a class that is always being taught by a Team 7 member so they can still establish that this person knows me, knows who I am, knows what form I am in and who my home group teacher and what I have done wrong, they know my name and that can be quite threatening for them sometimes, but beneficial I think in the long run

I think now we are getting better at working together as a team, it has probably taken all this year to shuffle down and get to know each other

We’ve bonded a hell of a lot better this term. We have moved forward, we have improvement.. because there is more communication between staff we have been able to address issues in terms of literacy and ISU or their numeracy skills.

The work that teachers are doing, we communicate really well with one another and it doesn’t have to be formal meetings, having meeting time communication, it is making an effort to catch up with someone and say “this is what I am doing, what do you think”

Reorganisation I think that year 7 students socially they are better looked after in this school than in previous years, not only because they have home group teachers but because they also have their main teachers. And academically because there is more feedback from staff to staff, we can pinpoint errors and the students can be dealt with in certain respects

Team 7 has probably helped me learn more this year than I have learned in any of the other year 7 classes. I think that the teacher needs to be valued as a team member rather than someone who stands up the front and tells others what to do.

Cross curricular unit development

It does open up a lot of opportunities to make that connectedness between the learning

But then they go off at a tangent on their own, they are talking about something else, and sometimes I let them run with it and that generates more ideas

Improved classroom environment for students/reduction in movement around the school: The positioning of the Team 7 classrooms in new rooms that have been designed to include glass walls, round tables and brightly decorated rooms has received a positive response from students and teachers and has eased the move from Primary school to a larger environment. All of the staff, even those that felt that Team 7 had been a great success, believed that the delivery of the program could be improved for implementation in future years.

Scale I have other kids who are socially inadequate who have blossomed being in this environment.

It is extremely different, we have the students all in the one area, they are in their special rooms, they only have 3 teachers, there is a lot of team teaching going on, and they are doing these big projects that they are actually quite interested in

In the reorganisation I think that year 7 students socially they are better looked after in this school than in previous years, not only because they have home group teachers but because they also have their main teachers

Improved engagement (for some)

It is the notion of developing your skills. Spelling is something that can be learned, a lot of them will say "I can't spell" a lot of them said that at the beginning of the year and so some of those children who were getting 2/20 are getting 20/20 every week. So they are now seeing that it is not just about the spelling words, if you apply yourself you can do pretty well anything

Give them an opportunity, so for example, being inclusive, the manner that kids talk to each other and you can have some sort of effect I suppose, as opposed, and as well as saying "little Johnny why don't you come into this group?" and it might be just a suggestion.

I know that there are some big kids in the classes love skateboarding, some of them are scouts, some have early bedtimes, some don't have breakfast, it is really important that you establish those relationships and it is just the small talk, while the students are working that is a really essential part of being able to engage the kids

I have a young boy in my class who is Aspergers and he hates writing and he hates reading but the way I have got around that is I say, I often say to this particular student "well, when you get older, you want to get you license" and he says "yes" and I say "well you have to be able to read and understand the questions and when you get a bit older you want to buy a nice car and you need to be able to read a contract when you buy a car so that you know that you are not being ripped off" I try and link things back to their everyday lives so that it seems, well it is important.

More than anything Team 7 we have concentrated on developing life skills as well as developing whole new curriculum. I don't want kids to walk out at the end of the day and say "why did I do that?"

I hope that they would have a better year in delivery to a group of kids if they know them better, that their relationships with those kids have been such that they feel they have made a difference and I reckon at the end of the year they might reflect and say "oh I have made a difference this year, in a better way, I

Moves to improve transition from Primary School

I envisaged that the transition from primary school to secondary school would be a lot smoother, or would be as smooth as possible for the students, and I envisaged that we would have a high level of student engagement and therefore that would have an effect on behaviour, some of the behaviour issues that we had last year in year 7.

Because I think in year 7 I can't just walk into class and go "what would you like to do today?" that doesn't work. In year 7 students like to have a structure, but because it is about feeling safe in a big school they know that when they go into their classroom, they are safe and supported. They don't operate well when you walk into a class and say "what do you want to do today" because in reality they are still children and they are still like primary school and they like to have some say and not too much

Opportunity to develop better relationships with students

I think it has been successful; students have been able to form a relationship with a far less number of teachers than they would have without this program. They may have had up to 10 or 11 teachers but now they have maybe 5 or 6 so it is a lot less new people to deal with and I think there are so many ways you can maintain learning or relationship when you have more time with someone rather than seeing them twice a week

They know that I am excited and they feel that I am involved so they keep wanting to learn because I keep wanting to learn

As a teacher I don't look at myself as just teaching them academic skills but social and so forth. So then if we are doing all that, then we are achieving a whole student I suppose. I have succeeded or have been successful, and the students see success because success for them might not be academic.

That team has basically been given a structure where they can develop a program where they can learn who the kids are, and that is what they have been doing at the moment, activities that are really about relational development, understand where the kids at and hopefully now starting to think about what sort of programs we need to evolve for this group of kids

I think that when a teacher developed, endeavours to develop, a relationship with each and everyone of their students that the results that they get, both in and out of the classroom, are far beyond someone who sees themselves as the teacher, walks into the classroom and they teach and then leave again.

Suggestions for the future (from staff)

1. Closer links with the feeder primary schools

It was felt that as much of the design of Team 7 more closely reflected the teaching styles demonstrated in year 6 that staff who have no previous exposure to Primary Education delivery would benefit from observing the delivery styles/teaching methods of local primary schools.

2. Clearer guidance on development of units etc.

There was comment that because staff were not always aware of what colleagues are teaching, that there was the possibility of either an overlap in provision or omission of tasks. If staff were given specific units to develop with staff that have experience in other subject areas then 'complete' units could be shared and used within the year group.

3. Possible movements within the year group

Mention was made of 2 specific classes that were causing problems with the behaviour/level of engagement demonstrated by students. There was currently no system in place to "redistribute" these children.

4. More support for inexperienced teachers, or those teaching outside their subject areas for the first time.

Inexperienced teachers exposed to the students in the most 'difficult' classes were a concern for other teachers in Team 7. Many expressed a desire to assist these staff, but were wary of appearing to interfere or undermine the staff. Other staff that were teaching outside of the subject area would have liked more assistance in the preparation and delivery of their new topic. More experienced staff commented that they felt that the children of the less experienced staff would be academically disadvantaged in year 8.

5. More hands on involvement from Principal/leadership team

The principal had been able to "sell" the idea of Team 7 to the staff and his positive input would have been welcomed throughout the year. There seemed to be some feeling that the Principal was not fully aware of how far Team 7 was from achieving its initial aims in some areas. It was also hoped that the Principal and the leadership team could have provided clearer guidance and structure to the process at the beginning of the academic year. Many staff requested that someone take on the role of Co-ordinator.

6. Consistent approach on issues of behaviour/discipline

Differences in classroom management and teaching styles resulted in some behaviour being acceptable in some classes and not with others, and the staff commented that students were aware of this.

7. More involvement with the rest of the school and the wider community/parents

Clear up some of the mystery surrounding Team 7, especially if it is going to be rolled out to a wider school audience. Also, year 8 teachers need to know what they are inheriting in the way of student experiences/expectations.

What the Students said

The students in year 7 came from a number of local primary schools. The year 7 classes are not "streamed". Two of the classes appear to have been labelled by staff as the classes that cause the majority of the disturbances or problems within the year group. Despite this, the concerns and opinions they expressed appear to be constant across all of the form groups.

All Team 7 forms were interviewed. Students were selected by their teachers on the basis that "they were prepared to speak out" – they were not to be the best or worst students in the class. Focus Groups of 3 to 4 students were interviewed through term 2 and some during term 3. The semi structured interviews were conducted in private and recorded. The interview questions are attached as *Appendix 2*. Each interview

lasted approximately one hour and was transcribed. Students were also administered a very brief questionnaire about their classroom pedagogy. The questionnaire is attached as *Appendix 3*. The student comments are all taken directly from the transcripts – only identifying names have been removed. The comments are reproduced indented in small italics.

Prior negative impressions of what Secondary School would be like.

All of the students had been told “stories” of what secondary school would be like. Their preconceptions were based on what older siblings and friends had told them, as well as what they had seen on TV. None of their ideas were based on information that they had been given in a formal setting while at Primary School, or on any visits to the Secondary School. Their thoughts ranged from concerns about bullying to the amount of homework they would have to

- Getting lost within the school
- Bullying from older children
- Being the youngest in the school
- Increase in the level of work/more homework
- No longer being the oldest in the school environment

I thought that it was going to be confusing because it is a lot bigger than some other primary schools, it would be hard to find my way around

The only fears I had was being bashed up and picked on by older kids

My sister, on my first day of school, said “watch out, you might get your head flushed down the toilet” but it is not that bad because it is not true

I heard about this school before, I was a bit anxious if people were going to be smoking and passing out smokes everywhere, I would become a passive smoker

Prior positive impressions of what Secondary School would be like

Students expressed a hope that they would have a greater range of subjects available to them, that they would be offered more opportunities to demonstrate their independence and, in some cases that the work would be more challenging than that engaged in at Primary School.

- Greater range of subjects
- More friends
- More independence

I am a computer freak - I couldn't wait to get into the school to do it!

Probably all of the new friends you can make in High School, more than in Primary School 'cos there are a lot more kids and you could have a lot more friends.

My brother used to go to this school and he told me all the fun had, in cooking and stuff. I just expected it to be fun like his years were.

Actual experience

Once at Secondary School, the initial concerns relating to the practical day to day routines of Secondary School (getting lost, bullying etc) proved to be largely unfounded. Many students were pleased with taking more ownership for ‘organising’ themselves.

There is a lot more teachers but it is not really that much of a problem because the more teachers you have, the more fun it can be

It's a challenge. Well it was a challenge when I first moved here to find my way around the school, and I like challenges.

We have timetables, we have become a lot more organisational for ourselves so we can get around a lot more easier and we become adults

You can take care of yourself and you don't have teachers on your back all the time

It sort of gives you a fresh start

At High school there are more better subjects

We got lost a few times, looking for the toilets and the water taps and then we found our way around

The best thing is meeting all the students and having good times with them and you know that you will have them through the rest of High School

Prior impressions of what the academic work would be like

Most of the students had expected that the level and volume of academic work they would be expected to do in Secondary School would be dramatically increased to what they had experience at Primary School.

I thought the work would be a lot harder

I thought it would be a lot harder and a lot more work

I thought the work would be a lot harder and more challenging for me, the maths would be really hard

I thought I was going to get more homework, like we would come in and we would get this stack of homework, and go home and have to stay up late and finish all our homework

Actual experience

Disappointment was expressed by a number of students that the work was not as varied or as difficult as they had thought it would be.

I just want some hard work

Year 7 isn't as hard as I thought it would be. It is usually the same as primary school, the same work, it is not that hard really

Some of the fast workers like me get our work done. The teachers have nothing for us to do and we have to sit there and do nothing

The work isn't difficult

Lack of engagement

Students recognised that they were not as engaged in the work in year 7 as they had been in year 6. They themselves identified a number of possible reasons for this

- Disengaged teachers
- Disruption caused by other students
- Work too easy
- Repeating work already done

He (teacher) comes up and yells in your face and...it is like you don't want to be there

They (other students) they don't really learn it because they are too busy shouting and getting kicked out of the room, so they don't really learn what they are supposed to, so the work is hard for them

Teachers have to explain it to us so that we actually know, like if they don't explain it to us properly, not like "here you go"

Well everyone doesn't like her because she is grumpy and all that, but I think she is only grumpy because everyone is mean and doesn't listen to what she says

Always yelling and that, cranky. Favouring other students and not having enough work prepared

Discipline

The link to lack of student engagement was clear even to the students. Many felt that students 'acted up' in order to get out of classes that they found boring, and that some teachers were not effective in preventing these incidents within their classroom. Failing to provide extension work for 'able' students also led to them becoming involved in disrupting others.

Because they talk a lot when she asks them to be quiet, they keep talking and not doing their work

They (worksheets) are just put on our tables and they just say "work" d make us work until the bell goes

I get bored after work, when I have finished all my work and I start getting bored and restless and throwing things around

Other students mucking around...just disrupting learning

The teacher is too busy telling off the people that are shouting, they don't have enough time to come to you and help you.

All the talking and people looking at your work

Increased engagement experiences/how they would increase engagement

All were able to give examples of the kind of work and activities that they felt made it easier to learn, and made them more likely to want to be attentive in class. They also expressed ideas that they felt teachers could use to make the lessons more rewarding. Interestingly, many of these were also suggested by some of the staff interviewed.

- Staff ensuring that all students understand the aims of the lesson
- Different activities for classes – using different learning tools
- 'Able' students given the opportunity to develop additional skills
- Teachers expressing an interest in the subject and the students
- Not allowing disruption by students in the classroom
- Students having some say in choosing tasks
- Opportunities to work on projects

The teaches us literacy and English and she helps everyone and all that and when we do reading with her she puts us in different groups so that everyone is up to their own reading level.

If I sit on a table where I don't enjoy sitting with the people. I can't work well. But if I sit on a table with my friends and we talk and we get our work done

I like doing experiments and all that, because you don't know what is going to happen

To just jump ahead and learn as much as you can, get motivated

To have 3 separate groups of intelligence levels for like how smart we are at maths or English

The most enjoyable projects and all that we do would have to be the hands on stuff

A classroom where there is big tables and zero noise

I would make it easier so that kids can get their say in what they do, because sometimes teachers don't listen

Because before we actually go onto what we are making, Miss Smith does it

They made sure everyone knew how to do it. They won't go on with the work until they knew everyone knew how to do it

More help ... I mean he is always going off at kids for doing something wrong and we are not getting as much help as we want.

When there are not many people around, so you don't get distracted by other people, I would really like that, to be working on my own or with someone I liked.. it wouldn't

be so distracting, no-one mucking up or anything like that, not as much noise, that is my ideal working place.

If you teaching is willing to help you . If they are willing to help you it is the easiest to work

Importance of School

Despite their identification of their engagement as important to their outcomes, many students accepted that some of the work they do would be of benefit to them in the future, even if it did not offer an instant interest to them at this stage. Even though they are only just beginning Secondary School, they were already considering the long term benefits of academic success – the danger here is that gratification delayed will lead to at best passive or ritualistic engagement or at worst retreatist, rebellious or resistant forms of engagement (Schlechty, 2002)

Not every work is fun, like some things can be boring but you have got to do it.

You need to get used to the homework because you are going to get a lot of in year 12 and 11, during VCE

I get bored with the maths, but I still do it - I know that I need a good education to get into university and to pass year 12 and that. I don't like it but I still do it

When you do harder work you understand more

I just try my hardest at it because I don't know yet what I want to do when I am older, but I want to go to Uni and I know you need good marks to be able to get into Uni, so I try my hardest at everything

Awareness of Team 7

Considering that the students have no previous personal experience of Secondary School and therefore would not necessarily be aware that their year group was structured differently to other year groups, some students knew that “Team 7” meant that their teaching was somehow delivered in an alternative way. They also identified some of the benefits of this

They have a Team 7 which is where the all the teachers from Team A or Team B work with that particular grades and they each teach us about, so we get to know all the teachers

The best features is like, well it is just really because it is all in one like staffroom, and they just pretty much only teach year 7s.

Physical environment/social opportunities

Year 7 students have access to newly decorated and furnished rooms, which probably offer a learning environment more similar to a Primary setting than to a typical Secondary School class. They felt a sense of ownership of this environment because of the amount of time they spent in there and also because some staff had allowed them to ‘put their mark’ on the room. Unfortunately most students believed that there are far less social opportunities for them at recess and lunchtime and spoke of a desire for more to do.

I would like to paint it (the classroom) like the class could paint it, it could be a class project and just have a bright colourful room with music being played and that

Like everyone could have white walls and we could each have a paintbrush and draw our name or picture on the wall and make it our room

We have lockers this year

We spend most of our time in here and we have made it our own by like our birthdays on the back of the door, photos up, posters, work

I would like to see more during lunchtimes and recess

This year we have round tables, they are good because everyone gets their own space if you were bored with your work or something, you could look up and see what kind of work people are doing and it might inspire you to do work like that

I would like to be able to do other things, because at the moment, all I do, apart from going to the library because it is the only thing open, is walking around and I reckon they should organise something for kids at recess or lunch, like a group activity

Suggestions for the Future (from the students)

1. Greater involvement in decision making process, giving them a sense of ownership
2. More to do at recess and lunchtime
3. Minority of disengaged students disrupting others
4. More staff to display the positive teaching styles they have seen
5. More linking of what they are doing to the real world

1. Greater involvement in decision making process, giving them a sense of ownership

This relates to their physical environment as well as the choice of tasks in class. Even if students are presented with a choice of 2 tasks in a class they felt that by having the freedom to pick which one they wanted to do would make them more likely to do that work well. Similarly with their homeroom, students that had been involved in having a say on the layout and decoration felt a greater sense of class community. Some of the sensible practical comments included the fact that when seated at a round table half the class will have their back to the teacher if the teacher stands in one place, and that a decorated and painted wall was the only one in the class that no-one actually faced. Most students also felt that the school environment was not designed well for any extremes of temperature. Access to toilet facilities was also limited and some felt intimidated by the older students that congregated there to smoke.

2. More to do at recess and lunchtime.

Reference was made to the desire for a range of activities that were regularly available. Most students also felt that the school environment was not designed well for any extremes of temperature. Access to toilet facilities were also limited and some felt intimidated by the older students that congregated there to smoke

3. Minority of disengaged students disrupting others.

Students recognized need for greater *control*. Removing students from the class often resulted in disruption to other classes. Threat of going to the head of year offered no deterrent to most students. Students that would otherwise stay on task became involved in disruption when staff were not seen to be in control. Some students were even frightened to come to school.

4. More staff to display the positive teaching styles they have seen.

Students repeatedly were able to identify those teachers and teaching pedagogies that were effectively able to engage them in their learning. They wanted teachers to learn from each other about *what works*.

5. More linking of what they are doing to the real world.

The students were quite clear about if they can see a purpose to learning, they were more likely to do the work, even if it was something that they were not particularly interested in. They were not interested in just having fun all the time but did want to be challenged.

Teacher Survey Analysis

All but 2 members of Team 7 also consented to and completed the same questionnaire (self) evaluating their classroom pedagogy twice – the first before their interview and the second midway through term 4 before the Development Feedback Workshop. The questionnaire is attached as *Appendix 4*.

A second more detailed questionnaire that focussed on student engagement (based on a survey developed by Schlechty (2002) and used with his permission) was administered after the second iteration of the classroom pedagogy questionnaire was administered at the end of the Development Feedback Workshop (DFW). The questionnaire is attached as *Appendix 5*. The results of this questionnaire were not available at the time of writing this report. The questionnaire data (including demographic information) was entered into SPSS Analysis software and analysed. The interview data analysis forms the main part of this report which concludes with some recommendations as a result of the DFW.

The questionnaire was based on the observational rubrics developed by the QSRLS team in Queensland in 2001.

Productive Pedagogies

Productive Pedagogies is derived from the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS); a three-year intensive observation of 24 representative state primary and secondary schools, representing the largest and most detailed school reform study in Australia, containing almost 500 pages of perhaps the most exhaustive and important education research undertaken.

The study was concerned with how student learning, both academic and social, could be enhanced. Its original contribution was to specify which aspects of teaching require schools' urgent attention; the higher the level of intellectual demand expected of students by teachers the greater the improved productive performance and, hence, improved student outcomes). The base assumption of the research was that this enhancement required quality classroom teaching. The QSRLS defines quality student outcomes in terms of a sustained and disciplined inquiry focused on powerful, important ideas and concepts which are connected to students' experiences and the world in which they live.

Quality learning experiences, what the QSRLS has termed productive pedagogies is then crucial to improved student outcomes for all students, but in particular those most 'at-risk' of failure; those from socially, culturally and economically disadvantaged conditions, who were the least likely to be exposed to intellectually challenging and relevant material.

Productive Pedagogies in various forms has gained national recognition in Australia as a framework for teacher professional development.

The QSRLS states that productive pedagogies is not a formula to follow and one would not expect these elements to be seen every time, all the time in every lesson, nor would they be used in the same way in different settings with different students. The QSRLS suggests that not every dimension is equally required for success for all socio-cultural groups. In other words, while all four dimensions of productive pedagogies may be necessary and sufficient for all students, it is quite tenable that only one, two or three dimensions would be sufficient for some groups of students, but not all. It states categorically

... that the presence of all four dimensions within a lesson will contribute to the practice of a productive pedagogy. However, we recognise that whilst a number of the elements within each dimension should be present in classrooms at all times, there are instances in certain contexts and stages within a sequence of lessons that some elements might be more appropriate than others. (Lingard et al., 2001b, p. 135)

While each of the dimensions is readily defined on ideal grounds, there is no research basis for believing that school systems (anywhere) have been overly successful in consistently providing high levels of all four dimensions to large proportions of school students.

The research literature demonstrates that where teachers have mechanistically applied Productive Pedagogies, it has become a 'shiny object which teachers desire to utilise in classroom practice [only to] lose its lustre as a new and more desirable method comes along' (Loughland & Reid, 2002 p. 1)

The intention was for the teachers to reflect upon their own perception of their pedagogy in relation to only two of the four dimensions of productive pedagogies – **Engaging with Difference** and **Connectedness**. These two dimensions are recognised by the QSRLS researchers as the most fundamental pedagogies that assist at-risk and marginalised students as well as mainstream children to achieve the highest possible outcomes.

By asking the teachers to reflect on their pedagogical practice at the beginning and at the end of the project we wanted to see whether there was any perceived change occurring within the pedagogy of the classroom that might be reflected both in the student comments, student outcomes and for Team7 in general.

The following pages are an attempt in graphic form to represent the detailed analysis of the Teacher Self Evaluation of Pedagogy. The analysis records the changes to pedagogy (and pedagogical awareness) as the teachers of Team7 become more conscious of the needs of their students for greater **Connectedness** and **Engagement with Difference** in the daily classroom pedagogy.

Teacher Self Evaluation of Pedagogies Semester 1 - Chart 5

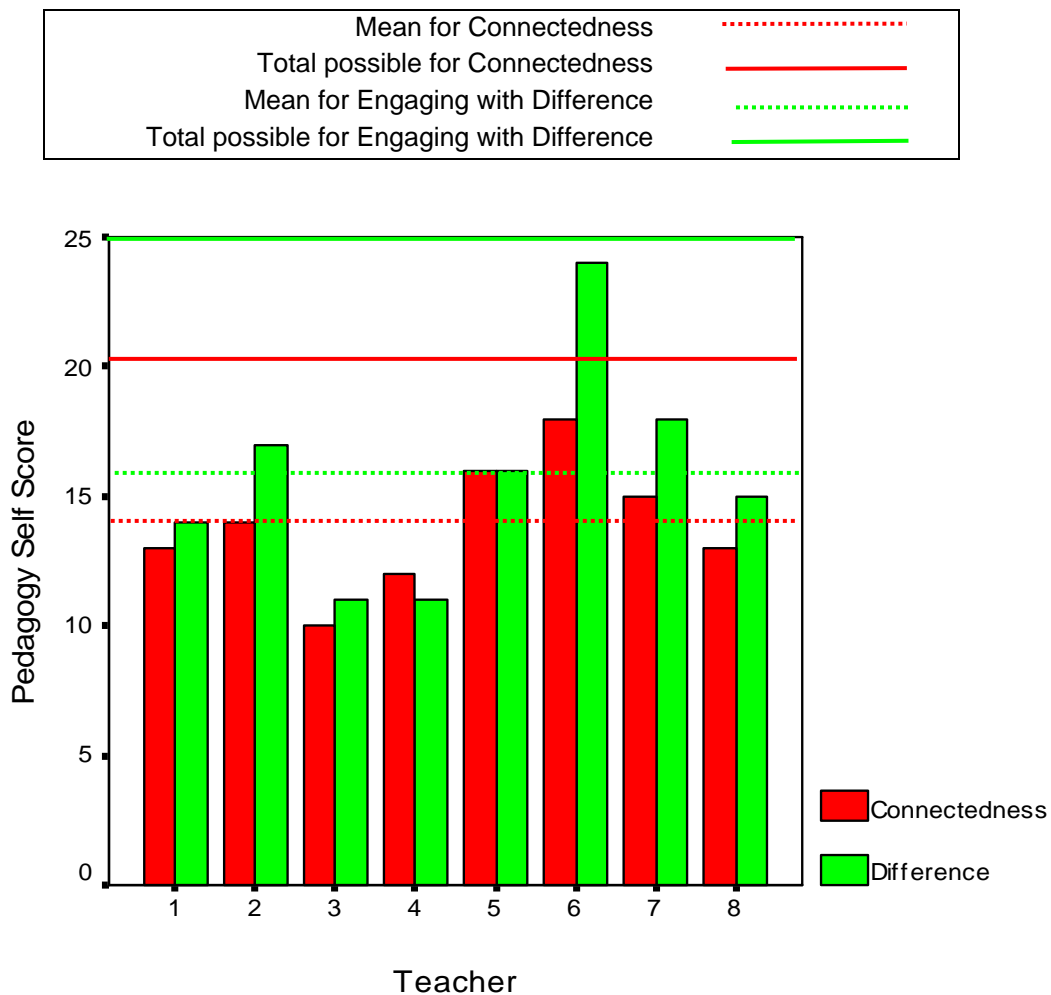


Chart 1 shows the self evaluation by each teacher for both pedagogies. The possible total for each pedagogy is indicated with a continuous line, while the *mean* or average is indicated by the dotted line.

The first self evaluation by teachers in Semester One shows that all but one teacher indicated that they thought that they were performing better in relation to **Connectedness** than to **Engagement with Difference**. This was not surprising and reflects the findings in the research literature (Lingard, 2001).

Four of the eight teachers were also below peer average for **Connectedness** but only three were below average for **Engaging with Difference**. These three teachers were also below peer average in their self evaluation of their **Connectedness** pedagogies. Two teachers self evaluated themselves as *above* peer average in **both Connectedness and Engaging with Difference**.

Total Pedagogical Self- Evaluation Semester 1 – Chart 6

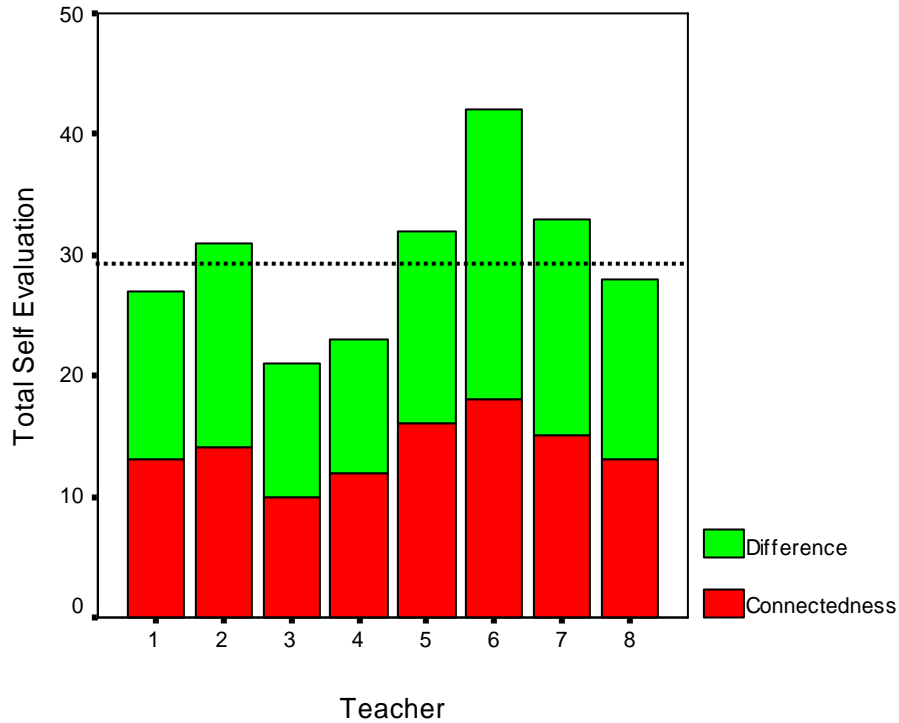


Chart 2 shows the total pedagogical self evaluation score for each teacher in Semester 2. The mean or average Semester 1 is overlaid for reference. Each teacher's self evaluation is out of a possible 50.

Four of the eight teachers were also below average (29.625) for both **Connectedness** and **Engagement with Difference** but that only Teachers #3 and #4 were significantly below their peer average. Of the four teachers above their peer average only Teacher #6 was significantly above scoring 42 out of a possible 50 for both pedagogies.

Teacher Self Evaluation of Pedagogies Semester 2 – Chart 7

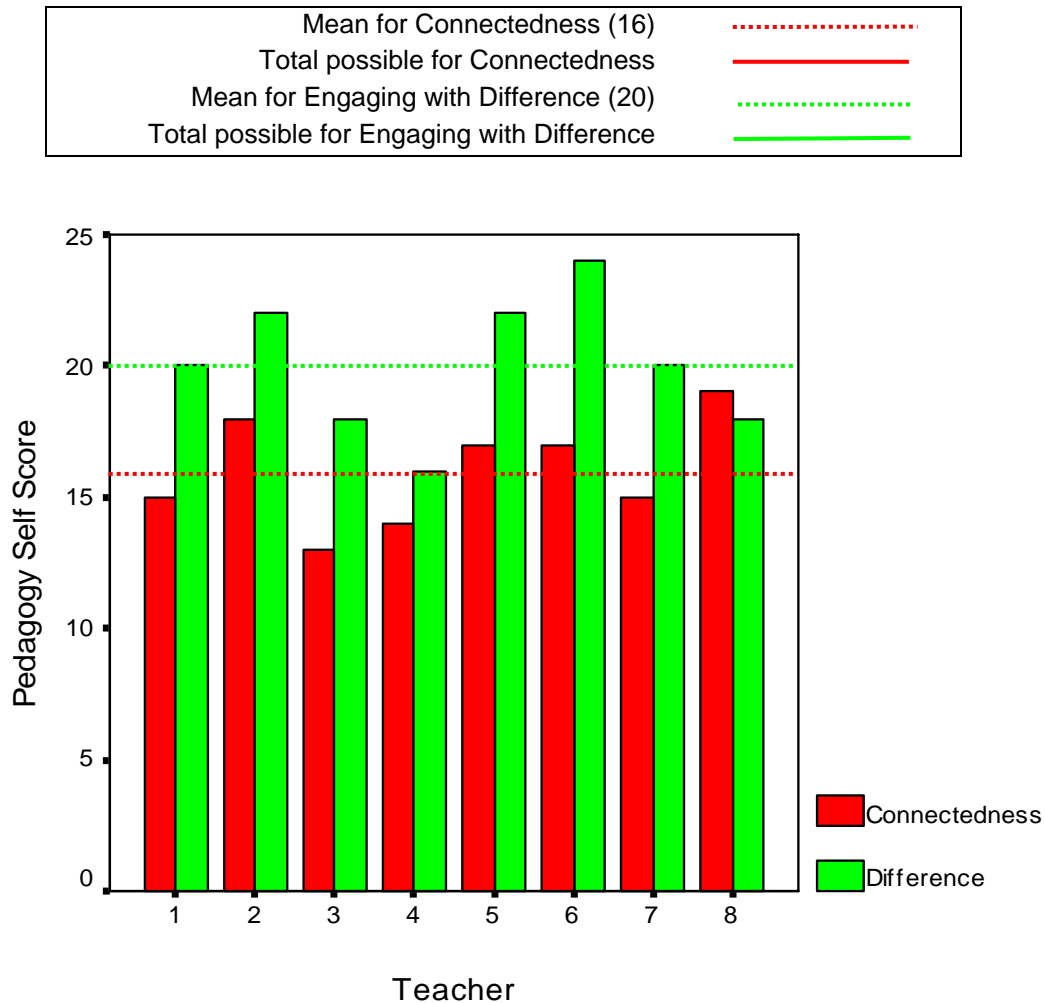


Chart 3 shows the self evaluation by each teacher for both pedagogies. The the *mean* or average is indicated by the dotted line.

In Semester Two all teachers self evaluations indicated that they thought they were doing *better* on both the two pedagogies. The only exception to this is Teacher #6 who was starting off a very high base for **Engaging with Difference** and thought that there was a slight drop from 18 to 17 out of 20. While the same 4 teachers (Teachers #1, 3, 4 and 7) were still below the average for the dimension of **Connectedness** they were now seeing themselves as not only closer to the average peer self evaluation but had improved over all. All teachers except for #8 still indicated that they believed they were more effective.

Teacher Change from Semester 1 to Semester 2 – Chart 9

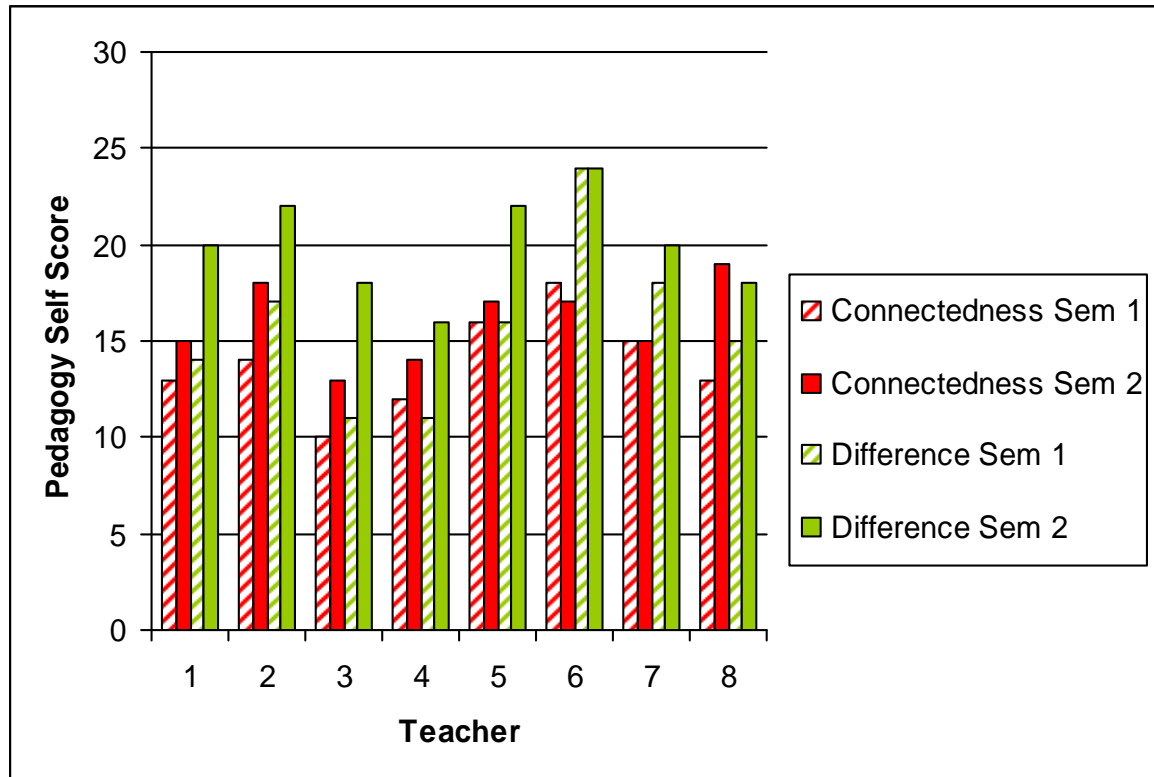


Chart 5 shows the changes in each teachers' pedagogy over the two semesters.

All teachers except for Teacher #6 showed a self perception of improvement in both pedagogies over the two semesters and in the case of Teacher #6 the decrease in **Connectedness** between Semester1 and 2 was by one point only. It seems that as the teachers were now more conscious of the need to use a more connected pedagogy that engages with student difference their self perception of their pedagogies showed an improvement. This was however not borne out by the student interviews which suggested that there was not as much positive change as the teachers perceived there to be.

Self Score Change by Teacher Semester 1 to Semester 2 - Chart 10

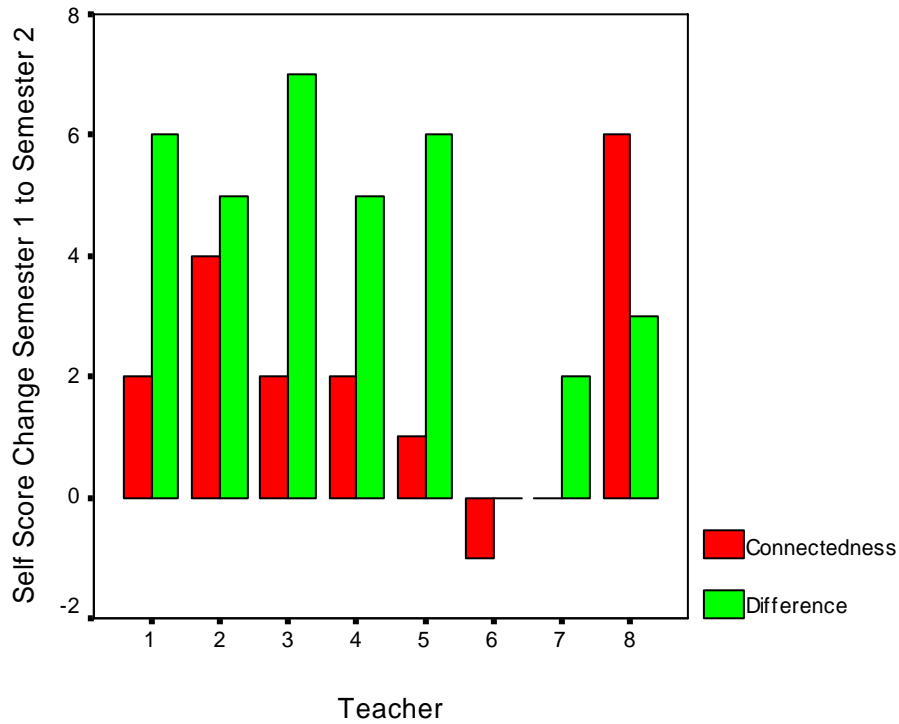


Chart 6 details the positive or negative changes between Semesters for each teacher by pedagogy. Only Teacher #6 registered no change or a negative self evaluation – as mentioned before this was from a very high base. Teachers #1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 all recorded greater increases in their perceived engagement with difference as the year progressed, while only Teacher #8 perceived that their pedagogy had improved more in relation to **Connectedness** than **Engagement with Difference**.

Self Score Change Teacher by Pedagogy Mean Score - Chart 11

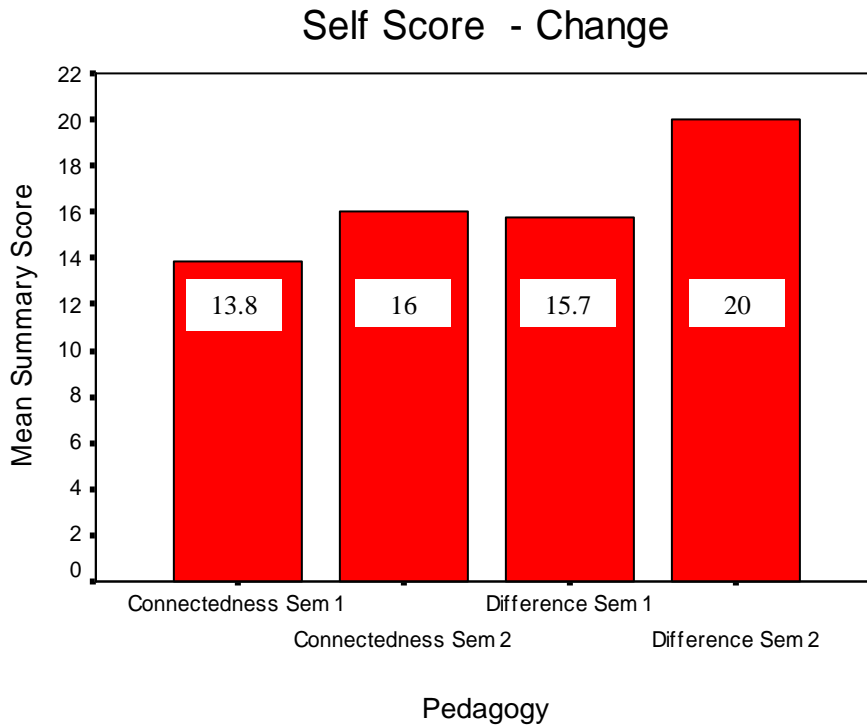


Chart 7 shows the change between Semester 1 and 2 in the mean or average score of the teacher's self evaluations. The average for each pedagogy is superimposed on the appropriate bar.

Given that the total possible score for Connectedness was 20 the average increase was 2.2 points out of a possible 6, a 30% improvement. The total possible score for Engagement with Difference was 25 and the average increase was 4.3 out of almost a possible 10 points, the average increase was more than 40%. This clearly indicates that the teachers thought they were engaging with the differences in and among the students more effectively.

Staff Development Feedback Workshop

This was held during an afternoon and over lunch in the school meeting room during Term 4. The teachers were not pressured by time to be elsewhere! It was recorded and transcribed. David Zyngier presented a power point summary of the teacher and student comments together with an introductory analysis of the teacher questionnaire on their own self evaluation of their classroom pedagogy. The charts are reproduced above. The summary was stopped regularly for teacher feedback and discussion. The structure of the session DFW permitted and facilitated:

1. Rapid feedback on the evidence and discussion of the developing patterns of evidence.
2. Checking whether our interpretation of the evidence was congruent with the participants.
3. Gathering more evidence from the participants and modifying our understanding of the processes and practices.
4. Safety for all to explore any contradictions and issues that (may) have arisen.
5. Decision making and consultation with the administration (Principal) to assist planning for 2005 considering issues such as was the project transforming and transformative; did it make us think (again) about what we do?

The main points raised and discussed were:

1. A regular time needs to be made to meet but it must be more often and more effective
2. Should we work as a team or would it be more beneficial to work in small (like) groups.
3. We focus a lot on student difference but what about teacher difference?
4. Survival for many become the major objective as the semester progressed

1. A regular time needs to be made to meet but it must be more effective

A regular time needs to be made to meet but it must be more effectively used to not just discuss administration but to actually focus more on teacher self development and learning. This will require more structure. Collective decision making was difficult (impossible) in large groups was a shared view by many. Some staff saw this more as an opportunity rather than a threat.

2. Are the goals for Team7 clear (er) now

Staff commented that they need help to push ahead even though other staff were still looking for leadership and direction from above. It was asked whether we should reduce the numbers of staff involved. The translation of the initial aims into the reality was the major struggle – were the aims actually explicitly understood and agreed by all.

3. Should we work as a team or would it be more beneficial to work in small (like) groups.

While some commented about their own growth as teacher during the duration of Team7 approach, others commented about the simultaneous lack of trust between Team7 members where there wasn't agreement over issues like curriculum content or curriculum delivery (pedagogy).

4. We focus a lot on student difference but what about teacher difference?

Many commented that the curriculum development was uneven and unequal between different classes and teachers. This aspect needed more direction to develop a consistent approach. There was an obvious division between staff

between the skills and concepts approach to curriculum and pedagogy. Some teachers believed the dominant discourse of deficit as a fact that almost all the students coming into Year 7 were very poorly equipped to deal with secondary education, with very low levels of literacy and numeracy as evidenced by the very low AIM scores. Other staff thought this was an over generalisation and only applied to a minority of students, raising the question whether it was more important to worry about engagement or the skills outcomes for the students. Some commented that it was not necessarily an either/or proposition. Another view (albeit not agreed to by others) was “all I do is crowd control”. Do we scaffold those who are behind or keep them all behind was how one teacher characterised this situation.

5. Are the goals clear(er) now

In relation to the Integrated Studies Units (ISU) it was stated by one participant that the most successful units were those that were student directed – that incorporated choice, another added that even when student choice was included and a variety of teaching strategies like Bloom and Gardner were incorporated into these activities they were still not successful. This point is highlighted the compelling evidence (Haberman, 1991) that low SES students shaped their classroom practices by resisting high level tasks to comply only with low level ones. They make a free choice to be unfree. It was agreed that more training for teachers to better accommodate diversity was needed – but there are some areas (outside of teacher abilities/skill sets) that some will never be able to teach

6. Survival for many become the major objective

One teacher commented that we are privileged middle class impressing on the children our values. They just may not value education as highly as we do. There was common agreement that discipline measures needed to be addressed through organisation – that staff needed to be prepared to ask for assistance but that classroom teachers had to take responsibility for what goes on in their classrooms. While classroom rules were negotiated early in the year it was said “we slacked off over time”. It was suggested that professional mentors be considered and come into classrooms to assist in pedagogical development.

Conclusions

The Keymakers Project and Team7 have demonstrated that a change to teachers' pedagogies can have a qualitative change to student engagement and through this enhanced student engagement improve student outcomes for all students but in particular for those students most at risk of failing and *being failed by school*.

It is still unclear how much change in the nature of teachers' pedagogy is needed before most if not all students will demonstrate improved outcomes. It is also still unclear how many teachers have to be teaching authentically or productively to make a difference to student outcomes.

It has also been demonstrated that it is not enough for teachers to just think about pedagogical change to ensure that their pedagogy will change. It is much more difficult than that. On the other hand it has been shown that pedagogy can actually drive positive change in a school.

Recommendations

1. More work needs to be done to ensure that there is a common trust and purpose among staff. This will require specific and purposeful leadership from both within Team 7 and continuous consultation with the Leadership Team.
2. Teachers should be able to teach within their areas of strength and best use needs to be made of the varied talents and skill sets of each member of staff.
3. The integration model needs further development and agreement between staff to facilitate common sharing of resources – it must be recognised that the artificial integration of content remains superficial and is ineffective as a teaching and learning framework.
4. The dilemma of flexibility of the time versus content will be addressed through more effective and efficient application of the principles of multiple literacies, toolkits and ISU.
5. Further *in-class study* of the pedagogies of the teachers through peer mentoring, peer evaluation and self reflection.
6. Further interviews with students on a more in-depth basis to listen carefully to what they see as the issues and to act upon their views.

In the end it is about what the students themselves say and think.

It is the students themselves who will be able to tell us that they are engaged and who will say whether their education is working for them in a culturally sensitive and relevant way. It is the students who will be able to tell us whether the offers that education purports to provide are real or illusionary. It is at the messy point of teachers and students responding to each other in relation to classroom discourse and assessment practices where we are truly going to see whether or not students feel that school is for them. It is within this space that education can provide a chance that is not illusionary, and that it can indeed be engaging and lead to purposeful, relevant and productive educational outcomes. (McFadden & Munns, 2002, 364)

Appendix 1 Indicative Teacher Interview Questions:

1. What subject (s) do you teach, length of time in the school, other schools, other roles in the school?
2. What did you understand about the aims of Team7?
3. What have been the benefits of Team7?
4. What have been the most difficult aspects of Team7?
5. What changes would you like to see for Team7 in 2005?
6. What do understand by the term “Student Engagement”
7. How important is *student engagement* in relation to student outcomes?
8. What are the factors in your opinion that make a student more or less engaged?
9. In general terms how would you describe the engagement level of students in your class?
10. How important is it for teachers to develop lessons that encourage meaning and significance in students’ lives?
11. What strategies do you use to increase student engagement in your classes?

Appendix 2: Student Focus Group Questions

Engagement

1. Thinking back over the past years can you describe the classroom learning that you have most enjoyed.
2. Can you describe the classroom that you would most like to learn in?
3. When do you find it easiest to learn new and difficult work?
4. Can you describe the way you would most like to learn?
5. Thinking about your current teachers can you describe the different ways they may try and teach your class?
6. What sort of teacher would you think teaches you best?

Team7

1. What did you expect Year 7 to be like?
2. What do you understand about the way Year 7 is organised this year?
3. What are its best/ worst features?
4. What do you want to change?
5. What do you want more of?
6. What do you hope year 8 will be like?

Appendix 3: Pre Student Focus Group Survey

*Looking back over the past week in your classes, which of the following statements most closely reflects the way you approached your classes and the work your teachers have assigned? Please tick one box only. Do **not** write your name on the sheet.*

I really have been active in the work in my classes, and I generally do what I am asked to do because I see the relevance of what I am being asked to do and things that I care about.

I always pay attention in class and do the work I am assigned because I want to get good grades, but I really don't see much value in what I am being asked to do and would not do it if I didn't really feel I had to.

I do what I need to do to get by, but I really don't put any more effort than I feel I have to if I am to stay out of trouble.

I am bored and I have done very little work for my classes, but I have not caused any trouble for myself or for the teachers.

I have been in some trouble because I have not done what the teachers want me to do. But that is just the way it goes. I don't plan to change what I am doing.

Date: / / 2004

Appendix 4: Teacher Pedagogy Questionnaire

Teacher's Name: _____

Subject: _____

Class: _____ Questionnaire completed between (dates) _____ and _____

Teacher background information

Gender:	Male			Female	
Age:	20 – 29	30-39	40—49	50-55	Over 55
Years of teaching (total):					
Years at current school:					
Years teaching current year level:					
Years teaching current subject:					
Institution where teaching qualification obtained:					
Highest Degree obtained:					
Institution where this degree obtained:					

How far do you live from school (approximately)

Less than 5km	
5-10 km	
10 – 15 km	
15 – 20 km	
20 – 30 km	
Over 30km	

CLASSROOM REFLECTIONS

(Adapted from Curriculum Implementation Unit from New Basics Research Branch and the Queensland School reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS))

CONNECTEDNESS

Knowledge Integration

Knowledge integration is identifiable when knowledge is connected across subject boundaries, or subject boundaries do not exist.

In most of my lessons:

All knowledge is strictly restricted to that explicitly defined within a single school subject area. No intrusion of other contents permitted.	
Knowledge mostly restricted to that of a specific subject area, with minor intrusions limited to connections with one other (separate) discipline.	
Knowledge from multiple subject areas connected or related together, but still treated as separate and distinct subjects.	
Near complete integration of multiple subject areas, however some minor inclusion of knowledge that is still treated as unique to a subject area.	
Complete integration of subject area knowledge to the degree that subject area boundaries are not recognisable.	

Background Knowledge

Background knowledge is valued when lessons provide explicit links with students' prior experience. This may include community knowledge, local knowledge, personal experience, media and popular culture sources.

In most of my lessons:

No reference is made to background knowledge: students' community and cultural knowledge or school knowledge covered in previous studies, other subjects and lessons.	
Students' background knowledge and experience are mentioned or solicited as a motivational technique, but are trivial and not connected to the lesson.	
Initial reference or solicitation is made by the teacher to background knowledge and experience. At least some connection to out-of-school background knowledge.	
Periodic reference or solicitation of background knowledge is made by the teacher. At least some connection to out-of-school background knowledge.	
Students' background knowledge and experiences are consistently incorporated into the lesson, with the lesson shunting back and forth between known material and new material. At least some connection to out-of-school background knowledge.	

Connectedness to the World

Connectedness to the world measures the extent to which the lesson has value and meaning beyond the instructional context, exhibiting a connection to the larger social context within which students live.

In most of my lessons:

Lesson topic and activities have no clear connection to anything beyond itself; the teacher offers no justification beyond the need to perform well in class.	
Students encounter a topic, problem or issue that the teacher tries to connect to students' experiences or to contemporary public situations; i.e., the teacher informs students that there is potential value in the knowledge being studied because it relates to the world beyond the classroom. For example, students are told that understanding Middle East history is important for politicians trying to bring peace to the region; however, the connection is weak and there is no evidence that students make the connection.	
Students study a topic, problem or issue that the teacher succeeds in connecting to students' actual experiences or to a contemporary public situation. Students recognize some connection between classroom knowledge and situations outside the classroom, but they do not explore the implications of these connections which remain abstract or hypothetical. There is no effort to actually influence a larger audience.	
Students study or work on a topic, problem or issue that the teacher and students see as connected to their personal experiences or actual contemporary public situations. Students recognize the connection between classroom knowledge and situations outside the classroom. They explore these connections in ways that create personal meaning and significance for the knowledge. However, there is no effort to use the knowledge in ways that go beyond the classroom to actually influence a larger audience.	
Students study or work on a topic, problem or issue that the teacher and students see as connected to their personal experiences or actual contemporary public situations. Students recognize the connection between classroom knowledge and situations outside the classroom. They explore these connections in ways that create personal meaning and significance for the knowledge. This meaning and significance is strong enough to lead students to become involved in an effort to affect or influence a larger audience beyond their classroom in one of the following ways: by communicating knowledge to others (including within the school), advocating solutions to social problems, providing assistance to people, creating performances or products with utilitarian or aesthetic value.	

Problem-Based Curriculum

Problem-based curriculum is identified by lessons in which students are presented with a specific real, practical, or hypothetical problem (or set of problems) to solve.

In most of my lessons:

No problems are presented during the lesson.	
Some minor and small problems (no correct solution) are posed to the students but they require little knowledge construction by students.	
Some minor or small problems are posed to the students requiring substantial knowledge construction/creativity from students	
A large problem is posed requiring engagement by students throughout a single lesson. A large problem has been set requiring engagement by students over a number of lessons.	

ENGAGEMENT WITH & RECOGNITION OF DIFFERENCE

Cultural Knowledges

Cultural knowledges are valued when more than one cultural group is present and given status within the curriculum. Cultural groups can be distinguished by gender, ethnicity, race, religion, economic status or youth. No explicit recognition or valuing of other than the dominant culture in curriculum knowledge transmitted to students.

In most of my lessons:

Some inclusion of others' cultures, with weak valuing, through simple reference to a particular feature(s) of them or their existence.	
Stronger valuing in curriculum knowledge, by acknowledgment and recognition of multiple cultural claims to knowledge, and perhaps some activity based on an aspect of this, though still within the framework of a dominant culture.	
Others' cultures explicitly valued in the content through equal inclusion and use of the knowledge/perspective of the group, alongside the dominant culture.	
Different cultures equally valued in all curriculum knowledge, such that the concept of a dominant culture is excluded in both its content and form.	

Inclusivity

Inclusivity is identified by the degree to which non-dominant groups are represented in classroom practices by participation.

In most of my lessons:

No activities recognise the varied learning needs of students from diverse backgrounds. One or two activities recognise the varied learning needs of students from diverse backgrounds.	
Several activities recognise the varied learning needs of students from diverse backgrounds.	
Activities recognise the varied learning needs of students from diverse backgrounds for at least half of the lesson, but not all (nor nearly all) of the lesson.	
Activities recognise the varied learning needs of students from diverse backgrounds for all, or nearly all, of the lesson.	

Narrative

Narrative in lessons is identified by an emphasis in teaching and in student responses on such things as the use of personal stories, biographies, historical accounts, literary and cultural texts.

In most of my lessons:

At no point is narrative used in the lesson, all teaching and content remains expository.	
Narrative is present in either the processes or content of the lesson, but the use of this narrative may only be on occasion or as a minor deviation from the main portion of the lesson.	
The lesson processes and content are evenly split between narrative and expository forms. Lesson processes and content primarily narrative in nature, but exposition is used on occasion or as a minor deviation from the main portion of the lesson.	
Almost all of the lesson processes, and almost all of the lesson content is narrative.	

Group Identity

Group identity is manifested when differences and group identities are both positively developed and recognised while at the same time a sense of community is created. This requires going beyond a simple politics of tolerance.

In most of my lessons:

No evidence of community within the classroom; no positive recognition of difference and group identities; and no support for the development of difference and group identities. Students are all treated as individuals.	
Limited evidence of community exists within the classroom; no positive recognition of difference and group identities; and no support for the development of difference and group identities.	

Some evidence of community exists within the classroom; some recognition of difference and group identities; and no support for the development of difference and group identities.	
There is a strong sense of community within the classroom; positive recognition of difference and group identities; and limited support for the development of difference and group identities.	
There is strong sense of community within the classroom; positive recognition of group identities; and a supportive environment for the production of difference and group identities.	

Citizenship

Citizenship is developed when the teacher elaborates the rights and responsibilities of groups and individuals in a democratic society and facilitates its practice both inside and outside the classroom.

In most of my lessons:

The citizenship rights of students and teachers are neither discussed nor practised within the classroom.	
There is limited talk about the practice of active citizenship within the classroom.	
There is some evidence and some talk about the content of, and possible practices of, active citizenship for teachers and students.	
There is evidence of the practice of active citizenship within the class.	
The practice of active citizenship is obviously prevalent and evident in practices and in relationships between students and the teacher, and students in some instances will be involved in active participation in contemporary issues external to the school.	

Appendix 5: Teacher Engagement Questionnaire

Teacher's Name: _____

Year 7 Class: _____ Questionnaire completed on (date) / /2004

Instructions:

There are 12 sections to this questionnaire that reflect on your work as a member of **TEAM 7**. Each section is introduced with some *descriptive text* followed by a number of different **questions**. **Please read the *descriptive text* carefully.**

There are five categories of response possible beneath each **question**. Please tick only **ONE** box for the response that is closest to your view of what you do in the Year 7 classroom.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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Many thanks for your time and cooperation.

David Zyngier
Faculty of Education Peninsula Campus
Monash University
PO Box 527, Frankston, Victoria 3199

No specific individual or identifying data will be made public. All information will be strictly confidential and will not be seen by anyone else apart from the *critical friend*.

Teacher Code (Office Use): _____

Section 1: Patterns of Engagement

Student engagement can vary from what has been termed authentic or productive engagement, through ritual, compliant or passive, retreatist and rebellious or resistant.

- *Authentic engagement.* The task, activity, or work the student is assigned or encouraged to undertake is associated with a result or outcome that has clear meaning and relatively immediate value to the student — for example, reading a book on a topic of personal interest to the student or to get access to information that the student needs to solve a problem of real interest to him or her.
- *Ritual engagement.* The immediate end of the assigned work has little or no inherent meaning or direct value to the student, but the student associates it with extrinsic outcomes and results that are of value — for example, reading a book in order to pass a test or to earn grades needed to be pass.
- *Passive compliance.* The student is willing to expend whatever effort is needed to avoid negative consequences, although he or she sees little meaning in the tasks assigned or the consequences of doing those tasks.
- *Retreatism.* The student is disengaged from the tasks, expends no energy in attempting to comply with the demands of the tasks, but does not act in ways that disrupt others and does not try to substitute other activities for the assigned task.
- *Rebellion.* The student summarily refuses to do the task assigned, acts in ways that disrupt others, or attempts to substitute tasks and activities to which he or she is committed in lieu of those assigned or supported by the school and by the teacher.

1. Authentic engagement is commonplace in my classroom, and rebellion and retreatism are rare.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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2. When planning for classes, I always think through strategies and materials that I might create or adapt that will increase the likelihood of more students being authentically engaged.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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3. When the pattern of student engagement differs from that which I want or expect, I analyse the work I provided to students in order to discover what might account for the difficulty.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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4. I operate on the assumption that most of the variability in student engagement in my classroom has to do with the way the schoolwork I provide for students is designed.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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5. I regularly invite colleagues to give me suggestions regarding ways I can make the work I provide students more engaging.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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Section 2: Student Achievement

Students, parents, other teachers, the principal, as well as others who have a stake in the performance of the schools, are satisfied with the level and type of learning that are occurring.

- 1. Most students in my classes learn what I intend that they learn and meet the standards that are set for them.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 2. Parents are generally satisfied with the level of achievement of students in my class or classes.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 3. When students leave my class, they are well prepared to succeed in the next grade or in other endeavours where what they are assumed to learn in my class is important to them.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 4. Students I have taught believe that what they learned in my class was important to them and helped them to succeed in subsequent pursuits.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 5. Most of the students I have taught have favourable memories of their experiences in my class.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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Section 3: Content and Substance

Teachers and administrators have a clear, consistent, and shared understanding of what students are expected to know and to be able to do at various grade levels. This understanding is consistent with such official statements of expectations as state standards and standards established by local boards. Teachers and administrators also have a reasonable assessment of student interest in the topics suggested by these expectations and standards.

- 1. I am very clear about what my students are expected to know and to be able to do.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 2. I have conducted a careful review of standardized tests (local, state and other) to determine the content students are expected to master.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 3. I am satisfied that those things that are being tested are things that should be taught to students even if there were no testing program.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 4. My view of what students need to learn is consistent with the views of my colleagues.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 5. My view of what students need to learn is consistent with the views of my principal.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 6. My view of what students need to learn is consistent with the expectations supported by the central education authority.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 7. I feel confident of my understanding of the subjects I am expected to teach, and I am up to date with regard to those subjects.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 8. I provide students with a wide range of activities that call on them to work with content and processes that have been identified as worth knowing and worth mastering.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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Section 4: Organization of knowledge

Teachers generally endeavour to ensure that the media, material, books, and visuals used to present information, propositions, ideas, and concepts to students are organized in ways that are most likely to appeal to the personal interests and aesthetic sensibilities of the largest possible number of students and to ensure as well that students have the skills needed to use these materials.

- 1. I carefully assess student interests and take these interests into account when developing units of work, creating tasks, or designing assignments.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 2. I am clear on which students find the subjects I teach interesting and which do not, and I try to compensate for lack of student interest in the subject by activities, tasks, and assignments that engage the students even though they are not interested in the subject.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 3. When student interest in the subject or content is low, I am especially attentive to designing high-interest activities.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 4. Curriculum materials are available that will support students' working on and with the concepts facts, skills, understandings, and other forms of knowledge that I expect students to deal with, understand, and master.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 5. I try to employ a wide range of media and presentation formats to appeal to students with different learning styles and ways of thinking.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 6. I routinely involve students in problem based learning activities, conduct experiments, use primary source materials, and read books and articles that convey powerful ideas in a powerful ways.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 7. I regularly assess the skills students have with regard to reading and technology use and work to ensure that they develop the skills needed to function at the level that the activities that need to occur in my class requires.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 8. I make a serious effort to cause students to use what they are learning to analyse problems, issues, and matters of concern to them.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 9. I try to encourage students to develop an interdisciplinary perspective—to see how what they are learning in a history class, for example, might have relevance for what they are learning in mathematics, language arts, and other subjects.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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Section 5: Product Focus

The tasks students are assigned and the activities they are encouraged to undertake are clearly linked in the minds of the teacher and the students to performances, products, and exhibitions about which the students care and on which students place value.

- 1. I try to link what I ask students to do to a product, performance, or exhibition of value to the student.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 2. Students usually see a clear connection between what they are doing and what they are expected to produce.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 3. I try to personalize products so that the different types of student interests are responded to even when students are working on the same product or activity.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 4. Students in my class place a great deal of personal value on and take pride in the products and performances they are asked to produce.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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Section 6: Clear and Compelling Standards

When projects, performances, or exhibitions are part of the instructional design, students understand the standards by which these projects, performances, or exhibitions will be evaluated. They are committed to these standards and see the real prospect of meeting the stated standards if they work diligently at the tasks assigned and are encouraged.

- 1. I make the standards by which performances, products, projects, and exhibitions are assessed and evaluated very clear to students.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 2. Students in my classes find the standards used to assess their work relevant, meaningful, and important to them as opposed to seeing these standards as personally irrelevant conditions that they must meet simply to satisfy me and get a good grade.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 3. I regularly encourage students to assess their own work in terms of the standards set.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 4. I often hold assessment conferences with individual students or small groups of students where the qualities of student products are assessed.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 5. I use assessment primarily as a tool to promote student success and only secondarily as a means to justify the distribution of rewards and grads.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 6. Timeliness is important to me, but I am more interested in the quality of work products than in time schedules.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 7. Peer evaluation and public discussions of performances, exhibitions and products are commonplace in my classroom.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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Section 7: A Safe Environment

Students and parents feel that the school as well as each classroom is a physically and psychologically safe place: success is expected and failure is understood as a necessary part of learning, there is mutual respect between and among faculty and students, and the fear of harm or harassment from fellow students and demeaning comments from teachers is negligible.

- 1. When students interact in my classroom, for example, in peer evaluations, the interactions are respectful, friendly, and supportive.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 2. When a student fails to meet standards but is making sincere efforts, I am very supportive of the student and encourage him or her to see such failures as a normal part of the learning process.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 3. I expect all students will meet standards at some point, and when they fail to do so, I work directly with the student to diagnose the cause of the failure and correct the situation.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 4. I provide students with feedback on their performance on a regular basis, not just at the time that grades are given or distributed.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 5. Both my students and I have access to the resources needed (people, time, and technology in particular) to provide optimum opportunities for success.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 6. When a student, after numerous tries, fails to meet standards, I seek advice from colleagues, parents and the student regarding things I might do or help the student do that would make success more likely.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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Section 8: Affirmation of Performances

Persons who are significant in the lives of the student, including parents, siblings, peers, public audiences, and younger students, are positioned to observe, participate in, and benefit from student performances, as well as the products of those performances, and to affirm the significance and importance of the activity to be undertaken.

- 1. I regularly involve students in creating products that will be of use to other students, read by other students, or viewed by other students.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 2. I always involve parents and guardians in the standard-setting process and encourage them to function as full partners in the evaluation of the student's performance in school and in the classroom.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 3. I often display student work for other adults in the school and the community to examine and comment on.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 4. I try to design the work students do so that the student feels that what he or she is doing is of value to others as well as to him or herself.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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Section 9: Affiliation

Students are provided opportunities to work with others (peers, parents, other adults, teachers, students from other schools or classrooms) on products, group performances, and exhibitions that they and others judge to be of significance.

- 1. I try to ensure that in-classroom and out-of-classroom work involves two or more students working together on a common product.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 2. I try to ensure that student tasks are designed in such a way that cooperative action is needed to complete the work assigned successfully.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 3. I often give students work to do that requires the active involvement of parents and other adult members of the community outside of the school.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 4. Some of the products students produce in my class are clearly intended to be useful to others (for example, other students, teachers, community leaders).**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 5. I make sure that students in my class know enough about group processes to analyze and evaluate the operation of groups of which they are a part.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 6. I design tasks for students that require the use of the Internet and other forms of electronic communication to build cooperative networks among students, as well as between students and adult groups.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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Section 10: Novelty and Variety

The range of tasks, products, and exhibitions is wide and varied, and the technologies that students are encouraged to employ are varied as well, moving from the simplest and well understood (for example, a pen and a piece of paper) to the most complex (for example, sophisticated computer applications).

- 1. Students are provided a wide range and varied modes of presentation.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 2. In my class, students are provided opportunities to lead others, and they also are provided assistance in carrying out leadership functions when they have difficulty.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 3. In my class, students are encouraged to participate in educational activities and programs sponsored by groups and organizations outside the school (for example, the local zoo, a museum, a symphony, local 'experts', the public library, a local business).**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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Section 11: Choice

What students are to learn is usually not subject to negotiation, but they have considerable choice and numerous options in what they will do and how they will go about doing those things in order to learn.

- 1. I encourage students to experiment with different means of presenting information and gaining access to information.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 2. In my class, students regularly participate in decisions regarding the process to be employed in assessing performance and determining the standards by which their performance will be evaluated.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 3. Both my students and I have access to wide range of technologies, from workbooks and textbooks to original source materials, sophisticated computer programs, presentation technologies, lap-top publishing, and so on.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 4. I feel quite confident in my skills in using computers and other forms of instructional technology.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 5. I believe that the experiences I provide students do make a difference in the level and type of engagement students will display and I know how to work to improve the qualities of the experiences I provide to students.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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Section 12: Authenticity

The tasks students are assigned and the work they are encouraged to undertake have meaning and significance in their lives now and are related to consequences to which they attach importance.

- 1. In my class, students see a link between the quality of products, performances, and exhibitions they produce and consequences that they consider to be personally important.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 2. Students believe that they can do the work I give them if they invest the effort, and most of the time they are willing to invest the effort required to the work assigned.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 3. I try to design schoolwork in ways that increase student ownership for the quality of the results.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 4. I make consequences of meeting standards or failing to meet standards clear to students, and they understand that meeting these standards is important to their current circumstances as well as to their future prospects.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 5. The work assigned to students is designed and evaluated in such a way that the success of one student does not have a negative impact on the success of another student (for example, grading on the curve).**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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- 6. I try to design the work I assign to students in such a way that they have a positive stake in, and care about, the success of other students.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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Many thanks for your time!

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