

Collaborative

assessment planning:

exploring rich

assessment

for the School

Certificate

Designing rich assessment tasks offers opportunities for faculties, teachers and teacher-librarians planning collaboratively to develop units of work to integrate learning, teaching and assessment for the School Certificate.

The first article of this series described the elements of rich assessment tasks as:

- explicitly describing the expectations of the task to the learner
- engaging the learner
- connecting naturally with what has been taught
- providing opportunities for all students to make a start
- learning activities
- providing opportunities for students to demonstrate subject knowledge, skills and understandings
- focussing on the critical areas of learning within a subject
- assisting teachers to determine the specific help which students may require in content areas.

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The potential for collaborative planning

Collaborative task design becomes exciting when it has the potential to broaden the existing assessment base to incorporate information literacy outcomes for all students as they actively engage in the assessment process. Students need opportunities to learn, practise and integrate the steps in the information skills process as they become competent

in information retrieval and in using information technology. By integrating learning opportunities with assessment task design students can demonstrate achievement of syllabus and information literacy outcomes.

Assessment for the School Certificate describes what a student can do, knows and understands through authentic learning experiences. Collaborative planning can lead to designing assessment tasks that are relevant to real life situations. The information skills process provides a framework for task design for students to solve real information problems in all subject areas. In this framework the learners see a clear connection between the learning objectives, activities and method of assessment. Student learning outcomes become observable and measurable.

Planning an assessment project

Pendle Hill High School is an outer suburban, comprehensive secondary school with 720 students. It is a dynamic learning community where students are encouraged to achieve their potential and teachers are supported by a whole school approach to training and development. The school's welfare program is an integral aspect of all school life.

Jenny Byrne (Head teacher English), members of the English faculty and Margaret Stapley, the teacher-librarian, formed a professional learning team with a project focus to develop an assessment schedule for Year 10.

Margaret commented that "the involvement in the development of this project created an opportunity to explore



This article highlights the professional relationships between faculties and the teacher-librarian when they share a project focus as a professional learning team. **Jenny Byrne**, Head teacher English, and **Margaret Stapley**, teacher-librarian, at Pendle Hill High School share their professional learning journey with **Frances Plummer** (*Securing Their Future*) as they document the development of the English faculty's assessment schedule for Year 10 at their school.

The outcome of the project is an assessment schedule that maps information skills and the areas of assessment against each task. The focus of the assessment schedule is enhancing student learning by designing a range of tasks that gather all the information the teacher needs to determine the level of each student's achievement.

The learners see a clear connection between the learning objectives, activities and method of assessment.



The teacher-librarian plays a critical role in the professional learning team.

the possibilities in working with the English faculty to construct their assessment schedule for Year 10. As the tasks were constructed I, as teacher-librarian, could contribute in their planning to integrate information skills in each of the tasks."

Jenny reflected that "the collaborative processes throughout the project enabled the faculty to come to a shared understanding of their assessment practices. We were able to construct tasks that provided opportunities for all our Year 10 English students to demonstrate what they know and to achieve the course outcomes at varying levels of competence."

Rationale for the assessment schedule

The assessment schedule designed by the English faculty at Pendle Hill includes elements of rich task design as described in *Securing their future: subject based assessment for the School Certificate in English*. The six tasks developed in each of the program units are integral to the teaching and learning activities for the Year 10 program. The tasks in the assessment schedule address objectives of the English 7-10 syllabus. (See Table 1.)

Documented below is the project planning process Margaret and the English faculty implemented:

- School Management Conference on the nature of assessment (1998)

- review of assessment issues for the School Certificate for Year 10 (1999)
- development of the outline of the tasks and areas of assessment
- faculty design one task collaboratively
- further development of the individual tasks and assessment criteria
- faculty evaluation and refinement of the assessment tasks
- review of the completed assessment schedule
- distribution of assessment information to students and parents
- ongoing discussion, reflection and evaluation.

Outcomes of collaborative assessment planning for teachers

Hopkins & West (1998), as a result of six years of research through the *Improving the Quality of Education for All* (IQEA) project, proposed a number of classroom conditions as enabling factors for learning. In the context of this article, these conditions can describe the outcomes of the collaborative planning at Pendle Hill High School:

1. Promotes authentic relationships among teachers.

Hargreaves & Fullan (1998) describe any strategy that improves relationships has a chance of succeeding... and leads to improved problem solving and learning. In the context of professional learning, as a team seeking solutions to assessment design, the teachers agree this has been a valuable experience for them. Developing and supporting authentic relationships is central to the success of collaborative planning and critical to improved learning for students.

Table 1

PENDLE HILL HIGH SCHOOL - ENGLISH FACULTY ASSESSMENT SCHEDULE FOR YEAR 10 1999

INFORMATION SKILLS						TASK	UNIT	TIMING	SYLLABUS OBJECTIVE PENDLE HILL HIGH SCHOOL STAGE 5 ENGLISH PROGRAM OUTCOMES	AREAS OF ASSESSMENT				
Define	Locate	Select	Organise	Present	Evaluate					Talking	Listening	Reading	Writing	Viewing
✓				✓	✓	1. Media	Media Madness	Term 1 Week 10	Syllabus Objective: experiencing, enjoying and responding sensitively and perceptively to the mass media Responding to a specific mass media item. Constructing mass media product in an altered context.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
✓			✓	✓	✓	2. Creative Writing	Out of Control (conflict and violence)	Term 2 Week 5	Syllabus Objective: writing with pleasure, confidence and competence over a wide range of registers Writing for a specific situation, audience and purpose in a specified form.			✓	✓	
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	3. Talking	Speak Up! Speak Out!	Term 2 Week 10	Syllabus Objective: recognising, enjoying, broadening and exercising control over their oral language repertoire Talking for a specific situation, audience and purpose in a chosen form (by student). Talking using appropriate conventions of speech.	✓		✓	✓	
✓			✓	✓	✓	4. Response to humour	Always look on the bright side of life	Term 3 Week 5	Syllabus Objective: experiencing, enjoying and responding sensitively and perceptively to a wide range of literature Analysing and responding to a variety of humorous texts (eg. TV., cartoon, narrative etc).		✓	✓	✓	✓
✓			✓	✓	✓	5. Response to literature	Where are we going? (The future)	Term 3 Week 10	Syllabus Objective: experiencing, enjoying and responding sensitively and perceptively to a wide range of literature Responding in writing sensitively, perceptively and competently to a piece of literature.			✓	✓	
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6. Leisure portfolio	Chillin' out	Term 4 (ongoing)	Syllabus Objective: addresses specific components of the five syllabus objectives Reading, writing and talking for a variety of purposes in a variety of forms.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



Margaret and Jenny prepare to meet with members of the English faculty to plan assessment activities.

2. Supports access to planning, resources and preparation of a range of appropriate structured learning and teaching strategies and materials to meet a range of individual student learning needs.

"The result is teachers taking into account their own personalities, values and expertise when planning learning units. The teachers had the opportunity to choose to modify a previous task or create new tasks that interested them." (Jenny)

3. Expands teachers' repertoire to positively influence the quality of learning outcomes by integrating information skills, syllabus content and areas of assessment.

"By mapping the information skills developed in each assessment task I was able to identify where I can strengthen resources and work with the teachers to enhance student learning." (Margaret)

4. Enhances professional learning through developing pedagogic partnerships.

Russell (1989) and Stoll & Mortimore (1995) describe effective teacher development taking place in schools where there is a culture of collaboration; working with a colleague not only dispels feelings of isolation but also assists in enhancing practice. eg "At Pendle Hill, for this project, the teachers have formed a professional learning team (PLT) dedicated to the improvement of teaching, learning and assessing for the School Certificate. The teacher-librarian plays a critical role in the distributed leadership of the PLT. This creates opportunities to work with other faculties as they develop further their assessment policies and practices." (Margaret)

5. Opportunity for reflection on teaching in classrooms where assessing what students can do, know and understand is based on evidence collected through assessment tasks and classroom activities.

Teachers in the English faculty have used this professional team learning opportunity to reflect on their current

The learners see a clear connection between the learning objectives, activities and method of assessment.

assessment policy and practices. The result is an assessment schedule that:

- develops authentic classroom learning experiences
- deliberately integrates assessment in the teaching and learning units
- communicates clear expectations for student performance set by the teacher
- is relevant to students' ability, interests and experiences
- engages students in their learning.

**Do you have an idea for a future Scan article?
Contact Ian McLean at (02) 9886 7501**

Table 2

PENDLE HILL HIGH SCHOOL - DESCRIPTION FOR YEAR 10, 1999

ASSESSMENT TASK	ASSESSMENT APPROACH/ES	MANAGEMENT	EVIDENCE COLLECTION METHOD
Media	• Whole product	• Class task • Integrated in teaching and learning unit • Assessment criteria	• Work sample • Product
Creative Writing	• Creating text	• Class Activity • Assessment criteria	• Work sample • Formal testing
Speaking	• Research activity • Performance • Engaging with text: speaking	• Peer group presentation • At conclusion of teaching and learning sequence • Assessment criteria	• Observation • Oral presentation
Response to humour	• Engaging with text: writing, reading, listening	• Class task • Teaching and learning informs the task • Assessment criteria	• Work sample
Response to literature	• Engaging with text: reading, writing	• Class task • Teaching and learning informs the task • Assessment criteria	• Work sample
Leisure Portfolio	• Research activity • Creating relevant text	• Task given at the beginning of the unit • Assessment criteria	• Observation • Portfolio

Meeting the challenge of assessment for the School Certificate

The assessment project was initiated at Pendle Hill High School by the English faculty in response to the School Certificate Grading System. While this project defined the work of the faculty it also created professional development opportunities to transfer the learning to planned assessment for Years 7-9. The professional learning outcomes included a chance to discuss teaching and learning philosophies and visions in the context of the school as a dynamic learning community.

The Department of Education and Training has implemented a statewide strategy for the establishment in schools of professional learning teams to support the implementation of the new Higher School Certificate. Professional learning teams are groups of teachers who work collegially, through projects that focus on more effective student learning. The professional learning team provides a structure through which: schools can frame problems and seek solutions; and each school can integrate and sequence its program of initiatives. Support for professional learning teams has been provided in the form of statewide funding, professional development activities in districts and the resource materials *Enhancing learning through the new HSC through professional learning teams: resource manual*.



REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Enhancing learning for the new HSC through professional learning teams: resource manual*. NSW Department of Education and Training, 1999.
- Hargreaves, A. & Fullan, M. *What's worth fighting for out there*. New York Teachers College Press, 1998.
- Hopkins, D. & West, M. 'Creating the conditions for classroom and teacher development', *Teachers and Training: Theory and Practice*, 4(1), 1998.
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- Plummer F. 'Rich assessment tasks: exploring quality assessment for the School Certificate', *Scan* 18(1), 1999, pp 14-19.
- Russell, T. 'Documenting reflection-in-action in the classroom: searching for appropriate methods', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 2(4), 1989, pp 275-284.
- Stoll, L. & Mortimore, P. 'School effectiveness and school improvement', *Viewpoint*, 2, pp 1-8. ■

Information Technology

Our series of Internet reviews continues. Sites for a range of Key Learning Areas are included in each edition of *Scan* to help maintain currency, and ensure teachers from each KLA are provided with helpful information to support technology in learning. Sites are listed alphabetically by title. Those reviews which note links to other sites, especially as a major part of the site, will require additional exploration time by teachers to verify specific curriculum applications relevant to their classes. The **USER LEVEL** descriptor, **Professional**, is a pertinent reminder of such issues. Please note that changes happen daily on the Internet. Sites come and go. We cannot guarantee that the following sites are permanent or are structured as they were when they were reviewed. These and other Internet site reviews appear on the DET site <<http://www.dse.nsw.edu.au>>. Site reviews for a number of HSC syllabuses are also available on HSC On-Line <<http://hsc.csu.edu.au>>.

A. Pintura: art detective.

<http://www.eduweb.com/pintura>

In this online game about art history and art composition, students assume the role of a 1940s detective. A distraught woman seeks help to identify the artist who created a painting she found in her grandfather's attic. To do so, students must examine paintings by famous artists: Picasso; Van Gogh; Raphael; Gauguin; Titian; and Millet. Each example highlights an art concept such as composition, style, colour or subject. **A. Pintura study worksheets** are supplied in **Teaching resources**. These may be printed for purposes of assessment and accountability and require students to play each activity thoroughly and explore each artist (even if they have figured out the correct answer early on). C. Burden

USER LEVEL: Stage 3

KLA: CA

SYLLABUS: Creative Arts K-6

SCIS SUBJECTS: Art - History; Artists

KEYWORDS: Art; artists

PUBLISHER: Educational Web Adventures, USA

REVIEW DATE: 10/3/99

A+ math.

<http://www.aplusmath.com/>

For teachers who haven't yet integrated the Internet into mathematics, this site is easily adapted to most classroom programs. By concentrating on interactive maths quizzes, games and flashcards, the site offers students the opportu-

nity to undertake individual extension or remedial work, at their appropriate stage. The exercises are at various levels and most are self marking. Other aspects of the syllabus are covered with activities centred on: geometric shapes; area; and fractions. Students will become enamoured with the **Homework helper**, which allows them to input a problem and check to see if their own answer is correct. N. Paull

USER LEVEL: Stage 1 Stage 2 Stage 3

KLA: Mathematics

SYLLABUS: Mathematics K-6

SCIS SUBJECTS: Mathematics - Problems, exercises, etc; Number games

KEYWORDS: Flash cards; fractions; mathematics; puzzles

PUBLISHER: A+Maths, USA

REVIEW DATE: 10/3/99

ACHPER.

<http://www.achper.org.au>

The Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation Inc. (ACHPER) has created a visually enticing Web site for those interested in gaining insight into their range of services for members and interested onlookers. There is a strong emphasis on professional development, such as the courses developed through State Associations. Of particular value to teachers is **Bookshop**, which profiles several resources for teachers and includes links to a nationwide mailing list and the complete catalogue. ACHPER's membership base extends beyond teaching. The site also offers material and activities which would best fit outside of traditional teaching interests, and may enhance opportunities for broadening one's range of experiences and opportunities. C. Maher

USER LEVEL: Community Professional

KLA: PDHPE

KEYWORDS: Health; fitness; resources

SCIS SUBJECTS: Health; Physical fitness; Physical education

PUBLISHER: Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation Inc.

REVIEW DATE: 15/3/99

ADA: Child nutrition and health campaign index.

<http://www.eatright.org/child/>

A section of this site is devoted to the dietary needs of children and would support the PDHPE K-6 syllabus strand: personal health choices. The site contains: general knowledge quizzes on food, fitness and health; a challenge to compare eating habits; and a folded paper game to make nutrition predictions. The quizzes are not interactive, but are alternatively available in PDF format for offline use. Answer keys include discussion and recommendations. A **Food guide pyramid for children** is an excellent resource for small group discussion. Support material is provided for parents and community workers, and includes dietary issues concerning athletes and the elderly. S. Leslie

USER LEVEL: Stage 3

KLA: PDHPE

SYLLABUS: PDHPE K-6

SCIS SUBJECTS: Food; Health; Nutrition

KEYWORDS: Food; nutrition

PUBLISHER: American Dietetic Association

REVIEW DATE: 10/3/99