



HAMPDEN STREET SCHOOL
Established 1868

Inquiry Learning



**End of Year Report
November 2011**

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Students will understand the process of inquiry and use appropriate techniques to further learning and create new solutions

Background:

Anecdotal data was gathered at the end of 2010 from teacher observation and conversations. It showed a big improvement in students' use, understanding and application of thinking tools but exposed a gap in their understanding and application of the school Inquiry Learning model. The students were not really able to explain the different stages of the model, and there were gaps in their understanding of what each stage represented. Sound understanding, application and skills in using our school Inquiry Model became the focus for 2011.

The key factors we considered when developing Inquiry learning in our school were:

- Our model was developed for our school and was not the one size fits all models which have been popular.
- It is based on sound pedagogy and backed by an understanding of thinking skills.
- It is consistent across the whole school, with the same language used from Year 1 to 6.
- Adequate time and resources are allowed for its implementation and that it supported by quality professional development.
- That timetabling, planning and assessment issues are addressed and that practice in this area support the change in philosophy.



While we have noted the key factors important in our Inquiry Learning model we had not effectively addressed all of them. This year was an opportunity to further deepen understanding and application of Inquiry Learning in our school.

Project Outcomes

Key actions and summary:

- ***Professional Development on Inquiry Learning stages***

This year professional development in this area became more low key than anticipated due to the time needed for the Literacy Contract we were also involved with. A Teacher Only day in Term 2 focused on Inquiry Learning allowing teachers the opportunity to work on an Inquiry Unit for Term 3. This had mixed success in syndicates. A third of the staff went to different conferences throughout the year, presenting their findings and sharing teaching and learning developments with the staff in staff meetings.

While working through the different stages of our school Inquiry Learning model was useful to a certain extent, it hasn't really enabled teachers to develop a confident understanding of the whole concept. Next year a different approach will be used to address this area.



- **Explicit teaching in class of each step needed in the Inquiry Model Unit**

The school Inquiry Learning model was used throughout the school with mixed results. Some classes were able to use the full model successfully, while others were still developing a sound understanding of the model as a whole. Barriers to success were:

- Time, particularly for the Senior Syndicate as they had many other commitments
- Teamwork in planning to support teachers' understanding
- Still trying to work out the practical / management of it
- Not completing all stages



The Inquiry team also needed time to be able to work with staff, and there was a lack of this due to other contract commitments and the 'extras' that came our way.

- **Students will understand & use all stages in the school Inquiry Model as appropriate for their age group**

Teachers worked with students through different stages of our school model, again, with varied levels of success. This was due to not always getting to the last stages, fully understanding how to use the model and also that we ended up focusing more on questioning and thinking skills as a gap became apparent in student learning. We will continue to work on ensuring students have a sound understanding of the school model over 2012 and beyond. This will always be a work in progress.



Conclusion

This has been a mixed year for us in Inquiry Learning development. Many different gaps became apparent and our focus changed slightly to meet these areas of need as the year developed. A continued focus on questioning and thinking skills was required and will also become part of next year's focus area. The barriers around our school Inquiry Learning model need to be addressed and more specific professional development given to the teachers in the areas they need rather than across the school. Teachers also found that the practical management of the model, particularly the planning, made it difficult to see what / where they were going with it. These areas, having now been more clearly identified, will be addressed next year.

Where to Next

- Continue to become familiar with the school Inquiry Learning model steps- especially those at the end of the process
- Professional development needs to continue with regular updates, discussions and best practice learning so teachers remain up-skilled
- Address teacher development specifically – individually or at syndicate level so that it is relevant and useful
- Ensure learning intentions and success criteria begin to be co-constructed by teachers and students
- Regular quality feedback and feed forward for teachers and students
- Review planning systems at syndicate level and allow time for quality planning
- Focus on links to thinking skills and up-skilling teachers across the school

