

Australia (Victoria)

Bentleigh West Primary School. Learning houses, suites and landscapes

Bentleigh West Primary School has established team teaching, personalized learning practices, flexible learning spaces, and community partnerships. Students (age 5-12) learn in flexible dynamic learning groups of two school years, with individual learning plans. The younger students are in “Learning Houses” that comprise a kitchen and craft area; older students stay in a “Learning Suite”. Teaching methods include explicit instruction, workshops, student conferences, inquiry based learning, and hands-on experiences. Teachers are encouraged to undertake research on promising new learning practice, building on previous results which are regularly tested with pre and post testing research and different progress measures.

Main focus of innovation: TEACHERS, RESOURCES, ORGANISATION

Other keywords: learning space

General Information

Name of the ILE: Learning Houses (Prep – Year 4) / Learning Suite (Years 5&6) / Learning Landscapes / Multimedia Communications Studio

Location/Address: 23 Brewer Road Bentleigh 4203

Website: www.bwps.net.au

ILE submitted by: Department of Education & Early Childhood Development, Victoria, Australia

Rationale

Why do you suggest that it should be included in the project? How does it respond to 21st century learning challenges?

The school's purpose as stated in the School Strategic Plan 2009 – 2012 is to develop all students' capacity as learners by creating flexible, dynamic and relational learning spaces where they feel valued and are given guidance, choice, ownership and the tools to explore their learning. At Bentleigh West Primary School there is a strong belief that learning must be relevant, meaningful and applicable for all students to set goals, achieve their potential and be connected to their community. Given that child development is powerfully shaped by social capital, the school recognises trust, networks, and norms of reciprocity within a child's family, school, peer group, and larger community, to have wide ranging effects on our students' opportunities and choices and hence, on behaviour and development. To this endeavour the school has established team teaching and personalised learning practices across all levels, supported by open plan and flexible learning spaces.

Innovative use of ICT tools and multimedia; our globally recognised environmental sustainability programs and the community partnerships we have established further provide a platform for active and engaging learning. We have learnt much and have much to share with others. Being part of this project would also give us the opportunity to further reflect on our practice using different lenses and sets of data.

Learning Aims / Intended Learning Outcomes of the ILE

What are the core learning aims and which knowledge, skills or attitudes are to be acquired? (These may include outcomes related to learners' social, interpersonal, or meta-cognitive development)

- Improve student learning and engagement through further exploring different forms and approaches to teaching.
- Reflect critically on our existing teaching and learning practices and how they affect student cognitive, social, interpersonal, motivational and meta-cognitive development.
- Provide opportunities for professional learning, mentoring and feedback from international experts, innovators and reformers of education.
- Engage students in interesting, involving, imaginative and interactive learning through innovative use of digital technology
- Empower students and teachers to be creative and reflective thinkers

Learners

Which group(s) of learners is it aiming at? Who is eligible to take part? How many learners are there? What are their ages?

Our innovative learning environment is aimed at all students from Prep to Year 6 (460 students aged between 5 and 12 years)

Broad identified learning needs of our students:

- Connect students to content through personalising learning
- Enhance relationship between student and student, and student and teacher by providing a social context to learning
- Improve students' aspiration to achieve and succeed
- Equipped all students with the necessary knowledge and skills to monitor and manage their learning.

Facilitators

Who are the teachers/facilitators? Who are the leaders? What are their professional backgrounds? What are their roles?

- Learning Teams take collective accountability with teachers learning, teaching and leading together
- The leaders of the ILE are the Leadership Team:
 - Principal – Jennifer Small (5 years)
 - Assistant Principal – Timothy Newton (2 years)
 - Leading Teacher – Environmental Science – Leonie Brown
 - Prep Team Learning Leader – Jane Ypelaan (Expert Teacher Tasmania / Victoria)
 - 1/2 Team Learning Leader – Melissa Morris (Accomplished Teacher)
 - 3/4 Team Learning Leader – Jessica Georgiadis (Accomplished Teacher)
 - 5/6 Team – Learning Leader – Michael Frost (Leading Teacher UK/ Singapore/ Victoria)

Organization of the ILE

How is learning organised? How do learners and facilitators interact? What kind of pedagogy do they follow? What curriculum is used?

The learning is organised in four micro learning communities (Prep, Year1/2; Year3/4; Year 5/6) where teachers team teach and learning is personalised to suit all students' needs, interests and next steps of learning. This is achieved through flexible dynamic grouping of students informed by rigorous assessment. All students have an Individual Learning Plan developed in partnership between teacher, parents and student. Learning is delivered through explicit, focused teaching, workshops, student conferences, inquiry based, developmental play based, hands-on experiences and problem solving tasks. Learning is supported by teachers, non-teachers, parents and community experts and a rich ICT environment incorporating personal devices, digital and video cameras, MP3 players, a TV studio, a radio station and a recording studio. At all times students are encouraged to be active learners and are given the skills and resources to support this. Students learn in a range of places and spaces, inside and outside. As students progress through the school they are expected to become more independent learners and the teacher's role becomes more and more of a facilitator and guide. At every level students are encouraged to think about their learning and are given the appropriate tools to support this. Our well publicised toolbox program is an example of this.

Learning Context

In which context does learning take place? What does the physical learning environment look like? Are community resources used to facilitate learning and how?

For Year Prep – 4, learning takes place in open plan learning studios known as Learning Houses. The Learning Houses enhance that home-school connection and students are given the freedom to move around the different learning spaces. Each Learning House has a kitchen / wet area with a very large kitchen bench for creating, making and designing. Inside-outside learning is connected by big glass lift up doors. The Year 5/6's have an upstairs Learning Suite with wonderful Google-earth type views of Melbourne representing a global focused learning environment where teachers work alongside students to support and challenge them in their learning. While teachers have collective accountability for all students at a level, each child has a home teacher to support their wellbeing. Across the school grounds there are a number of learning landscapes and an environmental science centre where students become proactive learners and community leaders in sustainability initiatives. Students also get many opportunities to learn from non-teachers, parents and community members who are ever willing to share their expertise. Teachers are recognised as the most valuable resource to improve student learning and engagement and are given the opportunity to undertake hands-on action research learning in teams and are encouraged to share their learning and experiences with other schools.

History of ILE

Who initiated it? For what reasons was it started and with what purpose? Have these changed since?

In an attempt to improve student engagement and learning through making teaching more learner-focused and personalised, the concept of team teaching and active learning was researched, trialled and implemented under the leadership of the principal. The key to this achievement has been the development of a strong teacher learning and performance culture alongside the resourcing of creative and digital learning tools and innovative workforce planning. Over the last four years teachers have undergone research learning, visited other schools, attended relevant PD, planned together, trialled and experimented ideas, shared, reflected, reframed their teaching and learning practices and articulated it all to parents and other teachers.

Funding of the ILE

How is it funded?

Funding for transforming the pedagogy has largely come from the Student Resource Package (SRP) and involvement in such initiatives as the Teacher Professional Leave (DEECD) other research and community grants and environmental sustainability awards.

Learning Outcomes

What are the learning outcomes achieved by the ILE, including academic, social, interpersonal and meta-cognitive outcomes? How is learning assessed?

Trend data is being gathered from AIMS/NAPLAN and VELs data and while it is too early to draw any conclusions regarding student learning, the data does show that teachers are assessing for a much wider range of student learning outcomes.

During term 1 each year the teaching teams undergo a detailed analysis of the data available for their cohort of students. This data informs their action research for the year. Pre and post testing is used to gauge the success of their action research and this is presented back to the whole staff at the end of year.

Teachers keep detailed anecdotal notes and checklists on student progress to inform each child's next steps of learning. Detailed assessment and student profiling is imperative to personalising learning. Provision is made at each level for students to monitor their own learning and to set their own goals. Visual thinking tools and digital portfolios are used extensively throughout the school for this purpose. Students also participate in on-line assessment.

While we will use the student opinion survey to track student engagement each of the teams have also developed customised surveys as an immediate and ongoing source of feedback. We are also tracking student involvement in in-school and out-of-school activities.

Teachers also self assess their own development using such tools as ePotential and POLT. Currently we are developing a customised teacher rubric based on the E5 Instructional Model.