

Australia (Victoria)

Courtenay Gardens Primary School

This is a primary school (students age 5-12) in a low-socioeconomic area which uses various multimedia facilities and research-based personalized learning frameworks. Students have access to a multimedia television studio and a radio broadcasting station, which are used to foster students' development of organisational skills, social behaviour, literacy and numeracy, and to connect with the community. Additional resources are a performing arts centre, outdoor fitness stations, and stages. Classrooms are technology-rich and purpose-built with shared learning spaces for team teaching and group work. Teacher teams meet weekly for planning, evaluation and peer support and the staff engages in regular, research-based instructional coaching activities. Student progress is registered in an electronic school wide data tracker that allows evaluation against the whole class and year performance. Parents can follow a training program to provide assistance in the classroom.

Main focus of innovation: CONTENT, RESOURCES, ORGANISATION

Other keywords: equity, technology-rich

General Information

Name of the ILE: Global Connections in the 21st Century

Location/Address: Rosebank Dve, Cranbourne, Victoria, Australia

Website: www.cgps.vic.edu.au

ILE submitted by: Courtenay Gardens Primary School

Rationale

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

Courtenay Gardens is a highly successful school as recognised by the State and Australia wide through the MySchool website. We would like to build upon our school's innovative approaches to Literacy and Numeracy teaching and learning environments. Furthermore we have now transferred our successful model to developing a whole school approach to Reading Comprehension. Courtenay Gardens' school has always been very collegiate in sharing with network schools and beyond. We would eagerly act as a school of reference to promote, transfer and embed innovative practice and accelerate improved learning in schools. We relish the chance to be involved with educators and researchers throughout our schools across the state and the world who could add value to our innovative practice.

In our desire to provide the best learning opportunities for our students and teachers on the global scene, we would be thrilled to participate and contribute our knowledge, resources and best practices on an international level. Even though Courtenay Gardens Primary is in a low socio-economic area, we constantly strive to develop a world-class environment and learning opportunities by attempting to embrace projects such as the ILE Universe. We feel that our students should and must actively participate and be fully equipped to compete in a highly competitive global marketplace that is full of challenges never imagined even a few years ago.

We would like to pursue the opportunity to engage in action research to further extend our best practice. This will allow us to enhance our current understandings of why high performing schools similar to ours achieve outstanding results and continue to maintain outstanding results. We have already established links with schools across Australia and overseas.

With regards to addressing the challenges of 21st century learning, we seek out the best practices around the world through the use of the internet, Skype conversations, international professional study tours, liaising with world experts in research such as Dr. Douglas Reeves, collaborating and sharing with colleagues in our networks, and truly putting the best theories into best practice.

As an ILE representative, we would be able to build upon our already highly regarded reputation to help benefit a much wider educational audience throughout our state and beyond by promoting and transferring our embedded innovative practices to help accelerate improved learning in other schools.

This project would enable our team to follow through further with our innovations and related research and to share our findings with our colleagues across our network and beyond. It would certainly give our team further credibility in the wider educational community.

We feel that participating in the OECD project will be an outstanding opportunity not only for our school, but we will be able to provide guidance and resources for others as well through our already established learning and teaching networks.

Students at Courtenay Gardens are fortunate to enjoy some very unique learning spaces which are available for them to use, learn and discover. For the past four years our school has had a purpose-built Multimedia Television Studio where students in Grades 5 and 6 perform all tasks necessary to run a daily live television show, which is broadcast to all the classrooms each school morning. We have introduced a Radio station 107.9 (CGPS Radio) to promote further access for student voice, links to the community and an increase of opportunity for authentic purposes for learning. Our radio program broadcasts over a three kilometre radius. Further, our students are fortunate to use equipment such as SmartBoards, Nintendo Wii's, DSI's, laptops, video cameras, as well as television and radio broadcasting equipment so there is truly a wide range of resources to actively spark their imaginations and natural curiosities.

This year we built a Performing Arts centre to compliment our Multimedia and Music programs where students explore Drama, interpersonal and presentation skills on an indoor stage complete with stage lights, sound effects, and other digital resources. Students also enjoy the use of two computer labs, computer access in classrooms and a portable laptop classroom which all students use. The laptop trolley program allows for a teacher to model and interact with class members. Students have a myriad of experiences at their fingertips such as being able to contribute to online learning and conversations, create visual images, problem solve and share their experiences with students around the world. Classes are able to interact with a variety of applications, movie making and animation tools to communicate, visualise, create and present their learning and understandings. Outside our students enjoy increasing their physical endurance and capacity on several fitness stations, play equipment and an outdoor stage where students can give whole-class performances, speeches or assemblies.

In addition to our own school facilities, our school regularly uses community resources by going on short and long term trips to areas to learn about global environmental issues with engaging hands-on activities.

Parents and the local community, such as business leaders and politicians, are a common site around school and they are always welcome to assist with our students learning, such as with reading, Grandparent's Day, assemblies, public servant visits, and in interviews on our TV show. We have a strong belief that it is crucial for students to see others outside our immediate community volunteering. This helps reinforce our goal of having students grow up to be productive citizens who regularly contribute their time and energies for the greater good of the others.

The challenge for our school, as for many schools built in the 20th Century, is to encourage the learning spaces to be 21st Century. That is why we have an emphasis on our students using the technological and multimedia tools that are available to them such as our live television program, the radio program, creating of DVD's and films. Students use these facilities to give their voice; they create projects for real audiences. Our students are making a difference using media to make a difference in the world.

In 2009 we were the winners of two very prestigious state awards for movies starring our Grade 6 students on the topic of Sustainability - Sustainability Victoria 'Best Film Award' and Planet Savers 'Best Film by a School'.

Our students just two weeks ago had the honour of presenting at the high-profile media launch of our Department of Education and Early Childhood's new FUSE website (Find Use Share Education) where we have submitted several digital resources for other schools to use. We are also a regular contributor of digital content on Channel 31 which broadcasts to over 40,000 households around Melbourne.

The other challenge we have is to insure our digital savvy students have teachers who are keeping abreast with cutting edge technology and the use of this in the 21st Century classroom. We are addressing this through our professional development. At Courtenay Gardens teachers have a colleague in their team who provides feedback with ICT/Multimedia and we have a leading teacher in ICT/Multimedia.

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)

The core learning aims of our Innovative Learning Environments is to promote student learning using exceptional multimedia and technology facilities to engage students in new, creative and exciting ways of learning.

As a school we aim to:

Improve and maximize student learning across the whole curriculum with a particular emphasis on literacy and numeracy.

Our goal is to enhance teaching and learning practices across the whole school by:

Extending the writing framework

Developing a reading comprehension framework

Developing a Maths Developmental framework

Developing a language of learning for the above which is shared by all stakeholders (students, teachers, parents)

Embedding the language of learning relating to Reading Comprehension, Maths, and Writing Developmental Frameworks through ICT and Multimedia.

We promote teacher capacity through the process of coaching and the use of multiple sources of feedback (student learning data, focus groups, student, staff and parent opinion) to improve student learning. Students develop personalised learning plans and digital portfolios in order to customise strategies and programs for all students to cater for differentiated learning. We are committed to increasing the number of opportunities for student involvement in community events and authentic learning beyond the classroom.

Improve student engagement, resilience and the capacity of students to be personal learners.

Courtenay Gardens' teachers strive to improve student abilities in self-managing their social and learning behaviours. We are developing a student-centred approach to learning plans, where the student voice, student decision-making and student responsibility for their learning are central platforms in this approach. A student leadership skills programme has been developed with increasing opportunities for students to participate in decision-making processes and school improvement. We have a feedback program for students about student opinions on various school related matters. Along with this we have established focus groups for students to further investigate results of the student Attitude to Schools Survey. Our student Leadership group seeks ways to improve student opinion.

Promote a seamless education for students which support the best possible student learning

As a school we support our students and their learning in many ways including in-school transition processes which track students' progress, reviewing the links between pre-schools and relevant secondary colleges to enable smoother transitions into the school and out of the school with a particular focus e.g. comprehension, and developing personalised learning plans for students whereby students have greater clarity and voice in their learning.

At Courtenay Gardens we have ensured that the teaching and learning approaches used in different year levels are sequential and complementary with specific focus on Maths, Non Fiction Writing and Reading Comprehension. We are developing digital portfolios as a way to enhance the monitoring and tracking of student progress throughout their schooling.

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?

Courtenay Gardens is a primary school with 700+ students ranging in age from approximately five to 12 years of age. Our students are drawn from a challenging demographic whereby most students have not been to pre-school/kindergarten, come with no pre-reading literacy skills and on the whole require a very rich, explicit range of educational opportunities that enable them to reach their true potential. Diagnosed language disorders are also well above average for the state.

We have established innovative learning environments throughout the school that cater for a range of students' learning needs and where teachers readily cater for their individual and differentiated learning.

Our teachers have established a vibrant and focused community of learners with high expectations that see students develop a long term eagerness for learning and success.

Facilitators

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

The leaders of our innovation are:-

Principal: Loretta Hamilton

This year Loretta celebrated her 38th year with the Department of Education with the last nineteen as a Principal in two different schools. Loretta has been the Network Chairperson for the past 3 years, trained coach to Principals and trained mentor to leaders in the Victorian Education System. Besides leading Courtenay Gardens Primary School from its founding in 1995, Loretta is regularly called upon to be part of DEECD principal advisory groups (e.g. Blueprint 1 – Leadership, Schools of the Future).

Loretta participated in the initial DEECD High Performing Principals Program and through strategic placing of resources, both human and financial/physical, has improved the Literacy standards of children to above the state average. As part of this success Loretta researched best practice in the teaching of Writing and as a result has initiated and managed the transformation of teaching and learning at the school and throughout the Cranbourne Network and schools across the State (as teams of staff visit Courtenay Gardens Primary to observe and learn). Courtenay Gardens Primary has also been recognised with a number of state and national awards. Loretta has been recognised as part of a Teacher Team of the Year Award (Literacy), a finalist in the Principal of the Year Award and in 2009 Highly Commended for Excellence by a Principal in the Australian Awards for Teaching Excellence, a Victorian Principals Association Study Award and a member of the successful Annual Curriculum Innovations Award – DEECD.

Assistant Principal: Georgina Wilson

Georgina has been an educator for 34 years. She has vast experience with students in the Early Years of education and in Literacy. She has experience in Special Education. Georgina has initiated and developed an Early Education Centre and has provided professional development, supported school leadership teams to improve the Reading and Writing standards of children in schools across the state and was a member of the Design Team for the Victorian Education Departments Innovation Division. Georgina was on the team that won the Victorian Education in Excellence Award for Innovation. Georgina has extensively shared her knowledge and expertise about the schools innovations with educators across Victoria.

Leading Teacher: Scott Balliet

Scott has been teaching for 10 years. He has worked in Australian schools for 6 years. He has vast experience in ICT. *Scott* has spent several years teaching overseas in American schools, and is now a multimedia specialist teacher at Courtenay Gardens Primary School. He developed the inaugural Multimedia program at Courtenay Gardens and has provided Professional Development in ICT and Multimedia both at the school and outside. Scott was a member of the Design Team for the Victorian Education Departments Innovation Division and was a member of the team that won the Victorian Education Excellence Award for Innovation. Scott is a leading teacher who collaborates with teachers and students to create digital stories, resources and experiences.

Scott actively shares his expertise and resources with other schools and educational institutions and has recently published three books on implementing and running a school-wide multimedia program.

The above staff have been involved in the development of our ongoing innovative learning environments at Courtenay Gardens Primary School. This process has been in place since the opening of the school in 1995 but has become more sharply focused in the last five years as schools across the world have become so much more accountable for their results.

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 Courtenay Gardens Primary School staff (around 70) work tirelessly in their commitment to improve teaching and learning environments for all children at the school. The school's investment in cutting edge programs such as our innovative multimedia approach ensures our children will succeed and compete in a global economy centred on 21st century digital Literacy. Through our school's curriculum we aim to provide programs that promote students to reach their true potential in all learning areas.

The clear and structured approach we have established for our innovative learning environments is a strength of our innovation. The Victorian Education Departments Innovations Division recognised that an outstanding feature of our innovation is that we have established clarity of focus and purpose. Teachers and students are very clear and know exactly what is expected of them.

Teachers and students have a laser like focus on improving Writing, Reading Comprehension and Maths. Successful elements used to drive these programs are common goals, common language of learning, and framework of curriculum, schedules that allow for collaborative team work and a data management team and tracker with curriculum leaders being ultimately responsible.

Teachers have a whole/ small /whole approach to classroom learning. Teachers clearly articulate the goal of the lesson at the beginning of the session followed by teacher modelling. Teachers work with a small group whilst other students are involved in independent related work. At the conclusion of the learning session students reflect on their learning.

Professional Development has been provided in our key targeted curriculum areas to develop strategies for what are they teaching, catering for the different learning styles, approaches and backgrounds of our students. Our Professional development is structured to support teachers with the introductions of new innovative approaches. Learning teams are committed to strengthening and sharing strategies of good practice with weekly collaboration meetings. The purpose of each innovation that we have introduced has been to improve student potential and excellence in all areas of learning. Our children are always expected to perform well above 'like school groups'. Our teachers strive to reach these levels of expectations.

Students have specified allocations of time to devote to improving Literacy and Numeracy skills.

Children write daily, and independently work their way through the five stages of the writing process. Children seek feedback about their writing and articulate to the class how they achieved the goal stated by the teacher at the beginning of the lesson. Display boards around the school are assigned to grade levels, to present and recognise published non-fiction Writing texts. These boards are a valuable means for the school community, especially students, to gain a further insight into the characteristics of outstanding writing.

The use of ICT and Multimedia with curriculum areas has led to providing many opportunities and experiences to improve higher order thinking skills in Writing, Reading Comprehension and Maths. These technologies have provided different and effective opportunities for communication, and developing communication skills. Reasoning and problem solving challenges are part of their daily learning as students expand and reflect on their digital knowledge.

Our Multimedia program has created a series of direct-instruction, digital learning resources which are available to students, parents and educators.

These learning resources directly support the teaching of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS), as well as the school's focus on 'The Big Three' areas for improvement from NAPLAN.

Each of our Power Strategy movies offers an innovative approach by having the 'Student as Teacher' approach to providing a more student-centred explanation of abstract concepts.

Teamwork has increased many times over as groups of children and teachers unite to complete production tasks. Children's organisational skills are developing to a high degree as they plan, construct and write in the pre-production stage in preparation for pre-recording and live broadcasting.

Children's Writing standards continue to rise as the children are immersed in authentic tasks such as script writing and writing reports for the 'Morning Show'. Children's Writing standards at Year 3 and 5 are now above the state average and the highest in the Cranbourne Schools Network.

Children's auto responses to number facts are improving in accuracy as well as speed as they practise with zest to beat their scores on times table challenge games and assessment. Students have created mini movies of maths problem solving topics as a whole school approach for the teaching and learning of maths problem solving strategies has been introduced.

Children who struggled to manage their inappropriate behaviour at school have transformed and built strong positive relationships with peers and staff as they have become highly engaged participating behind the scenes as camera or lighting operators or in front of the camera presenting, reporting or acting. They cannot wait to get to school to be part of the production crew.

The promotion of values education through role-plays, and anti-bullying skits has had a significant impact on creating a positive and supportive school culture in which children say they feel safe and happy. This has been primarily done through the making of movies that are broadcast across the school.

Courtenay Gardens school has heavily invested and recognised the importance of allocating resources. The importance of Leaders being committed instructional leaders has been vital in supporting and impacting on school goals, building teacher direction, innovation and consistency with learning environments. Our leadership team discusses and reflects on the direction of Literacy and Numeracy so there are strategic and systematic whole school approaches to support best practice in teaching and learning.

Extensive Professional Development has been instigated in building teaching capacity. This is centred on ensuring processes in the school are clearly defined and all teachers are well informed of the frameworks and approaches we have instigated in Literacy and Numeracy. Our Professional Development plan is annually reviewed to reflect the new needs of staff. All staff have an individual and differentiated professional development plan.

The school's leadership team is very focused on supporting teachers on the core purpose of providing outstanding teaching and learning environments. Hence we have at times employed an outside consultant and critical friend to support the transformation of our literacy initiatives. As a school we have engaged a variety of ways to inform our teachers of best practice. Some examples are using SKYPE with Dr Douglas Reeves in the USA, visits by Professor Max Stephens Melbourne University, and professional live conversations with Professor Ban Har Yeap from Singapore.

Along with this we have initiated action research with high performing schools and observed classrooms and leaders to gather insights into these schools. Such research has enabled our leaders and teachers to investigate educational issues and cutting edge education.

Collaborative learning has become a key element of the school's culture. The timetables have been modified so that teacher teams and Principal Class meet to plan, share, moderate, evaluate and support each other. The opportunity to engage in professional dialogue has been invaluable in the promotion of best practice and improved results across the school. This allocation of time has allowed teachers time to explore teaching strategies to match the learning styles and needs of their students to engage them in learning.

Peer Coaching, Walk Throughs and Look Fors' have provided teachers with opportunities to observe best practice and to discuss and realign teaching approaches and learning environments. This has ensured consistent instructional practice for teachers at our school.

We have developed a series of teacher and student DVDs to inform teachers and their students on how to connect them to the curriculum and support innovative learning environments. Teacher and student instructional posters have been developed for Literacy and Numeracy to ensure focus on targeted school goals. These resources support the use of a common language of learning.

Students have access to Multimedia and ICT to explore and represent their learning.

Classrooms are resourced with multiple computers and along with this we have a mobile laptop program with all year levels further resourced with interactive Smartboards. Our ICT/Multimedia team foster the development of student and teachers skills both acting as leaders and coaches to promote digital literacy. The utilisation of Multimedia and ICT are considered more than tools. As a school the emphasis is to highlight these as mediums to foster innovative ways of thinking, communicating with audiences within and beyond the classroom and links with the global community. The laser like focus is on providing children with 21st century multimedia through which to develop and present their work. Podcasting of student work on the school website and the Victorian educational website has been another way of sharing excellence in teaching and learning.

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?

Students at Courtenay Gardens have a variety of learning spaces. We have purpose-built classrooms that have shared learning spaces together with computer pods. These classrooms and spaces are ideal for team teaching and groups of teachers and students focused on specific projects. Students access the Multimedia Studio where they are responsible for broadcast daily. A Performing Arts centre that allows for students to explore drama, music and communication skills has been recently constructed. This facility is used by the school for student presentations and assemblies. Students also enjoy the use of two computer labs, a portable laptop classroom and we are in the process of building a full-sized community gymnasium capable of providing more engaging whole-school events and physical education classes. In outside learning areas our students have a variety of facilities to enjoy. Our outdoor areas promote physical exercise, play and socialisation. Students enjoy the fun of a new exercise station. They have boundless opportunities on the playground equipment. The new outdoor theatre provides an area for creativity, imagination and presentations. In addition the outdoor area has different types of seating areas for students to use for shared learning areas, tables and seats for eating and socialising.

Further, our students' classrooms and learning spaces are equipped with a variety of technology such as SmartBoards, Nintendo Wii's, DSI's, laptops, digital cameras, video cameras, as well as television and radio broadcasting equipment. Students learning with these tools can work individually, be in small groups or in connection with other students and educators. There are many new possibilities for learning for children. Learning with these tools is certainly more active and student centred.

Students learning is more personalised with students seeking improvement on their goals.

Parents and community involvement is of paramount importance to our school. We have always endeavoured to utilise the important resource of parents. In the classrooms parents provide outstanding support with Literacy and Numeracy. They participate in a Parent Training program so they are equipped to provide support and assistance in the classroom.

Courtenay Gardens has many days where extended family and parents share their expertise with projects students are involved in. In addition we have a See For Yourself Day where parents can be a student for the day and become more familiar with the school programs. We have always had a very supportive School Council who support the schools directions with the education of our students.

Community members, cultural groups, members of parliament, local councillors and interest groups have been a part of our television broadcasting where students can ask questions and guests share their knowledge. Courtenay Gardens believes that the connections to parents, community groups and community leaders only enhance the best possible learning outcomes for our school. Students participate in planned excursion programs that always promote student learning. Students create digital stories to communicate and share their learning with students and parents. Parents have used our media facility to communicate their knowledge to students. The local community, such as the kindergarten, have been a part of our film festival and performances.

History of ILE

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

Loretta Hamilton as Principal, mentor and leader has made valuable contributions to innovation and the approaches to Writing, Reading Comprehension, Mathematics and ICT/Multimedia at Courtenay Gardens Primary. She has inspired her staff, students and principal colleagues to be a part of the innovation. Her dedication to adding value and making a difference to the school community and local network schools and system wide is exceptional. Together with her leadership team, Loretta has developed systematic and whole school approaches to support and promote best practice in teaching and learning environments. We have initiated these approaches because we have always wanted to be at the cutting edge with education and give our students every opportunity with their 21st Century education.

These innovative approaches have been instigated to promote our school's vision which is to provide outstanding world class teaching and learning environments with programs where all students are challenged to achieve their full potential in the global classroom. The Principal, Assistant Principals and leadership team collaborate with teachers to specifically discuss teaching, learning and improving student achievement especially in Literacy, Mathematics and ICT/ Multimedia. Together teachers plan, share, mediate, evaluate and support each other with the development of innovative learning environments. The laser like focus is on providing children with access to global knowledge banks and providing children with 21st century multimedia through which to develop and present their work.

We have established the instructional approaches for Writing, Reading Comprehension and Mathematics. Expectations for student learning are clear. Teachers and students have a common language of learning.

A series of visual resources such as posters have been developed to promote the strategies for example text type posters, Maths Problem solving strategies and Comprehension. Students are able to track themselves through the learning process with the use of student management boards. Multiple sources of data accountability are analysed for teaching and learning directions. Multimedia and ICT have complimented these areas through the construction of student movies to demonstrate knowledge and understanding. During the broadcast students and teachers participate in phone-ins regarding topics that are current across the whole school.

The outstanding improvement in children's writing standards at Courtenay Gardens is a direct result of Loretta's research whilst in the USA and her highly effective capacity to successfully plan, implement and support staff through a significant process of change.

In 2006, Loretta led the development of a Non-Fiction and Multimedia Writing Program based on the significant research of Dr Douglas Reeves. Reeves had identified the characteristics of high performing schools in low income urban areas in the USA.

One element was a strong emphasis on teaching non-fiction writing. Courtenay Gardens restructured its curriculum and constructed a framework for the teaching of writing to guarantee that every teacher knows the expected approach and outcomes for their students.

For example, the Non Fiction Writing model is based on key elements including:

- a framework for the teaching of writing
- a focus on non- fiction writing
- extensive professional development
- peer coaching
- walkthroughs
- classroom organisation
- ICT/multimedia
- weekly collaborative sessions for teachers and leadership
- assessment rubrics for each text type
- data driven decision making- based on our school wide data tracker where every student is tracked in every area.

Our state-of-the art multimedia studio has been an exceptional way to engage students in the Non-Fiction Writing program. Teachers and students are occupied daily in a Writing Hour. Students' writing is brought to life using script writing, storyboarding, drama and ICT. Children work in teams to produce animation and movies which are the culmination of extensive writing tasks. Teamwork has increased markedly as groups of children unite to complete production tasks. The children's organisation skills are developing rapidly as they plan, construct and write in the pre-production stage in preparation for pre-recording and broadcasting.

Creativity is at its peak in the performing Arts realm as children compose, record and perform soundtracks to short films, ditties for advertisements and introductory songs for regular features such as Indonesian Today and the Weather Report. Now children are acutely aware of the audience to whom they are writing and presenting and are very aware of the impact of student voice with the power of the writing for connection to the community.

Children's Writing standards are impacted as the children are immersed in authentic tasks such as script writing and writing reports for the 'Morning Show'. Children's Writing standards at Year 3 and 5 are now above the state average and the highest in the local Schools' Network.

The Australian MySchool Website, which profiles every school in Australia and compares the Literacy and Numeracy results, has shown that Courtenay Gardens is performing exceptionally well in all areas despite student background.

We have adapted the successful elements of the Nonfiction Writing Model to the successful introduction of a whole school Reading Comprehension Program and Mathematics.

Again establishing and supporting whole school approaches, promoting best practice in teaching and learning, a common language of learning, and having high expectations has led to a positive impact on student learning environments. Students now establish their personal goals for learning.

Further impact has been upon building leadership capacity across all levels of the school, goal congruence in line with the vision of the school and the use of multiple sources of data for accountability purposes combined with innovative practices with multimedia and ICT.

In 2009 as leaders we researched best practice in Mathematics. We liaised with Dr Max Stephens, a senior research fellow in Science and Mathematics Education at the University of Melbourne, and Professor Ban Har Yeap – Professor of Mathematics and Mathematics Education, from Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. We observed Mathematics teaching in a variety of classes with a variety of students in Singapore. We introduced a whole school approach to Maths Problem Solving where leaders and teachers have established a framework for the teaching of Mathematics across our school. Assessment in Mathematics is organised with standardised testing and Pre and Post Tests. Teachers and students demonstrate understandings on interactive Smartboards and feedback is given through peer coaching. Again one of the essential features is having a common language of learning.

As previously referred ICT/ Multimedia is an integral part of our students' education.

We have seen many long and short-term benefits that movie-making brings to our students and to our school. Once students complete their movie, they are presented to their peers and families on "The Morning Show," on DVD and in a Grade-Level Film Festival. Students work in collaborative teams and improve their communication and presentation skills as well as responsibility, leadership skills, confidence and other Character Education traits.

The use of Multimedia and ICT has grabbed our students' attention and developed positive perceptions about Literacy and Mathematics. This has further led to students using these learning tools in the classrooms connecting their lives and their digital world for learning anywhere, anytime.

Funding of the ILE

How is it funded?

Our Innovative Learning Environment is funded through our global budgets.

Loretta Hamilton and the Leadership team are responsible for making sure that school priorities are appropriately resourced. This team takes into account items such as funding for Professional Development for all staff, leading teachers in school prioritised areas and purchasing of equipment to support programs.

School Council, which represents the school community, is a major force behind approving budgets that support the learning environment at Courtenay Gardens. School Council have fully endorsed and supported the development of several projects such as our Non Fiction Writing program which runs throughout the whole school, the introduction of interactive smartboards for individual classrooms, a whole school approach to Mathematics and the establishment of a Multimedia studio that is used to support and enhance all areas of the curriculum. Our School Council provides funds for teachers to conduct research into school priority areas. This was a follow through from a recommendation from our school review in 2004.

Many teachers on staff have been overseas and interstate to explore innovative education to further enrich our programs.

Learning Outcomes

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

All programs from instigation to implementation to evaluation are all premised on our collection of data from a variety of sources. As a school, working together as a team, we have a number of processes in place for collecting all sorts of data to cover a range of programs.

Firstly, we have a data or assessment committee which meets regularly to plan whole school assessment and to look at how we use this assessment, when assessment takes places, what types of assessment is suitable for which year levels and subjects, what our data is telling us and how to change our teaching for the purpose of assisting all children within the school in a differentiated learning environment.

Our data, when collected covers a range of areas including the more traditional academic subjects such as Reading, Writing, Spelling Mathematics and Speaking and Listening. Our specialist teachers also report against agreed VELS standards in each of their areas – Physical Education, I.T., Music, Library, Multimedia and Art. Science will be the big push in 2011 and again we are currently investigating courses, assessment and ways of assessing our students.

With all of the above we have a school wide tracker that has been designed by a number of staff members according to our specific needs. We constantly change and update how the data is presented and used. In 2010, for example, entering specific student data in a subject area not only shows an individual student but the tracker also generates graphs showing how students are improving, what whole class results look like and how a year level is performing.

Besides strictly academic results we also closely watch students and their social and interpersonal relationships. Where information in these spheres is required we ensure it is passed from teacher to teacher and that our Welfare Officer and Administration staff are continually kept up to date. As a matter of course all conversations with parents and students are written down or recorded.

With thinking or meta-cognitive skills we have a specific planned program in place which addresses 10 thinking skills that are consistent across the school. We generate posters and teaching videos with our own classes and teachers as stars to introduce each new thinking skill. Teachers assess the students through observation and solving written problems. Teams of students work together to solve one, two or three step problems – depending on their grade level and what standards are expected.

As mentioned above we closely follow all students and this information is stored on our school wide assessment tracker. All staff are trained in its use and are reminded when data is to be entered, discussed and evaluated.

Using the school assessment schedule each teacher is aware of the type of assessment and when it takes place. These results are collated on our customised school tracker system. The Leadership and Assessment and Reporting team are responsible for the management and collation of the data. Teachers reflect and discuss their students' performances. Data is used very powerfully to position teachers about where our students are and where we would like our students to be. Strategies are discussed in learning teams to promote growth in all students. Specific methods that are in use, especially with Mathematics are pre and post tests. Rubrics have been developed by teachers so learning is transparent for children and for teachers. All parties know where they are and how to get to the next level. Children are responsible for their own learning.

Over time our data is gathered by individual class teachers, specialists, the welfare officer and administration. We have a long history of data collection and know our students extremely well. This knowledge has enabled us to look for trends, identify strengths and address weaknesses as needed.

The professional learning needs of our teachers are gauged by conducting teacher surveys in specific subject areas, completing skills audits and by using documentation under the Performance and Development Culture requirements. Staff not only fill out planners for their and the school needs, but they also report back to staff when professional development is completed.

As a whole school we offer voluntary P.D. sessions every Thursday night on a variety of topics. We certainly encourage staff to attend, especially those less experienced. For most of these sessions we use the expertise already existing on staff. Sessions can be taken by experienced teachers, graduates, specialists, administration or outsiders. Our planner for each term is made available well in advance so that staff can organise their own timetables around what is being offered.

The whole staff also undergoes P.D. every second Monday evening on a range of school and departmental priorities. This is compulsory for everyone so that as a staff we are all 'on the same page' in regard to our most important areas. Again this can be presented by staff or outside speakers or experts.

Other feedback that staff receive in this P.D. area may be through peer coaching, our walk throughs and discussions during formal performance review cycles and at year level meetings with administration in attendance.

Student assessment takes a number of forms from formal standardised tests, to classroom made up tests, to 'online' testing to national testing to being involved in trials of testing materials, eg. Science. Within the classroom testing takes a number of forms and can be just a simple observation recorded as an anecdotal note. As a school we do have formal requirements but many teachers do use their own methods of assessment and do involve students in their own assessments – especially using student rubrics.

As mentioned above, Courtenay Gardens has a long history of collecting and using student performance data. Our tracker has been adopted by other schools and is widely admired by all who have seen it.

In all subject areas, using AIM/NAPLAN results we have seen improved learning outcomes. For example with our non-fiction writing innovation, we have continued to achieve excellent results in Writing. Our Year 3 students AIM and NAPLAN results have continuously been better than 'like school' and state. Our Year 5 results in 2006 and 2007 showed that the mean for Writing was above both groups. NAPLAN results revealed that Year 5 Writing was comparable again. It is particularly pleasing when comparing our school mean against the last two years of the SFO percentile range for Writing that Courtenay Gardens has excelled in its performance significantly beyond the SFO percentile range.

For 2009 on the Australian Federal Government's MySchool website our students were above in all areas compared to 'like schools' and more significantly, given the backgrounds of our students, performing where they should be in comparison with the entire student population in grades 3 and 5 in Australia.

As a school and whole staff we do analyse our NAPLAN results and come up with the BIG 3 strategies or areas that will be concentrated on in classrooms over the next twelve months. This is included in our schedule of Professional Development has been established to assist teachers with further classroom strategies.

One final positive and something which we are extremely proud of is that one of our Year 6 students participated in the International Competition of Australian schools section in Writing. The category entered was the most difficult one to achieve an award and only one person for the entire state in Year 6 would received this honour. Our student achieved the top score in the State of Victoria. We are extremely proud of all of our students in all areas!

The whole school implementation of the Non Fiction Writing program has had a significant impact across other curriculum areas. Students reflect reason and think about the value of writing and responding to writing in the different text types. All teachers are responsible for promoting the different literary genres in their area of learning. This has led to increased understandings and vocabulary in the different subject areas.

The successes that have been achieved through this program have led to the establishment of a culture of achievement and high expectations. Students have thrived on the whole school approach to the teaching and learning of Writing. As learners, students are confident and able to utilize the required supports to be active in their learning across the curriculum.

The key elements that promoted success in Writing have been transferred to Reading Comprehension Spelling and Mathematics. In 2011 we are extending the program into Science across the curriculum. Some of the main elements that have led to student success include a whole school common approach to teaching and learning, schedules for teaching texts, teacher and student rubrics for clear accountability, teacher collaboration and peer coaching. Explicit teaching instruction, assessment and intervention have promoted successful student learning. The use of multiple sources of data has allowed our teachers to clearly address areas of learning. Teachers work with students to set goals for improvement allowing them to personalise their learning and teachers to differentiate their instruction.

Courtenay Gardens' Writing program was the impetus for success with our teachers and students. It was this success that bred success for future whole school directions. Research indicates that a holistic approach to learning with all involved within the school promotes high achievement with all stakeholders. It motivated educators to review, develop and implement new ideas and approaches to teaching and learning. Our program, with the key elements mentioned above, has given students the belief and 'knows how' that they are high achievers and can achieve anything that they make up their minds to do.