Catalyst

Research and innovation in independent schools

TECHNOLOGY SUPPORTS
Reading comprehension in schools
ICT projects & initiatives
ESL learning in the 21st century

SCAFFOLDING LITERACY
for gifted students experiencing difficulty

SUSTAINABLE INTERVENTIONS:
Building Capacity

WHAT DO SECONDARY LANGUAGE STUDENTS WANT...?

TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS
Gifted students
ESL students

THE COR READING & COMPREHENSION FRAMEWORK
Françoys Gagné PhD is Honorary Professor of Psychology, Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada and is recognised worldwide for his contributions to the field of gifted education. Gagné is widely published and best known for his work on the Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT).

**The Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT).**
As Gagné points out, the Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) proposes a clear distinction between the two most basic concepts in the field of gifted education.

GIFTEDNESS designates the possession and use of untrained and spontaneously expressed superior natural abilities (called aptitudes or gifts), in at least one ability domain, to a degree that places an individual at least among the top 10% of his or her age peers.

TALENT designates the superior mastery of systematically developed abilities (or skills) and knowledge in at least one field of human activity to a degree that places an individual within at least the upper 10% of age peers who are or have been active in that field or fields.

**Overview of the Day (Draft)**
The seminar will engage you with the updated version of the model, how it defines intellectual giftedness, tools and instruments for identification and how to apply the model when programming and developing school provisions.

**NUMBERS ARE STRICTLY LIMITED.**

Registrations required by July 12, 2011
Welcome

Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) is committed to supporting member schools through a focus on the following:

- Effective management and administration of government programs
- Quality professional learning opportunities for teachers and school leaders
- Research and innovation
- Creation of strategic and influential relationships with and between schools, and external agencies

Our new publication “Catalyst: Research and innovation in independent schools”, which will be published twice a year, highlights just a snapshot of the diverse range of projects facilitated by Independent Schools Queensland on behalf of its member schools. These projects focus on the provision of quality professional learning opportunities, research and innovation. They are designed to support schools in building their educational capacity in order to improve student outcomes.

During 2011, Independent Schools Queensland is facilitating over 30 projects with over 250 school participants. Particular acknowledgement is made of the time and commitment given by independent schools to these projects, as well as the work of ISQ staff.

These projects are being supported by funding from the Australian and Queensland Governments.

I hope that “Catalyst: Research and innovation in independent schools” provides useful information for you and your school staff as we all strive for improved educational outcomes for students.

David Robertson
Executive Director
Independent Schools Queensland
May 2011
Research suggests that to manage current and future educational changes, effective schools look back and think forward. This means investigating the best of the past, learning from current exemplars of high-performing schools and systems, and moving ahead inspired by a shared commitment to future excellence and equity for all students and collective ‘informed professionalism’ (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2008, p.59; Report of the International Education Leaders’ Dialogue, 2007, p.9). For this reason projects developed by Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) are based on current research, usually working in partnership with a research partner from a university and adhere to the principles that underpin best practice in professional learning.

Over the years, school effectiveness studies have recognised five characteristics or ‘correlates’ of effective schools (so-called because of their strong correlations with student achievement) - strong instructional leadership, a pervasive instructional focus, a safe and orderly school environment or climate, high expectations for student achievement, and the use of student achievement test data for evaluating program and school success. Based on these characteristics and studies from successful initiatives in other countries, ISQ has used five themes to underpin the projects described in this publication. Each of these themes is described below:

1. **ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE**
   Effective schools typically have collaborative cultures, with teachers and administrators committed to learning together. Staff members are open to new ideas and new practices; they try to identify what is needed to be more successful with teaching and learning. Parents also participate in the school community, as partners.

2. **LEARNING AS THE FOCUS**
   Effective schools create an environment where learning is the top priority, and in which literacy and numeracy are crucial. The focus on improving literacy and numeracy is infused throughout the school program.

3. **LEADERSHIP**
   In effective schools administrators balance challenge and support in their relationships with staff, encouraging and recognising staff contributions. Leadership is distributed and shared, not concentrated, for example, in a single administrator. For most ISQ projects, a project team is nominated on the project application. The team usually comprises a Project Facilitator (a member of the school leadership team) and one or more teacher researchers. The Project Facilitator is pivotal in focusing and supporting the project initiative. For this reason the nominated person ideally will have demonstrated ability to facilitate effective professional learning based
on adult learning principles. The facilitator will participate in team meetings, act as a mentor and ‘critical’ friend, focus and support the research and researcher(s) and source resources. The Project Facilitator will provide leadership to teachers and provide on-going support to sustain the necessary motivation required to complete the project.

### 4 ASSESSMENT AND USE OF DATA

In effective schools administrators and teachers feel a sense of accountability for children’s learning. Data sets from external testing are seen as helpful and informative, and are considered as a source of information about what is happening in the school. However, teachers have also developed, and are using other assessment data including tasks that teachers develop collaboratively. Schools use various methods to track student progress and identify groups of children who need particular assistance.

### 5 LINKS BEYOND THE SCHOOL

Effective schools are not isolated. They forge strong links with their local communities and with other schools. Teachers join networks so that they continue to learn and improve, as members of a broader professional community.

According to the **Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (BES)** prepared by Helen Timperley, Aaron Wilson, Heather Barrar, and Irene Fung from the University of Auckland, the most effective professional learning opportunities, in terms of impact on student outcomes, have the following characteristics:

- Extended time for opportunities to learn is provided;
- External expertise is utilised;
- Teachers are committed to learning;
- Prevailing discourses are challenged;
- Opportunities to participate in a professional community of practice are provided;
- Consistency with wider trends in policy and research is important; and
- Active school leadership supports the project.

These are key components built into all ISQ projects.

### FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Independent Schools Queensland wishes to acknowledge the funding provided from the Australian Government under the following programs: Literacy Numeracy Special Learning Needs; the Smarter Schools National Partnership and the Australian Government Quality Teacher Program.
TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS

The Teachers as Researchers Project is funded through the Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs (LNSLN) Program. It utilises action learning and action research processes.

Action learning is a collaborative process in which a group of people come together to critically reflect on ways to improve their practice and help each other learn from their shared experience by trialing different actions.

Action research is a more formal process by which change and understanding can be pursued simultaneously, to better understand what contributes to the effectiveness of action learning as a process. It is usually described as cyclic, with action and critical reflection taking place in turn. The reflection is used to review the previous action and to plan the next. Individual teachers can also utilise the process. Both action learning and action research have been used often in the field of Education to improve practice.

The aim of this particular research project is to encourage and facilitate development in professional teaching practice by supporting teachers to analyse existing teacher practices and identify elements for change in their own teaching context. In essence teachers are asked to choose a focus, gather data, reflect on and share their findings, plan for action, carry it out, check their results and plan for further action.

Participants in this project are given the opportunity to work with Dr Margaret Fletcher, PhD, Med (Hons), GDip (Reading), Dip Ed (Primary). Dr Fletcher is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Education and Professional Studies at Griffith University. She has research expertise in Literacy theory and practice in primary, secondary and tertiary fields of English education, teacher education, action research and communities of learning, professional development, innovation and practice.

Following are two final case reports from 2010. These are indicative of the high quality of research and learning that took place over the duration of the project.

GIFTED STUDENTS P7

ESL STUDENTS P9
PROJECT GOALS:
• To increase teacher knowledge and understanding of students diagnosed as being Asperger’s within the Junior school.
• To assist teachers to develop appropriate provisions and strategies in their classroom to support students with Asperger’s Syndrome to communicate their mathematical thinking in the Junior school.

ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN:
• Initially the facilitators needed to research the differences between gifted students and gifted students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The facilitation team consisted of the Learning Enhancement Specialist ASD teacher and Head of Gifted Education. Also involved were the Head of Learning Enhancement, a Learning Enhancement teacher and School Psychologist. Research on what is mathematical talent and aspects of Asperger’s Syndrome academic functioning characteristics were also conducted. The Learning Enhancement Specialist ASD teacher and Head of Gifted Education undertook literature reviews to gather further information that was relevant to the field of the study. They obtained borrowing privileges from Griffith University.
• The facilitation team provided cognitive and achievement profiles of students and gained further information about students through further assessment and interviews. The Aspergers’ Syndrome students were interviewed prior to the Professional Development days with the teachers. Their responses were analysed and different strategies were considered as a result.
• Three Professional Development workshops were undertaken off campus with all staff involved in the project.
• Facilitators mentored teachers by observing in class interventions.
• Teachers reflected on information provided by facilitators, planned adjustments for students, observed strategies and modified where necessary through two action learning cycles.

INITIAL FINDINGS AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE PROJECT:
Findings from the student interviews and teacher observations suggested the students had difficulties primarily in communicating their understanding, working in groups, contributing to class discussion, initiating tasks, deciphering what is required if the teacher is not explicit, and in some cases accepting feedback.

Students were observed by teachers to “see the world differently and therefore respond in a creative manner”. The teachers suggested that the students had trouble expressing their thinking in written form and “experience difficulties in communicating how they know something”. One student suggested that he can get better at maths by “studying in his mind. I store facts in my brain and it tries to keep it in storage”.

Teachers found that the students had difficulties in seeing what information is important and how to place this in the context of the task at hand. Some students had difficulty in seeing the point of planning prior to commencing a task. Most students reported, and teachers observed, that they disliked working in groups and most preferred working with technology. Students disliked contributing to class discussion and teachers suggested that this may have been because they did not know how. Another student was observed to:

‘... know and follow rules; he wants to do the right thing. He is happy if the routine is followed, but reacts to change poorly. It is difficult to get him to start tasks. He gets stuck if a basic problem is not solved, he has the wrong book or pencil, and it becomes hard sometimes to motivate him to complete a task. He appears to have difficulty in understanding other people’s points of view. And then he might lash out in frustration at others because he is lacking in the skills to communicate his uncertainty.’

Inability to discuss uncertainties with the teacher was observed in some students. One student stated that he prefers the learning environment to be quiet and likes to:

‘... feel comfortable to ask for help. If I know something, I like to work by myself. If I don’t know something, I like to work in groups ... because someone can explain it to me. I like to work with smart and quiet people.’

At the end of the action learning cycle, and after the strategies in Table 2 were implemented, observed changes in students’ academic work included:
• Students sought more clarification about their work
• They strategically chose groups to work with
• They demonstrated less negative behaviours
• They used step out options
• They reported enjoying more choice in their feedback options.

STUDENT OUTCOMES ACHIEVED IN SPECIFIC PRIORITY AREA(S):
An analysis of the last three semesters’ reports on the students’ maths, in relation to each overarching goal, indicated that:
• Two of the six students had reported improvements in their use of mathematical tools to build mathematical models and generalise those models.
• Four of the six students had reported improvements in selecting information or techniques needed to investigate a situation.
• Five of the six students had reported improvements in using natural and mathematical language to communicate their understanding.
• All students either received the same overall grade or improved in their grade. For four of the six students, mathematics was their highest graded subject. All students received a Commendable work ethic for Semester 2 2010. These results indicate the students have been able to improve their level of mathematical communication.
TEACHER LEARNING OUTCOMES ACHIEVED:
1. Increased teacher knowledge and understanding of the profile of students with Asperger’s Syndrome/high ability (see Table 1).

2. Developing effective teaching strategies to support students with Asperger’s Syndrome in communicating their understanding in mathematics.

Some strategies, which were employed originally as preventative, went on to support the student during phase 1 implementation. Some modifications were made by teachers over the six week period (see Table 2).

WHAT WORKED IN THE PROJECT AND WHY?
- Teachers embraced the research project and feel inspired to trial new intervention strategies based on research findings of the literature review.
- The process of trial and planning from the workshop days was effective because teachers felt that they had ownership of the project.

The action research model provided a strong structure to recognise the differences in the teachers’ understanding and current strategies. It has allowed them to engage in professional discussions and openly examine possible strategies to implement.

The model also allowed the Learning Enhancement team to work together to deliver support and research information for the teachers. As the cycles evolved, it also allowed the team to examine aspects of their learning and plan further directions.

Teachers have improved in their understanding of high ability Asperger’s Syndrome students and how they can assist them to improve their mathematical communication. Having two co-facilitators for the project has allowed us the opportunity to continue to drive the project forward and collaborate in the different areas.

### Table 1 - Findings Regarding Teacher Knowledge and Understanding at the Beginning of the Action Research:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths in Teacher Knowledge and Understanding</th>
<th>Gaps in Teacher Knowledge and Understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify general characteristics of Asperger’s Syndrome.</td>
<td>The AS student’s weakness in central coherence and poor executive functioning of the brain - classroom implications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify student’s difficulty with social interaction, communication.</td>
<td>Intervention strategies to support academic tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student’s special interest area</td>
<td>Understanding cognitive assessments and classroom implications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student’s preference for routine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preventative</th>
<th>Supportive</th>
<th>Corrective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allocate role to student</td>
<td>Flexibility in grouping</td>
<td>Step out/step back in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour-coded timetable and “to do” list</td>
<td>Providing a rationale for the need to communicate mathematical thinking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish explicit social and behavioural expectations</td>
<td>Making goal of task and time frames explicit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strategies found to target multiple areas of concern:
- Flexible Grouping
- Colour code timetable and to do list
- Step out/step back in
- Establish explicit social and behavioural expectations
- Making goal of task and time frames explicit
- Providing a rationale for the need to communicate mathematical thinking

On reflection, adjustments made to strategies with success included:
- Scaffolding of tasks into small steps
- Suggesting changes to students at the end of their work rather than in the middle of their work
- Showing students what good exemplars are like and encouraging analytical comparisons between the different exemplars
- Encourage students to verbalise their understanding- automatic self talk

Feedback Sheets developed to support student progress:
1. Traffic Lights
2. Task Reflection Sheets
3. Smiley faces
4. Mountain Journey- where are you?
5. Personal Goal and work ethic
6. Rating feedback: numerical scale
7. 2 + and a constructive comment
8. UGS How close are you?- What do you need to do to reach them?

ONGOING ACTIVITIES PLANNED AS A RESULT OF THE PROJECT:
There has been overwhelming interest in our research- both within the College, within the state (QAGTC - Queensland Association for Gifted and Talented Children) and at the Asia-Pacific Conference hosted by the AAEGT (Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented). There was standing room only for our presentation on this topic.
A subsequent research question was developed: What kinds of support might modify teachers’ attitudes towards using music in their classrooms? We quickly established a pattern of support that transformed teachers from quizzical onlookers to enthusiastic research partners:

1. A staff afternoon tea to introduce and hopefully intrigue teachers. This was a wonderful meeting that was successful in arousing interest in the teachers present.
2. John Leigh, the Key Researcher, modelled activities in classes with the class teacher observing.
3. In their classes, teachers trialled activities developed by John.
4. Three PD days were set aside for the teachers to develop their own music-based activities with John serving as adviser and trouble shooter.
5. Reflective journals were given to the teachers at the initial staff afternoon tea, and reflection was part of each stage of development.

A.B. PATERSON COLLEGE continued

As a result, we need to continue and expand the project. The suggested focus areas will be on examining issues regarding Asperger’s Syndrome students’ achievement and teachers’ understanding of their strategies to assist their academic improvement. In the early childhood and Senior school areas as well as continuing with the Junior school student focus.

This project increased in complexity as we evolved the action learning phases. Remaining true to the action learning model ensured the facilitators continued to focus on the outcomes for the students and teachers involved.

There is little research in the area of high ability Asperger’s Syndrome students and strategies to support them throughout the different phases of schooling. With the increased identification of these students, this is an urgent area to address. We addressed this issue at the Asia Pacific AAEGT Conference and as a result were asked to submit an article for publication regarding Asperger’s Syndrome students with high ability and mathematical communication difficulties. This would not have been possible without the support of the ISQ grant.
TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS continued

ESL STUDENTS

CITIPOINTE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE continued

I think the lesson is very good. It’s interesting, especially the song. It help me learn the grammar well and I can remember the song. I enjoy it.

This song was good. I enjoyed it. First time I can’t understand the song’s meaning, but now I can understand about song more than first time. I can remember about the song, also I can know about the grammar much better.

Fresh idea. Easy to understand grammar. Enjoyed very much.

Built into each unit that we have developed are worksheets and writing tasks to assess students’ progress. There has been consistently good work on the worksheets with over 90% of students showing they could understand and use the grammar point. In the past using conventional approaches for grammar teaching, this rate averaged 60-70%.

TEACHER LEARNING OUTCOMES TO DATE:

Reflection: Teachers are keeping reflective journals to write about their needs and expectations as well as to reflect on their use of music activities with their students.

Teaching: Teachers are learning how valuable music is in helping students engage enthusiastically with language learning.

Resource preparation: Teachers are developing skills in accessing sites like YouTube, downloading internet material, superimposing text onto video clips and using karaoke resources. Teachers are also taking the initiative to develop their own music-based activities, including activities for Interactive White Boards.

Language acquisition: Teachers are discovering the benefits of a multimodal approach to language teaching.

The affective domain: Teachers are having fun with music in their classrooms. There is an enormous amount of material available for adaptation, and teachers are developing confidence in selecting and adapting materials.

WHAT WORKED AND WHY?

• Giving significant time-out for the Key Researcher to prepare activities and units of work to use as a model and stimulus for teachers.

• Guiding teachers in the ALAR process has helped them to realise the power of the research process.

• Demonstrating music-based activities until teachers are confident to use the resources independently.

• Giving support to teachers until they are confidently innovating and adapting materials for classroom use.

• Taking time to admire every achievement, no matter how small.

• Creating PD opportunities so teachers have time to engage in discussion, work in teams to develop music-based activities and reflect on progress to date.

• Teachers have been given time to engage in this project so that it has not impinged upon their normal duties. The Facilitator role of keeping the research focused and encouraging and valuing teacher effort has worked well to move the project forward.

This project has been a source of excitement and inspiration among the teachers involved.

We’re very grateful to ISQ for making this opportunity available.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS QUEENSLAND 2011 STATE CONFERENCE

CONVERSATIONS

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY THE COMMONWEALTH BANK

27 - 29 July 2011

RYDGES ESPLANADE RESORT, CAIRNS
ICT Projects & Initiatives

Teaching & Learning
Australian Government Quality Teacher Program (AGQTP)

School-based Project Component
The AGQTP program funded 13 schools in 2011 and was launched with a two day event at the Queensland State Library on March 10 and 11. Schools put forward proposals and were funded to implement a “School-based Project” which focuses on the professional development of teachers to use ICT-based pedagogy in their classrooms. The projects this year include:

- iPad implementations
- IWB initiative
- ICT Interdisciplinary Units through IB - MYP
- Various Content/Learning Management System Implementations
  - SharePoint
  - Moodle
  - Schoolbox
  - “The Learning Place” affiliate trial

Leadership Component
The “Leadership” component of AGQTP has begun with a media gathering tour to Melbourne. Recorded video interviews with leaders in pioneering schools with mature 1:1 programs were taken. This process will continue in Queensland and other states. Eventually a media resource (disk & web based) will be compiled for the benefit of our Queensland school leaders.

A virtual leadership forum is also planned for later in the year. Stimulus resources will be supplied and senior leadership team members from various independent schools will be encouraged to contribute online.

ICT Management

ICT Manager’s Forums
Historically two events are held per year and this practice continues. The first forum for 2011 was held on the 27th of April in the refurbished “Multi-Function” room at ISQ. Recent forum days have seen the usual array of vendor presentations enhanced by open discussion sessions, online back channel tools and web conferencing for managers attending remotely.

Group Purchasing Agreements
ISQ is increasing its efforts to offer aggregating buying agreements for its members for the purchase of software, hardware & IT services. Recent improvements have been made to the options for Microsoft and Adobe software licensing. We are on the lookout for new arrangements and there are some interesting options on the horizon.

ICT Survey
An ongoing survey process is in place to gather information on all facets of member school’s ICT operations. The intention of the survey is to inform ISQ in its planning and initiatives as well as create networking opportunities between schools using similar products, services and pedagogy.

Virtual Professional Development Network
The first program of online sessions was offered to members in early April. The “Open Program 1” offers 14 virtual sessions where participants can receive Professional Development presentations to their desktops. All participants can communicate with voice (VOIP) and screen control can be shared amongst participants. Other programs planned for the network this year:

- E-Learning Facilitator Meeting (May)
- Leadership Forum – July/August
- Open Program 2 – Sept/Oct

The content of these sessions at present is predominantly “E-Learning” in nature but the ultimate aim is to have a range of teaching and management areas using the mechanism.

ISQ E-Learning Forum
http://isqelrn.posterous.com/
was created in 2010 and is growing into a rich E-Learning resource. Regular posts are delivered to subscriber mailboxes as well as being rendered and tagged on the blog site. Currently the site boasts over 9500 views, 222 posts, 82 formal subscribers and many casual readers.
SUSTAINABLE INTERVENTIONS:
Building Capacity

‘This Pilot has made significant changes to how we have approached the pedagogical delivery of reading in our school. We have developed a sound system including the non negotiable principles that have resulted in improvement. We are of course on an ongoing journey as new staff arrive and some staff leave. It will be a constant process of growth and development.’

The Pilot “Sustainable Interventions: Building Capacity” involved 12 schools and over 300 students.

KEY OUTCOMES
Significant improvements occurred in reading comprehension levels of students involved in the Pilot project.

- At the commencement of the project only 38% of students were reading at or above the expected level for their enrolled year level. Upon completion of the Pilot, 80% of students were reading at or above the expected level. Within this group, two-thirds of students were reading more than one year above expected level.

- At the commencement of the Pilot, 29% of students were more than one year below the expected level. Upon completion of the Pilot this figure was reduced to 10%.

- Irrespective of whether a student was performing at or below the expected reading age the majority of students experienced growth of over 2.5 years, although the period between pre and post-testing was only 18 months. In the case of those students performing at least one year below expectation in 2009, nearly two-thirds of students (64.8%) experienced growth in reading comprehension of at least 2.5 years. This compared to 56.2% of those students who were performing at or above expected reading comprehension levels experiencing growth of at least 2.5 years (see Figure 1).

The integrated approach adopted, based on an evidence-based multi-layered framework that targets students, teachers and school leaders have led to improvements in other curriculum areas.

- Increased willingness by teachers and school-leaders to address whole-of-school improvement. The evidence presented by their own student data of the success that can be achieved through cohesive and planned approaches to improvement, combined with the collegiality developed through the course project, has acted as a catalyst for further interventions being planned and undertaken by schools.

- The value of data is now being recognised. Data is not only being seen as a mechanism to measure performance, but an essential component in informing future practice.

BACKGROUND
The project addressed three levels of literacy intervention. First of all, the focus was on establishing the underlying difficulties causing students to not reach the required year level standard. Second, teachers were guided in recognising these underlying difficulties and in planning appropriate intervention programs that adopted evidence based, high yield strategies. The third layer focused on whole school approaches with the strategies used in the intervention programs incorporated into the whole school plan for literacy instruction.

Throughout the Pilot, teachers and nominated school leaders were supported through a series of professional learning days, school visits, online discussion forums, and other networking opportunities. The professional learning days and school visits were facilitated by the QUT Literacy Secretariat and Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ). School visits provided

**FIGURE 1 GROWTH IN READING COMPREHENSION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Growth Well Below Expectation</th>
<th>Growth Well Above Expectation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
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Growth in Reading Comprehension Age (Years)
contextualised, job embedded professional learning opportunities for teachers. They also provided opportunities for the team to provide feedback and develop future plans.

EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH

Strong, evidence based principles underpinned the Pilot with a heavy emphasis on the work of Fullan, Hill and Crévola, as well as researchers such as Pearson, Pressley, Marzano, Hattie, Keene, Zimmerman and Fountas and Pinnel. The Pilot recognised the importance of instructional goals and infrastructure to support sustainable change. The expected change being the move away from previous practice to a situation where teachers become diagnostic practitioners with a solid core of beliefs and understandings about effective literacy instruction. As a result the teachers move towards the capacity to develop personalised programs that match the instructional needs of students.

Following the ‘Breakthrough’ principles (Fullan, Hill and Crévola, 2006), three components were at the core of the Pilot: personalisation, precision and professional learning (See Figure 1). The belief that all students can achieve, given time and support, binds all of the components together. The personalisation component builds on the work of Carol Ann Tomlinson in differentiation, and strives to deliver learning opportunities that are tailored to the students’ needs. Precision refers to the use of assessment to determine the needs of students so that instruction can be specific and targeted. Professional learning for teachers which is ongoing and grounded in practice supports teachers in the process of personalising learning so that it is precise to the learning needs of students.

Figure 2 also shows the other vital components that underpin the approach taken in this Pilot. These are assessment literacy; school and classroom organisation; classroom teaching; professional learning communities; intervention and assistance; and home, school and community partnerships. Leadership and coordination at all levels are necessary to ensure the effectiveness of the first two layers.

According to Fullan, Hill and Crévola, each of these components must be addressed and performing well for schools to be truly effective. Addressing each of these components is an ongoing process that develops over time. It is for this reason that many of the schools in the Pilot saw the Pilot as an opportunity for school transformation that will be a process that will continue beyond the Pilot phase.

RESULTS

As a result of the Pilot teachers have begun to employ the following evidence-based, high-yield strategies for improving student achievement:

• setting high expectations for students (Brophy & Good, 1974)
• using assessment for learning to guide instruction (Chappuis et al., 2005)
• providing frequent, useful and useable feedback for students (Black & William, 1998)
• understanding the meaning and scope of curriculum expectations (Reeves, 2002)
• engineering effective classroom discussion, questions and learning tasks that elicit evidence of learning (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001)

As a consequence of the practices introduced in the Pilot, a significant gain in reading achievement is evident. This improvement could be seen through the PROBE (Prose Reading Observation, Behaviour and Evaluation) testing conducted throughout the Pilot. The PROBE is a reading assessment that combines evaluation of reading accuracy, reading behavior and in-depth reading comprehension. At the commencement of the Pilot only 38% of students were reading at or above the expected level for their enrolled year level. Upon completion of the Pilot, 80% of students were reading at or above the expected level. Within this group, 67% of students were reading more than one year above expected level. Significantly, 70% of students improved more than two years according to the PROBE assessment. Upon completion of the Pilot only 10% of students were reading more than one year level below the expected level.

Teachers have reported that students are more engaged in their reading with increased confidence. A typical comment from teachers is “…students who were very low, reluctant readers are now reading with more confidence. There has been an overall boost in interest for the boys particularly. The students are able to confidently work in small group situations. They remain more on task and actively engaged.” Teachers have also reported that students are now demonstrating improved metacognitive thinking. Metacognition is the process of thinking about one’s own thought processes. It is an important skill because it enables students to reflect on what they know and need to know, and draw on a variety of strategies to make sense of what they see, hear, and say. Metacognitive skills give students the ability to plan and monitor their own learning (Branford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). Teachers play an important role in modelling how to think metacognitively to construct meaning from texts. Throughout the Pilot teachers’ understanding of the importance of metacognition increased and consequently they were able to model this important skill to their students.

From current research into effective schools in literacy instruction, eight areas of knowledge and skills were identified as being important for teachers to possess, and translate into classroom practice, if overall student outcomes for the Pilot project were to be achieved. Survey results of teachers and school leaders indicate that teachers have become more confident in all eight areas. Interestingly though, there are still areas where some teachers are not feeling confident. This finding could be influenced by a number of factors and highlights some of the challenges for schools. In some cases the finding indicates the realisation that there is more to know and that there is a need for continual learning. As Fullan, Hill and Crévola (2006) indicate, teachers need refined and focused knowledge all the time. It is a never-ending proposition.

The majority of schools have seen this project as an opportunity for whole school change and see the Pilot as just the beginning of this process.
AN ESL LEARNING DEVICE
for the 21st century learner

Learning opportunities outside the classroom are in the palm of their hands

As education moves into the 21st century with schools obtaining grants for the ‘digital revolution’ so too has technology dramatically changed for new learning capabilities. Both teachers and students are becoming more familiar and flexible with the mode and method of learning experiences in the classroom. Most recently, educators are also tapping into the potential of learning to occur outside of school, which goes beyond regular revision techniques, by using technological tools as a suitable platform for this to happen. As ESL learners and teachers currently understand, the average learning day for an ESL student is far more complex when learning and living in an English speaking environment. These learners need efficient and constant English teaching to ensure they maintain adequate levels of understanding in all of their subjects. By combining the ESL learners’ needs and new technological advances, ESL learning and teaching can be more efficient and easily extend beyond the school day.

An initiative, from Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) and Learnosity, has included 10 trial schools to develop the concept of portable learning with a focus on ESL learning needs. They have developed a combination of web-based learning and assessment with a hand-held device for the students to be able to access their learning anytime throughout the day. A common issue voiced by ESL teachers is in speaking and listening tasks and how students can adequately practice these skills while the teacher allocates one-on-one guidance. This program has helped to overcome this issue as well as extend learning beyond the classroom in a mode that is engaging to students. Teachers are able to create the speaking and listening tasks on the website then sync this with the students’ iPod Touch. The students can then view and listen to tasks then practice their own speaking by talking into the device. They can instantly hear their own responses and repeat it as many times as necessary before syncing the device back to the website for the teacher to access. Further, teachers are able to listen to student’s responses, mark and comment on their speaking, then sync those comments back to the student’s device so they can constantly track how they are performing.

Griplas and Pillans (2010) discuss the importance of planned scaffolding for ESL learners and reaching students at the point of need. This way students can self-access and move forward to become ‘experts’ in the particular area given. This program has allowed students to clearly listen to their own speaking and use self-evaluation methods to correct their own responses before submitting to their teacher. By doing this, many students have found areas they can improve in, or areas they need to practice more simply by listening to their own voice. Alongside this feature is the ability for the teacher to create marks and comments to sync back to their device. Students are receiving constant feedback that is not bound by the constraints of timetabled lessons. The teacher can scaffold their speaking and listening tasks accordingly and allow for students to work through activities at their own pace at a suitably convenient time.

These factors have also helped increase the students’ level of motivation. As Harmer (2009) explains, motivation is a key factor in any learning experience and sustaining this motivation must be carefully considered by the teacher. He also discusses the concept of ‘agency’(p.21), where students must take some responsibility for their learning and be the catalysts that drive the learning forward. Within the current program, the portability of the device has allowed ESL students to practice their speaking both inside and outside the ESL classroom and school setting. Students are also highly motivated to use a current, popular device whereby learning becomes more fun and engaging for them. They must be responsible for utilising the device and accessing the tasks as well as responding to them. This responsibility coupled with their motivation makes for engaging and stimulating learning experiences to occur wherever the student is throughout the day.

I think this is where children are at, I think this is where education is at. The Applications they can use to enhance their learning and to research as well as it being a small device to use and take with them... the results of their school work have shown that they have improved tremendously. Just in this Term we have noticed a huge improvement, especially in their speaking skills.

It’s changed my teaching practice and I think as an experienced teacher we all need to learn new things all the time and we must keep up with the trends.

Robyn Yeomens
Kings Christian College

Our students tend to be very shy when using English, so we needed something that would engage them actually using the language whilst also making them feel comfortable.

Robyn Goldman
Ipswich Girls Grammar School

From the first lesson it was very engaging and a lot of fun. The amount of laughter that’s occurring tells me that they’re interested and involved. They’re now speaking up and speaking out in class, there’s more communication amongst the class on what they’ve been doing and things they’ve found and learnt.

Justine Bomm
Ipswich Girls Grammar School

This is a wonderful opportunity for students to continue their learning in their own time as well as acquiring very important macro skills. It gives me the opportunity to be more innovative and to work closely with specific student’s needs. Language learning can sometimes be very academic but if we can marry it with playing and they are still acquiring the skills without actually realising it and keeping up to date with technology I think it’s the perfect match.

Lana Van Den Berg
Citipointe Christian College
As well as increasing the students learning experiences and motivation, it has also helped efficiency for teachers. Harmer (2009) discusses common problems associated with speaking and listening tasks within a classroom environment. With factors such as noise, embarrassment and limited one-to-one teacher and student time, students and teachers can find the lesson difficult to manage and achieve desired learning outcomes. However, by utilising the hand-held devices, teachers have commented on the ability to hear student’s speaking tasks who would have normally been too shy or embarrassed to speak in front of a class. Also, with personal feedback synced to the student’s device, these students can gain more confidence by knowing they will not be given feedback in front of others.

In conjunction with this benefit is the teacher having digital student files to refer and respond to for each student. They can manage these through various programs including Microsoft Excel, or simply through the website. The teacher can also be in a quiet environment to listen to student responses and create carefully produced responses to send to the student. The teacher can also instantly re-send the task if needed or send further follow up questions if more evidence of speaking and listening levels are needed. By doing this, classroom time can be spent on other aspects of the ESL curriculum including group projects and interactive teaching methods.

When providing ESL learners with new methods for learning, teachers should consider what tools they will need for the program to succeed. With the great increase of technological advancements over the past decade it is advantageous for teachers to consider its uses within the classroom and embrace the technological world we now live in. The program with ISQ and Learnosity has given teachers the ability to utilise portable learning tools for an increase in the regularity of learning opportunities for their students. As the program continues through its trial phases, more capabilities are being recognised for its use both within ESL learning and across the mainstream curriculum. Misconceptions or hesitancies of using this type of tool for learning are disappearing within the trial schools and teachers across all subjects are now seeing its relevance as a valid learning tool for 21st century learners. It is hoped that through this program, more advanced English learning continues to be achieved as well as efficiency in teacher practice. Also, that more schools will see the value of hand-held devices as a valid and motivational learning tool for their students.

Integrating technology into the curriculum is integral for students learning because they are already highly motivated to use this technology so it’s important we tap into that enthusiasm.

Nicholas Lim
Citipointe Christian College

I just wanted to share something with you. One of my students has started using the “Notes” application as a diary. He writes a diary entry everyday about his day. He loves doing it and I think it is such a great way for him to practice writing.

The iPod trial has certainly put ESL on the map in the Junior school. ESL is now considered to be “very cool” and I have had so many English speaking students come up to me and ask if they could join ESL. Overall I have found the trial to be a very positive experience. Whilst the Learnosity program has been a lot of work I have found the iPods to be very beneficial for the students. I am constantly finding great new free Apps for the students to work on their weaker areas at home and it is also a very useful research tool. The students are really excited about having their own iPod and they have shown great responsibility with them. Overall it has been a great learning experience for the students on so many levels. The parents are also very happy for the extra support and experience.

Aimee Wilson
Somerset College

This program has allowed students to clearly listen to their own speaking...
In the third term of 2010, 1,311 secondary students responded to an online survey which culminated in the report Secondary Student Views and Perceptions: Languages other than English in Independent Schools in Queensland.

The survey was designed so that not all questions were asked of all students i.e. students who previously learnt a language other than English (LOTE) but were not currently learning answered different questions, to current learners. The cohort comprised 96% current students (1,272) and the rest were not (53 students).

**CONTEXT**
It is widely known that the number of students choosing to study a LOTE beyond the compulsory years is low. However, there are exceptions where schools have more than 10% of students continuing to senior secondary.

This survey was an endeavour to find out from secondary students their views, ideas, perceptions and opinions about the learning of languages. It is envisaged that the findings and recommendations from the report will assist school leadership teams and teachers to review and reflect on their current language programs and practice and see how these align with the views and perceptions of students. In the end, it is students’ learning of languages that matters.

**SURVEY COVERAGE**
Out of the 1,311 students who responded, only 12 students did not identify their year levels.
- 1,267 students (96.6%) were currently studying a language
- 44 students (3.4%) were not. However they had previously studied a language.

**LANGUAGES**
1,242 students (94.7%) identified the languages(s) they had either learnt or were learning. Of the languages learnt by students:
- Japanese (35.1%)
- French (29.8%)
- German (16.3%)
- Chinese (Mandarin) (12.8%).

**DO STUDENTS LIKE LEARNING A LOTE?**
Of the 1,267 students who responded to this question, there were 32% who no longer study a LOTE. 28.1% did not enjoy learning a LOTE. But over 71.9% had enjoyed learning a LOTE but were no longer studying one.

Yet the proportion of students who enjoy learning a LOTE currently is 11% higher than the students who had previously studied and enjoyed studying a LOTE but no longer do so.

**FUTURE INTENTIONS OF STUDENTS TO CONTINUE WITH LOTE TO YEAR 12**
Approximately 73.5 % (1,055 out of 1,311 who responded) indicated that they would continue with LOTE to Year 12. Over half of these students intend to study LOTE until the end of schooling while the remainder indicated their intention of studying LOTE at university.

**REASONS FOR NOT CONTINUING WITH LOTE**
The most frequently cited reason from students for not continuing with LOTE was that LOTE was not considered relevant or important to their career choice. Other reasons were that “it was boring” or timetabling clashes when students choose a more preferred option. However it was interesting to note that students view the study of Mandarin as useful.
**REASONS FOR LEARNING A LOTE**

When asked to identify reasons for learning a LOTE, the majority gave multiple reasons:

- 54.5% enjoyed learning the language
- 40.6% intention to travel
- 34.6% like the culture
- 31.9% wish to talk to others in their own language
- 30.8% was because it was compulsory in schools

The least commonly cited reasons:

- 6.7% language spoken at home
- 10.8% helps to build relationships
- 11.4% like the teacher
- 11.6% helps with career choice
- 14.6% parent wishes

**WHAT DO STUDENTS LIKE WHEN LEARNING A LOTE?**

To gauge what kind of activities students like in learning a LOTE, they were asked to agree/disagree with a number of statements commencing with the phrase ‘I like...’ These statements reflected the different teaching strategies/activities that may be used in the LOTE classroom. The ‘strongly agreed’ responses were:

- 64.6% liked visiting the country where the language is spoken
- 54.9% liked watching DVDs, films, YouTubes etc in the language

The least favoured activity was using the:

- language labs (32.6%)

**WHAT WOULD STUDENTS LIKE MORE TIME FOR....?**

This question differs from the previous question in that the purpose is to find out whether they felt that sufficient time was allocated to particular activities.

Over half of students indicated they would like ‘a lot more time’ or ‘more time’ spent on:

- A greater variety of different activities (74.0%)
- Games and puzzles to be used in the classroom (73.0%)
- Practice speaking the language (67.6%)
- Opportunities to access the internet (61.5%)
- Activities where we listen to the language (53.2%)

Conversely, over 50% of students indicated they did not want any more time, or less time spent on:

- Time in the language lab (if there was one) (63.1%)
- Learning the language (more class time) (58.0%)
- Activities where we write in the language (56.3%)
- Online activities to be used (wikis etc.) (52.6%)

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

There were several recommendations that came out of the report. Among them were the following:

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** ISQ should work with leadership teams in schools through discussions, forums and meaningful conversations, to ensure quality language programs are consistently offered and fully supported. An emphasis should be on sound pedagogical approaches that lead to student-centred, intellectually engaging, real world, communicative and fun student learning experiences. School leadership should be considered as an integral indicator of successful LOTE programs.

Recommendation 1 is focused on leadership to transform LOTE programs so that they retain quality and integrity whilst also responding to contemporary student learning preferences. The use of learning technologies might be
WHAT DO SECONDARY LANGUAGE STUDENTS WANT.....? continued

considered here as well as immersion and partial immersion programs and flexible learning pathways. It should be recognised that students are already engaging with some highly enjoyable quality language learning experiences but that these need to be more broadly and consistently offered.

RECOMMENDATION 2: ISQ should support language teachers through professional learning to further their knowledge and experience with language teaching approaches that are student-centred, intellectually engaging, real world, communicative and fun. Professional learning would include pedagogically driven use of learning technologies that enriches language learning (such as virtual field trips, technology-enhanced game and adventure-based learning and the use of mobile technologies, podcasts and digital stories).

An eminent language educator and researcher in this field, Jo Lo Bianco, eloquently wrote ‘good teaching is the single most important controllable variable in successful language learning’ (2009, p.28). However he also cautions that ‘this in turn depends crucially on both the receptiveness of schools hosting language programs and the quality of teacher education’ (p.28). Language teachers need to be supported. They need to be supported by school leaders, by one another and by being provided with sufficient time to change practices, especially those practices where learning technologies are involved. Language teachers require opportunities for growth, and for sharing. Informal and formal professional learning and further university level study should be considered.

RECOMMENDATION 3: ISQ should provide professional learning for teachers on how to teach language learners to learn languages and how they can use technologies effectively to support their language learning.

Recommendation 3 continues the theme of professional learning for teachers. Growing up in a largely monolingual society means that many of our students do not acquire multiple languages naturally. This means that they need to learn how to learn languages. While this recommendation should be commenced in primary or early childhood years of education, the ability to learn a language is pivotal to student success. Conversely, students who do not have access to language learning strategies and repertoires are likely candidates for attrition.

Learning technologies offer an increasing and engaging range of real world and student-centred learning opportunities as well as meaningful contact with virtual language communities. However, growing up in a digital world does not mean that our students know how to learn using new technologies. Whilst our students might be used to using technologies in their daily life there can be considerable benefits from learning how to use these technologies to learn languages.

RECOMMENDATION 4: ISQ should work with school communities to promote LOTE education that better encompasses the intellectual, cultural and humanistic benefits of language learning with less emphasis on economic and career benefits.

Recommendation 4 conveys the need to re-think the way that language studies are valued, portrayed and promoted to students, their parents and the community. The study of languages is often promoted for their utilitarian uses such as economic and career benefits. However, students are unconvinced of these benefits and this approach leaves languages at the whim of global politics and economics. Rather, broader and more encompassing benefits should be promoted to students. This proposition is echoed nationally (e.g. ACARA Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages, 2011). Under this recommendation, ISQ would work with school communities to produce and share promotional materials that arouse students’ curiosity and inspire them to study LOTE. An example of this would be ISQ’s project with schools on using Flip Cams (small hand-held video cameras). This project focused on students and teachers working collaboratively to develop contemporary resources that promote LOTE studies.

CONCLUSION

What is captured here is but a snapshot of the report Secondary Student Views and Perceptions: Languages other than English in Independent Schools in Queensland. The students have provided rich and important data to inform the leadership team and teachers of languages with ‘more than enough food for thought’. Students have had their say. How schools and teachers of languages respond will determine and set the direction for the future of language programs and teaching.

Students want more time to learn languages, more opportunities in schools to select languages, more variety in activities and learning experiences but above all they want to know why the learning of languages are relevant to their careers and their future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Please note: The term LOTE has been used in the survey rather than languages to ensure that students are aware that it refers to the learning of languages other than English.
SCAFFOLDING LITERACY
for gifted students experiencing difficulty

This article focuses on a project developed as a professional learning opportunity for teachers from independent schools in Queensland. Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) has a long history of supporting gifted education in various ways. One particular way which has proven to be highly successful is the involvement of teachers in project based professional learning. Typically the projects run over the course of one year and focus on a particular aspect of gifted education, for example identification and policy development, differentiated classroom instruction and strategies to support gifted visual spatial learners. One such project focused on gifted students experiencing difficulty and involved over twenty teachers from ten different independent schools. All of the students identified by the teachers were gifted with a learning difficulty and in all cases this learning difficulty manifested as a difficulty in reading.

Second, although gifted students with a reading difficulty may experience difficulties with phonological awareness and score poorly on tests which focus on word recognition, they will be able to comprehend texts at a higher level (Beech & Singleton, 2004; Casalis, 2004; Volker, Lopata, & Cook-Cottone, 2006). Due to their higher cognitive skills, they are able to compensate for their limited skills in other areas (Casalis, 2004). For example, they may be able to apply their general knowledge and syntactic knowledge to work out what a passage or text means, rather than focussing on each word.

It is recognised that gifted students with a reading difficulty need to work much harder to achieve average results in reading and consequently in other print based curriculum areas. (Reis, Neu, & McGuire, 1995; Silverman, 1998). This constant struggle needs to be understood in order that adequate scaffolding of tasks is provided and that underperformance is not misinterpreted as laziness or lack of ability generally (Davies & McNeil, 2005).

The impact of the continual struggle and frustrations faced by gifted students with a reading difficulty cannot be overlooked and requires that a different instructional approach is taken. An instructional approach explored by teachers in the project as a way to reduce this impact was the Scaffolding Literacy approach.

WHAT IS SCAFFOLDING LITERACY?
Scaffolding Literacy (SL) is an instructional approach designed to scaffold students in reading and writing challenging, age-appropriate texts, and to make knowledge about text and written language explicit (Culican, 2006). The approach is characterised by a well-theorized rationale based on neo-Vygotskian principles of learning, along with a carefully designed sequence of strategies for teaching reading, spelling and writing (Adoniou & Mackan-Horarak, 2007). The origin of Scaffolding Literacy is in the work originally done by Max Kemp at the University of Canberra.
An important characteristic of SL is its ‘high challenge’ content (Adoniou & Mackan-Horarik, 2007). It is this aspect that we believe benefits gifted students who have a reading difficulty because the students are exposed to a selection of authentic well-written literature, rather than support programs with low level reading materials. The students are presented with texts that are more in line with their cognitive ability, while supported through a sequence of steps to ensure that the students experience success.

**HOW WAS THE SCAFFOLDING LITERACY APPROACH USED IN THE PROJECT?**

Teachers participating in the ISQ project were involved in professional learning days which introduced the key identifying features of the Scaffolding Literacy pedagogy (its ‘DNA’), i.e. the underlying principles which must all be in place at any one time for the approach to be effective. Teachers had an opportunity to work with Misty Adoniou from the University of Canberra. Misty has worked extensively on the Scaffolding Literacy pedagogy developed through the Schools and Community Centre at the University of Canberra. On the first professional learning day teachers were introduced to the pedagogy so that they could then trial it with their students. On a second follow up day teachers met again with Misty to clarify their understanding and take a more in-depth look at the teaching sequence.

The following section briefly describes each element of the SL sequence and the adaptations teachers made to cater for the learning needs of their gifted students with reading difficulties. For more detailed information about the approach please refer to Scaffolding Literacy meets ESL: some insights from ACT classrooms in TESOL in Context, 17(1).

**Text Selection**

The Scaffolding Literacy approach requires the use of a narrative text, although in other adaptations non-fiction texts are also incorporated. In this project the teachers chose to work with narrative texts. The chosen texts should contain good examples of literate language so that the language analysis work in the sequence is dealing with rich and meaningful examples of language use. For example, a narrative would need to include vivid descriptions of setting or character, passages focussed on a character’s thoughts and feelings, dramatic dialogue, suspenseful or emotive language, powerful imagery and so on (Adoniou & Mackan-Horarik, 2007).

Texts used in the ISQ project included: Fox by Margaret Wild, Mud Pony by Caron Lee Cohen, Stellaluna by Janell Cannon, Miss Bilby by Colin Thiele, Lighthouse Keeper’s Lunch by David and Rhonda Armitage and Charlotte’s Web by E.B.White.

**Text Orientation**

Once the texts have been selected the teacher carefully orients the student to the text. Instead of using more familiar pre-reading prediction strategies with questions such as: “What do you think this story is about?” and “What do you think will happen next?” the students are ‘told’ the text in a story telling mode (Adoniou & Mackan-Horarik, 2007). Teachers are able to draw on the illustrations (with younger readers’ books), the story’s meaning and even some of the author’s language in their oral-telling of the story. Teachers are encouraged to use the wording of the text, especially those likely to be difficult for students so that students are better able to predict these when they read the text later. Once the teacher has talked about the text the student, the text is read by the teacher to the student (Adoniou & Mackan-Horarik, 2007).

**Adaptations and Outcomes**

- The telling of the story without reading it to the students captured their interest and imagination and stimulated their desire to read the text again.
- The language orientation phase assisted in building student confidence because they were familiar with the content.
- The text orientation greatly enhanced the students’ comprehension of the text.
- This phase may be extended or reduced depending on the level of student engagement.

**Language orientation**

Once the story (or a chapter for longer texts) has been read to the students, a selection from the text of about a paragraph’s length is chosen for closer study. Because the section will be used later in the sequence as the basis for a writing activity, the section chosen should be a good model of writing. The purpose of Language Orientation is to prepare students for fluent reading of the extract, to promote the understanding of the meaning of words and to talk about the author and the language choices the author has made (Adoniou & Mackan-Horarik, 2007).

**Transformations**

When students are reading the focus excerpt with more than 90% accuracy, they can move on to the next step in the sequence (Adoniou & Mackan-Horarik, 2007). Through the Transformation process learners gain an understanding about the construction of sentences in English and a further understanding of the consequences of the author’s language choices. During this step in the sequence, one or more sentences from the chosen text selection are written on strips of cardboard. Students are guided into segmenting these sentences into units of meaning. Students identify and cut off sentence elements in response to teacher questions such as: ‘This part of the sentence tells us when the story began ‘On a dark windy night’. Can you cut off those words in the sentence that tell us when the story began?’ (Adoniou & Mackan-Horarik, 2007).
Adaptations and outcomes
- This phase lent itself to in-depth discussion about the use of words in literature and what impact these choice have on sentence structure, audience engagement and meaning.
- This phase also helped to enhance the students’ vocabulary. Students developed an interest in the meaning of unknown words e.g. ‘morsel’, ‘aloft’ and ‘bereft’.
- The kinaesthetic approach to cutting and manipulating sentence strips held the students’ interest.
- This phase provided a non-threatening way to “play” with sentences using transformations.
- This phase enabled students to see that by changing one word you can change the meaning of a sentence.
- Students could see that phrasing could be changed and the sentence would still make sense, although the meaning may change.

Spelling
Spelling words are taken from the selections of text used in the sequence. They must be words that the learner can read fluently and comprehend. At this stage the learners are explicitly shown how to look at words so that they can see chunks and common letter patterns in words. They need to be able to do this to effectively decode in the flow of reading, and they need to do this to develop efficient spelling strategies (Adoniou & Mackan-Horarik, 2007).

Adaptations and outcomes
- This phase lent itself to a word study focusing on different spelling knowledges, for example phonological letter patterns such as ‘ie’ as seen in chief and piece or to investigate morphemic knowledge.
- Many stories lend themselves to exploring rhyming words and spelling patterns within these words.

Text Patterning
The process is carefully scaffolded, moving from shared reconstructed writing (in which the extract is recreated by both teacher and students based on a writing plan) to patterned writing (in which students plan for and produce their own text, innovating on the meaning patterns used in the original). In this way, the text itself now scaffolds the writing along with the teacher but students are free to apply these syntactical patterns to their own interests and experiences (Adoniou & Mackan-Horarik, 2007).

Adaptations and outcomes
- The structure enabled reluctant writers a framework within which to put their ideas.
- This phase gave students an opportunity to use their knowledge of words and vocabulary to enhance the story.
- The text patterning gave students with a vivid imagination and strong vocabulary, who experience difficulty with reading or writing, a vehicle to get their ideas on paper.
- Students thoroughly enjoyed the story telling component.
- The process encouraged students to write more.
- Text patterning was a useful support for writing and assisted in producing excellent writing which had not been achieved previously.
- This phase may require more time to support the students’ writing efforts.

CONCLUSION
Gifted students who have a reading difficulty have learning characteristics that set them apart from their typically achieving peers, other gifted students and other students with learning difficulties. Due to these differences they require a modified curriculum approach which recognises their strengths and helps them to compensate for their weaknesses. Without such provision they will continue to struggle and achieve at levels lower than their expected ability would suggest. The Scaffolding Literacy approach which provides challenge in a supportive, scaffolded environment is one way of catering for these differences. It can also help to reduce the impact of the continual struggle and frustrations faced by gifted students with a reading difficulty.

Compiled in partnership with teachers from 10 independent schools in Queensland and gratefully drawing upon the work of Misty Adoniou and Mary Mackan-Horarik.
TECHNOLOGY HELPS TO PAVE THE WAY
for reading comprehension in schools

For many decades teachers have used a variety of methods and tools to help motivate students to read and better understand the texts they are deciphering. In today’s society it is little surprise that new methods and tools include technology, web-based platforms and a variety of intelligent software programs. Independent Schools Queensland alongside HeuLab have remained at the forefront of these emerging trends by trialing a project within a sample of Queensland independent schools to help classes with their reading comprehension strategies and to allow more teacher efficiency in reading lessons and marking.

The Web-based Reading Assessment Program or WRAP has been very successful with its implementation throughout 2010 and will continue to flourish with new updates and ideas coming through for the 2011 school year. The program operates on the school’s intranet and allows both students and teachers to login at any computer around the school including within computer labs. Teachers then set reading texts and comprehension questions for the students to complete via a headset with microphone. Their responses can also be digitally marked and automatically converted to an Excel spreadsheet for later use by the teacher. While this is the main focus of the program there are many other features that are particularly useful when using the program in a computer lab. The teacher can set up group chats for when students are researching topics; they can also control student computers by locking them down at any point, viewing their screen or generating a list of all open applications and websites. This allows the teacher to have full control and guidance at any point in the lesson without having to sprint around the room trying to ensure all students are on task. Further, at any point the teacher can display their screen, or a student’s screen, onto every computer in the classroom. This limits the need for a strategically placed data projector and ensures all students have full view of what the teacher or student is demonstrating to the class.

The benefits of this program have been remarkable. By having students complete their reading assessments at a computer they are able to replay their own voices instantly and self-assess their oral ability. They can also find out immediately how accurate they were in answering a variety of comprehension questions. Alongside this, the group chats and screen sharing allows for collaborative work to be more efficiently achieved when in a computer lab. When interviewing teachers it has become evident that not only have reading comprehension levels risen, but also their motivation levels towards reading. The students have also been working more collaboratively and most teachers involved in the trial have been instrumental in mentoring other classes and year levels to start using the program with similar levels of success.

...The benefits of this program have been remarkable. By having students complete their reading assessments at a computer they are able to replay their own voices instantly and self-assess their oral ability...
All teachers in the trial have commented on the positive change it has made to their teaching and administrative practice. They love the control features when conducting lessons in a computer lab, but also the program has improved their efficiency in marking and recording. All of their running record markings are digitally recorded as well as all student answers to questions. This is an admirable time-saving feature and allows the teacher to quickly and easily recall records for report writing and parent interviews throughout the year. It also allows for better student tracking of achievement throughout the year and across year levels. Further, because of its very user-friendly platform, both teachers and students need little guidance and tutorials in using and navigating the program. Both have become familiar with the program quickly and are able to successfully run lessons with minimal interruptions for technical guidance.

Throughout 2010, the program has been highly successful and certainly strengthens the ideas and future directions of ICT integration into mainstream learning at all year levels. It has given more ideas and direction for teacher creativity when planning reading and comprehension lessons as well as dramatically increasing the motivation of students and their desire to read regularly. Due to the success of the 2010 program, Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) and HeuLab will continue the trial throughout 2011 with a focus on specific data collection and deeper research into the catalysts of reading comprehension success when using this program.

Having the facility to replay the recording of their oral reading, provides students with the opportunity for some self-assessment. Most students were fascinated by the sound of their own voices reading the text. Multiple readings of the text has led to improved comprehension and increased confidence.

Performing regular individual reading assessments is time consuming. Having the ability to record a group of students reading at the same time and then attending to the assessments at a later stage or when the students are no longer available, is a bonus. Because the recordings can be saved, it makes it possible to go back, review and compare student performance. It is useful to be able to listen to students with articulation difficulties read multiple times.

The Assessment Creator includes a variety of comprehension question types providing great flexibility for Teachers to measure student responses. Students are able to express their knowledge in a number of different ways. Students with Literacy difficulties have alternate ways to respond, for example, drawing a picture or diagram, multiple choice questions or providing a voice recording.

Glenda Des David, Learning Support Coordinator, Faith Lutheran College
THE COR READING COMPREHENSION FRAMEWORK

In 2010, St John’s Anglican College participated in an ISQ project that involved the teaching of reading by using a comprehension framework. The project involved the implementation of the COR Reading Comprehension Framework into our classrooms to improve the teaching and learning of comprehension strategies. The COR framework project was based on the findings of Dr Gary Woolley’s PhD thesis dissertation: *The development, documentation, and evaluation of a strategy-training program for primary school students with reading comprehension difficulties.* The focus of the dissertation was the Comprehension of the Narrative intervention program. Although the framework was developed to assist students with learning difficulties, it can also be implemented as a whole-class approach and modified to suit a particular year level.

THE COR FRAMEWORK

The COR framework allows students to be active researchers and supports the application of conscious thinking and metacognitive processes while reading and comprehending texts. This is achieved by using the COR lesson procedures to scaffold learning and to build on prior knowledge during each of the six stages of the program which has been based on Bloom’s Taxonomy. Each lesson incorporates a before, during and after reading phase where the students can apply their newly learnt strategies to the narrative or information texts at the word, sentence, paragraph and discourse levels.

IMPLEMENTING THE COR FRAMEWORK INTO A READING HOUR

I implemented the comprehension framework as part of my Reading Hour in my classroom. The Reading Hour comprises of a whole/part/whole approach. We were working on an animal unit titled All Creatures Great and Small and were studying the characteristics and habitats of different animals. At the beginning of our Reading Hour, I introduced the big book *Please Don’t Feed the Bears* and encouraged the students to activate prior knowledge by posing the question “What do I already know about bears?” I then modelled making a concept map on the whiteboard of the students’ known words and information about bears. During the modelled reading, I used think-aloud strategies and modelled using “clicks” and “clunks”. “When we are reading and we can read the words and understand what we are reading we click, click, click along but when we come to a word we don’t know or understand the meaning of we clunk and stop”. “Then when we find a clunk, what fix-up strategies can we use to solve the clunk?” The strategies were printed on A4 Clunk Expert cards and laminated so that the students could refer to them during shared, guided and independent reading. After the reading, we reviewed the facts and added new words and information to the concept map.

FIX-UP STRATEGIES

1) Look for a part of the word that you know.
2) Break the word up and look for smaller words in it!
3) Use a picture!
4) Think of the story or the information in the text.
5) Re-read the sentence with the clunk and the sentence before or after it, looking for clues!
6) Re-read the sentence without the word. Think about what word would make sense.
7) Use a glossary or a dictionary!
8) If something is still not clear after trying all these fix-up strategies, ask for help!
READING GROUPS AND THE COR FRAMEWORK

The next phase of the Reading Hour was co-operative group work where the students worked in their allocated reading groups with a teacher, teacher aide or classroom helper - Guided Reading; Comprehension; Constructing a Concept Map; Visualising.

GUIDED READING AND GENERATING QUESTIONS

During guided reading, the students worked with a teacher aide with the focus of the lesson being on generating questions before, during and after the reading of the text. The teacher aide and students used question cards to assist them generate questions. This started as only an oral lesson as the focus was on the discussion by activating prior knowledge, making predictions, identifying details, determining the main idea, identifying clunks, sharing information and generating questions to locate new information. Eventually, the students reached the stage where they were recording questions before, during and after reading texts in their Learning Journals and posing questions for their peers to answer. It had also been successful in stimulating inferential questions with students posing questions commencing with “I wonder why ……………………….”

Questions to ask and answer before reading

- What clues does the title give you about the text?
- What type of text is this? Fiction? Non-fiction?
- Why are you reading this text? To perform a task? To gain information? To be entertained?
- What do you already know about the topic?
- What predictions can you make?

Questions to ask and answer during reading

- What did you learn from what you just read?
- Do you need to reread? Slow down? Use a different strategy?
- Can you predict what could happen next?
- What is the main idea?
- Can you summarise it?
- What picture is the author “painting” in your head? What details from the text help to paint this picture?
- Are there words you do not know?
- Does not knowing these words affect your understanding of the text?
- Do you need to look them up in a dictionary?

Questions to ask and answer after reading

- What predictions were confirmed?
- What details in the text confirmed them?
- What were the main ideas and themes presented in the text?
- How did the author present information?
- What connections did you make to the text?

(Reference - Pearson 2006 - Achievement Solutions)

Learning Journal – Student Reflection

Reading Groups by Caitlyn

Thinking about questions when you are reading helps you learn new words and helps you think better about the book. You can stop and think about it. Asking questions helps you find out what tricky words mean like frankfurt. It means a type of spicy smoked sausage that was made in Frankfurt (Germany) and like pomegranate. It means a fruit with a tough skin, reddish flesh and many seeds. It helps me understand words.

COMPREHENSION AND CLICKS AND CLUNKS

I usually worked with the comprehension group with a shared reading approach to working with non-fiction texts. The focus of the lesson was to identify clunks in our reading and clarify meaning. At first, the students thought of clunks as words they didn’t know. After several lessons, they began to also identify words that they didn’t know the meaning of or didn’t quite make sense in the context of the text. Towards the end of the year, they were scanning the text and looking for clunks and asking, what does that word mean? For example, we came across the word “hide” and the students didn’t know that it meant another word for the animal’s skin. This provided a great opportunity to make a word web for all the meanings of the word “hide”. The students turned into reading detectives and got very excited when they found a clunk in the text. The students took ownership of their clunks and used the fix-up strategies to solve their clunks. The clunks were written on pieces of card to make a clunk chart which gradually turned into a clunk wall.
Learning Journal - Student Reflection

Reading Groups by Hayley

In reading groups the class did clicks and clunks. Clicks and clunks are when you know a word it is a click but if you don’t know a word it is a clunk. Clicks and clunks help me because if I don’t know a word I can break the word up and I can sound the word out. In the classroom there is a clunk wall and I got a clunk and it was knowledge. I knew it was knowledge because I broke the word up and there is a word that I know and it is know. Then I broke the word into know-led-g and then I stretched the word out to make knowledge.

CONSTRUCTING CONCEPT MAPS

The concept map group worked collaboratively to construct a concept map using coloured paper circles that they blu-tacked onto a large sheet of cardboard. The students used a familiar text and negotiated to reread it again independently, in pairs, all together or in smaller groups. They worked together to determine the main idea and identify details in the text. The students worked with a classroom helper and generated a lot of discussion while constructing their concept maps. The movable paper circles and blutak allowed the students to move information around and group it in a particular way. It also provided the opportunity to negotiate what information should be included, taken out or extended upon. The concept maps were displayed in the classroom and then provided a visual aid to assist the students when they wrote information reports on a particular animal.

Learning Journal - Student Reflection

Concept Maps by Oscar

Concept maps help me get ideas down. With a concept map you don’t need to make a list. I’ve made a concept map about camels. The concept map was done by five people. Their names were Charlie, Daniel, Kiran, Hayley and me. Concept maps help me by getting facts down fast. Some facts about camels that I learnt are a camel with one hump is called a bactrian camel, a camel with two humps is called a dromedary camel, camels eat whatever they find in the desert.

Concept Maps by Anzac

A concept map is a map that helps you get facts down and to organise facts. You can also use it for writing. I made a concept map about bears and I got lots of facts down. I wrote down the headings Behaviour, Appearance, Food and Colour. I put down berries and grass for food and I put down grey and brown for colour. I put big for appearance and evil for behaviour. It helps me organise and read my facts.

VISUALISATION

The visualisation group worked with the learning support teacher who used a sketch-to-stretch approach to develop visualising strategies in students when reading texts to help them make sense of the text and the author’s intention. It also assisted them to make connections to prior knowledge and life experiences. A descriptive scene is read to the students by the teacher. The students then imagined what the scene looked like, what the characters looked like and what events were taking place. They then visualised and drew these details in a sketch. The teacher then encouraged the students to think of descriptive, visual words to describe the contents of their drawings as well as to further develop their vocabulary. These words were recorded under headings such as colour, size, shape, number, texture, time etc.

Learning Journal - Student Reflection

Visualisation by Seimon

Visualisation helps me if there are no pictures in the book. I can make a movie in my head and that helps me read too because I can visualise pictures. It also helps me understand better when I make pictures in my head.
WHOLE CLASS REFLECTION

Once the reading groups had completed their activity, we all came back together as a whole group to share our new learning. This sharing time varied between a group sharing and individual students. The students shared their specific achievement which may have been a clunk that they had identified, a concept map they had constructed, new information they had discovered or new vocabulary they had developed. The new learning was celebrated and recorded in their Learning Journals. This new learning was then applied in the Writing Hour with such activities as: comparing and contrasting a non-fiction text with a fiction text, sequencing the main events in the texts, writing a summary of the text read, writing an information report and writing a description of the characters and scenes.

CONCLUSION

The COR framework incorporates:
- Graphic organisers for visual and verbal integration
- Linking new knowledge with prior knowledge
- Cooperative group work
- Self-regulating processes – setting reading goals, monitoring comprehension, reflecting on reading outcomes

C - BEFORE READING
- Consider (factual)
  - Skim, scan, visualise
- Conceptualise (conceptual)
  - Discuss: vocabulary & genre
- Contrive (metacognitive)
  - Negotiate, predict, set goals

O – DURING READING
- Overview (factual)
  - Gist, compare & contrast
- Organise (conceptual)
  - Clarify, question, elaborate
- Observe (metacognitive)
  - Monitor goals: process & product (goals)

R – AFTER READING
- Review (factual)
  - Summarise, visualise, graphic organiser
- Relate (conceptual)
  - Extend, relate, create
- Revise (metacognitive)
  - Self-questioning

The COR framework provides a layered scaffold that builds on the previously learnt comprehension strategies of prior lessons. The lessons are based on developing comprehension strategies at the factual level, the conceptual level and the metacognitive level. Each of the six stages of the Framework introduces a new level of cognition based on Bloom’s Taxonomy:
- Knowledge
- Comprehension
- Application
- Analysis
- Synthesis
- Evaluation

During the project, we worked through the knowledge stage and the comprehension stage. The “wow” moments were seeing how the students had developed more confidence in their approach towards working with texts. They actually scanned the text looking for “clunks” before they started reading, they were verbalising the strategies they were using while they were reading the text and they were generating questions about the text after the reading. The next step is to build on this confidence and develop metacognition in their reading comprehension by encouraging the students to set goals before reading, monitor their goals during reading and reflect on their goals after reading. Implementing the COR Framework has provided an effective structure for the teaching and learning of comprehension strategies and has empowered my students to became more active learners.
"CHOICE & DIVERSITY"