

"Any other comments?" What makes effective ICT Professional Development

The experience of Williamstown Primary School and the Western Metropolitan Region Macintosh Schools' Network

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Delivering quality PD to teachers is vital to the success of any ICT program in schools. So as an ICT leader how can you organise it? Teacher time is at a premium and PD budgets are always under strain. Mark will elaborate on two different models that he uses to facilitate ICT PD, both in school and network settings. These models include web based learning to enhance their success. They are responsive to teacher needs, can be run a very small budget and are based on current learning theories to maximize results.

The experience of Williamstown Primary School and the Western Metropolitan Region Macintosh Schools' Network

1. Summary

Mark Richardson is ICT coordinator at Williamstown Primary School. He is currently on Teacher Professional Leave and is exploring ICT pedagogy and ICT professional development models. As well as his school commitments, he is currently working with both primary and post-primary teachers in the Western Metropolitan Region Pedagogy Network, the Western Metropolitan Region Dotcom Working Party, the Western Metropolitan Region [Re@ct](#) Student Film Festival, the Commonwealth Games TV project of Schools' Television and the Western Metropolitan Region Macintosh Schools' Network.

This presentation will demonstrate how school based ICT professional learning communities and cross-school ICT professional development networks can be developed. It will show how smaller scale professional learning communities and professional development networks can effectively provide teachers with the ICT skills and the links to pedagogy required to implement both *The Victorian Essential Learnings Standards* and the DE&T *ICT Professional Learning Strategy 2005-2007*. Such models, in building on teachers' current ICT knowledge and pedagogy are responsive to teachers' needs and time commitments. They are cost effective and can encourage mentoring and peer-to-peer support. School based and network based professional development sessions can also be used to meet performance review needs and the professional development requirements of the *Notebooks for Teachers Program*.

The two ICT professional development models Mark is developing are as follows. The

first model is the development and implementation of a school based, ICT professional development program. [This contains 30 sessions, covering seven modules of Desktop Publishing, Multimedia, Spreadsheets & Databases, Electronic Communication, Online Resources, Internet & Web Authoring, Operating Systems, Utilities & Networks, ICT Pedagogy, Planning, Student Activities, Assessment Tasks & Using ICT to Report on Student Progress]. This program is supported by course content, session notes and has its own website of online resources. This ICT PD program is conducted weekly at Williamstown Primary School. As it has just started in 2005, the content for some modules is still being written and evaluation of the program will occur at the end of each semester.

The other ICT professional development model Mark has developed is with Deb Hicks from Footscray West Primary School. They are network leaders of the Western Metropolitan Region Macintosh Schools' Network. This network is now in its third year of operation.

- The network links ICT coordinators, technicians and teachers within WMR, who have an interest in the Macintosh platform.
- It provides professional development for ICT coordinators, technicians and teachers. This is in two formats; the *first* is the regular network meetings, which while focusing on specific topics are forums for a wide variety of issues. The *second* is WMR-MSN Professional Development Series. For these ICT PD sessions, there is a nominal registration fee for attendance and participants complete a "hands on" session, with activities related to specific skills in using a software package and its classroom implications.
- The network also encourages and shares best practice in ICT pedagogy amongst members within Western Metropolitan Region.
- It also reports back on its activities to Western Metropolitan Region via the Dotcom Working Party and provides input on relevant ICT issues.
- The network has made links [without endorsement] with Apple Australia, some Apple Resellers and other commercial interests and uses these links to the benefit of schools and teachers within Western Metropolitan Region.
- The Network's web site is a resource for members, teachers, schools and school communities within Western Metropolitan Region and the wider ICT education community.

2. The two ICT Professional Development models

The success of ICT in schools is dependant upon professional development. The ***DE&T ICT Professional Learning Strategy 2005-2007***, while providing information about resources available to schools [and which may provide valuable PD for staff], also provides a valuable ICT PD structure for all schools, which is not dependent upon their use of statewide ICT PD programs.

2.1 School based ICT Professional Development Programs

In particular, **Section 7, *Approaches to ICT Professional Learning***, can provide the structure for the development of any school based ICT PD program, and is the one used by Williamstown Primary School in its ICT PD program for 2005. While this is currently encouraging Peer Coaching & Mentoring [7.2] in its ICT skills program, the Action Research [7.3] on the school's ICT PD program that I am completing as part of my work in the Teacher Professional Leave Program will encourage the adoption of ICT into teaching pedagogy to a much greater extent at the school. It will encourage the further development of Professional Learning Communities [7.1] a structure which has been particularly useful in the school's Early Years' Program. However, this program is in an early phase, and it requires further development and evaluation. This process will be completed during 2005. This program has started successfully, with positive feedback from staff attending, both anecdotally and through staff comments in their performance review process. To see resources on ICT PD plans see *ICT Professional Learning Strategy 2005-2007, Appendix 1: School ICT Professional Learning Plans* p.26. See also <http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/ict/pd/index.htm> to access templates for developing an ICT Professional Learning Plan – Whole School and a Personal ICT Professional Learning Plan.

However, at this stage it is too early to report on this model in any further detail, but action research on this school based ICT PD program using the structure on p.25 of the *ICT Professional Learning Strategy* will be very useful. The *eLearning Capabilities Resource* p.7, when released, will also add useful data to this research.

2.2 Cross-school ICT professional learning communities

Section 3, *ICT Professional Learning Strands*, can provide the structure of cross-school ICT professional learning communities, which I wish to illustrate:

In summary *DE&T ICT Professional Learning Strategy 2005-2007* [p.8] states, **To develop a teacher's eLearning capabilities, the *ICT Professional Learning Strategy* brings together three key strands of professional learning:**

Strand 1: eLearning Partners

eLearning Partners activities establish links with ICT industries, ensuring teachers have access to resources and opportunities designed to meet the challenges of education in the 21st century.

Strand 2: Online Professional Learning

Online professional learning allows teachers to learn in the time, place and pace of their choice. Online resources will be made available for teachers to access using their notebook computers.

Strand 3: Key Events and Conferences

Conferences provide teachers with access to specialist information, often with education and industry leaders presenting the latest findings in an area. Lectures and workshops provide opportunities for focused discussion and hands-on activities exploring selected aspects of eLearning

In 2003, under the auspices of the WMR Dotcom Working Party, the WMR Macintosh Schools' Network was formed. While formed prior to the *ICT Professional Learning Strategy 2005-2007*, the network was set up to provide curriculum support and a professional learning network for both schools using Macintosh as their curriculum network platform and for isolated Macintosh users in Windows environments.

The Macintosh Schools' Network has developed into an effective ICT Professional Development Network for all interested teachers in Western Metropolitan Region. It has developed a multi-faceted structure in its two years of existence. This structure reflects the strands of professional learning in the *DE&T ICT Professional Learning Strategy 2005-2007*.

Strand 1: eLearning Partners

The WMR-MSN from its first meeting saw the importance of industry links. We established links with a number of Apple Resellers who provided, at times, [without endorsement, which was always a policy of the network], PD venues, guest speakers for meetings, new product reviews and arranged an initial liaison with Apple Australia. This relationship has continued and has expanded to include PD providers and will soon include software developers. Apple resellers have been an excellent resource for the network and do so in the spirit of partnership in providing ICT PD resources. The network's relationship with Apple Australia is also one of partnership, although the reduction in staff in Apple's Melbourne office in providing K-12 PD support has meant that for the moment, this resource is not available to the network. Links between the network and Apple's Sydney headquarters have still been maintained and the network has discussed the issue of improving Apple's PD provision to Western Metropolitan schools. While Apple Australia is providing a PD component for those in the current DE&T notebook rollover, the network has developed its own fee for service 2005 Professional Development Series, "Using iLife'05 in the classroom". The three workshops have sold out. We believe their success is not only because the sessions are competitively priced, but mainly because the content is taken by practicing teachers within the region. This ensures that the sessions are related to good pedagogy and showcases classroom activities that have been used with students and that work effectively. Funds raised from the PD sessions, will be used to further develop the network's PD activities.

Strand 2: Online Professional Learning

The network saw the need for a dedicated website for a number of reasons. The website went online a year ago. The website was able to record its activities and

advertise its meetings and the professional development activities of the network. The website also has a large number of useful links to ICT curriculum resources, technical links and DE&T ICT links. The website has also begun to publish original work of members. This is in two categories, technical advice and curriculum resources. The website also has a discussion board, but this is under utilised at the moment. The website is hosted on the web server of Williamstown Primary School and therefore costs little or nothing to run. While not having its own domain name, it is still picked up readily by search engines. This also opens the network to a worldwide audience.

Strand 3: Key Events and Conferences

Our key events are our network meetings, one or two per term. These are wide ranging in scope, sometimes with a guest speaker, or presentation by a network member, or product launch. Time is also allowed for networking between members and discussion on a range of issues of concern to members. Links between WMR consultants and the WMR Dotcom Working Party ensures that a dialogue is kept between the network and the region. Members are also being increasingly asked to speak at other ICT PD events. The development of the 2005 Professional Development Series is the next phase of our development as a PD provider in the Western Metropolitan Region.

Conclusion

The experience of these two models is that while DE&T provides ICT PD opportunities on a statewide basis, [and use these wherever they are useful to fit into your school's ICT Professional Learning Plan], other school based or network based models can work effectively too. They do require teacher time to organise and run, however, other costs can be kept to a minimum. These models provide another pathway for improving teacher ICT skills and for re-visiting their pedagogy. They have provided quality professional development in schools; however, they are a work in progress with the action research on their success and future directions still being completed.

Checklist for ICT Professional Learning

Schools can use the following checklist to stimulate discussion when developing an ICT Professional Learning Plan.

The Vision Driving ICT Professional Learning in the School

- How does it reflect the school vision?
- Has this been clearly communicated?
- Is there ownership of, and commitment to, the vision from all participating staff members?

Supportive Leadership

- How are the school leaders, through their practice, supporting ICT Professional Learning?
- How does the leadership provide a supportive environment for risk-takers and innovators?
- What change management strategies have been developed to support the sustained practice of ICT Professional Learning?

Supportive Environment

- What 're-engineering' has occurred to build in the practice of ICT Professional Learning as part of the regular school routine?
- Has an adequate timeframe been developed, indicating key milestones, e.g. Professional Learning workshops, meeting schedule, dates for online postings, sharing and feedback, etc?
- Has an adequate budget been allocated?
- How will achievements/milestones be celebrated or acknowledged?

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