

TASK CENTRE PROJECT

NEWSLETTER

NO. 1

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Welcome

To the first newsletter of the MCTP Mathematics Task Centre Project. It has always been our intention to keep in touch with our clients, however, the time required to develop the project to its current level has meant that communication to date has usually been initiated by you. This newsletter is our first broad scale attempt to keep in touch with the rapidly growing members of the task centre family of schools.

We can't promise to be regular in its publication, but we can promise that we are always interested in how you are using the resource in your environment.

The Task Centre Project, like all MCTP material, is 'from teachers for teachers'. We need to communicate with you to continue this process of refining the best 'kick start' we have yet found into problem solving.

Growth

We serviced over 100 clients during 1993 and about one third of those included workshops. It is heartening to find schools agreeing that the key to successful use of the resource is the accompanying workshop which is built firmly on the grassroots wisdom we have been able to gather from successful task centres.

Our materials are seen as fulfilling part of the concrete problem solving aspect of the curriculum which schools are seeking. Our workshop is now recognised as a vital instrument for refocussing a staff's energy

and enthusiasm on improving teaching and learning throughout their mathematics curriculum.

Teachers are the best resource in a school community and this project attempts to capture all the elements which bring together the ingenuity, organisation, team work and teaching experience of a staff.

If you have any feedback regarding our materials or workshop, please let us know. We would like to publish your comments, experiences, problems, views in future newsletters.

New Consultants

Expansion has demanded that we find more consultants who are able to deliver the workshop all over Australia. The team currently includes several members in Victoria, three in New South Wales, one in Northern Territory and one in Queensland. We also have plans to train others.

The workshop is always being modified based on an increasing range of experiences with an ever broader range of proficient teachers. You can help continue this process by sending us any thoughts you have on upgrading the workshop, or any possible follow-ups.

New Administration

The growth of the project meant that Charles and I began to spend an inordinate amount of time dealing with inquiries and processing orders. These tasks were/are essential, but they took away from time we

could spend developing new tasks and upgrading other aspects of the project.

We have been very fortunate to obtain the services of Sue Davis to take over this work. Sue is an experienced executive secretary who is retraining as a teacher and who has a special interest in mathematics education. Those who have spoken with her already have found her friendly, competent and efficient.

New Packing System

The packing and delivery of materials requires an amazing range of suppliers and cottage industry craftspersons. This has grown too big to manage on a small scale any longer. From the beginning of 1994, packing has operated from a warehouse space, a move which has brought increased efficiency.

New Prices

We have been supplying materials until now at what was almost cost price. From January 1st, a more realistic pricing has been introduced, which will allow for continued quality improvement and on-going development. The new prices are:

Workshop with materials	\$1300
Materials only	\$900

We have enclosed a new brochure so that you can share this information with colleagues.

New Tasks

Also enclosed with this newsletter is a catalogue of our current task collection. If your school purchased the workshop package, you were challenged to add at least 100 new tasks to your collection in the next twelve months. If appropriate you could meet some of that challenge by purchasing tasks which were not in your original kit.

Two examples of our new tasks are included with this mailing.

To order, send a school purchase order naming the tasks you require. Tasks must be purchased in minimum lots of 10 and are \$10 each. Delivery is included.

We also provide a replacement service for those bits which have fallen through the cracks in the carpet. If we can help in this way, please send a separate purchase order stating the task and the bits you need. We will invoice you.

New Markets

We have now sold several sets to New Zealand, USA and UK and interest seems to be growing.

Next Steps

We intend to expand the task collection to a maximum of 200. If you have any ideas for new tasks, please let us know.

A future intent is to provide examples of how schools are linking their task centre to their regular programme and also how these examples connect with the National Profiles.

The Task Centre Project for Aboriginal Students

We have been working with a group of teachers from Northern Territory for over a year to develop a set of tasks appropriate to these remote, culturally different schools. That work culminated in a Darwin conference in November, from which I brought back a couple of months work writing up tasks, Task Notes and Teachers' Handbook. That work is now complete. The result is very exciting, both in terms of the materials, which are A4 and decorated with borders designed by some of the aboriginal children, and the realisation by the teachers on course that the materials should not be supplied without some form of in-service.

As a result, they are designing their own programme based on the way we have worked with them.

Best wishes,

Charles Lovitt

Teacher's Notes

& Doug Williams

They are coming ... still! But it is a big job, so please be patient. We expect to be able to publish a stand alone collection of solutions and classroom advice before the end of the year.