

TASK CENTRE PROJECT

CONSULTANTS' NEWSLETTER

NO. 3

JULY 1994

Hi folks, time to update you with some of the latest developments in this very exciting Task Centre Project to which we all contribute. Some of the material in this newsletter has come from consultant's suggestions and some from school inputs. That's the way we like it. All aspects of this project grow from rich classroom experiences and we are happy to see that source contributing to its expanding richness.

Kids In The Workshop?

You might like to consider it. Ken Preece tells us that in a TC cluster workshop he ran, the organiser (Keith Hartmann, who has since become a TC consultant) suggested that some of his brighter students (Year 6/7) could help the lone staff member from one of the participating schools to solve and prepare the tasks. Everyone agreed it was worth a try. Ken says they were a terrific help. Although some of the latter part of the afternoon was a little outside their expertise, they stayed for the 'show and tell' session and presented as lucidly as any of the staff present.

Workshop Homework?

We have been told that one school completed the preparation of its tasks by holding a parent/family night *with homework*. The curriculum evening introduced parents to the concept through an 'Eric The Sheep' type experience and followed this with some time on tasks already prepared. Families were then asked to work through unprepared tasks and make notes under headings that the teachers had chosen for their task notes. To close the evening, families were given the opportunity (purely voluntary) to take other tasks home to prepare together as a family in the same way. Many families agreed and over the next week or so all the tasks were ready for use in the curriculum. You might like to include this experience at the relevant point in your workshops.

Workshop Evaluation

Rick Bowman has designed an evaluation sheet to use at the end of his workshops. The version

included with this newsletter is based on his work. He gave me permission to make changes, but those who know me would probably say I would have been unable to stop myself from doing that anyway! This version will be included in future Consultants' Kits. There is no compulsion to use it, but if everyone isn't exhausted, you could get some useful feedback. Rick did.

Consultants' Kit Update

In addition to the Evaluation Sheet, you will also find with this newsletter:

- TES article:
This report has been extremely well written and captures all of the nuances which we are trying to convey. Mereway School was the first of two demonstration schools I was able to establish in the UK on my recent trip. The briefing on which the reporter based much of the article was given by Dawn Wilson, who co-ordinated the staff's development of their program after the workshop day. As in so many other instances with this workshop, I was thrilled by the way the staff were enlivened by the day and used it as a springboard to review their curriculum. We thought the article could be useful when you talk with potential clients.
- Sample Unit Plans Booklet:
We do not believe that Task Centre materials and/or workshop are a cure-all for a school's curriculum problems. We aim to assist a staff to explore the potential of the materials (which have their genesis in the experiences of a range of teachers) and we can contribute cameos from the wisdom of practice which is shared with us by our colleagues. The sample units have grown out of the experiences of schools which have struggled with the major issue of integrating the tasks into the total curriculum. We have found the samples provide powerful images which help to crystallise an implementation strategy for many staff. We use them during the afternoon session in the time where we are discussing the possibilities for

making use of the resource. We encourage you to do the same.

From now on clients will receive the booklet in their envelope. The words Sample Unit Plans have also been added in the appropriate place on the Agenda (copy enclosed) and page 31 of the Teacher's Handbook has been slightly modified to make reference to the booklet.

- In the last issue of the newsletter, I wrote that your kit would have 10 tasks. Cost has prevented that. A kit will contain 5 tasks for promotion. Please contact me at my home/office phone/fax number [03-726-8316] if your kit is incomplete.

New Communication

Charles and I can both now be reached through the Internet e-mail network. Our addresses are:

Doug: <blackdouglas>@nexus.edu.au

Charles: <clovitt>@nexus.edu.au

New Consultants

Our team has expanded further in the first half of this year. Charles and I would like to formerly welcome each of these new people to our team. We are building a vital group with an amazing corporate expertise. Thank you for your support.

In Victoria

Andrea McDonough, Barbara Clarke, Ann Downton

In New South Wales

Keith Hartmann, John Matchett, Vin Sharkey

In Queensland

Rick Bowman

In ACT

Peter Ross

In UK

Michelle Selinger, Keith Windsor

I will be working in WA in July and August and, while there, hope to add at least one member to the team.

Old Administration

In the January newsletter I introduced you to Sue Davis who was to become the focus of our upgraded administration system. By now she has probably spoken to each of you (well perhaps not to Michelle

and Keith!) on several occasions. Sue is thoroughly enjoying her work and often comments to me that she loves the rapport which is developing between each of you and herself. Thanks for that, Sue makes a big difference to the services we provide.

Carol Eaves of the CC Office, who was mentioned in the January letter, has also taken on expanding responsibilities as the project has become more successful. We have been thankful for her support too.

Overseas Markets

As you can tell from earlier comments, the trip to the UK has resulted in two demonstration schools being established and two consultants being trained. I was also able to complete business arrangements with our agent, DIME Projects, and run workshops at several conferences and meetings. It is early days of course, but teachers responded very positively. In the next twelve months there should be developing interest, especially since Michelle, Keith and DIME are so enthusiastic.

Charles will be returning to the US soon as part of his overall role with CC and is excited by requests to base some extensive PD programs around task centres. A critical mass of interest seems to be developing in that country. As with the UK we hope that this concept can assist in improving both teaching and learning. In the long run, it is the kids who must benefit.

Corrections

We are aware that from time to time the wording/presentation of some tasks could be improved. Please continue to let us know if you have suggestions in this regard, even if they appear small. If something is conceptually incorrect we fix it ASAP, destroy the current stock and use the new version. For less significant modifications, we change the master immediately, but run down the current stock before introducing the modification.

Best wishes,