



Australian National Schools Network

## Authentic Assessment Hub

**Exhibitions, Roundtables and Digital Portfolios as tools for  
redesign and transformation of schools**

2007 Membership Package

Australian National Schools Network  
**National Coach Viv White**



**VICTORIA  
UNIVERSITY**

**A NEW  
SCHOOL OF  
THOUGHT**





## The Australian National Schools Network

The Australian National Schools Network (ANSN) has a long, successful history in school reform and improvement. It is at the forefront of new thinking about learning, pedagogy, curriculum and school organisation. It brings together teachers, schools, universities, teacher unions, government and non-government employers as a unique, nationwide learning community.

The ANSN leads, supports and promotes innovative teaching and learning practices across Australia. It builds on the expertise of its members and uses what has been learned about successful practice. The network and its members nurture good ideas, develop them, try them out, evaluate results and turn them into reality.

The ANSN extends and crosses boundaries. Its members are at the leading edge in their re-thinking of teaching and learning. They devise and explore innovative ways to improve educational outcomes. And they share their experience of what works best in the classroom.

In times of unprecedented change, ANSN members are building teacher and school leadership capacity in wide-ranging ways. They are helping their students become more flexible; more able to handle information in the knowledge society; more skilled in the use of new technologies; and more prepared to handle changing demands and occupations during their later lives. ANSN members are part of an exciting network that does exciting things for education.

**For more information about the ANSN see: [www.ansn.edu.au](http://www.ansn.edu.au)**

## Introducing the Authentic Assessment Hub

In 2005 the ANSN, in partnership with Victoria University, established two networking Hubs that provided high level, ongoing, collaborative support to schools working with common innovative ideas. These were the Habits of Mind Hub and Relational Learning Hub. In the first year, more than 300 schools from across Victoria benefited directly from workshops, conferences, school visits and other activities. Following this, the ANSN in partnership with Victoria University established the Authentic Assessment Hub. During 2005 and 2006 members of the three Hubs were able to access high level ongoing professional support and learning that in many cases resulted in significant improvements to teaching and learning practices in schools.

**The ANSN now invites you to take part in this network and the Authentic Assessment Hub during 2007. The results speak for themselves.**

*“The Hub was a godsend for us because we were writing a new program for year 9s and didn’t know where to begin. The six days were continually challenging and inspiring, and equipped us with a framework to engage students in a groundbreaking way. Instead of being spoon-fed or blasted with information, we actually went through all the processes we would ask of our students”*

*Janine Wood  
Camberwell High School*

## Authentic Assessment Hub: What For?

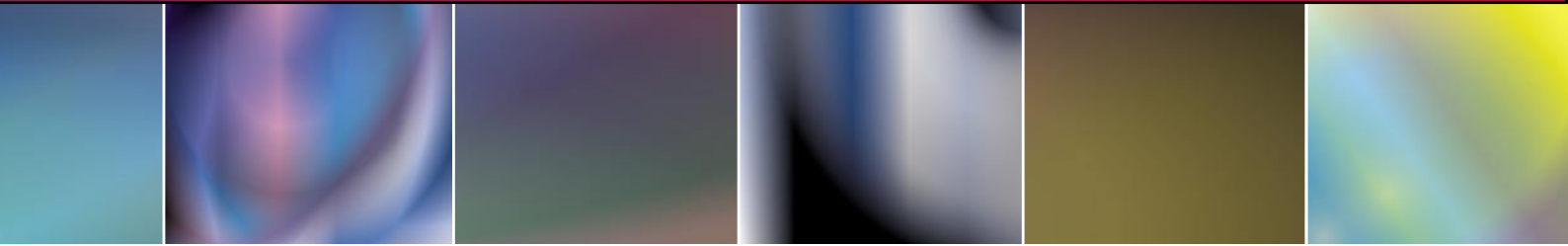
Across the western economies there is a clamor by governments for more accountability for learning outcomes and improving standards in schools. There is no denying the necessity for accountability. But as educators we may well ask, “On whose terms and for what purposes?”

We should of course be accountable for what we do in our schools and classrooms and for the standards that our young people achieve. We owe that to the students we teach and the communities that entrust their young people to us.

But there is much debate about the nature, effectiveness and extent of accountability measures. Which measures will we chose and why? Which tell us most about our students and over what time frame? How often do we measure? Who decides what counts as evidence? When do we report? These questions focus our community attention on the nature of accountability, but more importantly focus our attention on our young people and what counts as evidence of their learning.

Of course the answers are contested. The education community’s views principally centre on the form that the tools for accountability take. In the main, greater accountability means more pen and paper (increasingly on line versions), standardised, mass sample tests. There are more and more sophisticated tests that purport to measure more and more levels and types of human capacity.

But these tests are almost always normative, socially constructed and numeric in design. They also don’t tell the whole story about the lives, capacities and learning of our young people in schools. They often miss the chance of sharing our greatest achievements and learning from our greatest failures by limiting our assessment to single scores and grades.



What's more, the students are not usually involved in determining the standards to be reached and how they will get there. Educators have long struggled with ways of making assessment more authentic so that our young people in schools get feedback like adults in the workplace and community.

The Hub will explore ways of being authentically accountable to our young people and their communities. In doing so, it will support the work of schools in implementing the Essential Learning Frameworks across Australia.

*“In the traditional method the child must say something that he has merely learned. There is all the difference in the world between having something to say and having to say something”*

*John Dewey  
American philosopher, psychologist and educational reformer*

### **What is an Exhibition?**

An Exhibition is a term which summarises a particular approach to curriculum and assessment in schools. Students are engaged in a curriculum task that is problem or issue based and community focused. It comprises a carefully designed, multi-dimensional task, carried out actively over a term by students, culminating in their presentation of learnings and outcomes in a Roundtable format, involving a public audience. The evidence for achievement is developed throughout the course of the work and stored in a digital portfolio. It is specifically designed as a strategy to integrate the curriculum and its assessment across a number of essential learnings. The Exhibition like the world of work is built around giving feedback and showing

young people what they need to do to improve their work.

Exhibitions allow students to demonstrate and improve their understanding of what they know and understand, are able to do, and value. Exhibitions are conversations about learning between students and their teachers, peers, families and community. They demand that the student has something to say about their learning. The Exhibition and its accompanying portfolio emphasise the process as much as the product. Even in the worst case example, the Exhibitions can still be a learning tool because it can allow the student to really see what they did not know or were not able to do.

### **Why take Exhibitions as the organising idea for a curriculum innovation?**

There are several key reasons for using an 'Exhibitions and Digital Portfolio approach' as a model of assessment:

#### ***Exhibitions connect with the curriculum in meaningful ways***

In Exhibitions, efforts are made to develop trans-disciplinary integration of curriculum within the essential learnings framework. The essential learnings conceive students as being active in their learning, as having the chance to work with teachers and the community in developing knowledge. The Exhibitions process brings the wider community into connection with the school in the development and delivery of the work. Assessment, as a means of estimating what has been learned and how well it has been learned needs to be appropriate to this whole approach, emphasising the core aspects of what is done.

#### ***Exhibitions honour diversity***

Exhibitions involve negotiation

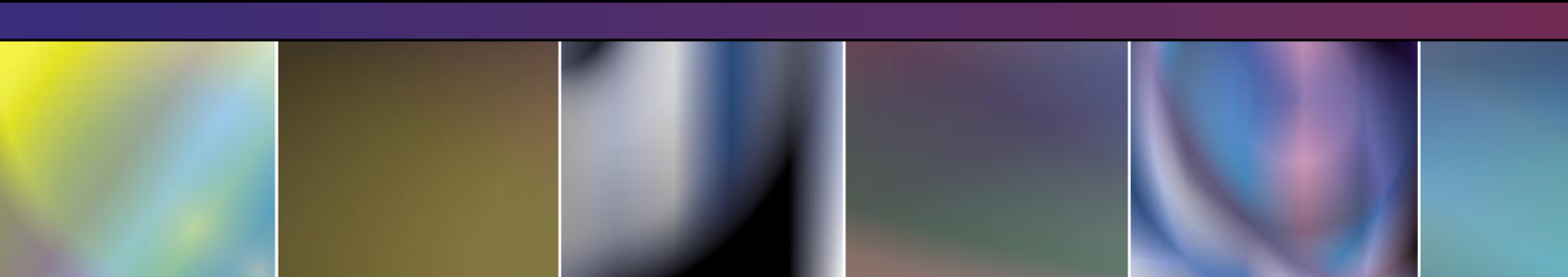
between students, teachers and their community about what knowledge will be demonstrated, so it is possible to recognise a variety of approaches to learning. There is no 'one test for all' or one way of demonstrating what is known, valued and understood — as is so often the case with traditional assessment methods. The Exhibition is a much more egalitarian process across ethnic, socio-economic, gender, location and other differences.

#### ***Exhibitions bring the student into the community and the community into the school***

The Exhibition brings the student's work into the community and therefore has the potential to contribute knowledge to the broader community. As well, it is a practical way for students to learn about their civic responsibilities, active citizenship and how to demonstrate in a real way what they may contribute now and in the future. In a practical way students have real opportunities to recognise, communicate about and negotiate values and meanings within and across multiple communities. Involvement in Exhibitions also provides them with very powerful 'practice' for interviews and portfolio presentations in the world of work.

#### ***Exhibitions are consistent with the values embedded in the areas of essential learnings***

Consistent with the whole approach in using Exhibitions are the principles of valuing respect, responsibility, relationships, rigour, relevance and resilience in our young people and their communities. The Exhibition is a strategic and practical manifestation of the beliefs, values and priorities that underpin the most recent reforms in



Australia. They encourage the practical embodiment of the essential learnings in each of the states and territories.

***Exhibitions demonstrate what students CAN do rather than what they can't.***

Student assessment is too often organised so that a significant proportion of students fail and what they cannot do becomes the focus of teacher, student, parent and media discussion. However, most of what a student does in school is only seen inside the classroom, solely by the teacher and the student. Exhibitions focus attention of a wider group on the work of each student in a public way.

***Exhibitions build in meaningful ways on the best of Australian and international research on school curriculum change***

Much is known about school reform and the reasons for its many failures, despite good will and effort by a range of people. This work draws on the experience of teachers in Australia especially the work of the ACT High School Group (who worked with the ANSN to pioneer this work in 2001\*). It is consistent with contemporary educational research in middle schooling, teaching and learning issues and national and international innovations literature on why most school reform does not succeed.

*\*From The Assessment by Exhibition Kit of the Australian National Schools Network, 2003*

## **Membership of the Hub**

Schools that become part of the Authentic Assessment Hub will have access to the following benefits:

- access to SIX days of Professional Learning for a team of THREE teachers as part of the membership package. Memberships may be limited in order to get maximum learning within the group

- a fully designed exhibition process for school-wide implementation
- a teacher developed digital portfolio which will demonstrate an understanding in a deep way the process of developing digital portfolios
- a design model for developing an Exhibitions Project at your school
- opportunities to work with and visit other schools and teachers that work in the Exhibitions Projects nationally
- clear connections to support learning and planning in relation to Essential Learning Standards and Frameworks
- access for the school to extended learning opportunities as they become available at discounted rates (with possible contacts with key colleagues internationally engaged in this work)
- access to an email discussion list that comprises all Hub members and to other Hubs where possible
- closed access to the Exhibitions website that will include copies of resources exchanged on the discussion list, as well as resources created specifically for the Hub
- access to *Assessment by Exhibitions Kit* (ANSN 2003) at a discounted price
- school contact details of all other Hub members
- discounted access for anyone associated with the membership to events run through other Hubs of the ANSN, including the Relational Learning Hub led by Dr George Otero and the Habits of Mind Hub led by James Anderson

Further to the benefits described above, the ANSN is constantly seeking to enrich the opportunities and services it provides to schools. It was able to exceed its own expectations and commitments to schools in 2005 and 2006 and hopes to do this again in 2007.

## **Purchasing a Membership**

The cost of membership to the Authentic Assessment Hub for 2007 is \$1500. This includes attendance for a consistent team of 3 teachers to attend 6 days of professional development activities (as described on the back page).

Memberships may be purchased by individual schools or clusters of schools. Multiple memberships may be purchased where necessary. Where there are special circumstances that require flexible approaches to memberships please contact Viv White directly: [viv.white@ansn.edu.au](mailto:viv.white@ansn.edu.au)

Small schools interested in joining are encouraged to share a membership with other local schools. This enables the establishment of a small supportive team of local teachers who can work together and share experiences, discuss issues and generally support each other.

Schools wanting to purchase a membership in 2007 should complete the attached form and email it to [viv.white@ansn.edu.au](mailto:viv.white@ansn.edu.au)

Memberships may be limited in some areas, and the first two days of Professional Learning will be undertaken early in term two, so it is important that membership details be received as early as possible.

## **Regional Areas**

The ANSN is committed to supporting schools in regional areas. Where possible it tries to bring together groups of schools in regional areas to support their needs. Where it is impractical to bring regional schools together, the ANSN is happy to discuss alternative ways that it can work together to meet your needs.

# ANSN Authentic Assessment Hub 2007

## 1. Some preliminary matters

- (i) Please complete the details below and return to [viv.white@ansn.edu.au](mailto:viv.white@ansn.edu.au)
- (ii) Alternatively you can fax this form to (03) 9919 5096.
- (iii) Where appropriate, cluster coordinators who are submitting this form should confirm availability of staff with relevant principals first.
- (iv) Returning this form confirms the school, cluster or organisation's commitment to join the Authentic Assessment Hub in 2007. An invoice for \$1500 (including GST) will follow.

## 2. Membership Details

*Name of school*

*Number of memberships required*

*Main contact person for membership*

*Email of main contact person*

*Address for correspondence*

*State and Postcode*

*Phone*

*Fax Number*

## 3. Billing Details

*Name, school and address for billing*

*Phone*

*Fax Number*

## 4. Cluster Details (Where applicable)

*If joining as a cluster, please enter the names of all schools that form a part of your cluster.*

School Name	Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Principal's signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

## **The Professional Learning Days: Program Days One and Two**

Discovering and Exploring Exhibitions and Portfolios: a general introduction to the concepts of Exhibitions and Portfolios. This includes an overview of the theories and practices of using them and planning for the introduction to Exhibitions in your school work for the year.

### **Days Three and Four**

Commence Work in Designing a Task: determining the design parameters and planning with students. The structure of a Teacher Digital Portfolio will be developed and the Teacher Roundtable will be planned.

In between these two days and the next two, the teams of teachers will trial the task in their schools and gather their own examples of student and teacher work for the teacher portfolio to share with other group members.

### **Days Five and Six**

Teams will share the work conducted in the school, get feedback from colleagues using a series of protocols and then review and rewrite. Teams can continue to work with colleagues on their Teacher Portfolio as well as plan for Roundtable and Final Exhibitions at school level.

Culmination of work and presentation of portfolio to colleagues.

“The experience was challenging and thought provoking and has provided us with the professional confidence to think outside the box”

Karen Guest  
*Sunbury Primary School*

## **About Viv White**

Viv White was CEO of the Victorian Schools Innovation Commission (2002-2005) and was National Coordinator of the Australian National Schools Network for ten years. With Marie Brennan (Professor of Education at the University of South Australia), she led the development of the Exhibitions Project in the ACT with all high schools in 2001. Viv currently works at Victoria University. Through the University and as National Coach of the Australian National Schools Network and Director of Big Picture Company Australia, she is developing a new set of national initiatives on school reform, redesign and community development. Viv has worked with Australian schools for 30 years as a policy activist, teacher, university researcher and facilitator in change and improvement.



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