



The Connecting Lives and Learning Project (CLL)

The ANSN is pleased to announce a new project partnership with the University of South Australia's ARC-funded project titled Redesigning Pedagogies in the North (RPiN) which has since 2005 aimed to build a new generation of pedagogical innovation that has focused on the following broad questions: ***What's 'good' pedagogy that works here, and in these times? and, Who are the students, as learners, in and out of school?***



Now in its third and final year, the project has involved a team of 14 researchers, 10 principals, 30 teachers and 1000 students who have worked with ten of Adelaide's public northern secondary schools.



In 2007, the project entered a new phase, where it is preparing to publish its research findings and develop a teacher friendly website to be hosted by the ANSN that will offer middle schooling professional development approaches, teacher resources, guidelines for conducting and doing research incorporating the project's big ideas. It is envisaged that the website will be of interest to education systems, schools and teachers nationally and will be up and running by the end of the year. The site will be called ***Connecting Lives and Learning (CLL)***.



Throughout the project, open questions have been used as a provocation for teachers to rethink middle years' curriculum and pedagogy in a context of a university-school professional learning community that supports educational action research projects. The focus of these projects has been the redesigning of curriculum and pedagogy that demands high intellectual challenge from students in ways that engage young people's lifeworlds and the concerns of their communities.

The diagram below outlines the broad process used for rethinking curriculum/pedagogy.





RESEARCHING LIFEWORLDS

- community funds of knowledge
- place-based education
- futures
- talking to students

EXAMINING PEDAGOGY

- documenting biographies
- reflecting on practice
- describing the challenge



RETHINKING CURRICULUM & PEDAGOGY

- thinking about student lifeworlds as a resource for curriculum
- what aspect of pedagogy do I want to work on?
- what resources do I need?



REDESIGNING CURRICULUM & PEDAGOGY

- designing a unit of work/working on a pedagogical practice
- putting in place a research approach
- analysing how it went
- replanning

The key features of a CLL process are to:



- **develop and sustain a professional learning community that enables teacher inquiry into reinvigorating curriculum and pedagogy in the middle years.** Professional learning community in this case means a group of willing teachers who meet regularly to discuss, share ideas and plan projects that involve designing curriculum units or working on developing pedagogical practice.
- **support teachers to research their students as people and as learners.** The project is predicated on the idea that successful teaching and learning (pedagogy) is based on being able to connect learners to the curriculum. Knowing the students as learners is essential, but students are learners in and outside of school. The aim is research your students' lifeworlds as a resource for planning curriculum/pedagogy.
- **support teachers to be involved in projects about their teaching that aim for substantial improvements in the quality and quantity of student school work**

The design principles for a 'CLL curriculum project' has these features:

- a). Clear description of the key aims for learning. How is this learning rigorous? (content, key learning challenge, social learning, learning skills building).

How to plan for learning?
 What do we want the students to learn?
 What's the pedagogical sequence that will achieve this aim?
 How do we negotiate significant aspects of what's to be learned?
 What is the role of the teacher when committed to providing rigorous *and* relevant curriculum?



- b). 'Strong' connection to student lifeworlds

Making strong connection to your students involves foregrounding the question – *Who are the learners in my classroom?* – in deliberations about curriculum and pedagogy. Making a strong connection involves being committed to researching what 'learning resources' your students bring to class and that could involve, their use of language, their statements, their significant issues, and 'funds of knowledge'.



How to get to know your students and their communities?
 How do we negotiate student lifeworlds into the curriculum?
 But then how much do we know about the students' lifeworlds or the issues of their communities? How could we learn more? And how might this become curricular?
 How can we better understand what knowledge, skills and understandings the students bring to learning?

- c). Meaningful, challenging learning task(s)

Rigorous learning is only possible if the students are set meaningful, challenging learning task(s). Of course that's only the beginning of the challenge – what pedagogies we have to use to support the students, to be successful in rigorous learning, is the key focus of this work. Your expectations for learning, in the end, are worded in the assignments/learning contracts you provide for your students.



How do we negotiate learning processes with students?
 How can we make 'safe' curricular and pedagogical use of both the 'dark' and 'light' sides of what students know and can teach us about their lifeworld spaces?



- d). Performative expectation for student learning

Finding an 'authentic' audience for student learning has been identified as a good strategy to motivate students to engage in rigorous learning activities. The term 'authentic' is one that refers to forms of performance or demonstration of student learning achievements to audiences wider than the teacher and other students in the class. Various approaches are being developed, including

'exhibitions', use of multi-media presentations, and artefacts that can be shown to wider audiences, such as a magazine, presentations to panels, group performances etc.

How do we negotiate assessment with students?
In what ways are students engaged in evaluating the curriculum/
pedagogy?

For more information about Connecting Lives and Learning, have a look at the CLL listing under projects on the publicly accessible ANSN site.

ANSN E News will offer regular updates about new CLL project developments throughout 2007.

If you would like to read about some of the research conducted to date, then a summary of the CLL project can be found on the publicly accessible ANSN website under Projects.

For more information about the project you can contact Andrew Bills (Research Fellow) on (08) 8302 4224 or Associate Professor Rob Hattam on (08) 8302 4226.