

Case Study BP606: Teaching as a Team

Abstract

Reference: Case Study BP606

Classroom Practice: Years 11 and 12

Title: Teaching as a Team

Overview: Two teachers have taken joint responsibility for the programme design, delivery and assessment processes for both the Y11 and Y12 technology classes at the school.

Focus Points: The case study highlights issues relating to:

- Programme planning
- Assessment practices
- Skill development and student practice
- Peer Monitoring
- The learning environment
- High quality outcomes

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Background

[St Margaret's College](#) is a (Years 1-13) single-sex, independent private girls' school in Christchurch, with a roll of around 740 students. Senior technology was progressively introduced into the school, as NCEA technology units became available. Technology Level 1 was introduced in 2002. Level 2 was introduced in 2003 and Level 3, in 2004.

The first year the school offered Level 1 Technology, St Margaret's Technology Head of Department Claire Wood and colleague Terry Wood were keen that the programme be a comprehensive one and include an Information and Communication Technology unit. This, they reasoned, would ensure students had a solid grasp of Information Technology skills, which they could utilise in their later technology practice.

The Year 11s completed a Database Design unit before moving on to the technology room to a "[Shelter Unit](#)", developed by Terry.

While students found it a big step to move from Year 10 to Year 11 work, the year was a successful one and most students opted to progress onto Level 2 Technology the following year, with the remainder opting to undertake the [International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme](#).

In 2004 a team-teaching approach was adopted for the Year 11 and 12 classes. Rather than each teacher being responsible for a Year 11 class or a Year 12 class in 2004, Terry and Claire decided to take joint responsibility for the programme design, delivery and assessment for both the Y11 and Y12 technology classes at the school.

Terry Wood: "I'm still a strong believer that to be able to do successful technology you should have reasonable strengths in IT; it can be used as a tool to enhance work."

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Pre-planning

Claire and Terry discussed their proposed approach with St Margaret Principal Claudia Wysocki. They presented the case that the shared-approach would allow a broader range of courses to be provided and better use to be made of each teacher's strengths and personal interests.

Ms Wysocki agreed there were sound educational arguments in favour of the approach and gave her approval. Timetabling required the Year 11 and 12 classes be staggered so the teachers could swap between classes.



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Delivery

In 2004, the Y11 course structure was repeated from the previous year, but with some changes. The database design unit had been developed to meet the requirements of the first of the new achievement standards, which focused on developing a 'plan of action'. Terry had decided that developing a database, capable of auto-generating Gantt charts, would not only teach valuable IT skills but would also provide a planning tool useful in the following two units. However, subsequent revision of the achievement standard softened the need to focus on a specific planning tool.



As a result, most of the second Year 11 class opted to design databases suited for other purposes, such as managing collections of music or recipes. The Year 11 Shelter Unit was repeated with only minor changes. Terry repeated the Shelter unit because it embraced a wide range of materials and technologies, and he reasoned the experience gained during the course would serve the students well when they moved on to Year 12.

Having spent the previous year studying fashion design on a Maths, Science and Technology (MST) scholarship, Claire was keen to give the Year 11 and 12 technology unit a fashion focus.

Year Planner 2006

In 2005, two initiatives were launched aimed at smoothing the transition between Year 10 and Year 11 Technology: [The Guide](#) and [Mentoring](#)

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Outcomes

The team-teaching approach was judged successful, for both teachers and students, and was repeated in 2005 and 2006.

Claire and Terry feel team teaching allows them to get to know students better than was previously the case; to understand their strengths and weaknesses; and understand what needs to be worked on. It also makes for improved student teacher continuity.

Both teachers agree that it is helpful when taking over a class mid year, to be able to refer back to what was covered by the first teacher. "Students also make these links", Claire says, "The students feel they've got two teachers that they can go and talk to." Even though at any particular time only Claire or Terry has the class, students feel they can talk to either one. This extended contact is particularly evident during study times or lunch breaks.

If one teacher can't answer a question or provide a particular skill, the student will be referred to the other teacher. The students see this referral and the subsequent sharing of information with the first teacher as an advantage, not a weakness.

While this doubling of the opportunity for contact works really well for the students, it is made clear that for anything official students must go to their teacher of the moment.

Claire and Terry believe the improved continuity brought about through team teaching has made for a more seamless transition to Level 2, with students commenting that it's "only a little step" or that they "hadn't noticed much difference". While the workload is higher at Level 2, students are building on the foundation established the previous year and students expect to be working at a higher level.

Year 12 students comment that as a result of their Level 1 work they are more organised and don't leave things to the last minute, that they have a good work ethic and understand how to plan things. They use email more, so that if they don't get some of the information from class they can still get help from the teacher.

Some students note that the skills gained in Technology carry over to other subjects.

Both Year 11 and 12 students work well together as a group, and seek help from each other before calling for a teacher. But while the classrooms have a relaxed atmosphere, everyone is motivated. Part of the students' motivation comes from knowing that they have to do things for themselves and get things finished to a high standard. And part of it comes from knowing they can show off their work, not just in their portfolios, but also on the technology display board and by placing their garments on the models outside the technology room.

Internal assessments are team marked so that both teachers are aware of progress and can discuss any problems or opportunities, while the current teacher writes the report.

"Students can often explain very clearly their design thinking and their rationale for making decisions verbally", Claire says, "but often this clarity doesn't extend to their written work". Claire now keeps notes on conversations she has with her students in a class journal. She plans to include these notes

when submitting student portfolios for formative feedback and moderation. But Claire notes that even if it is initially a challenge, students come to appreciate the benefits of documenting technology processes and practice. The Year 12 group is now eager to get access to their Year 11 work to refer back to.

Terry: "There's something to be said for having an influence at Year 11 on the students you're going to be teaching at Year 12, it's not solely someone else's responsibility. I think in some departments the problem is that you only work with what you get, when you get them, whereas we both have a considerable influence at Year 11. We both teach at Year 11 and so we both benefit in Year 12."

Student: "It's good because there are two different styles of teaching and that follows through to Year 12 so it's a two year programme with two teachers". "You get two different perspectives, two lots of skills". "You don't exactly have to get to know two different teachers because they're often both here in the room or in and out".

Student: "These skills have helped me in other subjects such as graphics; it's a lot easier because we've done all this stuff". "It gives some variety and different ways to look at things". "If you're not sure about one of the opinions you can go to the other one".

Student: "It's a lot of work but very self satisfying.. I feel proud seeing my work displayed 'that's my skirt!' especially if you've put a lot of effort into it. You've got to be committed, quite a few lunch times you'll see some of us in here doing stuff we should have done a week ago, but it's worth it".

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What next?

The popularity of technology has grown at St Margaret's and limitations on numbers taking Year 10 have had to be put in place. While this makes for a manageable Year 10 class size, it limits numbers going on to Year 11. At Year 12 students can do the International Baccalaureate or continue with NCEA. This means in effect the Year 11 class can be split in half, which can make for small numbers in Years 12/13. The department is looking at how to increase Year 11 numbers. But if numbers do increase Claire and Terry will be challenged to maintain the team teaching programme.



Last year the decision was made that Database Design had run its course and that the ICT unit for 2006 will look at the use of computers as a tool to do fashion illustration. The programme will combine Claire's fashion design and manual drawing lessons with Terry's work with drawing programmes. Students will produce a unique design concept illustrated and presented in a professional way. They will scan their drawings of garments into a computer to generate templates, which are used by the fashion industry to reflect conceptual designs. Students will be expected to appreciate industry standards and present their concepts using story boards. Claire and Terry anticipate that the students undertaking the programme will have gained the requisite manual and IT skills to create good design presentations.