Toora Primary School

Toora Primary School is a small rural school in South Gippsland. Geographically we are placed between Corner Inlet, with beautiful views of Wilsons Promontory, and the Strezlecki Ranges, with views of rambling hills dotted with wind turbines, dairy cows, sheep and magnificent eucalypts. Our students are either from town families or are bused in from farms or rural retreats. We are currently completing our Building Futures project that saw our relocatable school replaced with an architecturally designed purpose built school. Establishing the outside learning environment is our final phase of the project. To complement the state funded project we have recently been given the go ahead for our federal funded Building the Education Revolution multi-purpose hall project.

A small school has many advantages. However, the school budget is not one of them. We always strive to ensure that our school community has access to quality teaching and learning and is kept informed of changes to curriculum and pedagogy. Our school motto “from the hills to the sea, being the best we can be” applies to all members of the school community. Therefore, we were particularly interested in the funding opportunity through Asia Education Foundation, “Becoming Asia Literate” that would enable us to use Web 2.0 technologies to further develop and improve our curriculum and teaching with increased emphasis on the place and role of Australia in the Asian region. For more information check the website: http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/default.asp

1. Project Summary

We called our project “Asian Literacy – Borderless Learning” as we were excited by the prospect of using Web 2.0 tools to support students to become global citizens. We were keen for students and teachers to work together to develop Asian Literacy cross-curricula with Japan and Indonesia being our key countries. Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/ ) domains of the Arts, Humanities, and Civics and Citizenship, along with objectives of the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP http://www.deewr.gov.au/schooling/nalssp/Pages/default.aspx ) and the National Statement for Engaging Young Australians with Asia in Australian Schools will be central to Prep to 6 projects. The draft National Curriculum will also be a consideration (http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Home). Life-long learning, and parents, students and teachers working together are important aspects of our project. Fundamental to the project is the creation of an Asian Literacy policy and long term planning so that Asian Literacy will continue once the funded project is complete.

2. Demonstrated Need

Toora Primary School was identified in the Tony Vinson Report, "Dropping off the Edge" as one of the poorest communities in the nation. Our geographic position and small population provides wonderful experiences for our students but at the same time can impede learning of and from the wider world. Our school community has restricted access and understanding of the increased global integration and international mobility that has occurred during the last ten years. Behaviour management concerns have seen a growing school focus on values and the need to create a harmonious and cohesive learning environment. These factors impact our curriculum and heighten our "need to nurture an appreciation of and respect for
social, cultural and religious diversity, and a sense of global citizenship." Limited funding translates to limited access to a specialist teacher for our Languages Other Than English - Indonesian program P-6. Classroom teachers lack expertise and confidence in teaching Asian Literacy and using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to support student learning. ICT has been identified by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development as a focus with the introduction of the UltraNet throughout the state this year.

3. Project objectives

We aim to:

- Broaden our school community's horizons
- Support students to purposefully use Web 2.0 Information and Communication Technologies to become global citizens
- Support students to develop Asian Literacy through the Victorian Essential Learning Standards Domains of: The Arts, ICT and Humanities
- Provide quality Professional Development for all staff in using ICT to support the development of Asian Literacy
- Provide quality Professional Development for all staff to develop a shared understanding of Asian Literacy
- Provide teacher time and resources to develop a comprehensive policy and program for Asian Literacy.

4. Project description

In order to achieve a quality project we broke it into stages, into what we hoped would be achievable chunks.

Stage 1: Ready
We needed to develop a shared understanding of what “Becoming Asia Literate” means. This required us to explore the relevant websites (listed above), devote curriculum meetings to share our findings, seek out relevant external professional development opportunities and to audit curriculum, resources and staff to identify shared practises and to determine areas for improvement. Central questions we continue to explore are “What, why and how will we teach so that our school community becomes Asia Literate? How can we best utilise diverse resources to engage in borderless learning?”

Stage 2: Set
Whole school and individual PD focusing on Web 2.0 technologies and how they can be used to support the Asian Literacy project has taken place at external venues, as well as during curriculum meetings and informally between staff. Curriculum plans will be shared on the school’s intranet. Two quality professional development programs that have supported our project were the DEECD Innovations Showcase and Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership Connecting Policy and Practice Series – Mrs Ameeta Wattal, principal of Springdales School in New Delhi.

Stage 3: Go
Teachers implemented their projects with regular sharing throughout the school, including multi-aged classes, and ongoing PD. Completed projects will be shared using Web 2.0 tools.
Stage 4: Review
School community reviews project to date and repeats the Ready, Set, Go cycle.

**Becoming Asia Literate – Implementation of the Australian curriculum**

First semester has seen staff work together to highlight Studies of Australia and Asia within their regular curriculum cross-curricula. We were quick to discover the importance of knowing and understanding our own culture so that we can better understand and appreciate different cultures. The many influences that impact the culture of a person, family and country, and the interdependence of cultures in today’s world provide a wealth of teaching and learning opportunities. We started small, for example, Year 5/6 students view Behind the News television program weekly, prepare a report and present an oral presentation to their class. Those items with Asian content provided opportunity to ‘dig deeper’ with what’s happening in neighbouring countries and what that means for us and our relationships, for example, the economic situation in China. The Prep to 6 Arts program included stories, music, dance, drama and appreciation of art works from Asia with a particular focus on Japan and India. Bollywood dancing workshops were a popular addition to the arts program prompted by the Commonwealth Games being held in Delhi this year. Year 5/6 students participated in the National Gallery of Victoria Floating Worlds project last year and have continued their interest in this area, with many participating in an online session “Meet the Curator behind the Pictures of the Floating World – Wayne Crothers” (http://ngv-floating-world.ning.com/). This was a fantastic learning experience for the students who could see the original artworks and ask questions that were immediately answered by the curator; an example of Borderless learning. Year Prep/1/2 students created tiger collages earlier in the year to acknowledge 2010 being the Year of the Tiger. Year 3 and 4 students digitally photographed these collages and assisted the Junior students to use their digital artwork to create a greeting card using Publisher software. These cards were hand delivered to students in the prefecture of Gifu by a staff member visiting Japan over the term break. Before long our Junior school students received postcards and origami cranes, made just for them all the way from Japan! These examples, illustrate how small the world has become reinforcing the need to become global citizens. Our current foyer display shows examples of our “Becoming Asia Literate” learning for semester one and outlining our objectives. We continue to modify our Studies of Australia and Asia policy that has been circulated in draft form to the school community.

Next semester we aim to refine our curriculum, policy document and capacity to share and develop resources using Web 2.0 tools. We plan to establish regular ‘borderless’ learning opportunities, explore the potential of Skype, develop sequential and sustainable curriculum. The action research cycle will continue and we believe this places us in a good position to implement the Australian curriculum with its Asia studies perspectives.