

QUESSIE Newsletter February 2017

Dear **QUESSIE** Member

One of the reasons I started **QUESSIE** was to strengthen ties and share practice with colleagues from across the globe. It was very pleasing to have Carol from Michigan USA share with me her school's journey related to reviewing the assessment of mathematics across the junior school....and it's wide ranging implications for better practice.

I'd like to share Carol's story....

One of our teachers brought up in a staff meeting that they thought the assessment in mathematics across the school was too easy and didn't "extend" students. The staff member essentially felt that an "A" was not too difficult to achieve and challenged the current assessment pieces. This interaction brought up a robust staff discussion and importantly, action!

We pulled apart our assessment for mathematics and found that many of the questions we were asking students were indeed "simple". Many were arithmetic based problems that could be learned off by heart by the student with little or no understanding of the reasoning and processes behind the answer. While it was recognised that questions of this nature had their place in mathematics assessment, we were officially overloaded with this type of question.

So where to from here? We culled many assessment questions that drew on this basic knowledge and introduced higher order thinking questions into the mix. Problem solving tasks were prevalent in our new offerings with many of these questions integrated within other subject areas such as Science. This revamp of assessment tasks was the catalyst for wholesale change across not only our school but the district. Other schools reviewed what they were asking of students and ensured students achieving an "A" standard really were earning it through displaying a comprehensive knowledge of mathematics across a wide range of tasks.

The review process has brought schools in our district closer together on a range of topics including assessment, student wellbeing and general teaching matters. Another flow on effect has been that we are working through other subject areas to ensure our assessment is truly "on the mark" and aligns with what students need in the real world.

What an inspiring story about the power of teaching staff to instigate tangible and significant change related to improved student outcomes. This story resonates strongly with me and the work educators within our district are doing on the review of assessment and in particular, the questions we are asking of students. We are moving away from such a heavy emphasis on the "simple familiar" questions to a more balance approach where quality assessment contains complex familiar, simple unfamiliar and complex unfamiliar questions.

I look forward to hearing more from Carol and **QUESSIE** members about their respective journeys related to questioning.

On a personal note, I am elated to have been accepted to be part of the **Special Educational Needs Summit** <https://www.informa.com.au/event/special-educational-needs-summit/> being held in Sydney on May 15 and 16 in the capacity of presenter, panel member and Chair (2nd day). My presentation will focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics is for everyone and yes, effective questioning will figure most prominently!

Best wishes

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