

Maitland Public School

Action Research

27th April 2011.

Stage 3 Middle School Project

The *Middle School Project* is an innovative teaching and learning strategy designed to deliver the Key Learning Areas of Science and Technology, HSIE and Creative Arts to Stage 3 students in a highly effective and pedagogically derived manner.

Developed in 2011, the *Middle School Project* came about as a trial solution to having limited prospects in the organisation and management of Stage 3 classes. Based on previous year's successes, there existed a desire amongst staff to maintain straight year five and year six classes. The options of having two oversized year 6 classes or two stage and one cross-stage composite class posed a variety of problems. The establishment of the Middle School Project has enabled Stage 3 (as well as Stage 2) to be organised into the highly desired year classes as well as providing opportunities for improved teaching and learning outcomes.

With careful timetabling, the utilisation of STLA and executive teaching time and the 'project' concept, it became possible to address the above problems. Three smaller year six classes and two straight year 5 classes were able to be formed. However, this was only practicable until lunchtime when the STLA and executive who shared the 'extra' class had to fulfil their commitments elsewhere.

Taking place four afternoons a week, the Middle School Project absorbs the extra class in the afternoon. The five straight classes reform into four parallel 'tribes,' whereby each tribe rotates through the above KLA's with each Stage 3 teacher as a KLA specialist. Mrs Vane-Wood teaches HSIE, Mrs Kilmurray, technology, Mrs Wilson and Mrs Edge teach Art and Miss Hickey, Science. Lessons take place in the Stage 3 classrooms, Computer Room and Arts Room.

The 'project' is already proving to have many benefits to both students and teachers, least of all the evidence of improved student engagement and the potential for greatly improved student outcomes. It is enjoyed greatly by all and has surpassed expectations as a 'solution' to the above organisation and classroom management issues posed by 'tricky' student enrolment numbers.

Further exploration of the effectiveness of the Middle School Project will take place in Term 2 with the administration of a Student Feedback Survey in Week 4 and a Parent Feedback Surveys in Week 10. The student survey will provide feedback on social, organisational and teaching and learning factors. The parent survey will provide information about the perceived effectiveness of the project.

Staff evaluation of Middle School Groups and the benefits it provides to the teaching and learning cycle and professional development, suggest that it should be an integral and on-going component of Stage Three organisation for the remainder of 2011 and, indeed into the future at Maitland Public School.