

Smarter Schools: CoAG National Partnerships Round Table, November 9, 2009

'Way above the basics': Investing in literacies and numeracies that matter

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PRIORITIES

- teacher quality
- literacy and numeracy
- low socio-economic school communities



NAPLAN 2009

INTEGRALLY RELATED

- Teaching literacy and numeracy in low-SES communities
 - What's new?
 - Is there room for optimism?
 - What are the risks and possibilities?
- Students, teachers and parents
 - Who will be smarter and how, and how will we know?
- Specificity of people teaching and learning in particular places
 - Kylie & Liam; Cruz and May; rural Newfoundland and Sudan

Ongoing research

PROJECTS

- **Investigating literacy 4-9** (Nixon, Comber & Kerin, DECS)
- **School to Work- Literacy and Numeracy Innovation Program** (Cormack, Wilkinson, Kerin, Hattam, Chartres, Bills, Brennan, Barnett, Sullivan & Jorgenson; futureSACE)
- **Mandated literacy assessment and the reorganisation of teachers' work** (Cormack, Kerin, Doecke, Kostogriz, Griffith & Smith; Australian Research Council Discovery Grant)
- **New literacy demands in the middle years: learning from design experiments** Carrington & Freebody; ARC Linkage with DECS and AEU

CHALLENGES

- Expectations & time frames (eg innovation and measurable gains)
- Collaborative teams
- Competition
- Interstate and international
- **Uncomfortable alliances**
- Contradictory demands – quick answers to complex and changing problems

The policy context – national curriculum and national testing

Literacies and numeracies that matter – in the words of an innovative and effective teacher:

I can't stand it when people say this thing about go back to the basics. I mean we are way above the basics, we're way more sophisticated than that, and using all the kinds of text, I mean there's so many kinds of texts that we use, and people bring things to me all the time, so people know what you're doing, you know, mass media text and a whole range...

The Box

Today you are going to write a narrative or story.

The idea for your story is "The Box".

What is inside the box? How did it get there? Is it valuable? Perhaps it is alive!

The box might reveal a message or something that was hidden.

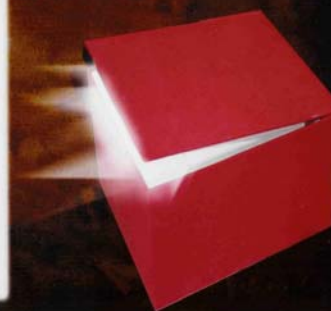
What happens in your story if the box is opened?

Think about:

- the characters and where they are
- the complication or problem to be solved
- how the story will end.

Remember to:

- plan your story before you start
- write in sentences
- pay attention to the words you choose, your spelling and punctuation, and paragraphs
- check and edit your writing when you have finished.



- ...there's no test for if a child can stand up in front of the whole school and run an assembly, you know, I mean that is an incredible skill. There's no test for going out there and being a peer mediator in the yard, which can be a battleground, and mediate for students in an argument. No test for that. There's no test if a student can make a film and win a competition and go and get a really wide audience to see their film and love it, and question people, come up with some kind of question about their work. No test for any of that. There's no test for them, you know, teaching another, the junior primaries or older and younger peer, peer teaching. There's no test for that.

Risks and possibilities

RISKS

- "NAPLAN took Term 1"
- "We left out Art and SOCE"
- Poor quality testing/test items
- Reorganisation of educators' work – data entry vs professional interpretive work
- Rewarding results may impact on ethical practice
- School or testing cycles bracket out lived realities – material realities vs deficit discourses

POSSIBILITIES

- Equity-driven strategic mediation of the policy demands – new leadership
- De-bunking of assumptions about what low SES students can achieve academically

These new partnerships need to ensure that:

- literacies and numeracies available to young people are “way above” recycled old literacies and numeracies for yesterday’s worlds of work, leisure and communication.
- serious investments in critical, complex and engaging learning for all young people
- support is provided to the people who negotiate the curriculum in our most challenging places
- we avoid abstracting out the realities of life and work in real communities
- teachers’ working conditions are adjusted so that collaborative research on making a difference to students’ learning is part of the job reality