

# EMBEDDING THINKING INTO THE CURRICULUM



ROEDEAN SCHOOL (SA)

INSPIRING A LIFE OF SIGNIFICANCE

# BRIEF BACKGROUND

- Independent girls' school in Parktown, Johannesburg.
- Junior and Senior School – Grade 0 to Grade 12 – 800 pupils.
- *Established in 1903, many deeply-embedded traditions and strong value system.*
- *Renowned for academic excellence.*
- IEB National Senior Certificate
- Wide variety of subjects.
- Students from diverse cultures form global community

# STRATEGIC PLAN

- Strategic Planning Exercise:
  - started in 2006
  - South African context
  - ‘Inspiring a Life of Significance’
- Entire school community involved – Old Girls, Board, staff, PTA and pupils.
- 2 key strategic imperatives for 2013:
  - Maths and Sciences
  - explicit teaching of Thinking Skills



ROEDEAN SCHOOL (SA)  
INSPIRING A LIFE OF SIGNIFICANCE

# WHY THINKING SKILLS ?

- 2006 : Visit to Australia showed many schools explicitly teaching Thinking Skills.
- Report back sessions sparked interest in Thinking Skills.
- Early 2008 : Senior School workshop on Curriculum.
- Amongst improvements decided upon was : Explicit Teaching of Thinking Skills.
- 2009 : IACESA conference – insight into several strategies for teaching thinking.
- Introduced to idea of “Thinking Schools” as defined by University of Exeter.

# PRINCIPLES

- Strategies chosen must fit in with the values and ethos of the school.
- Support from Principal is critical and must be evident.
- Thinking Skills to be taught explicitly throughout whole school : Grades 0 to 12.
- *All* teachers involved – develop a sense of ownership.
- *Excellent* training essential – must be well in advance of implementation – whole staff.
- Days set aside for training.
- Implementation carefully planned – step-wise manner.
- Clear implementation policy critical.

# GUIDED/INSPIRED BY

- David Perkins' keynote addresses at "Teaching for Understanding" conference in Australia (2006)
- Kaner, S. *et al.*, 2007. *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*, John Wiley & Sons.
- IACESA conference in 2009 – in particular, Bob Burden's presentation on "Thinking Schools".
- Reeves, Douglas B., 2009. *Leading Change in your School : How to Conquer Myths, Build Commitment, and Get Results*. ASCD.

# THE COMMITTEE

- Committee of “champions” to drive process.
- 8 teachers representing all phases.
- Chaired and directed by Deputy Principals in charge of Curriculum.
- Regular planning meetings.
- Organisation of staff training and report back sessions.
- Formalise process to make it as easy as possible for rest of staff.

# THE JOURNEY

- 2009: Small number of staff began researching/exploring different strategies.
- Each group a different strategy.
- Guidelines provided.
- Report back.



# STRATEGIES EXPLORED

- Matthew Lipman's Philosophy for Children
- De Bono's Thinking Hats
- Feuerstein's Instrumental Enrichment
- Nyborg's Basic Conceptual Systems
- Perkins' Visible Thinking Routines
- Ritchardt's Thinking Dispositions
- Art Costa & Bena Kallick's Habits of Mind

# THE JOURNEY

## **Critical Workshop 2010**

- Core of enthusiastic “knowledgeable” teachers presented talks or workshops to entire staff
- Staff discussed pros and cons in vertical subject/learning area groups.
- Groups developed brief proposal.
- Reported back.
- Unanimous decision : Habits of Mind as over-arching strategy – develop dispositions for Thinking.
- Other strategies implemented at different levels within different Learning Areas.

# HABITS OF MIND

- Initial training – whole staff – Principal and teacher from Bukit Batok Secondary School, Singapore.
- Set aside 2 student-free days and 2 afternoons
- In interim, continued to explore and experiment with other strategies.
- Examples: “True for Who?”, “Headlines”, “Six Thinking Hats”, “Philosophy for Children”. Videoed for report back session.

# HABITS OF MIND

- 2011: significant re-structuring of LO department to create timetabling opportunity for explicit lessons up to Grade 9.
- Whole staff workshops held for developing lessons - Sharepoint.
- Groups developed rubrics for assessing Habits.
- Teachers presently testing lessons.
- HOD Cognitive Education to be appointed within next few weeks.
- Will guide curriculum development and implementation, with assistance of Committee.

# HABITS OF MIND WORKSHOP

James Anderson full day workshop for whole staff

- Further developed understanding of the theory of intelligence.
- Showed how pupils should become better at using Habits; how teachers should assist with this.
- Described dimensions of the Habits.
- Described levels of implementation in schools and long term sustainability.

# CHALLENGES

- The “We-do-this-anyway” syndrome.
- Managing staff : over-enthusiasm, lack of interest and negativity/cynicism.
- Making time for planning and training.
- Sustaining the initiative over time.

# SOME PLANS FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE

- Embed the Habits into relevant school policies, including Performance Review process and Key Performance Areas of staff.
- Develop material and upload on Sharepoint.
- Encourage continual feedback from teachers and students - blog.
- Explicit lessons taught in time set aside.
- Infuse Habits into lessons in all subjects/learning areas.
- Develop plans for infusing Habits into the culture and ethos of the school.

# TIME LINE

**2006 :** Conference in Australia  
Strategic Planning starts



**2008 :** Staff workshop  
- curriculum  
enhancement



**2009 :** IACESA conference  
Strategic plan – Thinking Skills  
strategic initiative



**2009 :** Research into strategies  
starts



**2010 :** Staff workshop – Habits of  
Mind over-arching strategy



**2010 :** Experimental lessons  
using various strategies



**2010 :** Initial training in Habits  
of Mind – whole staff



**2011 :** Development of lessons  
for explicit teaching of Habits

Training by James Anderson –  
whole staff

Implementation May 2011