St Peters Catholic Primary School
Caboolture

Annual Report –
Progress against strategic renewal plans for 2010
Major learning from internal review processes
Critical Mass Mentoring System (CMMS) is the professional learning structure we use at St Peters to nurture our learning community. Every teacher (one from each year level) is a member of a CMMS group and is responsible for developing an in-depth level of knowledge and teaching expertise in the area they are responsible for. Each teacher has a responsibility to teach their year level peer teachers by sharing, modeling and coaching.

CMMS Enrichment Group Report
Following the annual school review it was decided that Enrichment would be a focus area for CMMS staff professional development for 2010. One of the school focus areas has been helping students to find their strength, or what it is they shine at. Another facet of school enrichment is the Enrichment Policy – or guidelines for how St Peter’s school caters for high achieving students. This writing of the school Enrichment Policy commenced this year.

2010 has been an interesting year for the Enrichment Group. They have worked on three main areas
- Ta Da! program
- St Peter’s Enrichment Policy
- Best practice for high achieving students in the classroom.

Ta Da
This group has worked hard to co-ordinate the Ta Da! Days conducted in terms 2 and 4. This whole school enrichment opportunity was made possible as this group of teachers undertook the immense task of organising the whole school into groups according to choices, organising the spaces available and trouble shooting for the program on the whole. Part of this process was a staff survey gathering feedback, and the following reflection for improvement in the program for the future.

St Peter's Enrichment Policy
Three members of the Enrichment Group are currently enrolled in an Australian Government Quality Teacher Program (AGQTP) concerning differentiation of curriculum for high achieving students, providing mentoring as they embark on the writing of the school Enrichment Policy. Together with the remaining group of teachers, they form the steering committee contributing to the writing of the policy. This mix of staff from differing year levels and a variety of experiences provide valuable opinions and feedback in the process of policy writing. The group has discussed and decided upon topics such as the school definition of a ‘high achiever’, the school vision for learning and how enrichment fits into this vision.

Best practice
This group has examined a variety of pedagogical practices and how they are used in their general teaching. These practices include strategies such as direct teaching, group work, role plays and discussions. As teachers they have reflected on which teaching strategies they employ most often and why, and shared this information and process with year level teachers for discussion.

Differentiation of curriculum describes the changes teachers make to cater for learners of different levels. These changes could be to the content, process or product, or a combination of these. The Enrichment group were fortunate to have a guest speaker regarding differentiation visit during term 2. Associate Professor Jim Watters (Faculty of Education, QUT) was able to describe, clarify and answer the groups’ questions regarding catering for
high achieving students in the classroom. This information was then shared with year level peers to provide a foundation of understanding throughout the school.

CMMS Science Group Report
In light of the introduction of the Australian Curriculum: Science in 2011 it was decided to make the particular focus in this group the exploration of the document and what the challenges, benefits and requirements would be for the implementation of this document at St Peter’s.

The group consisted of a teacher from each year level – Sarah Drew, Bronwyn Edwards, Rebecca Hutton, Rebecca Beveridge, Ben Gray, Deirdre Williamson, Nicole de Vries, Rebecca Durey.

This group worked on the following:
- Discussion of the current Science Syllabus and its implementation as part of St Peter’s curriculum. It focussed on science as stand alone units or as part of an integrated unit, teacher’s qualifications/interests/abilities and resources related to teaching concepts in science.
- Development of a school based document that outlines the major focus for each year level with comparison of current syllabus documents.
- Positive and negative statements about the National documents.
- Areas of concern and questions about the Australian Curriculum: Science document
- Identifying areas that will require specialist resourcing in order to implement the components of the new National documents
- An explanation of the strands within each year level – Science Inquiry Skills, Science as Human Endeavour, Science Understanding and Achievements
- Reporting back to and getting comments from their peer teachers on the Draft Australian Curriculum: Science

CMMS- Numeracy group report
This year the numeracy group has continued the journey of improving Mathematics teaching throughout the school. Eight very dedicated teachers (Lisa Freeth, Kelli Pacey, Simone Bannan, Angela Brown, Karen Pickford, Michelle Quince, Rebecca O’Connor and Bev Forster), one from each Year level have met throughout the year investigating best practice in Mathematics teaching. Additionally they have been analysing and investigating the soon to be released Australian Curriculum: Mathematics and the implications of this curriculum for our school.

They have worked hard at refining their own skills and sharing these skills with their colleagues in the area of inquiry in Mathematics. Inquiry is a teaching method which endeavours to engage students in a significant problem solving task which answers a question. This question is real life or life-like depending on the concept. It is a method which is used to show students that Mathematics is important for day to day life and not just a skill.
which is confined to pen and paper activities. Mathematics Inquiry was the focus at the recent Consistency of Teacher Judgement day.

Additionally they have spent many hours analysing the Australian Curriculum in Mathematics. This curriculum will affect the content which is taught in various year levels and it has been this group’s role to investigate what if any changes need to made to our own conceptual development framework in Mathematics. At a recent gathering of teachers members from the Numeracy CMMS group presented a workshop on the Proficiency Strands of the new Australian Curriculum: Mathematics. The Proficiency Strands (Understanding, Fluency, Problem Solving and Reasoning) describe the way in which students demonstrate how they use and understand Mathematics. The CMMS group shared their learnings and strategies with over one hundred other teachers from four other Catholic schools.

Two members of the CMMS group – Simone Bannan and Rebecca O’Connor, are also part of a major two year Numeracy study run jointly with UQ, ACU and Brisbane Catholic Education. They have been investigating developing student’s awareness of the Mathematics of real-life. They have created units of work which explicitly connect different learning areas highlighting the Mathematics and numeracy skills required.

Currently these teachers are working at preparing for the annual Mathematics Olympics in Mental computation. I thank them for their hard work and dedication over the last year.
**Internal School Review report 2010**

**Reporting** was reviewed prior to 2008 because of the necessary adjustments required on the report card aspect in light of Federal Government Legislation. A parent information evening was called that was well attended by approximately forty parents in 2007. Following this a sub-committee of eighteen stakeholders (fourteen parents, two school officers and two leadership members) was formed to review the report card format. Participants attended six workshops over a six week period. The conclusion drawn by this committee was that parents at St Peter’s believed that the narrative component in teacher reports about their child’s progress was a priority. While still meeting the legislative component of a five point scale reporting system, parents believed that it was the narrative that truly reflected the teacher’s understanding of their child’s learning.

The method of reporting to parents (other than the formal report card) was also reviewed in 2008 which resulted in parent teacher interviews being moved to the end of term one. Formal reports are issued at the end of term two and four, and additional parent teacher interviews at the request of parents and/or teacher at the end of term three. Parents were given the opportunity to comment on other aspects of reporting: newsletters, assemblies, class communications and web page.

The ARC Reporter system that linked to Curriculum Manager (CM) was trialled in 2006 and adopted by the school in 2007.

Teachers have become very proficient in the design and use of criteria sheets to clearly articulate the standards required to obtain each level. This is reinforced during the validation process at CTJ day.

The review of component 2.5 in 2008 via teacher and parent survey (50 families / 15% of total families) concluded that 98% of parents and teachers were very satisfied with reporting procedures at St Peter’s. A rating of six was assigned as a result of this feedback.

**Major Learning:**
Report card formats have the potential to be a contentious issue.

Parents, who experienced a more traditional model of education and the hierarchy of subjects in their own schooling, require education and information on the needs of students in the twenty-first century. The move from content recall to inquiry learning and the roles of the lifelong learner require continued discussion with stakeholders.

As the current BCEO supported CM and ARC reporting system comes to a contractual end, staff will require opportunities to engage in research and professional learning to adopt the newest monitoring and reporting tools.

**Information, Communication and Learning Technologies (ICLT)**

An audit of technology in classrooms and a survey in the use of technology within the wider community was conducted. A master plan for ICLT was completed and put into action in 2008. Using the CMMS structure, teachers have been provided with professional learning opportunities to assist them in meeting the needs of “Digital Natives”.
In a relatively short period, all staff were using technology on a regular basis. The use of technology for planning and reporting is now well entrenched in our community. The majority of our teachers are using technology to enhance learning on a regular basis. While work continues on assisting teachers to use technology to enhance learning outcomes the master plan clearly articulates priorities and goals. The resource levy allows this plan to be enacted. A rating of six was assigned to this priority.

In 2007, a policy on cyber bullying was written and adopted after six months of research and education from experts in this emerging topical issue which is a consequence of the digital age.

**Major Learning:**

The resources and infrastructure required upgrading and maintenance as digital immigrants do not require much of an excuse to avoid the use of technology. The establishment of a technology levy resulted in the ability to plan for future upgrades and ongoing initiatives.

**The Religious and Evangelising Mission**

The Religious and Evangelising Mission of the school was the focus of the professional development days at the start of the 2009. At these professional development days, staff engaged with the various dimensions of The Religious Identity and Culture of St Peter’s School, the Evangelisation and Faith formation opportunities offered, the structure and depth of Prayer and Worship and the Social Action and Justice opportunities and experiences for students.

The BCEC resources were utilised to provide staff evidence of exemplary practice. Staff were encouraged to share past experiences and ideas for future implementation. Using the CMMS structure, teachers and other staff were provided with professional learning opportunities to assist them in unpacking the various components, as well as equip them with skills to critically evaluate practice within the school. Involvement in the Parent Summit provided the stakeholders with an overview as well as an opportunity to provide comments on various components. Parent and staff surveys provided valuable feedback on each component which led to the development of a variety of strategies for consolidation and improvement.

Religious Identity and Culture, and Evangelising and Faith formation components were rated highly. Prayer and Worship within the school was highly valued and rated a five. However, the group concluded that with concerted professional development and specific resources, the Prayer and Worship life of the school could be further enhanced. Social Action and Justice was rated as four. We believe this was due more to lack of public awareness rather than lack of action, however Social Action and Justice has been prioritised in 2010.

**Major Learning:**

The BCEC document (RLOS) was very well received by the community. We believe that it made connections between the Evangelising Mission of the school and the
Religious Education process. It affirmed the relevance of the day to day faith life of the Catholic school.

It is important to involve the community stakeholders in the context and background of the reasons for the things we do.

Our reflections validated the importance of the things we were already doing at the school but gave us plenty of scope for future directions.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

The review of this priority began with a process to revise the beliefs and values we have about learners, learning and learning communities. Staff collaborated in the design of this charter. We all agreed that this would be the starting point in any discussions about planning, pedagogy and assessments.

The Parent Summit in 2009 was an opportunity to affirm that parents were aware and supportive of these beliefs and values. A new vision for learning emerged from these statements of belief and value. The concept of a learning community and the leadership team’s vision that requires teachers to be engaged in ongoing professional learning in order to improve learning outcomes in their classrooms was a major discussion point. Parents acknowledged that teacher absence from the class for eight days of professional learning during the year did not have any significant impact on their child’s learning. However these professional development days allowed for a significant increase in their teaching ability.

From these discussions emerged the idea of encouraging and valuing individual creativity and imagination. While we certainly do not devalue the academic hierarchy, we acknowledge that focusing only on this hierarchy will leave the majority of students disengaged with the education process. This disengagement we see is a direct result of students believing the things they are good at are not valued in the school context. The leadership team actively pursued processes to expose students to the arts and creative expression. The rating of five acknowledges that our vision for learning requires further consolidation before it is fully understood and embraced by the parent community.

In 2004 the notion of an alternative to current professional learning practices was developed – Critical Mass Mentoring System (CMMS). The subsequent development and refinement of CMMS over the last six years has seen significant engagement in professional learning. This has resulted in assessment data showing an improvement in Literacy and Numeracy outcomes for students since 2004.

While curriculum, teaching and learning is continually under review, the CMMS professional learning model clearly identifies our priorities each year. Staff feedback through surveys and general discussion demonstrates an improved ability to engage and respond to curriculum issues. In the KLA’s covered to date in the CMMS groups teachers rated their progress by assigning a rating of six to this priority.
**Major Learning:**

Nothing changes in terms of pedagogical practices or learning outcomes unless teachers are willing and committed to bringing about change. This willingness and commitment needs to be modelled and fully supported by the leadership team.

Teachers need to be fully involved in decisions about the need for change. This needs to be based on real data and evidence. It cannot be personality or system driven but come out of a desire to improve teacher competence and therefore student outcomes.

Students make decisions about what the school thinks is important by observing what the school celebrates.

By year seven, students at St Peters have performed well above the state average and above the National average in all aspects of literacy and numeracy since 2005.

**Student Support**

In 2009, a major goal was to review the school’s support programs and structures in terms of equity, efficiency and effectiveness. Evidence for this review came for parent surveys and discussions with parents who regularly accessed this service.

In the area of Learning Support, a rating of five indicated that significant progress has been made in assisting teachers meet the individual learning needs of students. Ongoing development and consultation is required in determining the alignment between teacher’s perception of the role of a ST:IE and BCEC role description.

While an ESL support teacher is engaged for one day per week, it was acknowledged that the school has few practices in place which give opportunities to celebrate cultural diversity. This was the poorest rating of all of our components of internal review. This will be a significant focus for future planning and directions within our community utilising links to the parish.

Student Well-Being and Pastoral Care is of overwhelming significance in our community and the support team has numerous programs to meet the social and emotional needs of the students. This was reflected in the assignment of a rating six. The absence of a full time pastoral worker for two years has had an impact on family and student access to emotional support.

The school works closely will parents and outside agencies to support students with disabilities. There is an effective transition process for these students. Parents and staff acknowledge that this is an area where the school excels and assigned a rating of six.

The Gifted and Talented focus was of a major concern to a group of parents at the Parent Summit. Some parents believed that streaming and withdrawal was the only way to address the needs of high achieving students. A rating of four indicated the need to investigate further opportunities for enrichment and extension.
Major Learning:

The need for a central data base of student information is a priority. Teachers and the leadership team require easy access to this information to inform planning and to provide feedback to parents.

The outcomes of the Shaddock report outlined the discrepancy between parent’s perception (that were duplicated in our community) of the use of funding and the acknowledgment that schools are able to use the funding at their discretion to support the students in a variety of ways.

There is a significant discrepancy between people’s perception about what constitutes giftedness and how to address this in the everyday classroom situation. Enrichment for all students has become a CMMS focus for 2010.

Staff Support

The desire to promote a culture of lifelong learning has been a focus in the school since 2004. This has been achieved through the CMMS structure and the action research process which involves all staff in making decisions about the reasons for change. The CMMS system has evolved considerably with regular staff feedback giving us ideas for restructure and improvement. In this school there is a strong culture acknowledging the importance of lifelong learners. There is no doubt that this community sees itself as a community of learners.

The staff are fully engaged and committed to the Queensland College of Teachers Professional Standards (QCTPS). Teachers wrote an eleventh standard relating to the religious dimension of teaching in a Catholic School. The staff use an action research template addressing each of these standards when making decisions about their own professional goals. The school spends $100,000 per annum on professional learning.

A survey (Measuring the Strength of St Peter’s as a Workplace) was conducted in 2009 to determine the level of staff satisfaction. The survey was based on the work of Ian Gamble that listed the components that determined job satisfaction and employees reasons for remaining at a workplace. Ninety nine percent of teachers and school officers stated in this anonymous survey:

- They know what is expected of them.
- They have the resources and equipment they need to do their work.
- They receive recognition and praise for their work.
- There is someone at St Peter’s that encourages their development.
- The mission/vision for St Peter’s School makes them feel their job is important.
- Their colleagues are committed to doing quality work.
- They regularly receive opportunities to learn and grow.

Many letters from visiting specialists, consultants and parents comment on the apparent level of enthusiasm and commitment of staff.
**Major Learning:**

Embedded change takes time.

An improvement in learning outcomes is a result of teachers who are prepared to strive for exemplary practice through improved pedagogy.

Teachers thrive on seeing results improve as a direct outcome of their actions.

Teachers who are prepared to learn from each other become good facilitators of learning.

CMMS is a successful and valid structure for promoting staff engagement and developing good professional practice.

A continued commitment and persistence to achieve desired goals leads to staff enthusiasm and success.