Beginning to teach in a rural school

Kelvin Grove Teacher Education Centre of Excellence graduate Cathy Friend began her career at Millmerran State School teaching Prep in 2013. Cathy was well prepared to work at Millmerran after completing her internship at the school in 2012.

Her principal, Mr Andrew Brandon, has been very impressed with Cathy’s commitment to her students and to this rural community, noting, “Cathy has seized many opportunities to participate in local activities and has established herself as part of Millmerran State School”.

Cathy says that the school and local community made her feel welcome from the beginning and she is very fortunate to be teaching at such a great school.

From preservice to beginning teacher!

The first cohort from the five Teacher Education Centres of Excellence has now been teaching in our state schools for 18 weeks and feedback from their principals has been overwhelmingly positive.

All placement principals were surveyed about their new TECE staff members. 100% of principals believe that the Cohort 1 graduates demonstrate a commitment to state schooling and 84% demonstrate enhanced readiness for teaching in state schools in comparison to other beginning teachers.

The principals also indicated that these beginning teachers were more developed than other beginning teachers in the areas of:

- Use of effective teaching strategies that reflect the teacher’s knowledge of their students and how they learn (71% more developed)
- Knowledge of content and application of effective pedagogical practices (81% more developed)
- Planning and implementing effective teaching and learning (71% more developed)
- Ability to reflect on and adapt teaching practices (71% more developed)
- Engaging in professional learning (66% more developed)
- Ability to differentiate (64% more developed)

In comparison to other beginning teachers TECE graduates are seen by 85% of their principals as more developed overall for the role of a state school teacher.

Many principals included comments praising their TECE beginning teacher for their readiness to teach in their individual contexts.

Our mentee survey results echo the thoughts of the principals with 93% of TECE graduates believing they were better prepared to teach in a Queensland state school after having been involved in a Centre of Excellence program.

TECE graduates rated behaviour management, student engagement, curriculum implementation and differentiation as the areas in which the TECE programs enhanced their capabilities the most profoundly.
Aspley TECE I Special Education

This year we have placed a high emphasis on setting professional learning goals. During the semester we have refined this process, culminating in the production of a goal setting workbook for mentors and mentees for Semester 2. The workbook steps mentees through the process to identify focus areas for development, and then be supported by mentors to refine and write their goals.

We use the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers as our mentoring ‘curriculum’, resulting in mentees using the focus areas and descriptors from the Graduate career stage to inform the nature of their goals. Over the past few months mentors have pooled their expertise to develop support documents for each of the standards. We have articulated some content and context specific areas within special education where mentors feel mentees should develop their expertise.

Mentors and mentees are focusing their energies on using the goal setting structure for their work together during Semester 2. This structure is effectively demonstrated in mentee Wendy’s goal around the IEP process.

By the end of Term 2 I have developed a deep understanding of the IEP process, including goal setting, data collection and reporting; so that I understand the process in detail and feel as though I am prepared and confident when holding these discussions with stakeholders. Further, I understand that my goals for a student may be different from the goals that parents set for their children and also these goals provide students with ongoing support and continuity between home and school.

Small steps to achieve the goal:
1. Attend an IEP meeting with my mentor and the parents of the student. Observe how goals are discussed and developed in collaboration with stakeholders.
2. Discuss the wording of IEP goals and how these goals are entered into One School. Observe goals being entered into One School. Discuss how data is to be collected and recorded.
3. Participate in data collection and recording. Discuss if goals have been attained. Does the goal need to be altered? Discuss and observe the reporting of IEP goals at reporting time.

Mentees will also spend more time honing their writing of personal, professional and student goals during their July Winter Intensive professional learning program.

Kelvin Grove TECE I Early, Middle and Senior Phases

KGTECE PSTs Go West

“I really enjoyed the road trip. It has opened my eyes to the schools out west and has made the task of moving there a little less daunting.” – KGTECE PST1, 2013

Once again, KGTECE students were provided with an opportunity to visit schools in the Darling Downs and South West region in anticipation of their placements for internship in Term 4.

This year we visited Millmerran SS and Dalby SHS. These schools were chosen so that the current KGTECE students could engage with past-KGTECE students who are working in those schools. The 2012 graduates were able to share their experiences and talk about the opportunities they have had, and the challenges they’re overcoming as new teachers.

While there is still a lot unknown about where they will be placed in the Darling Downs and South West, KGTECE PSTs can now picture it; they can imagine where they are going to be and this will give them the confidence to work through the next six months with the goal posts clearly in mind.

“The road trip was a great experience. I just want this year to be over so I can go out and teach. I am so excited.”

KGTECE PST1, 2013

The Smarter Schools National Partnerships are a joint initiative of...
Mt Stuart Cluster TECE | Indigenous Student and Community Participation

MSCTECE students have been engaging in weekly professional development workshops in NQ & FNQ facilitated by identified specialist teachers, addressing key EQ initiatives, and providing the opportunity for job-embedded practice with the assistance of their mentor teachers.

Prior to their week practicum, the students worked in conjunction with each region’s educational services team and their mentor teachers to plan the implementation of C2C English unit 3. In their co-planning they needed to show evidenced-based differentiation, demonstrate how they would embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, design formative assessment and provide individual students with feedback and then reflect on lesson effectiveness.

At the workshop immediately after their practicum, the students engaged in reflective discussions regarding the implementation of their units and identified areas for improvement.

These were some of the students’ reflections:

- I need to clearly state the learning intention of the lesson and success criteria at the start of each lesson;
- I will start having a 2min reflection at the end of each lesson where the students share with their partner what they learnt today. I can walk around and check for understanding which will assist me in future planning;
- I need to ask more probing/open questions. I tend to just give the students the information rather than engaging in discussion and getting them to answer questions to elucidate the information from them.

Morayfield Cluster TECE | Low SES, Literacy and Numeracy

With preservice teacher participants from various geographical locations, I look forward to the middle of the year and winter school when we are able to come together as one group and share our experiences so far and engage in focussed professional development sessions.

The Winter School program for the MTECE is determined during term 2 from feedback provided by the preservice teachers about their learning and development needs and from my observations on term 1 visits; watching the preservice teachers in the classroom and talking with their teacher mentors. That is one of the great aspects of the program – it is not a one size fits all, but tailored to the needs of the participants.

Our pre-service teachers will have the opportunity to engage with respected experts focussing on knowledge and skill development in differentiation practices; practical strategies for improving student numeracy; and assessment and learning. This year’s presenters include Tony Ryan and Jenny Nayler.

I realised that the Year 1 students did not understand some of the concepts being taught using the recommended text, so I selected a new text to show them more explicit examples of the language feature being taught.

Preservice Teachers at Summer School – January 2013.

Current preservice teachers, MTECE beginning teacher graduates from 2012 and teacher mentors associated with the program will have the opportunity to come together to network in a professional yet social environment, enhancing the centre as a true Professional Learning Community.
The semester draws to a close with some hard decisions to be made, specifically, has the selection process of written application and interview sourced the best candidates for the program? Sadly, the answer is ‘not entirely’ and several candidates have exited from the BTECE. Those that remain however have all the hallmark traits of successful future teachers: enthusiasm for the role, a willingness to learn from experienced practitioners, a commitment to state education and an understanding that the steep learning curve and extra effort required now will provide an enriched preparation and consequently future professional benefit.

In any trial of something new and innovative there are bound to be issues that arise. Not least of these is maintaining consistency in delivery of the program but equally as important is maintaining consistency in what the program delivers to the Queensland state school system – the raison d’être for the BTECE – providing highly performing and outstanding graduate teachers for Mathematics and the Sciences with a commitment to working in state schools. The quality and calibre of candidates is not negotiable. It is not sufficient that candidates simply possess the relevant content qualifications to teach in these shortage areas. They must learn to excel in pedagogy as they have excelled in content knowledge. Just about everything else apart from the imperative of quality teaching is subject to continual review and revision in order to refine and enhance the experience provided for the preservice teachers so that they are afforded every chance to learn to become and subsequently demonstrate that they are outstanding graduate teachers.

Separately, but fortuitously, the Governance Committee recently agreed to recruit additional candidates to the program from the Graduate Diploma of Education (Secondary) cohort at Griffith - Gold Coast. This midyear entry process is underway. There were a number of potential candidates identified who were late applicants to Griffith’s Grad Dip program. They were unable to be considered for entry due to Blue Cards restrictions – the BTECE program has preservice teachers in classrooms from Orientation Week in mid-February. The midyear selection process will take advantage of the fact that these applicants will have completed practicum in another setting, so practicum reports and direct references from teachers will be given considerable weight, because they are about pedagogy.

In May BTECE was visited by John Ryan, Director of the Queensland College of Teachers. John’s support and interest of the BTECE since its inception is gratefully acknowledged but this was the first time John had opportunity to visit and speak directly with mentor teachers, preservice teachers and school administrators. John visited several classrooms to observe the preservice teachers’ practice and later spoke at length with them.

He also discussed the practices of mentoring with teacher mentors and spoke with school administrators about their experience of the program in his efforts to provide us with his evaluation, feedback and recommendations. Subsequently John shared his insights which are currently under active consideration for inclusion in the program.