



Significant Episode: Teagan Ward

Teagan Ward (18 months at the school)

Year 3-4 classroom teacher

Noarlunga Downs Primary School

Noarlunga Cluster

Finding 3.2: Learning Goal

Practise explicit and scaffolded teaching with a defined and planned learning goal for each lesson that is shared with students to orient them to the learning.

I only started the project (*Make It Count*) in 2012; prior to that I was at the school but wasn't able to access training. I have now been teaching number and try to do it every day. Every day we try to build up number knowledge and understanding of the language that comes with number, using a very explicit teaching approach.

It was scary to start doing that. It was completely different to any pedagogy or methodology I'd used before. On the other hand, I wanted to do something different because I found what I had done with my 5-6-7 class last year wasn't really successful.

This meant moving away from the traditional maths lessons I learned at uni where you teach the theory then get them to go to their workbooks. This approach is very hands-on and it can be days or even weeks later that you move to the books and worksheets.

It was quite daunting but once I got into it there was heaps of support to learn the methodology and how it works. The support of Marie (Cluster Coordinator and mentor) really helped me. It took me a term to feel comfortable with it. I also had a new class which took time getting used to.

1. My kids had learnt maths this way the year before, so when I started they knew exactly what to do – in fact they could tell me some things I wasn't sure about or confident in. I can't wait to have a class next year and see the flow. I started with very basic concepts this year – but next year I hope to get the flow-on from kids who have done this work in previous years – they will get to (Year) 3-4 and recognise numbers, part/part/whole, and be ready for what comes next.
2. How I perceive maths has completely changed through my involvement in this project. When I was at school you were given a sheet, told to do your sums; that was it. No-one ever explained why we did it. This is very explicit teaching of asking the kids, getting to the end and asking "Could you use it in another sum?"; "Could you use it a different way?". And if they don't know, then we have to go back to it. I've done lots of work on multiplicative thinking – you're not going to only get problems with small numbers in real life, so we need to look at what we're doing and go deeper than just memorising times tables.
3. The real thing that made me change was because everyone here is expected to do *Make it Count*. If I wasn't expected to do it I wouldn't have, but taking it on made me change my approach and that has changed my thinking. My maths lessons are very explicit now, and I have a learning goal at the start of each lesson and that has directed my thinking and it makes me accountable. At the end of the lesson you look and ask, "Did we do that or did we get off track?"

"It was scary to start doing that. It was completely different to any pedagogy or methodology I'd done before. On the other hand, I wanted to do something different because I found what I was doing with my 5-6-7 class last year wasn't successful."

4. I love that I've changed that and am not just teaching to the middle group and leaving the outliers out. There are some really bright students who need huge extension, so it is the same goal but at different levels. I have stopped taking the traditional approach of theory first, worksheets later. I am doing a lot more observations and note taking, a lot of anecdotal assessments.
5. If you come in part-way through the year it is very hard to pick it up. We've had three new teachers starting mid-year and it is not a lack of wanting to, it is a lack of access to what is going on, and that is probably an issue. No-one says no to things here. I've been in previous schools where people would flatly refuse to do something new like this. We don't have that here. I haven't noticed more talk about maths, but if there is a break through story you let everyone know, and at observation time everyone is talking about it.
6. We are very well resourced with boxes of resources for teaching maths the *Make it Count* way.
7. For me the project has completely changed my teaching style and I'm glad it has happened to me now. You always think you are doing the right thing, but I feel lucky I have found this just four years into my career. I wonder if this can only succeed in this school, I don't know if it would work at a leafy green, 'best of the best' school – I think it would, but I don't know for certain.

Some questions to prompt discussion:

1. *What helped Teagan make changes to her pedagogy?*
2. *How do you perceive mathematics?
Do you teach it the same way you were taught it?*
3. *What other interesting or important aspects are in this Significant Episode?*

