The tenacity of teachers: The evolution of a teacher community of practice.

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Volume 1

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The tenacity of teachers: The evolution of a teacher community of practice.

Abstract

“Educational systems are fundamentally conservative – they want to retain the status quo – and when change is attempted it results in defensiveness, superficiality or at best, short lived pockets of success” (Fullan, 1993, p. 6).

The research reported in this dissertation examined one such “pocket of success” (Fullan, 1993, p. 6). It began with an exploration of the factors that facilitated and/or constrained the development of a community of practice among a team of middle years’ teachers in a small central school in rural New South Wales. The personal stories of these teachers were used to explore the impact that their involvement in this community of practice had on their professional lives, teaching philosophies and pedagogical practice. Subsequently, the nature of the relationship between this community of practice, teachers’ learning and whole school change was analysed and the potential of teacher communities of practice as a new model for a transformative form of teacher professional development was proposed.

This research took the form of an interpretative, longitudinal case study and methodologies for data collection included observations, interviews and document analysis. The data was analysed using both a constant comparative method typically used in grounded theory studies (Merriman, 2002) and a community of practice theoretical framework (Wenger, 1998).

Results showed that a community of practice had evolved at the case study school under the period of study. Ten facilitating factors and six constraining factors were identified. Facilitating factors included: strong interpersonal relationships, professional development opportunities, the personal attributes of teachers, a sense of purpose, the recognition of success, support from the community and others, school context and financial support. In addition, the concept of teacher tenacity as a facilitating factor for cultivating a community of practice was theorised. The constraining factors identified included: additional workload, the pressures of external accountabilities, sustainability concerns, group tensions, an insular membership and communication outside of the
community. Two factors, leadership and balkanisation, were also identified as acting as both facilitators and constraints, at different times during the evolution of the community.

Results also indicated that teachers in the community of practice learnt through the interconnection of five constructs: meaning, practice, community, identity (Wenger, 1998), and teaching. Both the products and processes of teacher learning were identified, and characterised, in line with these constructs. The process of reverse legitimate peripheral participation (Hung, et al, 2006) was also theorised as an effective means of enculturing ‘newcomers’ into a community of practice (Wenger, 1998).

Finally, a model was proposed that outlined, and explained, the nature of the relationship that existed between the middle years’ reform enacted at the case study school, the resultant teacher community of practice, teachers’ subsequent professional development and whole school change in terms of teachers’ changing beliefs and practices, improved student outcomes and a more positive school culture.

The findings of the research have significant implications for practice and future research. Teacher communities of practice in schools offer a more sustainable and transformative model of teacher professional development than previous ‘training’ paradigms. Cultivating these teacher communities of practice needs to become a priority for school districts if they are serious about affecting real changes for students, teachers and school communities. It is recommended that additional studies of fledging and mature teacher communities of practice, in the context of schools, be undertaken to develop a deeper and broader understanding of the factors that shape and sustain such communities. Furthermore, the concepts of teacher tenacity, as a facilitating factor for sustaining teacher participation in a community of practice, and reverse legitimate peripheral participation, as a process for enculturing new teachers into a community of practice, warrant further attention.
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Certificate of Authorship

I .........................................................................................................

Hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgment is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

I agree that the thesis be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with the normal conditions established by the University Librarian for the care, loan and reproduction of the thesis.*

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Community begins with a shared vision. It’s sustained by teachers who, as school leaders, bring inspiration and direction to the institution. Who, after all, knows more about the classroom? Who is better able to inspire children? Who can evaluate, more sensitively, the educational progress of each student? And who but teachers create a true community for learning? Teachers are, without question, the heartbeat of a successful school. (Ernest Boyer, 1995, p. 31)

1.1 Origin of the research and biography of the researcher

I have always tended to divide my professional life into two separate and seemingly unrelated phases: my past life as a medical scientist in a large teaching hospital in Western Sydney, and my life now as a teacher in a rural, regional centre in Western New South Wales. But the division between these phases has become less distinct over the years for two reasons. Firstly, I have come to the gradual realisation that teaching was something I had always wanted to do and I recall a faded memory, clearer upon reflection, of asking my Biology teacher when I was in Year 11, “How does one become a Biology teacher?”, to which he cynically replied, “One doesn’t”. Needless to say I did not immediately enrol in an undergraduate teaching degree, choosing instead to study Biomedical Science and seek employment within the industry. Upon moving to the country (an eminently suitable place to raise three children) many years later, necessity forced me to choose a new path, and suddenly an avenue opened to combine my experience and love of Science with my frustrated, unrealised love of teaching. I completed my Diploma in Education (Secondary) in 1998 and commenced teaching Science and Mathematics two years later as a casual teacher in a rural comprehensive high school some thirty minutes from home. Surprisingly, a second reason appeared to explain the blurring of the division between my two lives: being a medical scientist and a teacher had one important thing in common: both were professionally isolating: what you learnt, you learnt alone.

It has been said that “teaching is a lonely profession…” (Sarason, Levine, Goldenberg, Cherlin & Bennett, 1966, p. 74). Unlike many other professions, teaching does not necessarily provide for a “shared culture” whereby knowledge leads to experience in the
“company of one’s peers” (Lieberman & Miller, 1991, p. 95). Upon completion of a teaching credential, graduates often find themselves alone in classrooms left with high expectations, a handful of strategies and a few like-minded teachers with whom to “share, grow and learn” (Lieberman & Miller, 1991, p. 95).

I do not consider that during this early (and often lonely) phase of my career, anyone would have called me a good science teacher. It wasn’t that I was not punctual, unprofessionally dressed or inept: I just had very little idea of how to teach. I modelled my lessons around what I knew and how I had been taught in school. I wrote copious notes on the black-board, threw in the odd science practical (when student behaviour permitted) and assessed my students faithfully each term with a topic quiz. My perception of teaching was that I had a body of scientific knowledge to transmit to students, my understanding of pedagogy was that students needed that knowledge in a written form so that they could memorise it and regurgitate it back to me, classroom management centred around the notions of compliance and order and professional development meant borrowing colleagues’ black line masters and discussing student behaviour over lunch. Despite being surrounded by some exemplary teachers during this period of my career and being mentored by a very experienced Head Teacher (well versed in innovative teaching practices), I was not an active participant in my own professional development. I learnt a great deal about teaching and learning through observation, modelling and collegial dialogue, but these new understandings didn’t seem to find their way into my practice.

The literature cites the most common form of professional development for teachers in schools as one of long periods, during which teachers work alone, interspersed with an organisational one-day training workshop or expert presentation on a pre-packaged programme or resource (Raymond, Butt & Townsend, 1992; Robb, 2000). Little et al.’s (1987) review of staff development activities concluded that “most staff development activities are not designed in ways that can promote professional growth” (cited in Lieberman & Miller, 1991, p. 72). A centralised structure of professional development rarely has relevance for a heterogeneous group of teachers teaching different subjects, in different places, to different students in different grades. Robb (2000), in a critique of traditional models of staff development, concluded that one-day training sessions failed to account for differing levels of knowledge and expertise among staff; that one-size-fits-all presentations did not account for contextual issues like school culture; that school leaders rarely attended school-based development activities, thereby sending the
message that staff development was not important, and that most staff development activities did not provide follow up support for participants.

Little (1997) described the training paradigm as the dominant model in the world of teachers’ professional development, whereby short term skill training workshops far outnumber teacher focus groups, networks or practitioner action research. Many forms of teacher in-services in schools have traditionally been “deficit in philosophy, remediating teacher shortcomings” rather than acknowledging teacher expertise as a valuable school resource (Buchanan & Khamis, 1999, p. 1).

My own experiences with professional development from 1998 to 2000 certainly mirrored this phenomenon: single staff development days each term to transmit the latest policy or new instructional mode; occasional training days to pick up often valuable and innovative tips from more experienced colleagues – tips I never actually found time to implement (always alone) with programming, lesson planning and behaviour management.

In 2000, I obtained my first permanent appointment as a classroom teacher at a small Central School close to home. I was to be one of only two Science teachers in the Secondary school, and responsible for teaching both junior and senior classes to students with very varied learning needs. It soon became apparent that a survival mode of pedagogy was inadequate to address these needs. I began to read more widely and critically, accessing books on interesting science experiments and surfing internet sites which allowed for a virtual exploration into scientific phenomenon. Science text books were now viewed as a teaching resource rather than a lesson prop and I began to search for better, more effective and engaging modes of lesson delivery. I still would not have called myself a good teacher, but at least a journey of self reflection had begun: I began to see connections between what and how I taught and what and why students learnt.

Then in 2001, a door of opportunity opened. I secured an appointment as Head Teacher (Welfare) at my school, and I volunteered to become part of a teaching team responsible for designing, implementing and evaluating a Middle School Program in order to re-engage our very disengaged adolescents. My understandings around professional development, teacher collaboration, quality teaching for improved student outcomes (New South Wales Department of Education and Training Curriculum Support Directorate, 2002), curriculum innovation and school improvement were to undergo a profound re-conceptualisation over the next five to six years, as this volunteer teaching
team gradually transformed into a dynamic and effective form of collaborative culture – a *community of practice*, focused on the middle years of schooling (Hargreaves, 1992; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). This community of practice was to impact significantly on the professional and personal lives of the teachers involved, and subsequently on the learning outcomes of our students and the culture of our school. The group also became the antecedent for another phase in my professional life: life as a *better* teacher because of my membership of this community of practice. I finally had a vehicle for my professional development that meant I didn’t need to work and learn alone, and consequently, what I learnt not only crept into my practice; it transformed it.

It should come as no surprise that throughout this chapter, and subsequent chapters, I will be linking the terms ‘innovation’, ‘teacher professional development’ and ‘school change’ together: the literature does so on many occasions and it is the interplay between these concepts that will ultimately be explored in this dissertation (Hargreaves, 1992; Hoban, 2002; Huberman & Miles, 1984; Fullan, 1992, 1993, 1997, 1999; Lieberman & Miller, 1991). Peterson, McCarthy & Elmore (1997 cited in Fullan, 1997, p. 79) presented an analysis that suggests schools are successful when they develop “professional learning communities with a school-wide focus on pedagogical practices linked to the examination of student learning, which in turn feeds back on school improvement”. This is the kind of phenomenon that this dissertation explored: the possibility that when teachers participate in a community of practice to drive innovation and direct professional development, schools and their community experience real change.

Fullan (1993) reminded us that school change is a complex business and that the tensions between educational innovation and a conservative system of education often lead to “superficiality or at best short-lived pockets of success” (Fullan, 1993, p. 3). But he also contends that teachers are “in the business of continuous innovation and change… they are in the business of *making improvements*” (Fullan, 1991, p. 4, author’s emphasis). The voices of the teacher participants in this research will attest to the fact that even *pockets of success* have their place. Indeed, I argue in this dissertation that when teachers come together with real *moral purpose* to improve outcomes for their students, these pockets of success can, and do, make a difference (Fullan, 1993).

My research acknowledges that teacher professional development as “training and remediation is an outdated model, based on formulations of teaching that are currently
being challenged and replaced” (Lieberman & Miller, 1991, p. 107). New models, designed to meet the challenges of the new millennium must be considered. These models should support the birth and evolution of collaborative cultures, whereby teachers are empowered to assume new roles in their own development and in the education of their students (Leiberman & Miller, 1991). One such new model is the Project for Enhancing Effective Learning (PEEL), a collaborative action-research project set up in 1985 at Laverton High School in Victoria by Ian Mitchell and John Baird. Originally a two year project involving ten volunteer teachers interested in exploring issues around student learning, the PEEL project still continues to operate in over 40 schools in Victoria and several schools overseas in Sweden, Denmark and Canada (Erickson, Brandes, Mitchell & Mitchell, 2005). This project continues through the premise that in order to bring about real change for students, there needs to be real change in teachers’ beliefs, attitudes and practice.

This dissertation explores another new model: the possibility that participation in communities of practice may provide schools with a purposeful, self-directed and needs-based model for teacher professional development. As Buchanan and Khamis (1992, p. 20) reminded us, “the centrality of the teacher in focused, purposeful and effective educational reform can scarcely be overstated”.

At this point, I would like to emphasise that the organic nature of the title of this dissertation was a deliberate choice and not the result of whimsical musings arising as a remnant of my past life. My title reflects the manner in which the community of practice evolved, and was sustained (from 2001 to 2008), despite internally and externally enforced changes. This process was reminiscent of the evolutionary response of an organism to the process of natural selection (Darwin, 1937). Later in this dissertation, I will provide evidence of this evolutionary response (See Chapter 4).

In this chapter I present an overview of the background for this research; the context of the case study school; the antecedents for the innovation (the Middle School Program) and a description of the middle years’ model developed. I then move on to outline the purpose of the research which consequently framed the research question, and resultant sub questions for my inquiry. The significance of the research will be discussed in terms of the links between curriculum reform (through a middle years innovation), teacher professional development (via a community of practice) and school change (envisioned as a move towards a positive school culture), and the potential adaptation of
communities of practice theory for school settings. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the assumptions and limitations of the study, and an overview of the framework for the dissertation.

1.2 Background for the research

1.2.1 The School context

Beaumont Central School (a pseudonym for the case study school and herein referred to as BCS) is a co-educational K to 12 school situated between two large regional centres in rural New South Wales. BCS is the only central school\(^1\) in its district and is surrounded by a number of larger public, independent and Catholic high schools that draw secondary students from the same area. This provides local families with a variety of educational choices and facilitates a competitive environment for school enrolments.

The school is situated in the main street of the town and has enjoyed a close association with the community over a number of years. The school site is used as a community centre for parent groups, vocational and adult education courses and sporting associations. The school buildings combine the old with the new. The school was established in 1884 and a new wing was added in the 1990s to house the administrative facilities and primary classrooms.

Student enrolments at the school fluctuate; averaging around 200 students from kindergarten to adult (the school offers adult education courses in Information Technology). A high percentage of students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and this is, in part, due to the fact that the school is situated in the centre of Beaumont and is therefore a convenient setting for parents who may have limited transport options. Also, many of the parents of students who attend the school attended BCS themselves and therefore seem to feel more comfortable communicating with staff (many of whom live in and around Beaumont) in familiar surroundings. The school is eligible for the state government’s Priority Schools Funding program. This program supports schools in which a large proportion of students attending the school come from families experiencing economic difficulty.

Historically, many students at BCS have demonstrated low achievement in literacy and numeracy, low self-esteem and an overall lack of confidence in learning. The school’s

\(^1\) A central school is comprised of students from Kindergarten to Year 10 or 12.
management plan focuses on student literacy, numeracy, welfare and the integration of technology into teaching and learning. Various pathway options are available for students that encourage them to complete school, including Vocational Educational and Gateway (for students with disabilities) programs.

Beaumont is a small community (with a population of 2500) experiencing high unemployment rates, and consequently, there are few local job opportunities. The population is an ageing one and the demographics of the community are changing quite rapidly. This means that students must leave the town to find employment or to take advantage of higher educational opportunities.

The staff at the school comes from a diverse range of backgrounds in terms of teaching speciality and experience. The school employs five primary classroom teachers, twelve secondary teachers and five school support staff. The students also access the services of a special education teacher, school counsellor, literacy support teacher and behaviour and welfare consultants. The school’s executive structure consists of a Principal, Deputy Principal, two Assistant Principals and three secondary Head Teachers. During the school’s history, there have been significant, and frequent, staff changes leading to escalating negative school culture and community disenchantment. With the appointment of a new Principal in 2001, and the subsequent expansion and stabilisation of the executive structure, the school was in a position to contemplate a process of change.

1.2.2 Antecedents for the BCS Middle School

In 2001, the Principal and staff at BCS met to discuss the overall school culture: a culture that could only be described as negative. This was evident in falling student enrolments, low primary to secondary retention figures and an increasing level of student disengagement, particularly in the middle years (Years 5 to 8). Minimal parental involvement at the school was also flagged as a concern by the school community. It was suggested that a Middle School be established at BCS to re-engage students in a significant, real world curriculum tailored to meet their diverse needs (Brennan & Sachs, 1998). Though the school encompassed Kindergarten to Year12, there were clear organisational and cultural divisions between the primary and secondary sectors. The Middle School was also heralded as a possible bridge between these sectors. The staff and school community were consulted about this decision at a public meeting and the
majority of people who attended were in favour of the proposal, provided community consultation was ongoing. In late 2001, BCS applied to the NSW Department of Education and Training for a Linkages Steering Committee seed grant, established to aid the transition of Stage 3 (upper primary) students into Stage 4 (junior secondary). The school was successful in securing both a monetary grant and the services of a ‘Linkages consultant’ whose role was to facilitate the process of establishing the Middle School Program, and later, to serve as a critical friend for the professional development of the involved teachers.

The school called for volunteers, and four teachers; two primary specialists, a secondary English/History teacher and a secondary Science/Mathematics teacher (the researcher) indicated their willingness to participate. The team, with the assistance of the Linkages Consultant, engaged in a series of planned weekly meetings (out of school hours) and research activities to develop the fundamentals of the program. These meetings, and the changes to classroom and school organisation and teacher practice that they generated, were to continue, with varied agendas and processes (according to identified needs) for the next seven years.

1.2.3 The BCS Middle School Program: the model unpacked

1.2.3.1 School structure and organisation

The Middle School program at BCS involved students in Years 5 through to 8. Originally, classes were organised into four units: two classes comprising Years 5, 6 and 7 students and two classes comprising Years 6, 7 and 8 students. During the period 2001 – 2008 these class structures were to periodically change, being influenced by external factors like student numbers and staff allocations, and internal factors like social interactions, student developmental concerns and curriculum considerations. The core principles of the program however – home rooms and teachers, small class sizes and multi-age, multi-ability groupings – were conserved.

The Middle School program began on a small scale. In 2001, the Middle School timetable consisted of a Literacy/Numeracy block of two hours per day, four days per week. Students attended regular primary and secondary classes outside of these hours. The four teachers involved worked as a team to plan and evaluate English and Mathematics programs that considered student outcomes along syllabus (NSWBOS Stage 3 Mathematics and English syllabuses and Years 7-10 Mathematics and English
syllabuses) continua. The primary and secondary bell times and session times were realigned, ensuring students in Years 5 to 8 could come together in their home rooms with their home teachers. In 2002, a team-teaching approach was adopted and the four classes were collapsed into two with each class being taught by a primary and a secondary specialist working together.

In 2004 the Middle School curriculum expanded in time and extended into more key learning areas. Block scheduling was introduced into the timetable to allow students to study Literacy and Numeracy in the morning session and Integrated Studies, Creative Arts, Music and Sport in the afternoons. Students studied other stage-specific subjects (Personal Development, Health and Physical Exercise (PDHPE), Languages and Design and Technology) in separate session times.

1.2.3.2 Pedagogy

The development of the Middle School Program at BCS involved a significant shift in the pedagogical understandings and practices of the teachers involved. Teachers needed to develop collaborative planning practices and a deep working knowledge of often unfamiliar syllabuses in order to program quality units of work that were student-centred, engaging and developmentally differentiated for students with differing needs across primary and secondary stages. To address this, Bloom’s Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956), The Planning Pyramid (NSWDETCSD, 2003) and The Quality Teaching Framework (NSWDETCSD, 2003) were used in the planning process to ensure a rigorous program delivery and to encourage high expectations. The rotation of teaching units over a four year cycle (as students progressed from Year 5 to 8) provided multiple opportunities to achieve stage appropriate outcomes as students were able to cover concepts in greater depth and revise common concepts and skills in different contexts. Mixed stage groupings also allowed for extension and remediation pathways.

The learning experiences facilitated in the Middle School were based on student-centred, constructivist theories of learning and problem solving, and a hands-on approach was a key component in teaching and learning programs (Groundwater-Smith, Ewing & Le Cornu, 1998) (See Appendix A). Students’ communicative competencies were strengthened through the regular use of group work and other collaborative exercises. Teaching and learning practices incorporated reflection activities so that students could think about how they learnt and could identify their individual learning styles and the environment that best facilitated that learning (Prashnig, 1998).
Another important factor in the structuring of the Middle School Program at BCS was to encourage the development of strong, positive relationships between teachers, students and peers. This was partially achieved through the use of supportive structures like home groups and home rooms. Home room teachers stayed with student groups for four years, enabling the teacher to know the students’ backgrounds, strengths and weaknesses and to differentiate the learning experience accordingly (Tomlinson, 2004). Democratic processes were also consistently used to ensure that students, and their parents, had input into the planning, implementation and evaluation of the program.

Outcomes based assessment and reporting across the middle years cohort was used to direct programming, track student achievement and report to parents. Assessment was focused on the use of criterion marking, rubrics and student portfolios in line with NSW outcomes-based syllabuses.

1.2.3.3 Curriculum

As noted, the curriculum for Years 5, 6, 7 and 8 at BCS was based on the NSW Board of Studies syllabus documents (2003). The teachers involved in the BCS Middle School Program engaged in a complex process of curriculum mapping to devise syllabus continuums and authentic, interdisciplinary, integrated units of work that encompassed the English, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography and Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE) disciplines (Drake, 1998; The State of Queensland Department of Education, 2001-2003). Specialist secondary teachers taught students Creative Arts, PDHPE and Design and Technology subjects in allocated time slots, and explicit literacy and numeracy skills were taught in morning sessions and reinforced in the integrated units.

1.2.3.4 Professional development

The Middle School Program brought together five very different teachers into a loosely woven group. Their differences included varied expertise across the primary/secondary domains, training in seemingly unrelated disciplines and polarised attitudes and beliefs around pedagogy and curriculum. In order to develop the Middle School Program at BCS, the teachers involved recognised from the onset that professional development would be paramount to the program’s success and that systematic processes would need to be put in place to ensure that this professional development occurred within a critical time frame. For this reason, it was decided that the teaching team would meet weekly,
out of school hours, and that a facilitator (the Linkages consultant) would be required to
direct (and deliver) the professional development agenda. It was hoped that this
allocation of time and space, would not only be used to develop the nuts and bolts of the
program, but would also be an opportunity for the team to develop a shared set of values
and collaborative practices.

Over an eight year period, these aims were realised; though in truth, none of us was
prepared for the changes that were to occur. Curriculum and pedagogy shifted
significantly in response to student and whole school needs; individual understandings,
beliefs and attitudes towards teaching and learning became collective; a team ‘coerced’
in the direction of implementation became active inquirers of knowledge; relationships
based on interactions and shared experiences formed and a common language and
practice developed. The loosely woven group of volunteers became a tightly knit,
effective and collaborative team committed to professional development; rooted in
practice. A community of practice had developed (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger,
1998).

1.2.3.5 Evolution of the phenomenon

As previously mentioned, one of the intriguing aspects for me, both as a participant in
the community of practice, and now as a participant researcher dissecting this
community of practice in order to better understand what made it work, was the
evolutionary and tenacious nature of the phenomenon. Over a period of eight years, the
Middle School Program experienced, and adapted to, significant changes; fluctuating
student numbers, staff turnovers, changing organisational structures, resource
constraints, threats of “balkanisation”, increased workloads and ever-constricting
system demands, to name a few of the contextual factors that shaped it
(Hargreaves, 1992, p. 223). Despite all this; the old timers remained and newcomers
drifted in and out; after- hours meetings continued to allow for program evaluation and
subsequent action; professional development drifted away from a facilitated model to a
collaborative action research agenda and students continued to benefit from a dynamic,
integrated curriculum (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As previously stated, this evolutionary
process will be explored later in this dissertation (See Chapter 4). As a participant
researcher, I began to ponder possibilities: if we were able to use the innovation process
to kick start a sustainable and effective community of practice, capable of generating a
cycle of transformative teacher professional development and school improvement,
could such a process be adapted and used as a viable alternative to more traditional school professional development models, elsewhere? Could an understanding of what happened at BCS mean that communities of practice in schools might be established and sustained as antecedents for other pockets of success (Fullan, 1993)?

1.3 The purpose of the research

The purpose of this research was to explore, in depth, the community of practice that was born, and evolved, at BCS. Through teacher interview (at significant points over an eight year period), observation (from multiple participant perspectives) and document analysis, this phenomenon was analysed, and the potential for a community of practice as a vehicle for teacher professional development, and ultimately school change, investigated.

This research is essentially transformative in nature, because it seeks to change existing processes for teacher professional development in schools. Too often, after being presented with an overwhelming number of theories, programmes and teaching trends in pre-service and in-service programmes, many teachers fall into a “repetitive pattern of teaching in the conventional way in which they were taught when they were at school” (Lortie, 1975, cited in Hoban, 2002, p. 1).

Research has steadily reinforced the claim that “professional community is an important contributor to instructional improvement and school reform” (Little, 2002, p. 917). The notion of communities of practice has also appeared steadily in the research literature over the past decade, and is popular in both educational and business settings. Within educational research, communities of practice have become a valuable metaphor for describing organisational learning (Yamagata-Lynch, 2001). However, exactly how these two concepts might be linked; teacher professional development and communities of practice, is not so clear. Several authors have explored the use of communities of practice as pedagogical devices for designing student communities, or for use in teacher professional development. For example, Palincsar, Magnusson, Marano, Ford and Brown (1998, cited in Yamagata-Lynch, 2001) used community of practice as a tool to track the birth and growth of a community within a teacher professional development program aimed at improving K-6 Science education (See Chapter 2). They found that it was difficult to use a community of practice as a design tool for teacher professional development because in the everyday work of the teachers they studied, there was a lack of a commonly shared mission, or joint enterprise. In this study, this was not an issue, as
the Middle School Program itself acted as the joint enterprise that held the community together (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Yamagata-Lynch (2001, p. 638) argued that “for the community of practice metaphor to mature as a research and development framework in educational settings, we need more discussions surrounding how it can be used as a metaphor for improving pre-service and in-service teacher education”. Little (2002, p. 931) reinforced the importance of this discussion, stating that “from the perspective of teacher development and school reform, a central interest in teacher collaboration or community resides in its potential for teachers to learn from and with one another in ways that support instructional improvement”. Ultimately this dissertation continues this discussion.

This research also paid attention to teachers’ voices: it listened to what they had to say in terms of the impact of their collective actions, beliefs and practices for individual student, and whole school, transformation. Pure research can be described as the “disinterested search for knowledge and understanding for its own sake” (Robson, 1993, p. 430). The application of findings to solving problems in the real world is not always seen as a high priority. Wilkinson (2000, p. 3) pointed out that although research may contribute to a knowledge base of a particular discipline, the findings are often accessible to only a small group through publications in research journals that are not always “user friendly or easily accessible to the non expert”. From the teachers’ perspective, it could be argued that research in the social, behavioural and education sciences has had little impact on practice. This research is an attempt to use the teachers’ voice to talk to teachers; to empower them to believe that what they do, think and feel can make a difference. My own experiences; as a postgraduate student, a pre-service teacher, an early career teacher and a member of a dynamic community of practice, affirms this statement. No matter how many books and articles I read, how many formal classes I attended or how many in-service programmes I sat through, learning about teaching and learning did not transform my practice, until I was able to discuss, debate, trial, evaluate and reflect on mine, and my students’ lived experiences with like-minded colleagues in an environment that valued that learning.

1.4 The research questions

The main research question that I seek to answer in this study is:

What is the nature of the relationship between teacher communities is of
practice, teacher professional development, curriculum reform and school change?

When examining this question the following sub-questions are also of significance:

- What factors facilitated/constrained the development of a community of practice among a group of middle years’ teachers in a small, rural central school?
- In what ways does a community of practice lead to or provide professional development for teachers?

1.5 Significance of the research

This research drew on the plethora of research, derived primarily from case studies, around Comprehensive School Reform (with a focus on middle years’ reform), communities of practice, teacher professional development and school change. It explored these concepts, not as separate entities, but as parts of a dynamic whole; components of a phenomenon (a Middle School Program) that evolved at BCS from 2001 to 2008.

Increasingly, education sectors are identifying the middle years of schooling as a priority (Chadbourne, 2001; Cumming, 1998; Finders & Bush, 2003; Whitehead, 2000). Most states and territories in Australia have middle years’ programs at some level and have developed, or are in the process of developing, policies around middle years’ reform. Luke, Elkins, Weir, Land, Carrington, Dole, Pendergast, Kapitzke, van Kraayenoord, Moni, McIntosh, Mayer, Bahr, Hunter, Chadbourne, Bean, Alvermann, & Stevens (2003, p. 13) offer one explanation for this, identifying the middle years as “a key proving and testing ground for many of the key challenges that face Australian education, training and larger social policy”. They identified the middle years as a site where key issues around demographic change, economic and cultural shift and community change were being played out. Also, due to the minimal number of specific pre-service training programs, many middle years teachers learn on the job, and therefore reform efforts in the middle years of schooling have historically moved slowly (Luke et al., 2003). Teachers new to the middle school context need to grapple with a middle years’ curriculum, redefined school structures and adolescent-appropriate pedagogies and assessments. Middle school teachers are asked to be something different; neither a primary or a secondary teacher: they are expected to be both
“mentor and monitor”, providing students with a positive relationship and an intellectually challenging curriculum (Whitehead, 2000, p. 6, cited in Luke et al., 2003, p. 54). The Middle School Program at BCS stands as a middle years reform that was implemented by teachers at the grass roots level and has seemingly withstood the tests of curriculum restructure, changing school priorities, fluctuating student numbers, staff movements and time itself, remaining as a viable program for over eight years.

In terms of teacher professional development, traditional models, both in Australia and overseas, have been based on a ‘service-delivery’ paradigm, whereby “teachers were objects to be in-serviced; they were seen as individuals operating without a context” (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992, p. 124). In a study in the United States, Little (1986; 1989) found that the prevailing patterns of staff development, based on a model of service delivery, were not conducive to sustained teacher development. This research explored the potential for another model of teacher professional development whereby teachers became valued members of a community of practice, developing a shared language around teaching and learning, restructuring curriculum for their own students and leading real change processes within their school.

This research is significant in terms of context: it was a longitudinal study that traced teachers’ stories of their professional development over time. It focused on a school within a rural community where real change for students was a much needed opportunity for equity, and it used the voices and perspectives of those involved in transformative practice (including the voice of a participant researcher). It is also significant in that it contributes, as new knowledge, to the discussion around how communities of practice can be used to improve in-service teacher professional development in and for schools, and how a knowledge of the process by which these communities evolve, might actually assist schools in setting up communities of practice as a tool to enhance personal and organisational learning (Yamagata-Lynch, 2001).

1.6 Assumptions and scope of the study

1.6.1 Assumptions

Deeply embedded within this research, and the recommendations that will arise from it, is an overriding assumption that the majority of teachers want to develop professionally; that they want to hone their craft in order to improve outcomes for their students, and ultimately, bring about positive changes in their school. Coupled with this is the
assumption that this is important. If, as teachers, we are committed to achieving equitable learning outcomes for our students, and if we truly believe that it is quality teaching that makes the difference, then surely we must also be committed to our own professional development (NSWDETCS D, 2003). As Sarason (1990, p. 45, cited in Grossman, Wineburg & Woolworth, 2000, p. 49) noted “it is virtually impossible to create and sustain over time conditions for productive learning for students when they do not exist for teachers”.

I take heart from the research of Leiberman and Miller (1991, p.94) who formulated eight understandings around the nature of teaching, one of which explored the initial weak knowledge base of the profession, concluding that “throughout their careers, teachers seek professional knowledge”. Certainly the literature makes the case that “schooling is urgently in need of reform” and that “teacher education will be the central medium of change” (McRae, Ainsworth, Groves, Rowland & Zbar, 2000, p. 14). Guskey and Huberman (1995, cited in McRae et. al, 2000) expand on this by declaring:

Never before in education has there been greater recognition of the need for ongoing (teacher) professional development…. Regardless of how schools are formed or reformed, structured or restructured, the renewal of staff members’ professional skills is fundamental to improvement. (p. 14)

1.6.2 Scope of the study

This research is limited to a single case: the BSC Middle School Program and the teaching team responsible for its development, and involves at most twelve participants. Critics of case study methodologies might consider this a limitation in terms of external validity: single cases may offer a poor basis for generalising (Yin, 2003). Whilst a single case has been studied, it has been studied in depth, over time, using a variety of data sources. This in itself may be considered a generalisation. Stake (1995, p. 7) suggested the term “petite generalization” to describe studies whereby generalisations occur along the way as the case unfolds. This case study does not seek to represent a ‘sample’, and the goal of the research was to “expand and generalise theories and not to enumerate frequencies” (Yin, 2003, p. 10). It is also worth remembering that “the real business of case study is particularisation, not generalisation” (Stake, 1995, p. 8). In a case study line of inquiry, we take a particular case and get to know it very well, not
necessarily looking at how it is like something else, but rather seeking to understand what it is, what it does and how it does it (Stake, 1995).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 451) remind us, that “for qualitative fieldwork, we draw a purposive sample, building in variety and acknowledging opportunities for intensive study”. Being an intrinsic case study, the case is given, “we are interested in it, not because by studying it we learn about other cases…..but because we need to learn about that particular case” (Stake, 1995, p. 3).

The theoretical construct of this study, within communities of practice theory, highlights the collaborative action of situated practice (Wenger, 1998). There was no benefit or requirement for this to be framed across a number of case studies and so the design of this study focused in depth on a single case. I have investigated a single, and what I believe to be, unique, phenomenon: a community of practice born out of necessity, but sustained by something else. Stake (1995) stresses the importance of uniqueness in a case study and emphasises the need to know how the case is different from others, but more importantly, the need to understand the case itself.

Whilst generalisations are difficult to make in this type of interpretative research, certain key themes will emerge that may be applicable to other school contexts. Certainly the use of case studies to explore the formation and development of teacher learning communities is a valid methodology used consistently in the literature (Graven, 2004; Grossman et al., 2000; Levin, 2001; Little, 2002 & Yamagata-Lynch, 2001).

Another limiting factor in this research centres on the issue of subjectivity: as the researcher I was also a participant within the community of practice. There is no question that qualitative inquiry is subjective, “the intent of qualitative researchers to promote a subjective research paradigm is a given” (Stake, 1995, p. 45). In the case study, subjectivity is not seen as a failing needing correction, but rather an “essential element of understanding” (Stake, 1995, p. 45). However, subjective misunderstandings and misinterpretations, due to weaknesses in methodology, are not an accepted element of qualitative research. In order to combat this, validation through data triangulation (in and between interviews, observations and document analysis) and regular member checking was a crucial component of the research design. Member checking: a process whereby participants are asked to review a researcher’s interpretations of their inputs (for example, interviews or meeting transcripts), was used to validate the data and subsequent analysis, for accuracy and palatability (Stake, 1995). It was also seen as a
way of including the participants in the research; their voices; their interpretations of the phenomena, were to my mind, an extension of their membership in the community of practice.

### 1.7 Framework of the thesis

In this chapter I have provided a brief autobiography that situates me as author within the community of practice this dissertation sought to explore. I then presented background information in terms of school context and the antecedents for the innovation (the BCS Middle School Program) that pre-empted this community of practice. The BCS Middle School Program was also deconstructed to provide readers with an understanding of its organisation and structure. From this, the research questions were articulated and a discussion followed outlining the significance, purpose and possibilities of the research for teachers and schools. The chapter has concluded with further discussion around the assumptions and limitations of the present study.

In Chapter 2 I will review the literature around the key concepts of communities of practice as a situated theory of learning, teacher professional development and school reform (within the context of a middle years’ innovation).

This is followed by Chapter 3 which contains an outline of the research design and methodology, including the analytical framework (See Figure 3.4) used to view the data. This chapter also includes an argument for the line of inquiry taken, an explanation of my role in the research, a description of the participants, the data audit trail (See Figure 3.2), an account of the ethical considerations of the research and a statement of how trustworthiness of the data was assured.

In line with the analytical framework outlined in Figure 3.4, a series of chapters address the discussion around the findings. Chapter 4 discusses the first set of results from the study, providing evidence for the establishment of the community of practice at BCS and its evolutionary nature. Chapter 5 outlines the factors that both facilitated and constrained the community, whilst Chapters 6 and 7 lead the discussion around the changes resulting from the community’s practice, in terms of teacher learning and professional development and school change.

Chapter 8 provides the conclusions from the research including a summary and discussion of the potential use of communities of practice for teacher professional
development in schools and the implications of this for school change. Areas for further research are also identified.

At this point it is important to note that this dissertation has been presented over two volumes. Volume 1 contains Chapters 1 through to 8, whilst Volume 2 contains a series of appendices aligned to each of these chapters and labelled accordingly. The appendices allow the reader access to original data and to documentation that will enhance his/her understanding of my argument without substantively adding to its development. For ease of navigation and depth of understanding the reader is encouraged to view these two volumes in tandem.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 1, this study focuses on the birth and evolution of a teacher community of practice and its potential as a vehicle for teacher professional development and learning and subsequent school change. To inform and underpin this study a review of the literature was carried out in the following areas:

- Communities of practice as a form of situated learning
- Teacher professional development
- School reform and School change (with a focus on Middle Years’ Reform [MYR] and Comprehensive School Reform [CSR])

2.2 Communities of practice: a form of situated learning

There are many different theories of learning. The differences between these theories usually surround “assumptions about the nature of knowledge, knowing, and knowers, and consequently, about what matters in learning” (Wenger, 1998, p. 4). The literature often differentiates between traditional cognitive theories of learning (for example, information processing) and situated theories of learning (Jonassen & Land, 2000; Contu & Wilmott, 2003). During the 1990’s learning theorists advocated for learning theories that moved away from cognitive perspectives (learning that emphasised individual thinkers and isolated minds) to theories that emphasised the social nature of meaning and cognition (Barab & Duffy, 2000). Contu and Wilmott (2003, p. 283) argued that situated learning theory was “emerging as a possible vehicle for revitalising the understanding of, and prescriptions for how, knowledge is developed and organised within work places”. Situated theories of learning are based on an understanding that learning is neither a submissive or transmissive process; learning is an intentional, conscious and constructive process that includes “reciprocal intention-action-reflection activities” (Jonassen & Land, 2000, p. v). Situated learning theory first sees learning as a meaning making process rather than a process of knowledge transmission. Second, a situated theory of learning focuses on the social nature of this meaning-making: there is a “process of social negotiation between the participants in any activity”, and therefore,
from a situated perspective, learning is seen as a “dialogue, a process of internal as well as social negotiation” (Jonassen & Land, p. vi).

The situated nature of learning, remembering and understanding is an important concept. Human minds develop in social situations, “they use the tools and representational media that culture provides to support, extend and reorganise mental functioning” (Pea & Brown, 1991 in Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 11). For some, the term ‘situated’ means that people’s thoughts and actions are located in space and time. A narrower view sees thought and action as social, only in that they involve other people or that they are dependent on meaning in a social setting. Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 33) saw ‘situated’ as a theoretical construct, they looked at “the relational character of knowledge and learning, the negotiated character of meaning and the engaged, dilemma-driven nature of learning for the people involved”. Therefore, there is no activity that is not situated. Situated learning becomes a whole person perspective – a connection between a cognitive view of learning and a view revolving around social practice. In this type of situated learning theory “interactions with the world are viewed as not only producing meanings about the social world but also as producing identities; that is, individuals are fundamentally constituted through their relations with the world” (Barab & Duffy, 2000, p. 26).

The term, ‘communities of practice’, evolved from the ethnographic studies of Lave and Wenger (1991), who explored apprenticeship as a model of situated learning. The assumptions behind this theory of learning are that: humans are social beings, knowledge is a matter of competence, knowing is a matter of active engagement with the world and our ability to experience the world and our engagement with it is meaningful (Wenger, 1998). Meaning, understanding and learning are all defined according to actual contexts, not to fit into “self-contained structures” (Hanks, 1991 in Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 15).

The community of practice framework is built upon two central tenets, first that knowledge is situated in experience and second, that experience is understood through critical reflection with others (Buysse, Sparkman & Wesley, 2003). As previously discussed, any situated theory of learning assumes that learning is grounded in daily activities, knowledge is acquired through experience, and learning is the result of social processes requiring negotiation and problem solving with others (Stein, 1998). Critical reflection is also a cornerstone of any effective community of practice as members
continuously reflect with others about “the intersections of professional knowledge and experience” (Buysse et al., 2003, p. 267). Critical reflection is used by a community of practice to not only extend members’ own professional understandings but to also advance the knowledge base of the profession’s field (Buysse et al., 2003).

Theoretical constructions of communities of practice are therefore derived from a social perspective about learning; a perspective that places learning in the context of our lived experience and participation in the world. As we engage in communities of practice, our beliefs and knowledge about the world are influenced by the beliefs and values of that community (Jonassen & Land, 2000). Lave & Wenger (1991) defined a community of practice in the following way:

[Community does not] imply necessarily co-presence, a well-defined identifiable group, or socially visible boundaries. It does imply participation in an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and their communities (p. 98).

The following discussion focuses on the characteristics which define a community of practice, the evolutionary nature of communities of practice, processes of learning and identity formation in communities of practice and the means through which a community of practice can be cultivated as an antecedent for organisational change.

### 2.2.1 Characteristics of a community of practice

Communities of practice are special types of communities in terms of a social theory of learning. They may be formed formally or informally, consist of core and peripheral members, may be fixed or fluid and can be short-lived or sustained for longer periods of time (Clarke, 2008). Communities of practice may be analysed through the following three dimensions: a mutual engagement in an activity, the establishment of a joint enterprise and the use of a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). These inter-related dimensions are identified below in Figure 2.1 and each will be explained in the subsequent sections that follow.
2.2.1.1 Mutual engagement

Practice exists because people are engaged in actions whose meanings they have negotiated with others. A community of practice is not just a group or team, its members come together, and stay together, because they are mutually engaged in some form of negotiated action or practice. People, in communities of practice, “learn through mutual engagement in an activity which is defined by the negotiation of meanings both inside and outside the community (Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson & Unwin, 2005, p. 52). The important concept of shared benefit is key to the idea of ‘mutuality’ here. In this study, teachers invested their time, energy and passion into a negotiated enterprise (the Middle School Program) because they individually, and collectively, benefited from their collaborations over time. Together, they pondered over common issues, developed unique solutions and relied on each other as “sounding boards” throughout the process (Nagy & Burch, 2009, p. 236) (See Chapter 4). Mutual engagement allows
members of communities of practice to share ideas and to build a repository (in participants and in the community) of new expertise and new knowledge (Kirschner & Lai, 2007).

Koliba and Gajda (2009, p. 102) described the concept of mutual engagement as the “sphere of social capital” in the community of practice, dependent upon the nature of members’ interactions including levels of “trust, belonging and reciprocity”. Mutual engagement creates relationships among people. When a community of practice is sustained; it becomes “a tight node of interpersonal relationships” (Wenger, 1998, p. 76). Members of the community form relationships based on the sharing of experiences, solutions and knowledge in relation to their activities and their interactions (Clarke, 2008). Mutual engagement is a critical quality for a community of practice because the community must be mutually engaged in order to effectively carry out its work. Community maintenance therefore becomes an intrinsic part of the community’s practice, and for the teachers in this study, the issue of ‘community sustainability’ became a concern that required attention and negotiation (See Chapter 5).

At this point, it is important to note that the concept of a community of practice does not always imply a homogeneous group with a shared set of understandings, beliefs and practices (Clarke, 2008). Most situations involving sustained interpersonal relationships also involve tensions, conflict, disagreements and challenges. Diversity among community members adds to, rather than detracts from mutual engagement. As Pugach (1999, p. 270) noted “one of the most important purposes of a community of practice is to establish a learning community across levels of expertise rather than within them”. Mutual engagement involves not only the competence of individuals, but often the complementary or overlapping competencies of others. The teachers in this study came from very diverse backgrounds in terms of discipline knowledge, educational sectors and levels of experience (See Chapter 3). Nevertheless, drawing on what members know and can do, and learning from each other about what we don’t know, or can’t do, can (and did) create a shared practice of mutual engagement (Clarke, 2008).

2.2.1.2 A joint enterprise

Members of a community of practice collectively negotiate a joint enterprise; a response to their situation, often in spite of controlling forces or restrictions. A joint enterprise is not just a goal for the community; it provides members with mutual accountability that becomes part of practice (Wenger, 1998). The enterprise ultimately consists of the
personal, instrumental and interpersonal aspects of members’ lives and it is defined by their mutual engagement in practice (Wenger, 1998). Wenger (1998, p. 19) also used the term “domain” to align the concept of a joint enterprise with the community’s common purpose and its members’ sense of identification with that purpose (Koliba & Gajda, 2009).

Because, as previously discussed, mutual engagement does not require ‘homogeneity’, negotiating a joint enterprise does not mean ‘agreement’. The enterprise is not considered ‘joint’ because all members agree on everything, rather the enterprise is joint because members are continually negotiating its form, its function and members’ responses to outside interferences (Wenger, 1998).

Communities of practice also have a common historical and cultural heritage, the practice of the community is influenced, in terms of meanings and understandings, by a variety of social, political and institutional forces (Clarke, 2008). A community’s practice however does not need to be defined by these forces. Rather, a “community develops its practices and responds to, external mandates from both personal and social interactions and negotiations with its members (Clarke, 2008, p. 5).

Negotiating a joint enterprise leads to a sense of mutual accountability among members. This includes decisions around what is important and what is not, what to do or not to do, what to discuss or ignore and what artefacts or actions need improvement or refinement (Wenger, 1998). This “regime of accountability” becomes an important part of the community’s practice; even when an enterprise is defined by a statement or vision, the community’s practice evolves into a “negotiated interpretation of that statement” (Wenger, 1998, p. 81).

Wenger (1998) stressed the importance of understanding that the joint enterprise of a community of practice is a process, not a product. This process is both generative and constraining; it energises the community but can also keep it in check and it can push the community into action whilst at the same time, provide the community with a focus. Wenger (1998, p. 82) aptly compares the joint enterprise to the rhythm in music, claiming that- “an enterprise is a resource of co-ordination, of sense-making, of mutual engagement; it is like rhythm to music…an enterprise is part of practice in the same way that rhythm is part of music”. This research explored the BCS community of practice and its associated ‘domain’ (the BCS Middle School Program) through the
interconnections of process and product. The community’s joint enterprise was viewed through the negotiated processes that led to its development, the meaning that teachers within the community of practice gave to it and the factors and relationships that shaped it along the way (See Chapters 4 and 5).

2.2.1.3 A shared repertoire

The repertoire of a community of practice involves its routines, words, tools, stories, symbols, actions and ways of doing things. Members in a community of practice do not only share their work: they also share their stories, histories, techniques, resources language and patterns of behaviours (Clarke, 2008). This repertoire becomes part of the community’s practice. It becomes “the discourse by which members create meaningful statements about the world as well as the styles by which they express their forms of membership and their identities as members” (Wenger, 1998, p. 83).

The repertoire of practice is also a resource for the way a community negotiates meaning because it embodies a history of mutual engagement and it allows members to renegotiate that history into the production of new meanings. Wenger (1998, p. 83) cited the “spontaneous creation of metaphors” as an example of the “kind of resource provided by a renegotiable history of usage”. The repertoire of the community is shared, not in the sense that everyone believes and thinks the same things, but in an interactive and dynamic way so that misunderstandings and mismatched interpretations are seen as occasions to construct new meanings. A shared repertoire becomes a “set of resources that members use to engage in, make meaning of and refine their practice” (Clarke, 2008, p. 6). In this study, components of a shared repertoire (built over many years) were identified from a rich database of ‘language’ and community artefacts (See Chapters 4 and 7).

The three dimensions of practice (that is, mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire) outlined in the preceding discussion were used in this study to reify that a community of practice existed, and operated, at BCS from 2001 until 2008 (Wenger, 1998) (See Chapter 4). In addition, data was mapped against fourteen indicators (theorised by Wenger (1998) and defined by the three dimensions) to add credence to this argument (See Chapter 4).

The following discussion will now compliment Wenger’s (1998) work through a consideration of the characteristics of a community of practice in a particular setting: an
educational setting (Barab & Duffy, 2000). Whilst Barab and Duffy’s (2000) framework was not used to specifically analyse the data collected in this study, it did provide a way of reconceptualising, and aligning, Wenger’s (1998) dimensions of practice to the practice of teachers in schools. And, as this study focused exclusively on a teacher community of practice in a school, the inclusion of their work in this literature review was considered beneficial.

2.2.2 Characteristics of a community in an educational setting

The work of Lave and Wenger (1991) around the concept of a community of practice has been primarily drawn from anthropological studies with “an examination of practices in everyday society and not environments intentionally designed to support learning” (Barab & Duffy, 2000, p. 35). Barab and Duffy (2000), after reviewing the research from the fields of anthropology, education and sociology, suggested three requisite features of communities relevant to educational processes: 1) a common cultural and historical heritage, 2) an interdependent system and 3) a reproduction cycle.

Communities of practice in educational fields share a common cultural and historical heritage. This heritage includes the shared beliefs, goals and stories that embody the community’s practice (Barab & Duffy, 2000). Buysse et al. (2003) also stressed that shared goals and meanings extend beyond the community meeting for sporadic periods of time to address specific needs. These shared experiences build a collective knowledge base that is continually negotiated each time the community interacts (Barab & Duffy, 2000). The passing on of ‘stories’ in a community of practice not only passes on knowledge; it contributes to the construction of members’ identities and also to the construction and development of the community itself. When someone becomes a legitimate member of the community they inherit its common heritage and this becomes intertwined with their own identity as a community member; over time they become encultured into the history of the community (Barab & Duffy, 2003). In terms of Wenger’s (1998) dimensions of practice, a common cultural and historical heritage resonates with both the evolution of a joint enterprise and the development of a shared repertoire.

Communities of practice are also situated within an interdependent system whereby members are connected, or part of, something larger (Buysse et al., 2003). For example,
a group of Special Education teachers who formed a community realised that that they were connected not only to their own school system but also to schools in other parts of the state and country (Buysse et al., 2003). In this study, the teachers identified themselves as part of a community of practice within their own school and as part of an overlapping National Middle School community of practice (See Chapter 6). A community is an interdependent system in terms of the collaborations between its members as well as in terms of the larger societal systems around it. Therefore:

...the individual and the community constitute nested interactive networks, with individuals transforming and maintaining the community as they appropriate its practices, and the community transforms and maintains the individual by making available opportunities for appropriation and, eventually enculturation. (Barab & Duffy, 2000, p. 38)

Finally, communities of practice have a reproduction cycle; they are able to regenerate themselves as membership changes. ‘Old-timers’ leave and ‘newcomers’ enter the community to “contribute, support and eventually lead the community into the future” (Barab & Duffy, 2000, p. 39). The process of how newcomers move from peripheral forms of participation in the community to core members through the process of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) and the notion of member trajectories will be discussed in a later section of this literature review (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Reproducibility in this form is crucial in educational settings if the community is to develop and maintain a common cultural heritage. The very nature of most schools, in terms of a continual influx of ‘neophyte’ teachers, demands that communities find ways to consistently enculture new members into mature practices (Barab & Duffy, 2000).

The preceding discussion has described the characteristics of a community of practice in both general and educational settings. Communities of practice however, as with most human endeavours, are not static entities. The following discussion will now consider the evolutionary nature of such communities.

### 2.2.3 The evolutionary nature of communities of practice

There are no time limits on communities of practice, they will continue to exist in time and space provided there is enough mutual engagement among members to sustain
significant learning. Communities of practice, as with all ‘living’ things, transform, reproduce and evolve over time.

Communities of practice are transformed through the processes of continuity and discontinuity; people come and go. Departures and arrivals bring new experiences and perspectives, practices are constantly being reviewed and re-invented and meaning is negotiated and re-negotiated. The existence of a community of practice does not depend on a fixed membership, provided it changes “progressively enough to allow for sustained generational encounters”, newcomers can be successfully integrated into the community (Wenger, 1998, p. 99). In this study, from 2001 to 2008, community membership changed several times as some ‘core’ members took up promotional positions in other schools, moved between educational sectors or taught classes outside of the Middle School. At the same time, a number of newcomers were introduced into the practices of the community to ‘fill’ the spaces left by these ‘old timers’ (Wenger, 1998).

Communities of practice have ‘life-cycles’ that arise from practice and learning. They reproduce their membership in the same way they form; they share knowledge and skills with new generations through the process of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). They are also not normally peaceful domains; their evolution involves the dual processes of participation and reification. The dynamic relationship between continuity and discontinuity shapes and propels the community forward. Since the life of the community of practice is produced by the mutual engagement of its members, it “evolves in organic ways that tend to escape formal descriptions and controls” (Wenger, 1998, p. 118).

The research of Grossman et al. (2000) around the formation and development of teacher communities features prominently in this study. Whilst Wenger’s (1998) work was used to reify the existence of the BCS Middle School community of practice (See Chapter 4) I chose to focus primarily on Grossman et al.’s (2000) model to explore the evolution of the BCS Middle School community of practice as it related specifically to teacher communities and was therefore highly applicable to my study.

After studying a teacher community comprising twenty two English and Social Studies teachers, who met as part of a professional development project over a period of two and a half years, Grossman et al. (2000) proposed a model of community formation.
The model suggested a series of markers that could be considered as a teacher professional community progressed through three stages of formation: a beginning, evolving and mature form. These markers were identified as: 1) the formation of group identity and norms of interaction, 2) understanding difference and navigating fault lines, 3) negotiating the essential tension, and 4) taking communal responsibility for individuals’ growth. The tenets of this model and its application in tracking the evolution of a teacher community of practice, is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

I turn now to consider how members in a community of practice learn to participate and carry out the work of the community in these dynamic and evolving contexts.

2.2.4 The Process of learning in a community of practice

The processes through which teachers learnt in the BCS community of practice, and how that learning translated into professional development and subsequent change, was a key concept explored in my study (See Chapters 6 and 7). Wenger’s (1998) social theory of learning was used to track and explain how participation in a community of practice can lead to learning, and professional development, for teachers. This theory consists of four interconnected components: 1) meaning, 2) practice, 3) community and 4) identity (Wenger, 1998). Each of these components is explained in the discussion that follows.

2.2.4.1 Meaning: Learning as experience

The first component of Wenger’s (1998) social theory of learning is the concept of meaning, or learning as experience (Warhurst, 2008). Meaning, in the context of participation in a community of practice, may be defined as “a way of talking about our (changing) ability-individually and collectively- to experience our life and the world as meaningful” (Wenger, 1998, p. 5). In other words, the situated nature of learning is exemplified as members of the community construct meaning, about what they are doing, from practice (Warhurst, 2008). Meaning, in a community of practice is negotiated, and it involves the interaction of two processes: participation and reification (Wenger, 1998).

Wenger (1998) defined participation as both a process of taking part in a community and the relations with others that develop as a consequence of taking part. Participation describes “the social experience of living in the world in terms of membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises” (Wenger, 1998, p. 55). In a
community of practice members think things, talk about things, do things and experience feelings, including those of belonging. Participation in such a community is therefore an active process. Participation in communities of practice shapes our experiences, the meanings we make from them and the communities themselves (Wenger, 1998).

The concept of reification is a complex one. Wenger (1998) used the concept to refer to “the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into ‘thingness’”, this then “creates points of focus around which the negotiation of meaning becomes organised”. He went on to explain that any community of practice produces abstractions or artefacts (for example; tools, symbols or stories) that reify the practice in a “congealed” form as reusable knowledge (p. 59). The reified elements of an organisation might include vision statements, meeting agendas or minutes and action plans; they are generally the explicit elements within an organisation (Kolibra & Gajda, 2009). Reification therefore shapes one’s experiences in a community of practice.

The reified elements of an organisation tend to exist in a “symbiotic relationship” with the participatory elements (Kolibra & Gajda, 2009, p. 109). Wenger (1998, p.70) referred to this concept of a ‘symbiotic relationship’ between participation and reification when he claimed that “through the negotiation of meaning, it is the interplay of participation and reification that makes people and things what they are”. The reified elements of the BCS community of practice were used as a chain of evidence throughout this study (See Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7) to trace the community’s evolution and its members’ participation, in the form of a ‘negotiated practice’, over time.

2.2.4.2 Practice: learning as doing

The second component of Wenger’s (1998) social theory of learning to be outlined in this discussion is the concept of practice or learning as doing (Warhurst, 2008). Practice provides for a “way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks or perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action” (Wenger, 1998, p. 5). According to Lave and Wenger (1991) learning is a process that takes place within a participation framework. Learning is seen as a situated activity whereby mastery of knowledge requires newcomers to move towards full participation in the practices of a community. This process has been termed legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The term ‘legitimate’ refers to one’s
participation in the authentic practices of the community whilst ‘peripheral’ refers to the varying levels of participation that newcomers experience as they gain increasing access to the community and their involvement, and sense of belonging, in the community grows (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Newcomers to the community, through time spent within the community in engagement in practice and progressive levels of participation, become fully skilled members, or old-timers (Lave & Wenger, 1991). LPP requires that that a newcomer experiences a “progressive trajectory from the periphery of practice towards full engagement” (Warhurst, 2008, p. 456). Through legitimate peripheral participation, “a person’s intentions to learn are engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a socio-cultural practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29). Legitimate peripheral participation may be considered “the conceptual bridge between the individual and the community of practice” (Clarke, 2008, p. 11).

Learning in a community of practice is not solely situated in a particular practice; it is part of a social practice generated in the lived-in-world. Whereas conventional theories of learning view it as a process by which a learner absorbs given knowledge, legitimate peripheral participation promotes a view of coming to know as “activity by specific people in specific circumstances” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 52). It involves the development of skilled and competent identities in practice and may involve the transformation of the communities of practice themselves. Lave and Wenger (1991) claimed that through this process of learning, communities of practice are sustained and socially reproduced.

Many educational researchers have found the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) useful as a theoretical lens to explain why community members “do what they do in everyday settings, and how community members define practices and engage in identity formation” (Yamagata-Lynch, 2001). Their work around the process of legitimate peripheral participation has helped to define, and characterise, organisational and individual learning in both business and educational settings (Yamagata-Lynch, 2001).

Hung, Chen and Koh (2006) outlined a variation of legitimate peripheral participation in a case study involving clusters of schools in a Singapore Education District. They discussed a nurturing process for the development of a community of practice referred to as reverse legitimate peripheral participation or LPP-1. In contrast to Lave and
Wenger’s (1991) notion of LPP (a process which is viewed from the perspective of a newcomer), LPP-1 refers to the “evolving process of a community of practice from the community’s perspective” (Hung et al., 2006, p. 300). In LPP newcomers join at the edge or periphery of an existing community, in a reverse LPP process, “the community starts with a group of core members and gradually grows to encourage new members into a community of practice” (Hung et al., 2006, p. 299). LPP-1 is based on activity theory but includes the notion of identity formation at the level of community (Hung et al., 2006). Hung et al. (2006, p. 313) concluded that the LPP-1 process could potentially be used to foster communities of practice in schools whereby “through a transformative stance, schools would become ‘knowledge-creating’ schools where learning [was] understood as a collaborative effort, and in the process, artefacts would be developed which could be knowledge-products, practices, or ideas both conceptual and material”. The concept of LPP-1, as it related to my study, is discussed further in the analysis outlined in Chapter 6.

The notion of legitimate peripheral participation, as an underpinning construct in situated theories of learning, is not without its critics. Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson and Unwin, (2005) raised some of the limitations of LPP as it related to workplace learning in complex settings such as the manufacturing industry and schools. They gave examples of experienced teachers in school communities of practice who continued to learn from colleagues through their normal work practices without the benefit of LPP. None of these teachers was a newcomer and none could be described as peripheral to the community. They also uncovered instances where experienced, old-timers learnt through their engagement with novices. They concluded that whilst they recognised some newcomers being encultured into the community of practice through LPP, there were some instances where members’ dispositions and experiences from ‘outside’ of the community coloured their participation in the community and consequently affected the nature and form of the community. Yandell and Turvey (2007, p. 547), following their research into the applicability of LPP and communities of practice for the professional development of first-year teachers, were also led to question the “universal applicability” of LPP. They found discrepancies in the roles occupied by pre-service teachers (roles that could be seen in light of LPP) and the roles placed upon first year teachers who were expected to fully participate in the practice of the school.
Finally, the work of Fuller et al. (2005) has raised another point of interest; that LPP as a construct for learning ignores the role that teaching plays in the workplace and in off-the-job settings. Gee’s (1991) concept of mastery of any practice incorporates acquisition and learning through explicit teaching by more expert participants, and suggests that teaching would ordinarily play a part in discussing mutual benefit in any community. Graven (2004) also challenged Wenger’s (1998) four component model of learning for the analysis of teacher learning, claiming that it failed to provide a thorough discussion of the central role of ‘masters’ in a community of practice. She compared the role of masters in communities of practice to the role of teachers (as facilitators) in formalised learning communities like schools. In this study, the significant role that teaching played in the learning (and professional development) of the BCS Middle School teachers is explained in Chapter 6, and the concept of teaching, as an additional component to Wenger’s (1998) interconnected model for learning, considered.

### 2.2.4.3 Community: Learning as belonging

Wenger’s (1998) third concept, in terms of learning from a situated context, is the concept of community or learning as belonging (Warhurst, 2008). Wenger (1998, p. 5) defined the term ‘community’ as “a way of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognisable as competence”. The place of community in the ‘lived in world’ is crucial to a situated theory of learning (Wenger, 1998). It must be remembered that a community of practice is “a set of relations among persons, activity and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98). The community is the site of a learning process and members learn because of their participation, and their activities, in that community. Warhurst (2008, p. 456) concluded that because a community of practice was an “intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge” individuals could not learn without “belonging to something” and that “learning [was] an incidental, but inevitable occurrence when individuals participate[ed] in social practice: that is when they belong[ed] to a community”.

Through the process of legitimate peripheral participation, and one could argue through a process of belonging, newcomers also learn the discourses of the community of practice; they learn how to act and how to talk as they move towards full participation.
Clarke (2008, p. 14) made a distinction between the type of discourses newcomers are expected to engage in as they become legitimate members of their communities: “there is a difference between talking about practice and talking within practice...full participation in a community of practice requires learning to talk, both about and within practice”. Each of these forms of talking indicates a member’s engagement (and sense of belonging) in the community. Therefore as Clarke (2008, p. 14) claimed “learning to talk within practice signals a form of legitimation in a community of practice”. Warhurst (2008, p. 461), reinforced the importance of developing legitimacy in a community of practice when he studied the social learning of new teacher educators in a university in the United Kingdom. He found that innovations suggested by new lecturers, who had failed to gain legitimacy, were not taken up by their practice communities.

2.2.4.4 Identity: Learning as becoming

The final component of Wenger’s (1998) social theory of learning involves the concept of identity or learning as becoming (Warhurst, 2008). Wenger (1998, p. 5) defined this concept as a “way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities”. Learning is therefore seen as a process of identity formation in relation to the community sustaining certain forms of practice. Members in the community of practice therefore form a practitioner identity through a process of belonging (Warhurst, 2008). Bruner (1996, p. 301) made the distinction between learning “to be” and learning “about” in a community of practice. We learn how through the community’s practice and through this practice we learn to be (Hung et al., 2006). Through enculturation within a community of practice, newcomers take on knowledge and “the ways of thinking (or identity) central to the participants of the community” (Hung et al., 2006, p. 301). Newcomers become encultured into a community of practice when, through their participation in the activities of the community, their behaviour or identity changes and they then become prepared to engage in similar activities at other times; participation becomes the process of learning to be (Hung et al., 2006).

Wenger’s (1998) first parallel between practice and identity is the interplay between participation and reification as a form of *negotiated experience*. This relationship was discussed previously in section 2.2.4.1. It is important to remember that Wenger (1998, p. 151) defined a member’s identity in a community of practice as an effect of the “layering of events of participation and reification by which [their] experience and its social interpretation inform[ed] each other”. As members of communities interact with the world and develop relations with others, Wenger’s (1998) layers build upon each other to produce an identity that is essentially “a complex interweaving of participative experience and reificative projections” (p. 151). When we bring these processes together, through a negotiation of meaning, we construct our identities within the community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Participants in a community of practice thus define themselves both by the way they participate in their practice (as central or peripheral members) as well as by how others view or perceive their participation in practice (Clarke, 2008).

Wenger’s (1998) second parallel between practice and identity is *community membership*. Communities of practice are not reified by markers or labels; it is participation (both peripheral and full) that defines a participant’s identity (Clarke, 2008). Wenger (1998, p. 152) claimed that “our membership constitutes our identity, not just through reified markers of membership but more fundamentally through the forms of competence that it entails”. When a person is a full member of a community they are able to go about the work of that community with some competence; they experience competence and are recognised for that competence. They are able to engage with others in the community, they understand the enterprise to which they are accountable and they share the resources needed to carry out the community’s activities. The dimensions of their competence become dimensions of identity (Wenger, 1998). However newcomers to the community experience something quite different. They may not know how to engage with other members of the community, or might not understand the subtleties of the enterprise and they do not have a shared reference. A newcomer’s identity is thus shaped through this non-membership. Membership in a community of practice therefore “translates into an identity as a form of competence” (Wenger, 1998, p. 153).

Wenger’s (1998) third parallel is the concept of *trajectories*. Wenger (1998, p. 154) argued that identity was not an object but rather a process of “constantly becoming”; we are always forming our identity in a community of practice. As we go through various
forms of participation, our identities form trajectories, within and across communities of practice. Wenger (1998) identified five types of trajectories: 1) peripheral trajectories, 2) inbound trajectories, 3) insider trajectories 4) boundary trajectories and 5) outbound trajectories. Peripheral trajectories are those that never lead to full participation but may still provide a participant with some access to practice that makes a significant contribution to identity formation. An inbound trajectory describes the path of newcomers who are committed to becoming full participants within the community of practice and whose “identities are invested in their future participation” (Wenger, 1998, p. 154). An insider trajectory is made in the situation where a participant’s identity does not end with full participation- the evolution of the practice provides participants with opportunities to renegotiate their identity. Boundary trajectories span different communities of practice as participants work to sustain an identity across community boundaries. Finally, outbound trajectories lead out of the community and participants are faced with the challenges of developing new relationships and finding a different position with respect to the community. Wenger (1998) defined a community of practice through the trajectories of its participants as follows:

… a community of practice is a field of possible trajectories and thus the proposal of an identity. It is a history and the promise of that history. It is a field of possible pasts and of possible futures, which are all there for participants, not only to witness, hear about and contemplate, but to engage with (p. 156).

Wenger’s (1998) fourth parallel that linked identity to practice was the notion of a nexus of multi-membership. Wenger (1998) claimed that we all belong to many communities of practice. We have belonged to them in the past and we belong to them in the present and we have participated within them to various degrees as full or as partial participants. As members of multiple communities we need to find ways to make our forms of membership exist together; to negotiate or reconcile our various forms of participation in these communities (Clarke, 2008). This reconciliation requires the “construction of an identity that can include [these] different meanings and forms of participation into one nexus” (Wenger, 1998, p. 160). Multi-membership in communities of practice therefore involves the interweaving of many trajectories (Clarke, 2008). In this study, each of the teachers in the BCS Middle School community of practice identified with other overlapping communities, for example, primary and secondary teacher communities and the school executive community. The ways in which these teachers 
reconciled their membership, levels of participation and eventual trajectories within this nexus is explored through their stories in the chapters that follow.

Wenger’s (1998) final parallel between practice and identity is the relationship between the local and the global. Wenger (1998) claimed that one important aspect of a community’s work was to place the practice of the community within a broader context. Practices, whilst originating at a local level, are connected to “broader constellations” (Wenger, 1998, p. 162). In our community of practice we come together to engage in pursuing our enterprise but we also recognise that the enterprise is part of a bigger picture. Wenger (1998, p. 162) concluded that “identity in practice is therefore always an inter-play between the local and the global”. In my study, the BCS Middle School community of practice existed, and evolved, within a context that extended beyond the ‘school gates’. It impacted on (and was shaped by) the whole school community, the school educational district, surrounding schools and districts and the academic educational community (in the form of academic partners and participation in funded research projects) (See Chapter 7).

The preceding discussion has detailed how participation in a community of practice leads to a situated form of learning for its members through the interconnection of four components: meaning, practice, community and identity (Wenger, 1998). The absence of ‘teaching’ in this model was also flagged. I now go on to discuss Wenger, McDermott and Snyders’ (2002) suggestions for cultivating communities of practice.

2.2.5 Cultivating a community of practice

Wenger et al. (2002) claimed that communities of practice are natural components of most organisations that develop and flourish on their own, provided that membership is voluntary and some form of internal leadership emerges. Having said this, they also claimed that organisations can, and must, also be in the business of “actively and systematically” cultivating communities of practice for the benefit of the organisation, its members and their communities (p. 12). Whilst a grounded theoretical approach (Boyatzis, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was used in this study to identify the facilitating and constraining factors that shaped the BCS Middle School community of practice, in context, Wenger et al.’s (2002) seven principles for cultivating communities of practice are an important strategic consideration for organisations wishing to cultivate them. These principles are briefly outlined in the following discussion.
2.2.5.1 Designing for evolution

Wenger et al.’s (2002) first principle for cultivating a community of practice suggests that organisations design for evolution. Wenger et al. (2002) noted that because communities of practice are organic entities, one does not need to create them from nothing; rather one must introduce a series of design elements that will act as catalysts for their evolution. “Alive” communities constantly reinvent themselves as they grow, as new members bring in new interests and as the organisation places new demands on them (Wenger et al., 2006, p. 53). Communities within organisations are usually built around existing networks so the purpose of design is to help them develop rather than to impose a structure upon them (Wenger et al., 2002). The kinds of design elements that could be used as catalysts include structural elements like the provision of meeting spaces or funding for teacher release and social elements like professional meeting opportunities.

2.2.5.2 Opening a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives

The second principle for cultivating a community of practice is to ensure that organisations find ways to open a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives (Wenger et al., 2002). Good design, in terms of cultivating a community of practice, requires assistance from people with both an inside and outside perspective. The insider understands the structure and purpose of the community; they appreciate the issues around the domain, the knowledge that the community feels is important to share, the professional challenges that the community faces and the potential in emerging ideas (Wenger et al., 2006). They also understand who is involved in the community and the relationships between its participants. The outsider is equally important as they can help the community’s members see the real possibilities for the community to develop and steward knowledge. They are able to bring information from the outside and contribute to the dialogue about what the community needs and could achieve (Wenger et al., 2002). Wenger (1998) described the possible role of one such outsider: the community broker. The broker may be identified as a boundary member of a community of practice, and they are often members of multiple, overlapping communities. They undertake the “task of translating meaning between the connecting communities of practice, and assisting members to acknowledge the possibilities of alignment between perspectives” (Clarke, 2008, p. 28). They are often positioned at the periphery, rather than in the core, of the community. Dialogues between outsiders and insiders allow legitimate community members to see new possibilities and can
effectively lead them to see themselves as effective agents of change (Wenger et al., 2002). I suggest, that for teachers, the possibility of becoming a change agent can be powerful motivator.

2.2.5.3 Inviting different levels of participation

Wenger et al.’s (2002) third principle for cultivating a community of practice is to invite different levels of participation for members. Good design, for the cultivation of community, also allows for different levels of participation as often participants have different levels of interest in the community’s work. Wenger et al. (2002) outlined three main levels of participation in communities of practice: a core group, an active group and a peripheral group. The core group is known as the “heart of the community” and they usually move the community along its learning path as they organise meetings, identify topics for discussion, set agendas and take on leadership roles within the community (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 56). Within the core group, a community co-ordinator is also often present who organises community meetings and helps to ‘connect’ community members. The active group attend regular meetings and sometimes participate in community forums but they do so with less intensity and passion than the core group. Finally, the largest portion of the community usually involves peripheral members who “keep to the side lines” and rarely participate fully in the community’s work (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 56). They do however watch the interactions of the core and active groups, gain valuable personal insights and may have private discussions with other community members. Finally, outside of these three levels are the outsiders: people who are not members of the community but who may have a vested interest in the community’s work (Wenger et al., 2002).

Because the boundaries of communities of practice are quite fluid, Wenger (1998) believed that members were able to move through the three levels as interests and professional or personal circumstances changed. The important thing about community cultivation is to facilitate an environment where all members, at every level, can still feel like full participants. Rather than forcing participation, communities of practice “build benches for those on the sidelines” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 57).

2.2.5.4 Developing both public and private community spaces

The fourth principle for cultivating a community of practice requires organisations to develop both public and private community spaces (Wenger et al., 2002).
(1998) claimed that connections between community members occurred on both private and public levels. Communities have public spaces, like meetings, forums and conference presentations where members gather to exchange ideas, explore new methods or solve problems. These spaces serve a “ritualistic as well as a substantive purpose”, as members are able to “tangibly experience being part of the community and see who else participates” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 58). Private spaces, on the other hand, are spaces where members communicate or network on a one-to-one basis. This one-to-one networking “creates a conduit for sharing information with a more limited number of people” and acts to strengthen the personal relationships between members (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 59).

There is an interrelationship between a community’s private and public spaces. The close relationships between members adds a ‘richness’ to community events; members thank each other for their ideas, find someone to help them solve a problem or share tasks. As Wenger (1998) argued:

...the key to designing community spaces is to orchestrate activities in both public and private spaces that use the strength of individual relationships to enrich events and use events to strengthen individual relationships (p. 59).

2.2.5.5 Focusing on value

A focus on value is Wenger et al.’s (2002) fifth principle for cultivating a community of practice. Wenger (1998) stressed the point that, as community participation is voluntary, community members need to know that what they do is valued. As a community evolves, the source of this value may change. In its earliest days what is valued usually arises from a focus on current problems, but as the community matures, “developing a systematic body of knowledge” becomes a priority (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 59). Communities need to allow ‘value’ to emerge as they discuss problems, identify issues, propose solutions, seek new information and create events. A key element in cultivating communities of practice is the need to “encourage community members to be explicit about the value of the community throughout its lifetime” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 60). This raises awareness for community members about what motivates them to participate, as often the impact of a community may not be initially felt.
2.2.5.6 Combining familiarity and excitement

Wenger et al.’s (2002) sixth principle for community cultivation suggests that organisations develop processes that allow them to combine familiarity and excitement. As communities evolve over time, participants can become very comfortable with regular meetings, candid discussions and team activities and projects. Members develop the freedom to explore possibilities and take risks without the fear of being criticised or ‘found wanting’ by other community members. Clarke (2008, p. 30) asserted that “familiarity, nurtured by the network of relationships in a community of practice provides stability for old-timers and newcomers”.

Wenger et al. (2002) claimed however, that a dynamic community also needed excitement. Communities thrive on divergent thinking, new activities and spontaneous contact between people. Therefore, “lively communities combine both familiar and exciting events so community members can develop the relationships they need to be well connected as well as generate the excitement they need to be fully engaged” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 62). I would suggest that when cultivating, and more importantly sustaining a community of practice, members need to find ways to balance the comforting ‘familiar’ with the exciting ‘unknown’.

2.2.5.7 Creating a rhythm for the community

Wenger et al.’s (2002) final suggestion for cultivating a community of practice requires the community to create a rhythm. Members of a community of practice are able to respond to the different pace of events (meetings, conferences, informal dinners) because they have a rhythm (Clarke, 2008). The interactions between members of the community are influenced by the tempo of this rhythm. Regular events encourage participation and the community “ebbs and flows” and there is a feeling of “aliveness” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 62). However, when the rhythm of the community is too fast, members stop participating because they feel overwhelmed. When the rhythm is too slow, the community becomes “sluggish” (Wenger et al., 2002 , p. 63). There are a number of rhythms in a community: frequent conversations, fluctuations between familiar and exciting events and the flow of people through levels of participation. Wenger et al. (2002) reminded us that “there is no right beat for all communities, and the beat is likely to change as the community evolves”.

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The preceding discussion has outlined the characteristics that define a community of practice (in both general and educational settings), described a model to track the evolutionary path of teacher communities, identified the processes of learning in these communities and provided suggestions, from the literature, on how to cultivate communities of practice for organisational change.

My research has explored the potential of dynamic, evolving teacher communities of practice as a way for schools to develop collaborative practices and contribute to teachers’ learning. Whilst there is a substantial body of literature that explores the theoretical issues related to communities of practice, there have been very few empirical studies which explore how communities of practice develop, evolve and are sustained in educational settings (Kirschner & Lai, 2005). Whist research, over the past two decades, has “pointed to the benefits of vigorous collegial communities”, few studies have examined how “professional communities supply[ed] intellectual, social and material resources for teacher learning and innovation in practice” (Little, 2002, p. 917). This study aims to contribute knowledge in this important area and the discussion that follows will now consider the construct of communities of practice as a form of transformative teacher professional development.

2.3 **Teacher professional development**

Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) discussed the need to relate educational change to teacher professional development. They divided change processes into two broad phases: the *innovation-focused period*, where the relationship between teacher development and successful implementation of innovations is explored, and the *total teacher and the total school period*, where the elements of a teacher’s purpose, person, context and culture are also considered.

Historically, teachers have been cast into a passive role in relation to the content and format of their professional development: there have been few instances where teachers have emerged as “true students of teaching and learning, engaged in inquiry of their own making” (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992, p. 124). Schlager and Fusco (2004, p. 205) also noted that traditional professional development programs were “frequently disconnected from practice, fragmented and misaligned”. Professional development for teachers must be more than courses and workshops, “…it is at its heart the development of habits of learning that are far more likely to be powerful if they present themselves day after day” (Fullan, 2001, p. 253).
An emphasis on the teacher has led to a new definition of teacher professional development – one that acknowledges that “no major reform in our school system will occur without the front line people who will eventually make it work: the teachers” (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992, p. 125). The literature contains a large volume of research into the antecedents of successful teacher professional development, including appropriate pre-service training, mentoring and supervision (Fullan & Connelly, 1990; Hargreaves, 1981; Maeroff, 1988), collegiality (Lieberman, 1989; Little, 1986, 1987, 1989; Lortie, 1975; Weick, 1982) and instructional leadership (McEvoy, 1982; Leithwood, 1988; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Pfiester, 1986; Stiggins & Duke, 1988; Wilson & Firestone, 1987).

Following over two decades of research into teacher professional development practices and school change, Fullan (2001, p. 260) has called for systems and schools to consider new policies that focus on “high standards of practice” and opportunities for teachers to examine their every day practice together to encourage reform. He concluded that “it [was] through local problem-solving with expanded horizons that new solutions [could be] identified and implemented” (Fullan, 2001, p. 260).

This study argues for an alternative model for teacher professional development beyond ‘formal’ training programs, non-reflective ‘learn on the job’ experiences or ‘in-service delivery’ programs. I have examined the potential of teacher communities of practice, in educational contexts, to transform the way teachers learn and work in order to change outcomes for students and ultimately improve the culture of schools.
As Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) reminded us, teacher development:

must actively listen to and sponsor the teacher voice; establish opportunities to confront the assumptions and beliefs underlying their practices, avoid faddism and basket implementation of favoured new instructional strategies and create a *community of teachers* who discuss their purposes together over time (author’s emphasis) (p. 5).

The following discussion will now consider several examples from the literature where a community of practice model has been used to either develop, or deliver, professional development for teachers.

### 2.3.1 Teacher communities of practice: a promise for teacher professional development

According to several authors (Hargreaves, 1994; Stoll, Bolam & Collarbone, 2002) a new form of teacher professionalism is already apparent; one in which teachers work more closely and collaboratively with colleagues, students and parents, linking together teacher and school development. Communities of practice are increasingly being used as a model for professional development as systems see that through the application of a community of practice framework “professional development programs may be transformed by learning communities where practitioners co-construct knowledge” (Clarke, 2008, p. 10). Digisi, Morocco and Shure, 1998, cited in Clarke, 2008, p. 10) claimed that in order for a learning community to be transformed, professional development needs to move towards “multiple, shared, reflective discourse that involves deep knowledge and learning”.

Elmore and Burney (1999) described successful teacher professional development as focusing on four key elements: 1). a concrete classroom application of ideas, 2). exposing teachers to actual practice rather than descriptions, 3). the provision of opportunities for group support and collaboration, and 4). the use of deliberate evaluation and feedback by practitioners. Interestingly, each of these components, taken individually or collectively, could be aligned to the three dimensions that define practice in a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). For example, mutual engagement would be enabled through the provision of opportunities for group collaborations, a joint enterprise would be developed following strategic ‘fine tuning’ through constant evaluation of the community’s practice and, over time, each of Elmore and Burney’s (1999) components would build towards a shared repertoire for the group.
As teachers we all have our own theories and ways of understanding the world and our communities of practice are “places where we develop, negotiate and share them” (Wenger, 1998, p. 48). The following discussion will consider some of these teacher communities of practice in light of on-line environments, higher education institutions and school settings.

2.3.1.1 On-line teacher communities of practice

Whilst my study does not involve an on-line community of practice, I have included some examples of these kinds of communities in this review because they are featured prominently in the literature around teacher communities of practice. This literature, regarding “virtual communities of practice”, generally looks at the role that information technology plays within existing on-line communities (Koliba & Gajda, 2009, p. 105). Community of practice theory, in these studies, has been used to determine the quality of on-line communications, the role of narrative, the adoption of common language and the depth and breadth of knowledge generated within the community (Koliba & Gaida, 2009).

Some organisations have utilised virtual communities of practice for some time as they have had to cope with issues like outsourcing, downsizing and increasing globalisation. These forces have combined to produce an environment that “[forces] collaboration and knowledge sharing across time and distance simultaneously” (Kimble, Hildreth & Wright, 2001, p. 220).

Gunawardena, Ortegano-Layne, Carabajal, Frechette, Lindemann and Jennings (2006, p. 217) detailed the use of an instructional design model, “WisCom”, in developing on-line wisdom communities. They used the model to facilitate an on-line graduate course in a university in the United States using a student community of practice whereby “learners [navigated] the process of learning, collaborate[d] and [became] collectively wise” and learning activities were designed to promote “interactional competence, social negotiation of meaning, and construction of new knowledge” (Gunawardena et al., 2006, p. 219). The researchers claimed that the WisCom model resulted in a ‘quality’ learning environment for its students that fostered knowledge innovation, reflection, sharing and transformational learning. This is a promising outcome in relation to my study as I was interested in exploring this kind of transformational learning for teachers in schools.
There is also a growing body of literature on the use of on-line communities of practice as models for teacher professional development. These communities have been used to support teachers in reflecting on their practice in supportive, collaborative learning environments (Kirschner & Lai, 2007). Chalmers and Keown (2006) combined the use of a number of internet tools (digital professional readings and activities and on-line forums) with a community of practice model to deliver a professional development program to a group of secondary school teachers in New Zealand. They concluded that through this model of professional development, “the goals of professional, personal and social development [were] addressed”, and that the “internet provide[d] a cost effective delivery platform for the delivery of professional development using communities of practice” (p. 154). Again these are important findings in relation to my study as this research directly linked the use of a community of practice model to effective teacher professional development.

2.3.1.2 Teacher communities of practice in higher education

There have been several useful studies of communities of practice in higher education settings. The GIsML (Guided Inquiry supporting Multiple Literacies) project, carried out by Palinscar, Magnusson, Marano, Ford, and Brown (1998), was one of the early applications of a community of practice framework in a teacher education setting. This project used an inquiry-based model for teaching science and involved a community of practice consisting of a secondary science teacher, university researchers, doctoral students and a group of K-5 teachers. The community was involved in sharing personal narratives and reflecting on classroom practice as they generated new ideas for their teaching. The group, involved in the project, was seen to embrace the tenets of a community of practice as they “shared knowledge generated through situated learning and reflection as well as diversity in expertise” (Buysse, Sparkman & Wesley, 2003, p. 270).

Similarly, Viskovic (2006) studied teacher communities of practice in three tertiary institutions in New Zealand. In all three institutions, teachers felt that their strongest support came from collegial ‘work groups’. Viskovic (2006, p. 332) found that “most teachers identified a sense of mutual engagement and common practice, purpose and values in the groups they most closely aligned
themselves with” and that “tacit or potential communities of practice existed”. She concluded that “social learning through work, in a collegial community of teachers [was] relevant for the staff of tertiary teaching institutions” and recommended that teacher communities of practice should be “shepherded and nurtured” (p. 336).

Nagy and Burch (2009) critically reviewed the literature around the use (and applicability) of communities of practice in Australian universities. They suggested that universities faced a number of challenges that were peculiar to the Academy in terms of the kinds of knowledge practices that existed and the “impediments posed by a corporate university model” (Nagy & Burch, 2009, p. 227). Despite this, they concluded that communities of practice in university settings could” provide a mechanism for re-emphasising past collegiality within a contemporary context” and “given sufficient support with coercion, academics may take the opportunity to reconnect, generating multiplier effects for students, staff and higher education institutions” (p. 242).

Bathmaker and Avis (2005) also used a community of practice framework to consider the formation of professional identity among a group of ‘trainee’ lecturers, who were completing a one-year teacher-training course in a university in England. The researchers considered the trainee’s expectations in their new roles as university lecturers and their experiences engaging with a teacher educator community of practice. Instead of learning through LPP in the community of practice, the trainee lecturers came to feel “marginalised”; they faced difficulties gaining access to the community and the culture of the community did not match their own “imagined professional identities” (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005, p. 60). The study concluded that the marginalisation that the new trainee’s felt was related to the current changes in further education in England. These changes included poor workplace conditions, a lack of resources and a perceived lack of support from management. The researchers claimed that under these circumstances, individuals within communities of practice can experience low morale, become burnt out and lose their commitment to students. They stressed that their findings did not mean that they were keen to “reject the opportunities that participation in communities of practice may offer” but hoped that the use of communities of practice as an analytical tool would allow for research that “questioned official discourses and create[d] opportunities
to develop alternative interpretations and ways forward” (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005, p. 61). This kind of research, into teacher communities of practice (whether it involves teachers or teacher educators) is critical if educational systems and leaders are serious about cultivating teacher communities of practice in schools to encourage a more transformative mode of professional development.

2.3.1.3 Teacher communities of practice in schools

A consideration of the literature around teacher communities of practice in schools is a key focus for this study. Communities of practice are becoming increasingly relevant to school settings, for both pre-service and in-service teachers. These communities are being described in schools where staff members come together to “provide meaningful and sustained assistance to one another to improve teaching and student learning” (Zorfass & Rivero, 2005, p. 51).

Barab and Duffy (2000) described the CoT (the community of teachers); a professional development program for pre-service teachers at Indiana University. Teachers are not formally allocated to associate teachers (as with many other pre-service programs) but spend their time in schools visiting the classes, and talking with, other teachers in the program. They are encouraged to develop informal mentor relationships, based on an ‘apprenticeship’ model, with an experienced teacher in their school and they also negotiate membership in a community of students who are also studying to be teachers. Each community is comprised of about fifteen members who meet regularly to discuss professional readings, plan and present presentations, share resources and information and reflect on classroom practices (Barab & Duffy, 2000). In the CoT students are continually negotiating meanings and developing shared practices and language, whilst the community is extending trajectories across classrooms and schools and continuously reproduces itself as students cycle through various forms of participation (Barab & Duffy, 2000).

Sutherland, Scanlon and Sperring (2005) reported on the results of a school-university partnership in NSW which utilised legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) in a pre-service teacher program to develop students’ professional knowledge. The pre-service teachers participated in a series of LPP activities which included interacting in tutorials with teachers from local primary and secondary schools, ‘shadowing’ a teacher in a school for a period of time each
semester, interviewing groups of primary students, leading classroom investigations and observing lessons. Through these activities the pre-service teachers were able to share in the teachers’ “rituals routines and practices” and rather than simply engaging in the community, they were able to “share[d] the community’s activities through the experiences of practising teachers” (Sutherland et al., 2005, p. 82).

Stone, Alfeld, Perason, Lewis and Jensen (2006), conducted an experimental study that tested a model for enhancing mathematics instruction in five high school vocation courses in Ohio in the United States. The model involved the use of a pedagogy that emphasised explicit teaching of mathematics in meaningful contexts, and encouraged teachers, and university partners, to participate in a professional development program that utilised an “authentic community of practice” (Stone et al., 2006, p. xii). The teams of teachers, and their university partners, worked together to assess and ‘unpack’ the curriculum and to construct, implement and evaluate contextual mathematics lesson plans. In the process they developed a supportive community of practice that allowed participants to feel a “sense of ownership” for the work they produced, develop teaching expertise in a single, but common discipline and effect real changes for the students they taught (Stone et al., 2006, p. 72).

Zorfass and Rivero (2005) also described a professional development program for teachers, called STAR Tech which used a community of practice to assist teachers to integrate technology tools into their inclusive classrooms. The STAR Tech program was built around four components: sustained assistance from a specialist staff developer, processes for deep knowledge acquisition, the identification and promotion of internal leadership and the creation of a community of practice; the “core of the program” (Zorfass & Rivero, 2005, p. 52). The program was cyclic in nature and allowed for collaborative team discussions, individual application in the classroom and individual and collective reflection. Zorfass and Rivero (2005, p. 59) found that the community of practice allowed teachers to “drive classroom change based on genuine concerns” and within the community they were able to “share their areas of strength and acquire knowledge to bolster areas of need, and have the support of colleagues to translate ideas into practice”.

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These studies, individually and collectively, have highlighted the increasing use of teacher communities of practice in school settings in Australia and overseas. These communities of practice are successfully being used to promote teacher learning and professional development across levels of experience (pre-service and in-service), sectors (university and schools) and disciplines (for example, mathematics and technology integration). In the context of my study, I have added to this literature base by exploring the use (and benefits) of a teacher community of practice in a Middle School setting in rural NSW.

The literature also widely references communities of practice as an “integral component of a structured intervention for organisational change and professional development” (Koliba & Gajda, 2009, p. 101). Owen (2005) asserted that through collegial interaction over time, and through the communal sharing of practices and beliefs, effective teacher professional development can, and does, happen. Research from the last decade has also consistently claimed that “strong professional communities are important contributors to instructional improvement and school reform” (Little, 2002, p. 937).

This discussion will now focus on the school reform literature from three perspectives: focused reform efforts, reform for educational change and the comprehensive school reform effort (Nicholas, 2009).

2.4 School reform

Tyack and Cuban (1995, p. 4) defined educational reform as any “planned effort[s] to change schools in order to correct perceived social and educational problems”. Historically, such reforms may be triggered by social crisis (for example, declining literacy standards in particular societal groups) or they may take the form of internal improvements initiated by teachers (for example, as in this study, a middle years’ program aimed at improving student engagement and learning outcomes) (Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Educational reforms are attempts to improve schools, and educational change relates to the enactment of these reforms (Fullan, 2001). In their reflection on one hundred years of educational reform in the United States, Tyack and Cuban (1995, p. 86) concluded that “the grammar of schooling” had not yet allowed this to happen. Farrell (2000, p. 87) reinforced this by stating that schools were able to change, but the process was slow
and rarely did they change “in ways which fundamentally alter the basic and familiar structures of schooling as we know it”. Furthermore, the literature cites repeated attempts at school reform that have had fleeting success but were not able to be sustained, ‘scaled-up’ or transported elsewhere (Datnow, 2002; Datnow & Springfiled, 2000; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Tyack and Cuban (1995, p. 136) suggested that in order for educational reforms to be both successful and sustainable an “inside-out” approach needed to be taken that gives consideration to the: need for resources, in the form of time to adequately implement the reform; a teaching workforce that accesses high quality professional development and are provided with opportunities for collegial support and active participation in the reform and an understanding of how students learn. In light of the preceding review of the literature around teacher communities of practice and teacher professional development and the findings from this study (See Chapter 8), I find myself in wholehearted agreement with Tyack and Cuban’s (1995) sentiments!

In the United States over the past few decades, three separate ‘waves’ of educational reform have been described. The first wave came in response to the 1983 report, ‘A Nation at Risk’, and consisted of a series of systemic changes that included increased standards and regulations, increased teacher salaries and a lengthened school day and year (Desimone, 2002). These ‘top-down’ reforms were generally held to have not added capacity to the system and heralded a second wave of reform (Hawley, 1988). This second wave focused on deepening the relationship between schools and the community, addressing the needs of targeted groups of students, upgrading teacher education and improving the professional stance of teachers (Desimone, 2002). Again however, this second wave did not lead to sustainable changes in school organisational structures or in the ways in which teachers taught (Desimone, 2002; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). The third, and most recent wave of educational reform, brought about by the “renewed focus on the importance of restructuring schools to foster changes in teaching and learning” is the Comprehensive School reform (CSR) movement (Desimone, 2002, p. 434). CSR, unlike previous reform efforts, is not limited to particular programs or instructional methods and does not specifically target particular populations within schools. Its focus is on the improvement of the whole school (Desimone, 2002).

In this study, the educational reform movement was framed around three perspectives: focused reform efforts (whereby schools are concerned with a particular innovation; in
In the following sections, each of the three reform efforts previously outlined will be discussed. Each reform effort will be shown to be aligned to the evolving reform effort implemented at BCS from 2001-2008: the BCS Middle School Program and its associated teacher community of practice. The discussion that follows will consider a focused reform movement in Australia: the middle years’ reform movement.

2.4.1 Focused reform efforts: Middle years’ reform

Since the turn of the 20th century, when the first junior high schools were established in the USA, the intermediary phase of schooling has been a cause for concern. Junior schools were formed to encourage young people to complete schooling beyond primary grades, but rather than bridging the transition between primary to secondary school, they were identified as “contributing to the disengagement and increasing sense of alienation of youth, especially among marginalised groups” (Juvonen, 2007, p. 197).

The concept of middle schooling was first introduced in the 1960’s and even though middle schools have existed globally (in the United States, United Kingdom, and more recently in New Zealand and Australia) for over forty years, they are still considered by many to be a relatively new phenomenon (National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 2002). Reports calling for middle years’ reform on a large scale began to appear in the mid 1970’s, and were considered, by some to be “the best hope for influencing the choices young adolescents make and for shaping their understanding of
how to develop their talents” (Mizell, 2002, p. 27). By the mid 1980’s, middle years’ reforms were well established in the educational policies of the United States and in the 1990’s middle years’ inquiries, reports and projects were emerging in Australia (for example: The Report of the Junior Secondary Review (1992); The Student Alienation During the Middle Years of Schooling Project (1996); The National Middle Schooling Project (1998); The Systemic, Whole-School Reform of the Middle Years of Schooling Report (1999) and The Middle Years Research and Development Project (1999-2002). Middle schooling reforms, in recent years, have been incorporated in a number of national educational initiatives such as the National Schools Network, The Innovative Links Project (1994-1997) and the Innovation and Best Practice Project (Cuttance & Stokes, 2001).

At this point it is important to distinguish between the connected terms: middle years, middle school and middle schooling, as these terms are often used indiscriminately and interchangeably. The middle years applies to early adolescence; meaning students aged between ten and fifteen, and usually in grades five to ten (Barratt, 1998). The term middle school refers to an organisational unit, separate from primary and secondary school, which provides education for students in the middle years. Finally, middle schooling refers to “formal education that is responsive and appropriate to the developmental needs of young adolescents” (Chadbourne, 2001, p. 1). The underlying philosophy of reform in the middle years’ of schooling lies in the provision of a “seamless tradition from primary schooling (which is traditionally student-centred) to secondary schooling (which is traditionally teacher-centred) leading to more effective student learning, positive experiences in adolescence and a desire and capacity for life-long learning” (Carrington, Pendergast, Bahr, Kapitzke, Mayer & Mitchell, 2002, p. x)

In the United States, Kindred, Wolotkiewicz, Mickelson, Coplein and Dyson (1976, cited in NCRVE, 2002) described the growth of the middle schooling movement as a function of six interrelated areas: a dissatisfaction with Junior High Schools; changes in young persons’ maturity patterns; new educational ideals; developments in learning theory; innovations in educational methods and materials and changes in society. In Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century (1989), the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development outlined eight necessary elements or principles for middle years’ education. These included: 1) dividing middle schools into smaller learning communities, 2) establishing a core of common knowledge for middle school students, 3) reorganising middle grade schools, 4) acknowledging the role of teachers
and principals in transforming schools, 5) ensuring middle years’ teachers are adequately trained, 6) promoting adolescent health, 7) allying school staff and parents and 8) building school and community partnerships.

In the recently published *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century*, Jackson and Davis (2000) provided a refined set of recommendations that emphasises that in addition to structural changes in the classroom and schools, educators must also make substantial, far-reaching changes in curriculum, student assessment, and instruction to improve student learning (Roney, Brown & Anfara, 2004; Jackson & Davis, 2000).

An earlier report, *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (1989) and the work of Hargreaves and Earl (1996) conducted in Canada, provided the stimulus for various pieces of action research in Australia on a multitude of issues concerned with middle years’ reform. To provide the reader with an historical context of the middle school reform movement, several of these key studies are described in the discussion that follows and together, they provide a clear argument that schools can no longer rely on ‘traditional’ curriculum approaches for adolescents in transition from primary to secondary settings.


This review of Years 6-10 schooling was conducted in South Australia to examine the nature of young adolescents in South Australian society and schooling at the time, with a focus on the transition period. The aim of the review was to develop a set of goals and procedures that would allow schools to work towards meeting the unique needs of these students. All schools in the state participated in an open-ended survey, and twenty one case study profiles of ‘good practice’ were compiled for schools. A framework comprising two goals, three strategic approaches and eight action areas was developed through workshops with principals, a general reference group and inter agency staff. This framework was then delivered, again through workshops, to thirty case study schools. Changes in student outcomes were measured for schools providing the opportunities outlined in the framework and resultant workshops. Key directions were set using three strategies for the education of middle years’ students: “maintaining high attendance”, “participating in a curriculum which is worth doing” and “productive support for young adolescents by school-based adults” (Luke et al., 2003, p. 19).
Twenty eight recommendations around the following eight action areas were suggested: learning communities, curriculum, teaching and learning practices, identifying and supporting students at risk, teacher training and support, family and community involvement, personal practices and resource allocation. This review “instigated a national focus on what became largely known as ‘the middle years of schooling’ and provided the basis for much of the research and reporting projects that continued on local, state and national basis throughout the nineties” (Luke et al., 2003, p. 19).

2.4.1.2 Australian Curriculum Studies Association (1996) – From Alienation to Engagement

The Student Alienation During the Middle Years of Schooling Project (ACSA, 1996), was initiated in 1994 with the aim of unpacking the hidden alienation students in Years 5-8 experienced as a result of schooling. Field studies were conducted in schools in South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria across sectors, in partnership with Universities and education systems. Teachers, in schools, used an action research based model to identify and analyse local issues, modify their practices and critically reflect on outcomes to gauge the effectiveness of their strategies and formulate future directions. The final report of this initiative included a summary of key findings and recommendations, a literature review on ‘alienation’ and professional resources for teachers (Luke et al., 2003).

2.4.1.3 Barratt, (1998); Cumming, (1998) – The National Middle Schooling Project

The National Middle Schooling Project was funded by the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education, training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) in response to the recommendations of the From Alienation to Engagement report (1996), and focused around the issues of the need for useful curriculum materials and meaningful professional development for middle years’ teachers. The project also aimed to develop a “common agreed view” about what middle schooling should look like in Australia (Luke et al., 2003, p. 22). The project identified the following needs of young adolescents:

- **Identity:** exploring how individual and group identities are shaped by social and cultural groups.
- **Relationships:** developing productive and affirming relationships with adults and peers in an environment that respects diversity and difference.
• **Purpose**: having opportunities to negotiate learning that is useful now, as well as in the future.

• **Empowerment**: viewing the world critically and acting independently, co-operatively and responsibly.

• **Success**: having multiple opportunities to learn valued knowledge and skills as well the opportunity to use talents and expertise that students bring to the learning environment.

• **Rigour**: taking on realistic learning challenges in an environment characterised by high expectations and constructive and honest feedback.

• **Safety**: learning in a safe, caring and stimulating environment that addresses issues of discrimination and harassment (Pendergast, Flanagan, Land, Bahr, Mitchell, Weir, Noblett, Cain, Misich, Carrington, & Smith, 2005, p. 22).

The report also identified the following key strategies as ones that made a difference in relation to the engagement of middle years’ students: integrating the curriculum, team teaching, authentic assessment and negotiated learning outcomes.

### 2.4.1.4 Hill and Russell (1999) – Systemic, Whole-School Reform of the Middle Years of Schooling.

Hill and Russell (1999) in this report described twelve guiding principles recommended for the development of middle years’ schooling. These included:

- Educational provisions based on the needs of young adolescents
- An holistic integrated approach to change
- The establishment within schools of a sound philosophical base and a shared set of constructs around middle years reform
- Student partnerships to develop curriculum
- Close relationships between students and teachers
- Collaborative work by teachers in planning and teaching
- Flexible use of time, space and resources
- Use of an outcomes-based approach
- Continuity between the three phases of schooling
- Parent and community involvement in schools
- Fair and adequate sharing of resources
• Implementation of new approaches based on theories of change (Pendergast et al., 2005).

After reviewing twenty four school reform models, and in conjunction with earlier research, Hill and Russell (1999) proposed a model for a General Design for Improving Learning Outcomes. This model identified the following best-practice design elements for middle years’ reform models: beliefs and understandings, professional learning teams, leadership, standards, monitoring and assessment, teaching strategies, home-school-community partnerships, interventions and school organisation. These guiding design elements were then used as a framework for the Middle Years Research and Development Project (MYRAD) that followed.

2.4.1.5 MYRAD Project (1999-2002)

The Middle Years Research and Development Project was commissioned by the Victorian Department of Education and Training and was originally a mapping exercise to find out if overseas trends in middle years reform were being mirrored by the Australian experience and “the results have impacted on initiatives designed to bring about systemic reform in the middle years and are now embedded in reform initiatives” (Luke et al., 2003, p. 24). Research focused on the areas of literacy, student engagement and a thinking curriculum. The study aimed to develop an agenda to “scaffold system-wide reform” in Victoria around the learning needs of middle years’ students.

The final report identified a number of areas for sustained reform: supporting leaders in reform efforts, developing reform strategies, supporting teachers through ongoing professional development and the continued collection and analysis of data. It suggested that the three message systems: curriculum, pedagogy and assessment be aligned and also identified several strategies and practices that contributed to improvements in the middle years. These are outlined below:

• Primary-secondary cluster co-operation, planning and consistency
• Securing a whole-school commitment
• Structured three year action planning based on a whole-school design approach
• Strong investment in targeted, ongoing professional learning by teachers and leaders
• A data-driven, evidence-based, evaluative approach
• Provision of resources and specialist support at all levels
(Pendergast, et al., 2005, p. 25).

2.4.1.6 Luke et al. (2002) - Beyond the Middle: A Report about Literacy and Numeracy Development of Target Group Students in the Middle Years of Schooling.

This study was funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training with the purpose of evaluating the efficacy, in terms of improved teaching and learning, of middle years’ programmes throughout Australia. It focused on the literacy and numeracy outcomes for targeted groups of students including those from low socioeconomic and aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, students from Language Other than English backgrounds and students from rural and remote areas.

The report included a large scale review of the national and international literature of middle years’ reform, a curriculum/policy mapping exercise, on-site data collection and analysis of literacy/numeracy strategies and an analysis of assessment and reporting data from case study schools. The report acknowledged the need for a “second generation of middle years’ theorising, research, development and practice” (Luke et al., 2002, p. 4) and made the following recommendations:

• A next generation of middle years conceptualisation and research on student pathways
• Funding of a co-operative, multi-partner professional development strategy on middle years school innovation
• To focus systemic activities on renewing mainstream pedagogy in middle years schooling
• To align school-based innovation in middle years pedagogy and assessment to focus on student outcomes
• To integrate and align approaches to assessing and reporting on social and academic student outcomes
• To commission research into patterns of middle schooling leadership that sustain student outcomes
• To support and research distinctive middle years teacher-education programs and career pathways
To co-ordinate an innovation and dissemination strategy for the findings and recommendations of [the] report and related strategies  
(Pendergast et al., 2005, p. 27).

2.4.1.7 Pendergast et al. (2005). Developing Lifelong Learners in the Middle Years of Schooling

This research project was undertaken to address the question of how to best engage all middle years’ students in schooling and how to encourage these students to become ‘life-long learners’ with a “higher order of learning objectives and outcomes” (Pendergast et al., 2005, p. 1). The project was undertaken by staff at The University of Queensland with consultative support and was managed by Education Queensland on behalf of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA).

The project consisted of four elements: a literature review, case studies of selected schools, a student survey and a discussion paper titled Implementing and sustaining school reform in the middle years. The literature review around three key areas: life-long learning, middle years’ of schooling and school reform, identified a series of core components for best practice in schooling and these are listed below:

From the research on lifelong learning
- School vision and visioning processes
- Student transitions and transitioning procedures
- Changing social and economic conditions
- Learner and learning focused programs

From the research on middle years of schooling
- Student engagement in learning
- Meeting greater diversity of adolescent needs and capacities
- Improved alignment of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment systems
- Enhanced pedagogies with greater intellectual challenge
- Connectedness of student learning to the world outside school
- Teacher teaming
- Innovative leadership

From the research on school reform
- Sustainable innovation
Focus on both social and academic outcomes for students
Linking school culture change with innovative structures
Professional learning communities
Evidence-based policy development processes

(Pendergast et al., 2005, p. 2).

Twenty five case study schools, already known for innovative middle years’ programs, were then examined in light of the above identified core components, and the report detailed the practices, processes, strategies and structures used in these schools to develop successful curriculum and pedagogical initiatives that promoted lifelong learning and assisted teachers to become “managers of learning” (Pendergast et al., 2005, p. 4).

The student survey was used to determine students’ perceptions of their schooling experiences and to provide an indication of their levels of resilience. An analysis of the surveys indicated that most students were satisfied with their learning environments, resilience declined significantly from Years 5-6 to Year 9 and a positive relationship was identified between students’ perceptions of their environment and resilience (Pendergast et al., 2005).

Finally, the discussion paper outlined a three phase model of reform that schools followed as they implemented the core components of change in their middle years’ initiatives. The first of these three phases was labelled the *initiation phase* and generally lasted one to two years, the second phase was termed the *development phase* and this lasted an extra two to five years, whilst the final stage, described as the *consolidation phase* required a further five to ten years.

The study concluded that schools can make a difference for students by encouraging them to become lifelong learners, but reinforced that the process of reforming schools was a “long and usually difficult one” and that there was no “right” way to undertake such reforms in the middle years (Pendergast et al., 2005, p. 8).

Many of the reports, discussed above, have been used as authoritative reports to guide the middle schooling movement in most states of Australia. Middle schooling has also been recognised as a viable educational reform in the policies of many Australian school education agencies including the Australian College of Education, the Australian...
Secondary Principals Association and some teachers’ unions and employers (Chadbourne, 2001). As a relatively new reform in Australia, “middle schooling has been gaining momentum” (Main & Bryer, 2007, p. 91). It would seem prudent to ask however, what has been the result of the middle years’ reform movement, both nationally and internationally, since its conception almost three decades ago?

There have been claims that the “first generation of middle schooling philosophy is unfinished and exhausted” (Luke et al., 2003 cited in Prosser, 2006, p. 10), and that like many reforms it has had a relatively poor history in its attempts to replace traditional teacher practices in order to improve student outcomes (Main & Bryer, 2007). Research on the state of middle schooling in the USA, found that by the late 1990’s very few schools had made any genuine reform effort and that there was little improvement in student learning outcomes due to a focus on organisational or structural change rather than a focus on quality teaching and a rigorous curriculum (Anafara, 2001; Beane, 2001; Haycock & Ames, 2000 cited in Prosser, 2006). Some argue that changing structures without corresponding changes in pedagogy and culture has constrained educational achievement and created tensions within schools implementing middle years’ reforms (Smyth, McInerney & Hattam, 2003). The major challenges to sustaining middle years’ reforms in western educational systems have been identified as: a lack of a universal acceptance of ‘best practice’ middle years’ teaching methodologies (Main & Bryer, 2007), piecemeal implementation of practices (Bean, 2001) and the uncoordinated evaluation of these practices (Main & Bryer, 2007). A key criticism of middle years’ reform in Australia was that throughout its history, its implementation has relied more on advocacy rather than rigorous research (Posser, 2006).

The report Beyond the Middle (Luke et al., 2003) concluded that in a ‘second generation’ of middle years’ reform there was a need to consider greater cultural diversity, the impact of information technologies and changing social contexts on student experiences of middle schooling. It was also suggested that this second generation of reform needed to provide Australian middle years’ students with a “more engaging, connected and intellectually demanding pedagogy that was enabled by new research, conceptualisation and theory” (Posser, 2006, p. 9). Consequently, when the BCS Middle School Program began in 2001, we spent considerable time and energy devising a rich and authentically integrated curriculum aimed at engaging our middle years’ students in connected, ‘real world’ activities (See Chapter 7).
In order to avoid what has been termed the middle school “boom-to-bust-to-reinvention” cycle experienced in the USA over the past decade, Main and Bryer (2007) described a research agenda for middle school innovation that encompassed practice acceptance, effectiveness and sustainability for all key stakeholders: teachers, students and the wider community. They claim that the framework aims to give direction for a more systematic approach to the planning, implementation and evaluation of middle school practices in Australia in place of the “ad hoc and piecemeal” experiences of past reforms and research agendas (Main & Bryer, 2007, p. 103).

The new challenges for second generation middle years’ reforms now centre on changing factors in youth identities and social demography. Posser (2006, p. 11) lists many of these factors: increasing levels of social and cultural complexity, precarious employment markets, the growing numbers of the “new poor” on the urban periphery, the dissolution of community networks, deficit views of marginalised groups and the influence of media cultures on youth identity. Research shows that the formation of positive learner identities in the middle years, and training for teachers in how to best support this identity formation, is vital if we are to keep young adolescents at school longer (Smyth, Hattam, Cannon, Edwards, Wilson & Hurst, 2000). Posser (2005, p. 11), drawing on the work of Pendergast and Bahr (2005), states that there is a call for “educational reform that is based in such research” and that “new models of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment that reflect the research into student diversity and changing contexts” are now needed.

My study is set in the context of these calls for enhanced teaching practice to support middle years’ reform. I argue that teachers who are themselves engaged in challenging practice (as part of a community of practice) with the opportunity to alter curriculum, instructional practices, behaviours, beliefs and understandings, in accordance with students needs, have real and exciting potential for both teacher professional development and ultimately, school change.

2.4.2 Reform and educational change

Change is an ambiguous term which accounts for a significant number of concepts including ‘innovation’, ‘development’ and ‘adoption’, and which can be planned or unplanned (Marsh, 2004). A range of research, like this study, focused on planned change following the implementation of a focused reform. For Fullan (1991, cited in
Marsh, 2004), a planned change encompasses many dimensions including changes in goals, skills, philosophy or beliefs and behaviour, but most importantly, change in practice. It is clear from my study that any successful reform that changed practice in a school would also lead to some resultant change in school culture (See Chapter 7). As Fullan (1997, p. 36) pointed out, “almost all educational changes of value require new: skills, behaviour and beliefs and understanding”.

In this study, the term ‘innovation’ refers to a process rather than simply a product - “a planned application of ends or means, new or different from those which currently exist in the classroom, school or system, and intended to improve effectiveness for the stakeholders” (Marsh, 2004, p. 80). Early studies on innovations in schools tended to focus on adoption decisions and awareness, but few explored the vital area of implementation, to find out how teachers actually used and refined the innovation. As Marsh (2004) points out, innovations are not objective and unchanging; they are constantly being refined as a result of experience. An implementation perspective on educational change is concerned not only with the nature and extent of the change, but also with the factors and processes that influence what changes and how it changes (Fullan, 1992). This study has therefore focused not only on the adoption and awareness of the BCS Middle Years’ Program but also on how the program was implemented in the school by teachers during the period 2001-2008 (Marsh, 2004; Fullan, 1992). It has investigated what Fullan (1992) calls the relationship between implementation, innovation and teacher development, and also, school development and improvement. Fullan (1992) defined implementation as “learning to do” and “learning to understand something new” and change as a “process of learning new ideas and things” (p. 22). He described an innovation as something new to people and claimed that dealing with something new requires an alteration in people’s behaviours and beliefs. This change in behaviour; new skills, new practices and new understandings, were then seen to be at the core of implementation (Fullan, 1992). From an implementation perspective then, what is important is “how the process of change unfolds vis-à-vis what people do (behaviours) and think (beliefs) in relation to a particular innovation” (Fullan, 1992, p. 22, original emphasis). Therefore investigating change through an implementation lens allows us to understand why some innovations succeed and others fail (Fullan, 1992).

The innovation at BCS: a Middle Years’ Program, evolved considerably over time; adapting to changes in structure, staffing and classroom instructional practices. Its
primary objective however: improving learning outcomes for students in the middle years’ and changing the school’s culture, remained steadfast.

Farrell (2000) identified a strong message regarding the links between school reform, change and a teacher’s practice; evident in the following quote:

…the changes which generally happen and last are local and locally adapted, developed and implemented by individual teachers or small local groups of teachers, drawing upon their own ‘personal practical knowledge’, their constantly evolving knowledge of their students and the communities in which they live, informed as they deem appropriate (selectively and skeptically) by ideas from assorted gurus, experts, and authoritative figures (p. 87).

Whilst Fullan (2000, p. 581) noted that, historically, reforms had limited success in schools in terms of reproducibility and scaling up, and that there was “no guarantee that the initial success [would] last”, he did stress the importance of the “inside-story” perspective to the success of a reform. The “inside story” refers to the internal dynamics of a school and consists of: a focus on student learning (specifically through assessment), changes to a teacher’s instructional practices and collaborative work structures (Nicholas, 2009). Fullan (2001, p. 582) characterised collaborative work structures as both “restructuring” (changes to structures and roles within an organisation) and “reculturing” (the process of developing professional learning communities). This second perspective focused on “developing the motivations and capacities of teachers, and on building productive working relationships among them as an alternative approach to change (Hargreaves, in Fullan, 1997, p. 58). Teacher development must be at the core of any implementation of change as it is important that teachers learn to manage change, both individually and with others (Dunne, 2008). Fullan (1992) argued that implementation occurred when teachers supported and interacted with each other as they tried out new practices, coped with difficulties and learnt new skills. Hargeaves (in Fullan, 1992, p. 3) also pointed out the need for teachers to work more collaboratively and stated that “cultures of teaching should be a prime focus for educational change”. This study examined a particular culture of teaching at BCS: the Middle School community of practice, and investigated the relationship between this community and educational change in the school (See Chapter 7).

A word of caution must be introduced here, as I acknowledge that implementation alone is not a precursor for educational change. Huberman (in Fullan, 1992, p. 13) reminded
us that “the process of implementation remains a singular event in the life history of the school: memorable, significant, not without lingering effects on relationships and working arrangements…but the former norms reassert themselves gradually, depressing once again both the level and the quality of professional interactions”. The issue of sustainability cannot be ignored in any discussion of educational change, but Huberman (in Fullan, 1992, p. 13) also claimed that “implementation creates interdependence between members of an institution…on an institutional level this can be the beginning of more general changes– in climate, in collaboration, in collective responsibility for the career of pupils– in that, here again, transcend any particular innovation”.

It is the process of Fullan’s (2001, p. 582) notion of “reculturing”: the idea that long lasting, meaningful changes in culture can be established in a school through the work of a professional learning community (Nicholas, 2008) that this study has sought to explore further.

I turn now to a discussion that relates to the third wave of educational reform: the Comprehensive School Reform movement. This literature has relevance for the study as the implementation of the BCS Middle School Program (and the evolution of its associated teacher community of practice) impacted on the school at a wider level.

2.4.3 Holistic reform efforts: Comprehensive School Reform (CSR)

Comprehensive School Reform (CSR), described as the “key to real and lasting school improvement, especially for low-performing schools” (Asensio, & Johnson, 2001, p. 3), has been a dominant constituent of the United State’s education policy environment for the past two decades and began as a series of modest, innovative research-based approaches aimed at whole school improvement (Aladjem & Carlson Le Floch, 2006, p. 233). The employment of CSR in low performing schools was significantly boosted in 1997 through the enactment of the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program, whereby schools were funded to build their own site-based CSR initiatives, or were asked to select from a suite of existing externally supported models (Bain, 2007). The program provided three-year funding to schools, through a competitive grants scheme administered by State Departments of Education, to improve student performance and focused on school wide change aimed at aligning all parts of the system: standards, curriculum, instruction and assessment. To date, over four hundred models have been adopted using CSRD funding in the United States and
encompass virtually all aspects of school organisation including instruction, classroom management, assessment and reporting, teacher professional development, curriculum design, parental involvement and school management (Munoz, Ross & McDonald, 2007). Since 1997, more than $1.8 billion has been distributed to over 6000 schools with an additional $2 billion being injected into the program through the New American Schools project (Berends, Bodilly, Kirby & Hamilton, 2002, cited in Bain, 2007).

Under the CSRD legislation in the United States, a Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) program needed to integrate all of the following nine key components:

\( i \). \textit{A comprehensive design with aligned components that:}\n
\begin{itemize}
  \item Allows for effective school functioning including instruction, assessment, classroom management, professional development, parent involvement and school management.
  \item Aligns the school’s curriculum, technology and professional development into a school wide reform plan.
  \item Addresses identified school needs.
  \item Enables all students (including students from low socio-economic status communities and non-English speaking backgrounds) to meet challenging state standards.
\end{itemize}

\( ii \). \textit{Effective, research-based methods and strategies that:}\n
\begin{itemize}
  \item Use innovative strategies and proven methods for student learning, teaching and school management.
  \item Are based on reliable research and effective practices.
  \item Have been replicated successfully in schools with diverse characteristics.
\end{itemize}

\( iii \). \textit{Ongoing high-quality professional development for teachers and staff.}\n
\( iv \). \textit{Measurable goals and benchmarks for student performance.}\n
\( v \). \textit{Support within the school from teachers, administrators and staff.}\n
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vi). Meaningful parent and community involvement in planning and implementing school improvement activities.

vii). High quality external technical support and assistance from an external partner with experience and expertise in school wide reform and improvement.

viii). Evaluation strategies for the implementation of school reforms and for student achievement.

xi). Co-ordination of financial and other resources to support and sustain the school’s reform effort.


Although the above criteria would seem to be conducive to CSR schools improving student outcomes, the evidence to support this claim remains limited (Berends, Chun, Schuyler, Stockley & Briggs, 2002; Borman, Hewes, Overman & Brown, 2003; Desimone, 2002; Herman, 1999; Nunnery, Ross & Sterbinsky, 2003). In a widely disseminated review, Herman (1999) assessed the research evidence relating to the effects on student achievement of twenty four national school reform models concluding that only three models showed strong evidence of these effects.

A meta-analysis of the student achievement outcomes of twenty nine prominent Kindergarten to Year12 CSR models, conducted by Borman, Hewes, Overman and Brown (2003), found an overall achievement advantage ranging from one tenth to one seventh of a standard deviation for the CSR models analysed. The researchers claimed that “the overall effects of CSR are significant and meaningful and appear to be greater than the effects of other interventions that have been designed to serve similar purposes and student and school populations” (Borman et al., 2003, p. 34). In a more recent randomised study however, Borman, Slavin, Cheung, Chamberlain, Madden and Cahmbers (2005) reported a modest effect size on student achievement for the Success For All CSR model, and this ‘modest’ gain has been reproduced in studies on eight CSR models in six hundred and forty nine schools across sixteen states (Zhang, Shkolnik & Fashola, 2005; Bain, 2007).

Bain (2007, p. 21) posed the question of whether comprehensive school reforms can “produce the deep, rigorous, and sustainable school-effects that have eluded past reforms through the widespread implementation of research-based approaches that
differentiate teaching and learning”? He concluded that to date, a full understanding and articulation of the content and processes of CSR that distinguish it from past reform efforts has not happened. He lists frequent examples of incomplete design, modest achievement effects, scaling up difficulties, an underutilisation of technology, limited feedback mechanisms, a lack of underlying theory and an over-reliance on school leadership, as indicators of this problem. One of the greatest challenges to CSR is sustaining reform over a long enough period to produce substantial effects. Taylor (2006, p. 331) highlighted the importance of “studying sustainability as well as the importance of being clear about what is being sustained, distinguishing between a sustained reform relationship and sustained implementation of a reform”. The slow pace of reform also makes it difficult to fully assess the impact of CSR in terms of measuring effects on students, parents and communities (Desimone, 2002).

In a study of three hundred and ninety five American low achieving elementary and middle schools using CSR models, Taylor (2006) found that whilst nearly one third of these schools ended their reform initiatives after one to two years, two thirds were able to successfully sustain the reform relationship for more than three years and in some cases, for more than a decade. He concluded that there was much more to be explored regarding the patterns of achievement gains that CSR programs produce over time. It seems clear that school reform, on any level, is a slow process. It has been claimed that it can take between five and ten years for a school to completely change (Desimone, 2002). Further, Sizer (1984, p. 224) reminded us that “we must be humble and patient in attempting [reform]. Schools are complicated and traditional institutions, and they easily resist all sorts of well-intentioned efforts at reform”.

My study has examined the notion of middle schooling: a reform that aligns with whole school reform that engages with cultures, structures, relationships and changing pedagogies in “ways more resonant with and respectful of young lives” (Smyth, Mcinerney & Hattam, 2003, p. 177). The middle years’ reform, implemented at BCS sits firmly within the CSR literature with two exceptions: the reform was not school wide (it was targeted to students in Years 5 to 8) and it has not, to my knowledge, been faithfully replicated in any other school in New South Wales.

It must also be stressed that my research focused primarily on one of the nine key components of CSR: ongoing high quality professional development for teachers and staff. Network discussions, centred around the success of CSR models in the United
States, raised the possibility that some successful reforms implemented in schools could provide them with “frameworks for becoming a community of practice where staff members take ownership of their learning and professional development” (Applebaum & Schwartzbeck, 2002, p. 6). This study explored this possibility.

2.5 Summary

In this chapter I have reviewed some of the seminal literature upon which this research is based. Communities of practice, as a form of situated learning was described and the underpinning tenets of this theory, along with recent applications in teacher education and school settings were discussed. Traditional forms of teacher professional development were briefly outlined, and on the whole were found to be disappointing in terms of eliciting sustainable changes in teaching and learning practice. Communities of practice were subsequently suggested as a potential model for a more transformative kind of teacher professional development. Finally, the concept of school reform was considered from three perspectives: focused school reforms, reforms related to school change and comprehensive school reforms. The BSC Middle School Program was then situated within these three perspectives.

The purpose of this research therefore has been to investigate the relationship between teacher communities of practice, teacher professional development, curriculum reform and school change. The following chapter describes the context for the study, articulates the research questions and explains the methods and procedures used to conduct this research.
Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodological Considerations

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, I reviewed, critiqued and analysed the literature around the concept of a community of practice as a situated form of learning, teacher professional development and school reform. In Chapter 1, I have suggested that these concepts did not operate in isolation at BCS, that through an evolving community of practice, these concepts came together, forging a dynamic bond that operated to transform teachers’ beliefs and practices and ultimately, positively affect educational outcomes for their students.

In this chapter, I shall justify the method of data collection and analysis used in this research, outline the data audit trail (incorporating both retrospective and prospective data sources) and address the triangulation processes and ethical considerations of the research design. I will also elaborate on my role in the research, as a participant researcher, in order to acknowledge, understand and minimise any unintentional researcher bias, and allow the reader to judge the authenticity of the case with full understanding of the research context.

3.2 The research design

The research design, outlined in Figure 3.1, was chosen after careful consideration of the research questions. This design was considered to be the most appropriate to gather the necessary data to address these research questions. Figure 3.1, below, is a visual representation of the main research design features, providing a framework and giving an overview of the constructivist paradigm, the strategy of inquiry and the qualitative methods chosen (Fehring, 2002).

In determining the research design I was very aware of the interpretative nature of the research, my relationship with the teacher participants, ethical considerations including the research setting, issues of confidentiality and informed consent, access to the data and the trustworthiness of the data in terms of “credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability” (Fehring, 2002, p. 19).
My research questions arose from a consideration of my own personal experiences as a member of the BCS Middle School community of practice and a subsequent review of the literature outlined in Chapter 2. They were also heavily informed through many informal discussions with the other members of the BCS Middle School community of practice.

As noted in Chapter 1, the main research question that this study has sought to answer is:

What is the nature of the relationship between teacher communities of practice, teacher professional development, curriculum reform and school change?

The sub-questions that arose from the main question were:

- What factors facilitated/constrained the development of a community of practice among a group of middle years’ teachers in a small, rural central school?

- In what ways does a community of practice lead to or provide professional development for teachers?

As previously stated, these questions then led to decisions about the research design and methods of data collection and analysis that needed to be used for my inquiry.
Constructivist Paradigm

- Inquiring to understand
- Reconstruction of knowledge

(Glaser & Straus, 1967; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Hermeneutic method of inquiry and interpretation

- Interpretation of meaning from a particular context or perspective

(Thomas, 2003)

Qualitative Methods

- Interpretation of phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them

(Thomas, 2003)

3.2.1 The research paradigm

The design for this research sits firmly within a constructivist qualitative paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This research utilised a socially constructed knowledge base, whereby the assumption of the study was that, as the researcher, I was seeking to investigate, explore, describe and construct an interpretation.
understanding of a phenomenon in which I was involved (Mertens, 1998). According to Peshkin (1993), qualitative research incorporates description, interpretation, verification and evaluation as categories of analysis. Within this study, description and interpretation of the phenomenon (the BCS Middle School community of practice) were essential research categories. In line with Denzin and Lincoln’s (2003, p. 4) definition of qualitative research, this research “is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world”. In this instance, I am a participant observer; it was a piece of my world, my history, which was explored.

Qualitative researchers study natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In this study, as a participant researcher, I wanted to make sense of the relationships, practices and learning that occurred for a group of teachers as we were caught up in the evolutionary processes of a natal community of practice. The intention of the study was to develop subjective meanings of participants’ experiences; to look for the “complexity of views rather than narrow meanings” in order to address and answer the research questions (Creswell, 2003, p. 8).

To understand the impact that this community of practice had on me, and the other teacher participants involved, the concept of teacher voice was essential to the research design. In research studies the voice heard is often that of the expert or researcher, the voice of theory is often heard more in the literature than the voice of the practitioner (Fehring, 2002; Goodson, 1992). It was important that this research used teachers’ voices to talk to teachers; and that not only should this research be accessible to teachers in the field, but it should also be able to be used as a vehicle for participant empowerment (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986; Sumsion, 1996; Fehring, 2002). Goodson (1992) reminded us that the study of teachers’ lives is central to the study of curriculum and schooling. In a study on teacher development, it is the people at whom the development is aimed who must be listened to, and strategies need to be developed that “facilitate, maximise, and in a real sense legislate, the capturing of the teacher’s voice” (Goodson, 1992, p. 114).
Ornstein (1995) described the teacher’s voice as follows:

The notion of voice embodies the new quantitative and linguistic tools used to describe what teachers do, how they do it, and how they react to their teaching. Voice corresponds with such terms as ‘teacher’s perspective’, teacher’s frame of reference, and ‘getting into the teacher’s head’ (p. 127).

This study has involved the collection and analysis of a variety of materials: observations, interviews and documents that described moments in these teachers’ lives. Data interpretation was hermeneutic in nature, as meanings were derived from a particular perspective or context (Thomas, 2003). Such qualitative studies “stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationships between the researcher and what is studied and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 13). This design then, seemed ideally suited to research that sought to analyse a community of practice: a socially constructed entity.

3.2.2 Strategy of inquiry

This study employed an interpretative, longitudinal, case study design. It should be noted however, that as a form of research, the case study is not defined by a method of inquiry, but rather by its interest in an individual case (Stake, 1995). In this instance, I focused on a specific group of teachers in a specific place and time: the teachers at BCS during the period 2001-2008.

This case study did not necessarily employ a single strategy of inquiry. In any case study it is “the unit of analysis that defines the case”, and other types of inquiry can be, and sometimes are, combined with case study (Merriam, 2002, p. 8). My study combined elements of ethnography (as the researcher, my role oscillated between full participant and non-participant observer), phenomenology (the study focused on the essence of a group of teachers’ shared experiences), experience narrative (teachers’ stories were the primary source of data) and grounded theory. Although a community of practice lens was used to view the data, it was the intention of the study to also build localised, real world substantive theory based around a pattern of meaning (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 2002). Most cases studies, including this one, are carried out by people who have an intrinsic interest in the case. The researcher is drawn towards what is important about the case within its own world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Although I hope to be able to extend the findings of this research towards a proposition for an
alternate mode of teacher professional development, in terms of communities of practice, it is the phenomenon itself, the BCS Middle School community of practice that originally drew me in as a researcher.

3.2.3 My role in the research

Qualitative designs call for:

“the persons most responsible for interpretations to be in the field, making observations, exercising subjective judgements, analysing and synthesising, all the while realising their own consciousness” (Stake, 1995, p. 41). As a member of the BCS Middle School community of practice, I was a participant in the research. However, my level of participation over eight years was not static. I oscillated from a full participant observer, part of the community of practice, to a non-participant observer, a researcher observing a community of practice as part of my doctoral thesis (Yin, 2003).

My changing role within this community of practice allowed for data to be collected and analysed along a continuum of time and from a range of perspectives. As a core member of the BCS Middle School community of practice, my personal reflections as a full participant were utilised, along with fresh, non-participant observations of old-timer (established) and newcomer team members at meetings over a period of twelve months (Wenger, 1998).

The issue of unintentional researcher bias was one that I was aware of early in the design process. There seemed to be a natural tension between my role as a member of the BCS Middle School community of practice from 2001-2005 and my new role of participant researcher from 2006. The tension manifested itself, in my mind, as the need to tell my story and the need to interpret truthfully, the stories of my colleagues situated in the same time and place. Guba and Lincoln (1985) remind us that constructivist inquiry involves rigorous research techniques in an attempt to minimise researcher bias. To combat this natural bias, results were cross checked using an audit trail and member check (See Figure 3.2). Recall that member checking is the “process whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stake-holding groups from whom the data were originally collected” (Lincoln & Guba,
1985, cited in Fehring, 2002, p. 23). Interview transcripts and analyses of meeting observations were checked with each teacher participant as a means of improving credibility, as “checking with those from whom the data are derived, gets to the heart of credibility; if they believe the findings from their several perspectives, it is tautologically, credible!” (Robson, 1993, p. 404). This procedure also gave participants a chance to reflect on their experiences and an opportunity to add or delete any information they considered relevant or inappropriate.

### 3.3 Data collection

In order to provide a rich description of the phenomenon under study, and to develop a comprehensive data set from which to draw a detailed analysis, a variety of data sources, collected at significant points in time, was utilised in this research. Details of these sources, descriptions of the participants, the audit trail, data recording and organisational methods and ethical considerations are outlined in the discussion that follows.

#### 3.3.1 Participants in the research

This study focused on the teachers at BCS who were members of the Middle School community of practice from 2001 to 2008, including myself, the school’s Principal and a district teacher, ‘Linkages’ consultant. A brief biography of each of the participants, using pseudonyms for the purpose of confidentiality, follows. Their stories, and the implications of these in terms of the research questions, will be elaborated upon in Chapters 4 through to 7.

*Margot*, the Head Teacher of English in the secondary school, was a volunteer core member of the BCS Middle School community of practice from its conception in 2001. Margot is a specialist History/English teacher with over twenty years classroom teaching experience and had been in her executive role within the school for approximately three years at the start of the study. She had a passion for social justice and espoused this in her practice, striving to achieve equitable educational outcomes for students from Beaumont’s low socio-economic community. Her knowledge base around developmental literacy skills was considered an asset to the teaching team as they strived to make sense of the continuum between the Kindergarten to Year 6 (K-6) English and Years 7-10 English syllabuses (NSW Board of Studies, 2004: 2007) (See Appendix 3A).
Holly, one of two Assistant Principals in the school, was also a volunteer core member of the BCS Middle School community of practice. She is a primary specialist teacher who had spent the majority of her twelve year teaching career at the school. She was a past pupil of the school and a well recognised, and respected, member of the Beaumont community. A true constructivist, her classroom was always in a state of organised chaos as students questioned, predicted, experimented, discussed and justified (Koch, 2005). Her commitment to a student-centred teaching philosophy, based on the process of discovery learning, significantly influenced the development of the BCS Middle School teaching programs (Bruner, 1960) (See Appendix 3B).

Richard was also an Assistant Principal at the school from 1999 to 2002, and another volunteer core member of the BCS Middle School community of practice. He is an experienced primary specialist with a developing interest in adolescent boys’ education. Richard was an integral part of the birth of the BCS community of practice, and was responsible for the Linkages Steering Committee ² seed grant that BCS secured in 2001 to support the transition of students from Stage 3 into Stage 4 (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2002).

Hereafter, in accordance with a community of practice theoretical framework, these core members (including myself) will be referred to as old-timers. In any given community of practice, the process of community reproduction can be deciphered in terms of participants’ changing (and evolving) identities within the community. They enter as newcomers and then become old-timers, journey folk or masters in relation to the newcomers as the community of practice goes about its work (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Sara, a district teacher consultant, became part of the BCS Middle School community of practice through a complex series of changing roles. An experienced teacher across a variety of secondary disciplines, Sara initially became involved with the school through a consultancy role. She was employed by the NSW Department of Education and Training as a district Linkages consultant to assist schools in the process of primary to secondary transition. Her role was to change several times as the community of practice evolved and as her professional and personal relationships with the teacher participants strengthened and deepened. In the language of a community of practice, Sara came to be viewed as a broker. As discussed in Chapter 2, brokering is a common feature of the

² Linkages- a NSW Government initiative that provided funding to school districts to implement programs to support successful transition of students from primary to secondary settings.
relation of a community of practice with the outside. Brokers are able to “make new connections across communities of practice, enable coordination, and – if they are good brokers- open new possibilities for meaning” (Wenger, 1998, p. 109). Sara’s passions centred around quality teaching: ways to improve teaching practice through a model of pedagogy “based on a sound research understanding of how teaching….can promote improved student learning outcomes” (NSW Department of Education and Training Curriculum Support Directorate, 2003, p. 4). Sara was to become an integral part of our professional development, providing professional readings at Middle School meetings, structuring meeting agendas and facilitating our learning around quality teaching pedagogies (See Appendix 3C).

Miguel had been a new Deputy Principal at BCS when discussions around the Middle School Program began in 2000. He became the Principal in 2001, providing an innovative style of leadership during a time of both significant change and uncertainty at the school. The implications of his leadership, in terms of the Middle School Program and the resulting community of practice, will be an issue further explored in Chapters 4 through to 7.

There were also a number of newcomers to the community of practice, as it evolved in response to the changes around it: changes that included, formal reviews, fluctuating student numbers, changes to timetable structures, movement of staff, changing community expectations, teaching award 3 nominations and teacher action- research opportunities.4 These newcomers had varied backgrounds, levels of experience and differing levels of participation within the community of practice. This type of participation or involvement in the community of practice, in terms of legitimate peripheral participation and identity formation has been discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2, and will be expanded upon in Chapter 6.

These newcomers included the following participants:

Juliet, a classroom teacher promoted to Assistant Principal in 2004, replaced Richard in the BCS Middle School community of practice in 2003. She was to move in and out of

3 BCS was awarded a national Literacy and Numeracy Award in 2004, a national Quality Teaching Award in 2005 and a Community Award for School Excellence in 2005.

4 The BCS Middle School team received funding to participate in an Australian Government Quality Teaching Programme (AGQTP) to develop an action learning project that was aimed at evaluating the Middle School’s Integrated Curriculum subject. The program required teachers to work in collaborative teams and use the process of action learning to enhance professional development. Schools worked with an academic partner to produce a comprehensive report of their project’s findings.
the community of practice, in changing roles, over the next five years. Juliet had teaching experience across a broad range of ages, from early primary through to adults and was often noted for her ‘out of the square’ thinking in relation to curriculum, pedagogy and student welfare.

Similarly, Lynette, a teacher with special education training, had been at BCS for five years and because of fluctuating student numbers and staffing ratios, was a member of the community of practice with varying levels of participation from 2004 to 2008. She was a strong advocate for student welfare and her relationships with the students in the BCS Middle School fostered a supportive learning environment.

**John, Carol, Anne, Elizabeth and Margaret** were all newcomers, who, for different reasons, remained in the BCS Middle School community of practice for only a short period of time each, averaging around twelve months. Their stories are included in the data, as they were able to provide valuable insights into the processes, in terms of participation and non-participation, in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

**John** was an intern teacher at BCS, in his first year of teaching, and was a *passionate* learner eager to learn all he could from the *old-timers* (Lave & Wenger, 1991). He came to the middle school with fresh ideas and recent experiences with theories on integrated curricula and primary pedagogies. He was to find himself in an interesting *insider/outside*r position as he straddled the demands of being a part of the Middle School team and a part of a group of teachers who were not members of the community of practice, and had no intention of ever being so. This emergence of a sense of *balkanisation* will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

**Carol** and **Anne** were also both recent graduates from teacher training institutes who were part of the Middle School Program for only a short period of time. Carol, in the same vein as John, was a keen member of the community who readily absorbed all that went on around her at weekly meetings and was always willing to try out new ideas in her professional journey as a teacher. Anne, who had completed her training in the United States, bought with her a different perspective on teaching and learning: one that was much more familiar with the concepts of middle schooling and integrated curricula.

**Elizabeth** and **Margaret’s** stories emerge in Chapter 6, as their induction into the BCS Middle School community of practice was not seamless. Their stories provided some very interesting insights into the process of *non-participation* in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Elizabeth, a former teacher educator with a strong
administrative background, often struggled with the demands of an upper executive role and the tensions this created in terms of time commitment for teaching junior classes and attendance at weekly meetings. Margaret, a very experienced secondary Mathematics teacher with district consultancy experience, seemed to struggle mostly with the underlying ideologies of the program and was often concerned with rigour in terms of secondary level key concepts.

3.3.2 Data sources

The main sources of data utilised in this study were participant interviews, meeting observations and the collection of relevant documents. Teachers’ stories, bracketed by time and space, were used to provide insights into the evolving and dynamic nature of the BCS Middle School community of practice. Retrospective content analysis of meeting transcripts, review reports, Annual School Reports (ASRs), journal reflections, teaching programs and student work samples were employed to add to this rich, descriptive database (Thomas, 2003).

The primary source of data in this study took the form of semi-structured interviews with participant teachers at key points over an eight year time frame. These interviews, and my own personal reflections as a participant, explored how we felt and thought about the innovative process, our professional development and identity within a community of practice and the impact that these two forces had on our school and its community.

The data was triangulated with evidence obtained through non-participant observations at BCS Middle School meetings and document analysis. These documents included school records (attendance, retention, and discipline records), meeting transcripts and agendas (from AGQTP meetings), journey folders (the researchers’ personal journal), teaching lessons and programs, student work samples, award nominations and press releases (Creswell, 2003; Spradley, 1980; Stake, 1995).

All participants in the study gave informed consent in writing and were free to withdraw at any time (See Appendix 3G). Ethical clearance was obtained from the Charles Sturt University Ethics Committee (CSU-2006/215) and the NSW Department of Education and Training (SERAP-06.292) to use both retrospective (2001-2005) and prospective data (2006-2008).
Comparative analysis of prospective data (data collected after 2005) was an ongoing process that influenced later interviews and observations (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Robson (1993) reminded us that, particularly with a case study, it makes sense to start analysis and interpretation of the data, in the middle of an enquiry. Analysis becomes necessary because “generally speaking, data in their raw form do not speak for themselves” (Robson, 1993, p. 305).

3.3.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

Due to the longitudinal nature of the study, interviews with participants were carried out at three significant points in time: early in 2001 at the beginning, or implementation phase of the BCS Middle School Program, in 2004/2005 during the development phase and lastly in 2008/2009, a time of restructuring and reconceptualising (Pendergast et al., 2005). Because development is a gradual process, these types of periodic interviews can serve as “snapshots that capture each person’s thinking about pedagogy at regular intervals throughout his or her teaching careers” (Levin, 2003, p. 24).

Only one set of interviews was actually conducted by the researcher (Series 3), those carried out in 2008/2009, the other two interviews (Series 1 and 2) formed part of other studies and reviews in which the BCS Middle School teachers were involved. The Series 1 interviews were recorded in 2001/2002 as part of a School District review process and Series 2 interviews were carried out by our AGQTP academic partners in 2004. Researchers and participants kindly gave permission for these interviews to be analysed as part of this study.

The final set of interviews (Series 3), each of which took 1 hour to complete, were conducted individually, digitally recorded, and later transcribed for analysis (Spradley, 1979). These interviews took place on site at the school after the Principal’s permission had been obtained. Within a semi-structured format, the interviews were as open as possible, allowing the researcher to pursue any unexpected responses and to reflect each interviewee’s experiences and perceptions. The questions focused primarily on participants’ perceptions of their changing professional development and pedagogical understandings over the period of time that they were involved in the BCS Middle School community of practice (See Appendix 3D). In this study I chose to record the

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3 In 2002, the BCS Middle School underwent a supportive District review process, termed a Learning Support Team Review. As part of this process the teachers who were members of the Middle School team were interviewed in relation to the organisation and development of the programme, the teaching practices employed and the future directions of the programme.
interviews so that I could also write detailed field notes in order to capture the nuances of both verbal and non verbal communication.

3.3.2.2 Observations of meetings

As the actions and behaviour of people are a central aspect in virtually any enquiry, a natural and obvious technique is to watch what they do, to record this in some way and then to describe, analyse and interpret that we have observed. (Robson, 1993, p. 190)

The BCS Middle School teachers began meeting, as a group, in 2001 and continued to meet through to 2008. These meetings were held weekly, usually after school hours, on site at the school or in the School District Office in a larger town nearby. Old-timers, newcomers, Sara, and on occasion, Miguel (the school’s Principal) were in attendance. The meetings had varied agendas depending upon the stage of development of the Middle School Program and the community’s learning needs. Over the time period of the study, meetings were used to plan timetables, establish class structures, develop teaching units and lessons, align assessment protocols, discuss individual students, write conference papers and award submissions and learn about new teaching and assessment strategies through academic readings and workshops. As teachers’ time was unpaid, we used school and later external funding to ensure that we shared a meal each time we met, an incentive that was initially used to reward participation.

I began attending these meetings in a different role, as a participant researcher, rather than a full participating member of the BCS Middle School community of practice, in 2006. Descriptive observations, whereby the basic aim was to describe the setting, the people and the events, were recorded at each meeting. Spradley’s (1980) framework, using the nine dimensions of social situations, was used to guide these observations. Observations and field notes were recorded in a split page notepad using the following dimensions: space, actors, activities, objects, acts, events, time, goals and feelings (See Appendix 3E) (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Spradley, 1980).

Observations were then focused and initially analysed, shortly after recording, using a reflective framework to track emerging patterns or themes (reflections on analysis); detail problems or issues with the data (reflections on method); record ethical considerations (reflections on dilemmas) and researcher assumptions (reflections on the observers’ frame of mind) and to clarify the data (points of clarity) (See Appendix 3E) (Bogdan & Bilken, 1982; Spradley, 1980; Tripp, 1993).
3.3.2.3 Document analysis

The collection and analysis of a variety of relevant documents was included in the study to add depth to the data, to create rich descriptions of the phenomena and to aid the triangulation of data (Rapley, 2007; Weber, 1990). These documents included school records (attendance figures, retention numbers, discipline notifications); meeting transcripts and agendas (from AGQTP action-research projects); journey folders (the researcher’s personal journal); Middle School teaching lessons and programs; student work samples; award nominations and press releases and the school’s Annual School Reports (ASR) from 1997 until 2007-2008. As Somekh and Lewin (2005, p. 35) remind us, such “documents can be examined for immediate content, changing content over time and the values that such changing content manifests”.

Field notes were recorded throughout the study as retrospective accounts of meetings in a personal journey folder and to facilitate the collection and analysis of data obtained from prospective meeting observations and participant interviews (See Appendix 3E).

The BCS Middle School community of practice was involved in a number of AGQTP action-research projects during 2004 - 2005. One of these projects required the teachers to meet weekly in order to evaluate the Integrated Studies curriculum recently introduced at the school. We used these meetings to develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of pedagogies, aimed at addressing the learning requirements of middle year’s students, through critical reflection. The agendas and transcripts of these meetings were included in the data set (See Appendix 3F).

Lesson plans, teaching programs and matched student work samples from 2001 to 2008 were also analysed in order to show the participant teachers’ professional development in practice (See Appendices 1A, 3B, 4H, 4I, and 7D).

Finally, school-based data, including Middle School attendance figures, discipline notifications and transition (Stage 3 and Stage 4) numbers, located in the school’s ASRs, was used as evidence to indicate a change in direction in the schools’ culture from 2001 to 2008. This evidence was selected as a starting point to measure changing school culture from the perspective of middle years’ student engagement, based on a definition of culture as “the values, beliefs, behaviours, rules, products, signs and symbols that bind us together” (Donahoe, 1997, p. 245).
3.3.3 Audit trail

Due to the longitudinal nature of the study, involving both retrospective (prior to 2006) and prospective (2006-2008) data, it seemed important to place people, events and data collected into a contextual timeframe. Figure 3.2 outlines an audit trail: a tabular format indicating the source and type of data collected, the time and place of collection, my role at that time and the membership of the very fluid and evolving community of practice that developed from the BSC Middle School Program.

This audit trail (See Figure 3.2) has also been included in this dissertation to increase the reliability (through construct validity) of the study by providing the reader with a means of identifying a chain of evidence. The principle behind a chain of evidence is that it “allows an external observer, in this situation, the reader of the case study, to follow the derivation of any evidence, ranging from initial research questions to ultimate case study conclusions” (Yin, 2003, p. 105).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Place of collection</th>
<th>Type of data</th>
<th>Source of data</th>
<th>Researchers’ role</th>
<th>BCS Middle School team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>BCS</td>
<td>Participant Interviews (Series 1)</td>
<td>NSWDET Learning Support Review</td>
<td>Full participant teacher</td>
<td>Margo, Holly, Richard, Sara, Tracey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 - 2004</td>
<td>BCS</td>
<td>Matched student work samples</td>
<td>Portfolios</td>
<td>Full participant teacher</td>
<td>Margo, Holly, Richard (until 2003), Tracey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 - 2006</td>
<td>BCS</td>
<td>Lesson plans Teaching programs</td>
<td>Teaching Units</td>
<td>Full participant teacher</td>
<td>Margo, Holly, Richard (until 2003), Tracey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>BCS</td>
<td>Interview (Series 2)</td>
<td>Action research projects</td>
<td>Full participant teacher</td>
<td>Margo, Holly, Tracey, Juliet, Sara, John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 – 2008</td>
<td>BCS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BCS</td>
<td>Meeting Observations</td>
<td>BCS Middle School team meetings</td>
<td>Participant researcher (2006)</td>
<td>Margo, Holly, Lynette, Carol, Anne, Sara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District Office</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Whole school staff (1997-2007/2008)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.2: The audit trail
3.3.4 Recording and organisation of data

In order to record and analyse the data collected during this research, a Case Study Database and document filing system were created (Yin, 2003). A Case Study Database increases the reliability of the case study by making data available for scrutiny, separate to the written case study report (Yin, 2003). The data base also further assists the reader to establish the chain of evidence, whereby specific artefacts, for example, documents, interviews or observations, can be cited, if required, in the database along with details like time, place and persons. It allows for “clear cross referencing to methodological procedures and to the resulting evidence” (Yin, 2003, p. 105).

The database consisted of four components: case study notes (observations/field notes), case study documents (for example, annotated lesson plans), tabular data (quantitative data such as school attendance records, retention figures and discipline data) and narratives, in the form of journal reflections and interview transcripts, that showed the developing patterns or themes arising from the raw data (Yin, 2003).

A manual filing system was also developed, whereby all relevant documentation was colour coded, and stored in separate coloured document wallets in line with the Analytical Framework (See Figure 3.4) outlined below in my discussion of data analysis. This allowed for multiple sources of data to be used as evidence, in a convergent line of inquiry, through the process of triangulation (Yin, 2003). Figure 3.3 depicts a model that shows the differences between a convergent and non-convergent line of inquiry in relation to this study. In a convergent line of inquiry, multiple sources of data come together to inform the development of a theme or pattern, whereas in a non-convergent line of inquiry each data set is used independently to formulate non-related findings.
3.3.5  Ethical considerations

Punch (1994, p. 92) alerted us to the ethical dilemmas that can be arise in research when the researcher has a “deep involvement in the setting and a strong identification with the researched”. For this reason the following discussion will consider the values and benefits that underpin this research, outline any risks to participants, detail the process of participant consent and anonymity and provide details of the permissions sought from the necessary ethical bodies associated with the institution and education sector.

3.3.5.1  Values and Benefits

My aim for this study is that it will provide insights for participants, and other teachers, into the potential impact of professional development on school change, and subsequently, student learning and life outcomes. Teachers may be able to explore the
concept of a community of practice within their own schools as an alternative model for a transformative mode of professional development.

### 3.3.5.2 Risks to participants

When conceptualising this research I was concerned that the participant teachers, all of whom were colleagues, and in some cases, close friends, might have felt uncomfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings and may have found my presence as an ‘observer’ at meetings intrusive, particularly as I was no longer working at BCS from 2006, and my role as a member of the community of practice had clearly changed. To address this concern, I endeavoured to make participants feel as comfortable as possible during the interviews and observations and encouraged them to view personal transcripts and interpretations regularly during the process of data collection and analysis. Participants were reminded that their participation was voluntary and that they could choose to discontinue their association at any time.

### 3.3.5.3 Participant consent

My colleague teachers, as noted above, came from a broad base of teaching disciplines and experiences, covering primary and secondary specialities and varying in teaching experience from one to twenty years. All participants kindly, and willingly, consented to the collection and recording of the Middle School experience, in the full knowledge that it would, one day, be written up for my professional doctoral study. At the beginning of the study, I approached all teacher participants and the school Principal personally at the school site, and contacted teachers no longer working at the school by phone, to ask if they would be willing to participate in the study. Participants were provided with a copy of the research’s Information Sheet and Consent Form (See Appendix 3G). The purpose and process of the study was clearly outlined in these documents. Only participants who had signed the Consent Form participated in interviews and had their data included in the analysis.

### 3.3.5.4 Ethical approval

As previously stated, ethical approval for this study was granted by the Charles Sturt Ethics in Human Research Committee and the NSW Department of Education and Training SERAP Committee (CSU – 2006/215 and SERAP 06.292). Signed consent was obtained from the school Principal and all teacher participants. Student work samples, while matched, had no identifying features and were originally collected by the Middle School teachers as part of a reflective process for classroom practice. The
Principal’s permission to use these documents, and to access school records, was also obtained.

### 3.3.5.5 Confidentiality

To ensure confidentiality, only the researcher had access to original data, and participants were encouraged to view only the transcripts and interpretations derived from their own personal interviews.

With a small number of participants, all of whom are known to each other and have worked closely together over many years, there was clearly no question that confidentiality could be maintained within the group. Beyond the group however, confidentiality has been assured through the use of pseudonyms for the school and all participants. This issue of confidentiality was monitored regularly with the participants, during data collection and analysis, while the group continued its work.

All documents used in the analysis were coded and all identifying features removed. Information, in the form of a Case Study Database, was stored on the personal space of my university’s network that is password protected. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed and the transcripts of the interviews and the audio-tapes were stored in the researcher’s office in a locked filing cabinet.

### 3.4 Analysis of data

In this research, both retrospective and prospective data were analysed in order to provide a rich and unfolding picture of the phenomenon being studied. An Analytical Framework (See Figure 3.4) was developed to facilitate the thematic analysis of the data.

Thematic analysis is a process often used to encode qualitative data. It enables the researcher to “use a wide variety of information in a systematic manner that increases their accuracy or sensitivity in understanding and interpreting observations about people, events, situations and organisations (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 5). Miles and Huberman (1984) advised that to make the results from qualitative studies accessible to others one must find a way of organising and presenting them. Looking for patterns or themes in the raw data and then generating specific codes from those themes or patterns is one way to accomplish this.
This study actually used a hybrid model of analysis. In thematic analysis, themes may be initially generated inductively from the raw information or generated deductively from theory and prior research (Boyatzis, 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1998, p.159) also suggested that “theory may be generated initially from the data, or, if existing (grounded) theories seem appropriate to the area of investigation, then these may be elaborated and modified as incoming data are meticulously played against them” (original emphasis). This study used the existing theory of communities of practice (as a pre-determined code) to view the BCS Middle School community of practice through the lenses of the three dimensions of practice that are used to associate practice and community within a community of practice: mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). Before being able to answer the main research question, it was important to firstly gather evidence from the available data (interviews, observations and documents) that a community of practice had, in fact, been established at BCS (See Chapter 4). Relevant exerts from interviews, meeting transcripts and documents were therefore mapped against a collection of phrases that were used as indicators to verify the existence of the community of practice. These indicators were:

- sustained mutual relationships
- shared ways of engaging in doing things together
- the rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation
- absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process
- very quick set up of a problem to be discussed
- substantial overlap in participants’ descriptions of who belongs
- knowing what others know, what they can do and how they can contribute to an enterprise
- mutually defining identities
- the ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products
- specific tools, representations and other artefacts
local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter

jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones

certain styles recognised as displaying membership

a shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective of the world.

(Wenger, 1998, p. 125)

As discussed in Chapter 2, the evolutionary nature of the community of practice was also confirmed using a model for studying the formation and development of teacher community proposed by Grossman et al. (2000). The four markers characterised by the model (the formation of group identity and norms, an understanding of difference and the navigation of fault lines, negotiating of the essential tension and taking communal responsibility for individual’s growth) were identified in the data, in the “participant’s talk and actions”, as the community progressed through beginning, evolving and mature stages (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 5) (See Chapter 4).

A grounded theoretical approach, using a constant comparative method, was then used to analyse the same data (interviews, observations, documents and school based data) using an open coding process to group emergent patterns or themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriman, 2002). These multiple sources of data provided a means of cross checking the themes or patterns, and where necessary, appropriate memos were added to clarify the thinking in relation to the data collected and the research questions being asked. This grounded approach was used to answer the first research sub-question: “what factors facilitated or constrained the development of the community of practice”? (See Chapter 5).

Wenger’s (1998) model of four interrelated learning components (meaning, practice, identity and community) was used to trace the participant teachers’ changing understandings of their practice as they participated in the community of practice. This analysis was used to answer the second research sub-question: “In what ways does a community of practice lead to or provide professional development for teachers”? (See Chapter 6).
The construct of change was considered from three perspectives: teacher change, student change and school culture change. Data from the final series of teacher interviews (Series 3), teaching and learning artefacts, student work samples and reports and school-based measures was analysed in order to conceptualise the changes that took place at BCS following the implementation of the Middle School Program. The concept of teacher change was mapped against changes in pedagogical practice, attitudes towards teaching and learning and commitment to the profession (Schulman & Armitage, 2005). Student change was viewed through the constructs of academic attainment, changes in attitude and behaviour and school attendance (Guskey, 2002) whilst the concept of school culture change was determined through an analysis of the changes observed in the school’s organisational structure, collaborative processes, educational foci and changing beliefs, values and norms (Little, 1981; Grimmett & Crehan, 1992; Sergiovani, 1984) (See Chapter 7). Finally, these analyses, as outlined in Figure 3.4, were viewed together, in order to determine an answer to the main research question: “What is the nature of the relationship between teacher communities of practice, teacher professional development, curriculum reform and school change”? (See Chapter 8).
3.5 Trustworthiness of the data

Fehring (2002) suggests that within a constructivist paradigm, the researcher analyses the data using the process of induction. “The researcher constructs, or reconstructs, meaning in relation to the research question” (Fehring, 2002, p. 27). It is therefore important in such inquiry, to address the issue of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). Trustworthiness, when referring to qualitative research, replaces the positivist

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**Research Questions**
What is the nature of the relationship between teacher communities of practice, teacher professional development, curriculum reform and school change?

- What factors facilitated/constrained the development of a community of practice among a group of middle years teachers at a small rural, central school?
- In what ways does a community of practice lead to or provide professional development for teachers?

**SCHOOL REFORM**
BCS Middle School Program

**TEACHER COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE**
Mutual Engagement
A Joint Enterprise
A Shared repertoire

**TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING**
Meaning, practice, identity, community

**CHANGE**
Teacher change
Student change
School culture change

Figure 3.4: Analytical Framework
terms ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’. Lincoln and Guba (1989), in reference to the trustworthiness of qualitative research, proposed four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

In order to improve the credibility of the data analysis, the process of triangulation was utilised. “In the search for accuracy and alternative explanations we need discipline; we need protocols which do not depend on mere intuition and good intention to get it right, in qualitative research, those protocols come under the name of triangulation” (Stake, 1995, p.107). This study utilised two forms of triangulation, methodological triangulation whereby multiple sources of data were collected (interviews, observations and documents and school records), and data source triangulation, where data was collected across time and space (Stake, 1995).

Transferability is a construct that equates to generalisability. This construct, and its applicability to my study, has been previously discussed in Section 1.6.2 of this dissertation. Stake (1995) stressed the importance of uniqueness in a case study and emphasised the need to know how the case is different from others, but more importantly, the need to understand the case itself. In this chapter I have provided specific details about participants, the school site and the BCS Middle School Program (within the confines of confidentiality) so that readers may judge the transferability of my findings to their own professional situations (Fehring, 2002).

Dependability is analogous to reliability, while confirmability corresponds to objectivity. Guba (1981, cited in Robson, 1993) argued that if a study is credible, dependability follows. Therefore the process of triangulation, outlined previously, sufficiently addresses this concept. Confirmability has been determined through the use of member checking to minimise researcher bias, and the theoretical framework and use of the literature in the research design, has meant that the enquiry has been conducted in such a way, that the reader can follow what has gone on and can see the justification for the study’s findings and conclusions (Robson, 1993).

3.6 Summary

This chapter focused on the methodological considerations of the study, outlining, and justifying, the research design employed and reiterating the research questions that framed the study. My role, as a participant researcher was clearly defined along with detailed descriptions of each participant. Finally, aspects of how data were collected and
analysed, including issues of reliability, triangulation and validity and ethical considerations, were examined. The following chapter begins the discussion around the results of the initial analysis: determining the existence and evolutionary nature of the community of practice at BCS.
Chapter 4

Discussion of data 1: The birth and evolution of a teacher community of a practice

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3, I outlined the methodological considerations of the study, including the method of data collection, the research design employed to analyse the data and a detailed description of the participant teachers involved in the research. I also detailed my own interest and involvement in the phenomenon as a participant researcher.

In this chapter, following the analytical framework outlined in Figure 3.4, I will listen to the teachers’ voices in participant interviews, meetings and observations to explore the community of practice that was born, and evolved, at BCS from 2001-2008. Whilst a descriptive analysis is not the intent of this thesis, understanding how learning occurs in such a socio-cultural phenomenon, as a community of practice, requires a meaningful understanding of the context, environment and relationships involved in its formation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). It should also be emphasised that a community of practice is not a synonym for a group or team of teachers, it is more than this, and “acts as a learning community: one in which members use their peers as a source of knowledge and professional development” (Clarke, 2006, p. 52).

4.2 Evidence for a community of practice

Before determining the factors that impacted on the BCS Middle School community of practice, it was important, and somewhat reassuring, to firstly confirm that we had in fact been a part of such a community. Can a core group of four ‘old-timers’ and a string of transient ‘newcomers’ be considered as a community of practice? To this end, a community of practice lens was employed to view the data through two constructs. As previously discussed in Chapter 3, the first construct consisted of the three dimensions of practice that Wenger (1998) claimed may be viewed as the property of a community, mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire.

The second construct utilised was a list of fourteen indicators that Wenger (1998, p. 125) suggested could be used to reify a community of practice. Recall that these are:
sustained mutual relationships

shared ways of engaging in doing things together

the rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation

absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process

a very quick set up of a problem to be discussed

substantial overlap in participants’ descriptions of who belongs

knowing what others know, what they can do and how they can contribute to an enterprise

mutually defining identities

the ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products

specific tools, representations and other artefacts

local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter

jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones

certain styles recognised as displaying membership

a shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective of the world.

Participant interview transcripts, meeting transcripts and meeting observation data were analysed for key words and phrases using these dimensions and indicators as an established code (Appendix 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D and 4E). The discussion that follows draws from this coding.

4.2.1 Locating the three dimensions in the data

For clarity and ease of analysis, the frequencies of key words and phrases representing each dimension were calculated and recorded in a table (See Table 4.1). This measure was a simple ‘count’ rather than a comprehensive quantitative analysis, as the intent was
to determine if the dimensions were present at all in the talk, not to determine the extent to which they were present. There has been no attempt to discuss the significance of these numbers to each other or in relation to a total value, as this would have no meaning in the rich, qualitative analysis that follows the table was valuable in that it matched key words and phrases to each dimension and clearly indicated where they were located in the data.

At a glance it was obvious that all three of the dimensions that linked practice to community were evident in the data, albeit to differing degrees, indicating that a community of practice had been established, and was operating at the case study school during the period of the study.

Table 4.1 COP Dimension Analysis Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension of practice</th>
<th>2002- Series 1 Interviews Incidence of key words/phrases</th>
<th>2004- Series 2 Interviews Incidence of key words/phrases</th>
<th>2004 AGQTP Meeting transcripts Incidence of key words/phrases</th>
<th>2006 Meeting observations Incidence of key words/phrases</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Engagement</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Joint Enterprise</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Shared Repertoire</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.1.1 Evidence for mutual engagement

As can be seen from Table 4.1, there were 82 instances of key words and phrases across the data that provided evidence for the dimension of mutual engagement within the community over time. Wenger (1998, p. 73) defines this dimension around the concepts of “engaged diversity and doing things together, relationships and social complexity and the maintenance of community”. Practice does not exist in isolation: it exists when people are engaged in negotiated action with each other, “membership in a community of practice is therefore a matter of mutual engagement” (Wenger, 1998, p. 73).

In the search for evidence of mutual engagement key words were sourced that would indicate participants’ involvement in the community in terms of **time, commitment, collegiality and passion** (Rapley, 2007).
Being included and feeling involved is a prerequisite for being engaged in a community’s practice (Wenger, 1998). This is reinforced in the data and can be illustrated by the following compilation of excerpts:

...the enthusiasm and skills of the involved teachers.

...the exceptional commitment of personal time demonstrated by the middle school team.

(Review panel member, Series 1 Interviews, 2002)

...just started with the middle school, and I attended all of their out of school hours meetings and everything else, and just tried to involve myself as much as possible.

(John, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

...feeling useful and valued, actively involved in decision making.

(Researcher’s interpretations of observations from team meeting, March, 2006).

Engagement in the enterprise, the BCS Middle School Program, is evidenced through the use of words like “enthusiasm”, “commitment” and the need to “involve” oneself in the community. Engagement goes beyond what is expected in the school day through the investment of “personal time”. Being involved in decision making is being involved in what matters to the community (Wenger, 1998).

I’d want to be there and be part of this very passionate group that wanted to do things and wanted to change and wanted to learn all the time.

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

...what I’ve learnt is the only way to make change is you’ve got to work with the people, become part of the group.

(Sara, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

Both Holly’s and Sara’s comments highlight the shared understanding they have reached that mutual engagement in the enterprise also allows for learning and, ultimately, change. They are able to see the benefits gained from “sharing their knowledge, insights and experiences with others with similar interests and enterprises” (Clarke, 2006, p. 52).

As previously discussed a community of practice is not necessarily a homogeneous entity and Wenger (1998, p.75) stressed the importance of member “diversity” in a community of practice. The BCS Middle School teachers, both newcomers and old timers, were certainly a diverse group: teaching specialties cut across primary and
secondary domains; professional experience varied from over twenty years to first year graduates; specialist knowledge encompassed the humanities and sciences and variations in beliefs and values (not to mention personalities) made meeting times interesting to say the least, from a personal point of view. Working together over a number of years gave us opportunities to gain both individual identity and a shared identity through the practices we were mutually engaged in. Wenger (1998, p. 76) pointed out that “mutual relations of engagement are as likely to give rise to differentiation as to homogenisation.” Our diversity, and at the same time, our coming together under the auspice of mutual engagement in the community can be seen through the following excerpts:

Primary and secondary teaching staff have invested considerable time and effort into the development of an organisational structure.

...links the school’s primary and secondary departments.
(Review panel member, Series 1 Interviews, 2002)

The use of words like “links” and phrases such as “development of organisational structures” reinforces both the original diversity of community members, in terms of departmental membership and teaching background, and the new shared identity that was developing. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the community of practice at BCS, through design and through the development of subsequent professional and personal relationships, was instrumental in bridging the perceived ‘gap’ between the primary and secondary sectors in the school. We had entered teaching through different pathways: Holly and Juliet were primary teachers with a broad curriculum knowledge and repertoire of pedagogies whilst Sara, Margo and myself were secondary trained and firmly tied to our individual disciplines, including the more teacher-directed pedagogies that often travel with ‘high school’ teachers. Yet through the Middle School Program we were forced to break down this divide as primary and junior secondary curricula merged and pedagogies more suited to the needs of our adolescent students needed to be implemented. We brought the best of both our worlds together: the breadth of primary pedagogy and the depth of secondary specialist discipline knowledge. Our differences were no longer a barrier and our identities no longer disparate. We were not primary or secondary teachers, through our mutual engagement in the BCS Middle School Program we were on our way to a new identity: that of middle school teachers.
Originally I was coming in delivering the professional learning in a structure ... you may have seen the structure, this conglomeration of everyone bringing things to the table...its fabulous.

(Sara, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

Sara’s comment here underlines the concept that mutual engagement involves a mixture of competencies: our own and others’. Each of us, within the community, “brings something to the table”. Wenger (1998) discussed two types of communities: those where participants have very different roles or things to contribute (complementary contributions) and those where participants have overlapping forms of competence.

Sara’s comments above highlight the way our complementary competencies contributed to the overall enterprise.

Sara brought structure and initial professional development to the enterprise. Meetings were set around ‘need to know’ agendas, funding and conference opportunities were presented, professional readings were distributed and innovative teaching strategies were modelled for classroom trial. Margo taught us not only the ‘nuts and bolts’ of the NSW English Syllabuses (Board of Studies, 2004; 2007) and ‘ways’ of teaching English, she also illuminated us to the fact that, regardless of discipline, we were all teachers of literacy. Juliet, Holly and Richard introduced us to the primary world: student-centred pedagogies, differentiated teaching strategies and an integrated curriculum (Drake, 1998; Marsh, 2004; Tomlinson, 2004). John brought with him the enthusiasm and energy of the first-year out graduate, whilst Margaret and Elizabeth kept us grounded as they often identified the ‘stumbling blocks’ within the program. My own contribution lay in deconstructing the NSW Science Syllabus and introducing the community to the ‘relevance’ of science for students and modes of discovery and inquiry-learning (Koch, 2005).

Mutual engagement, while not ensuring homogeneity, does create relationships between members. When these relationships are sustained, “a community of practice can become a very tight node of interpersonal relationships” (Wenger, 1998, p. 76). Evidence for this aspect of mutual engagement was overwhelming throughout the data, and whilst “peace, happiness and harmony” (Wenger, 1998, p. 76) are not necessary pre-requisites for a successful community of practice, and at times tensions and potential conflicts arose, the community of practice at BCS certainly evolved into a community where participants’ language indicates that they felt connected through their engagement in practice and a common desire to generate knowledge and change.
Evidence that interpersonal relationships were built and sustained over time, can be seen in the following excerpts:

The quality of staff and student relationships and student behaviour has improved over recent times...teachers felt that the middle school project has provided students and staff with more consistent contact, leading to continuity of instruction and sound relationships...

(Review panel member, Series 1 Interviews, 2002)

...it’s really amazing how close that totally different people can become about a project, and we are, we’re so different in so many ways and it’s just amazing how close its brought us all.

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

So there’s the collegiality, the fun that we have, the friendships and the support.

(Margo, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

It’s easy to bounce ideas off each other. It’s easy to chat and laugh socially, and enjoy your work.

(Tracey, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

The meeting began with social chit-chat and a catching up.

(Researcher’s interpretations of observations from team meeting, March, 2006).

These excerpts reflect the strong, positive and collegial nature of the relationship that formed between participants in the BCS Middle School as they went about their work. As time went by the excerpts also show, in part, how those relationships merged across professional and personal domains. Relationships began in an arena where the teachers were asked to come together to develop a program in the school and this required a sound professional relationship as they met, at school, to plan timetables, staffing ratios and meet with Sara for professional development activities. By 2004, and into 2006, additional meeting time was scheduled in participants’ own time after school and a more social, collegial atmosphere was felt where community members had “fun”, “chatted”, “and laughed” and were able to “enjoy” their work. The work itself also changed: it now focused on pedagogy rather than organisational structures, and professional development became a shared responsibility whereby learning needs were strategically identified and an action research approach was adopted by the community (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982). The atmosphere, and learning community, had become one in which “practitioners [were] invited to participate in the discourses of learning in situated contexts with other practitioners whom they respect, trust and who share an interest in improving their practice” (Clarke, 2006, p. 52, author’s emphasis).
Finally, transforming mutual engagement into a community of practice requires considerable work, and “community maintenance” is a vital component of any practice (Wenger, 1998, p. 74). Even when a community’s participants have a multitude of things in common, being able to do things together, successfully and over time, requires attention. The part that individuals play in maintaining a community is not always visible, or indeed in some cases, valued.

Sara’s participation in the community over an eight year period, in terms of contributing to community maintenance, is a significant example. Sara’s role, within and outside the community was to change several times during its evolution. Her presence initially, as a Linkages consultant, was aligned to accountability: her role was to monitor the program and teachers involved and provide professional development at various points of need to ensure that the Linkages grant was ‘money well spent’. She explains her original role in the following quote:

*Originally I was coming in delivering the professional learning in a structure, you may have seen the structure…*

(Sara, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

Sara ensured that middle school meetings ran to an agenda, and professional development activities were clearly aligned to program objectives (See Appendix 3C). These meetings addressed a variety of learning experiences: professional readings were shared, timelines established, middle years teaching and learning strategies unpacked, and preliminary teaching units drafted. Reporting back to subsequent meetings on the progress of new organisational structures or innovative pedagogies helped to reinforce our accountability to the program.

By 2004, Sara had taken up another consultancy position within the District and was no longer working with BCS. When the school was successful in securing an Australian Government Quality Teaching Program (AGQTP) grant, it seemed a natural move to ask Sara if she wished to be involved, this time in the guise of a critical friend. In a transcript of an AGQTP meeting, Holly comments on Sara’s quick response to being asked:

*…when we said we’ve got a proposal for you, and you said “Yep I’m there, what is it?”, … she’ll just say yes to anything in working with us.*

(Holly, AGQTP Meeting, 20/09/04).
Sara’s contribution to this action research project was to attend monthly meetings to assist the middle school teachers to develop, implement and evaluate integrated teaching and learning programs using the NSW Quality Teaching Framework (NSW Department of Education and Training Curriculum Support Directorate, 2003).

Sara’s participation in the community continued into 2006, despite her increasing commitments to a consultancy position outside of Linkages or middle schooling domains. She attended meetings when she could, providing the community with support, suggestions and critique, acting as ‘devils advocate’ within, and often as ‘staunch supporter’ outside, the community. She was also able to still provide professional advice and direction around assessment and reporting in accordance with her new position. In terms of community of practice theory, Sara may be identified as a “broker” (Wenger, 1998, p. 109). As previously discussed, brokers are people who are able to make connections across communities of practice, thereby opening new possibilities for meaning, as they engage in the ‘import-export’ of knowledge, artefacts and practice. Brokering may be defined as “the use of multi-membership to transfer some element of one practice into another” (Wenger, 1998, p. 109). Whilst brokers are not usually seen as full legitimate members of a community of practice, being considered neither ‘in nor out’, I would argue that Sara’s participation in the community was unique: she was able to participate as a full member at one time and in one context, and as a broker in another time and context. Her dual role as member and broker was a crucial factor in the maintenance and sustainability of the community; it was one of the lynch pins that transformed the group’s mutual engagement into a community of practice. Wenger, McDermott & Snyder (2002, p. 154) stress the importance of focusing attention on the “boundaries” of communities of practice in order to “prevent fragmentation and renew learning”. Boundary activity can be enhanced through a variety of connections including the work of “knowledge brokers” like Sara who, through membership in multiple communities, are able to act as “translators” within and outside of the community of practice (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 154). They assist the community by helping it to develop on the inside, and at the same time, help to turn it outwards. Communities of practice become both truly sustainable, and “knowledge assets”, when “their core and boundaries evolve in complementary ways – creating deep expertise inside and constant renewal at the boundary” (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002, p. 154).
4.2.1.2 Evidence for a joint enterprise

In Table 4.1, we can see that there were 68 instances of key words or phrases across the data that were indicative of a joint enterprise. Wenger (1998, p. 77) characterises this dimension as being:

- the result of a collective process of negotiation;
- defined by participants as it is being pursued – taking into account context and forces outside of the community’s control;
- not just a stated goal but an enterprise that creates mutual accountability among participants.

Enterprises reflected in our practice are complex and include the organisational, personal and interpersonal aspects of our lives (Wenger, 1998). The enterprise at BCS was not just the Middle School Program and how the teachers involved structured and implemented it, it was also the meaning we gave to the program, the relationships we developed between and around them, our feelings of belonging (for example, when presenting at professional conferences and winning awards) and our feelings of isolation (for example, the threats of balkanisation and the ‘tall poppy syndrome’). These experiences and feelings will be elaborated on in Chapters 5 and 6 of this dissertation.

Recall that in a community of practice, “the enterprise is joint not in that everybody believes the same thing or agrees with everything, but in that it is communally negotiated” (Wenger, 1998, p. 78). The teachers in the BCS Middle School Program did not only share a working space and set of practices, they shared dilemmas, and their responses to these dilemmas were connected. In the Learning Support Team Review (2002), when discussing the development of the middle school curriculum, panel members noted that:

Teaching and learning programs have achieved a greater priority and the potential has been created for stronger curriculum links…there has been a sharing of teaching skills.

The panel went on to note the importance of this sharing and how the middle school teachers embedded this negotiated practice into their own model of professional development:
...the model for professional development used in the middle school has appropriately focussed on current research, sharing and reflecting on classroom experiences, discussing new strategies and allowing time for implementation.

(Review panel member, Series 1 Interviews, 2002).

From the outside perspective of an AGQTP academic partner, coming new to the group and relying on observations during 2004, a “collective process of negotiation” could be seen, which resulted not only in a middle years program, but also led to the establishment of a new way of learning for the teachers involved in the community of practice (Wenger, 1998, p. 77).

For these teachers, action learning had already become part of their normal practice.

(Academic partner, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

These reflections generated from the Learning Support Team review process and interviews with an academic partner, show a summarised perception of the enterprise. The repeated reference to sharing indicates that a negotiation had occurred: the individual teachers within the BCS Middle School had begun to construct the enterprise around some common practices. In later years these practices: sharing skills and developing innovations from current research, were to become hallmarks of the Middle School at BCS.

The negotiated nature of the enterprise, whereby communal decisions were made around meeting processes and teaching and learning was the result of collaboration, is also clearly indicated in the following short excerpts, where words like “agreed”, “team” and “collaboratively” permeate the conversation:

It was agreed by the team that more information was needed.
(Margo, AGQTP Meeting, 29/10/04)

Planning is done collaboratively
(Margo, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

Middle school meetings were places where negotiation, on many levels, was valued. Conversations around decision making often ebbed and flowed as follows:

So, any questions, how do people feel about everything?
(Tracey, AGQTP Meeting, 20/09/04)

Tracey: What do you think about recording instead of minutes?
Holly: Well I don’t know, I’d like written minutes as well.

Tracey: I would too.
(Tracey and Holly, AGQTP Meeting, 20/09/04).

The community members recognise that in order to engage fully with the enterprise they must find ways of doing things together. They ascertain consensus by asking each other how they “feel” about decisions and arrive at these decisions through a process of ‘throwing out ideas’ and seeking multiple responses.

Because mutual engagement does not necessarily need homogeneity, a joint enterprise though negotiated, does not always mean agreement or even a smooth road. Disagreement and healthy tension were sometimes evident in the community. When discussing the need for rigour in one of the Middle School’s integrated subjects, Sara makes her position clear:

We’ve got to get back to ...the school needs to be rigorous academically. This is the only chance they get to learn, there’s a whole range of other social skills and everything that are incorporated in that, but if we don’t have rigour in what we’re doing academically, then what are the kids doing here? You can debate with me if you like, but.... I don’t agree with your statement.
(Sara, AGQTP Meeting, 20/10/04).

Reflecting on the processes involved in establishing the BCS Middle School community through regular meetings, Holly also touches on the notion of community tension that may arise as members negotiate the joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998):

...and then we had to try to refine a process or identify a process that we could follow again, for this to be successful, and that was really hard too, that seemed to be ever evolving in itself.

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

“Communities of practice are not self-contained entities. They develop in larger contexts – historical, social, cultural, institutional – with specific resources and constraints” (Wenger, 1998, p. 79). Whilst a more comprehensive analysis of constraints and facilitators follows in Chapter 5, for the purpose of identifying the phenomenon as an “indigenous enterprise” and examining how the community responded to the “resources and constraints of their situation” a few of the more obvious, initial constraints will now be discussed (Wenger, 1998, p. 79).
The BCS Middle School Program was constrained on several levels. Firstly, due to the fact that it was seen as an innovative success and became a celebrated enterprise within the district, it was often an object of critical scrutiny within and outside of the school community. Secondly, state-mandated curricula and assessment procedures imposed stringent constraints as teachers struggled to align primary and secondary syllabuses to create integrated teaching and learning programs and authentic assessment tasks. And finally, tensions within the school also arose as the middle school community of practice was often under the threat of ‘balkanisation’ as colleagues in the mainstream primary and secondary programs struggled to understand their developing practice. Even as a community of practice is shaped by conditions outside of its members’ control, “its day-to-day reality is nevertheless produced by participants within the resources and constraints of their situations…..it is their response to their conditions, and therefore their enterprise” (Wenger, 1998, p. 79, author’s emphasis). The BCS Middle School teachers produced a practice in response to the constraints around them, and using available resources, with an inventiveness that was all their own. This shaping of the “indigenous enterprise” can be traced through many of the excerpts that follow (Wenger, 1998, p. 79).

As Margo points out, feedback from our own evaluations, and those of our academic partners, were often sought out in response to our perceived view that we were ‘under the microscope’.

*The desire for quick feedback from the academic partners was expressed, given that the program was constantly being evaluated.*

(Margo, AGQTP Meeting, 20/10/04)

These sentiments were also echoed by the researcher:

*I think we have to be even more accountable, and that’s going to be a pressure.*

(Tracey, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

For Holly, the challenge was to sustain the program despite this scrutiny and the never ending requirement for accountability to both insiders and outsiders.

*... everything is in place to happen and that’s what we find most frustrating, because we do want this programme to continue. We’re doing everything we can think of to ensure its sustainability.*

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)
Designing innovative, yet rigorous assessments was also a major challenge. For the middle school teachers this meant aligning primary and secondary expectations around outcomes-based assessment and reporting, including issues around grades, portfolios and ranking of students. For a secondary teacher like Margo, experienced in NSW School Certificate and Higher School Certificate assessment and reporting demands, this was a particularly important constraint.

*I think that’s probably one of the big challenges that the group will face next, is how to resolve some of those assessment practices.*

(Margo, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

Organisational constraints also presented a constant challenge. As student enrolments fluctuated at BCS, student to teacher ratios affected some of the most basic tenets of middle years’ pedagogy: home rooms, home teachers and team teaching. Holly and I felt this most acutely, as by 2006; we had been successfully team teaching for five years.

*Holly comments that they are no longer team teaching due to class size restrictions.*

(Researcher’s interpretation of team meeting, 22/03/06)

A further organisational constraint came in the form of timetabling, a difficult enough concept in central schools where primary and secondary structures need to be considered equally. Additionally, the Middle School timetable needed to accommodate combined age classes, discrete literacy and numeracy sessions, integrated teaching sessions, teacher release time for primary teachers and executive release time for secondary Head Teachers. Even after I had left the community, the impact of these constraints were still being discussed at team meetings:

*The team were juggling the timetable to fit in other Middle School commitments*

(Researcher’s interpretation of team meeting, 18/07/06)

These excerpts clearly outline some of the constraints with which, over time, the teachers in the BCS Middle School community of practice grappled. These ranged from organisational issues like timetables and class size restrictions, to frustrations over accountabilities and concerns with the model’s sustainability.
How the teachers dealt with these constraints, how they used them to shape their community, bears witness to the negotiation of the joint enterprise.

In 2002, the Learning Support Review panel noted that the BCS Middle School teachers had developed “a general language” as they “engaged in extensive professional development”. In this way the community continued to develop an “indigenous enterprise” in response to specific constraints encountered (Series 1 Interviews, 2002: Wenger, 1998, p. 79). The community sustained this process into 2004, using middle school meetings to address emergent issues;

...general meetings may be one way of formalising and addressing these concerns.
(Sara, AGQTP Meeting, 20/10/04)

And finding inventive solutions to recurring problems:

*We need to do a lot of programming in holiday times...but it's more the after school commitment...because it's not the money, the fact that we've been able to do this through a very small amount of introduced money that's got it started over three years...*

(Tracey, AGQTP Meeting, 19/11/04)

Even changes in community membership, as when I left BCS, came to be seen as opportunities for others:

*A change in team structure opened spaces for others.*

(Researcher’s interpretation of team meeting, 19/07/06)

The final component that Wenger (1998) identifies in relation to negotiating a joint enterprise is the need for mutual accountability among the members of the community of practice. The negotiated enterprise is not just a “stated goal, but creates among participants relations of mutual accountability that become an integral part of the practice” (Wenger, 1998, p. 78). Whilst the BCS Middle School Program spent several of its initial meetings developing (and later revisiting) a Vision Statement (See Appendix 4F) it was never meant to be a document for accountability. This form of reification is not always required by a community of practice as, “even when the enterprise is reified into a statement, the practice evolves into a negotiated interpretation of that statement” (Wenger, 1998, p. 81). There was never an edict that the members of the community of practice should meet each week in personal time for planning and programming – this evolved as a mutually, unspoken but necessary, part of the practice
– a requirement for “pushing the practice forward” (Wenger, 1998, p. 82). The following excerpts affirm this:

_So we just need to get together, on task, in the right direction and in the right frame of mind, and we need everybody here together._

(Holly, AGQTP Meeting, 20/09/04)

_The change keeps going for the better, that we don’t just change for the sake of change, that we continue to look at what we do and improve it._

(Tracey, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

As one of the community’s academic partners noted, when speaking about the group’s interdependence:

_In short there was a commitment to evidence-based practice, driven by the teachers’ shared sense of responsibility to their students…. this contributed to a shared responsibility and interdependence among teachers._

(Academic partner, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

Again words like “commitment”, “responsibility”, “direction” and “improve” permeate the talk; relations of accountability include what the community think matters and what they think they need to do to sustain the “communal regime” (Wenger, 1998, p. 81).

### 4.2.1.3 Evidence for a shared repertoire

Reference to Figure 4.1 also shows that there were 39 instances of key words or phrases that would indicate a _shared repertoire_ had developed within the community of practice. This final dimension is characterised by Wenger (1998) via the actions, words, personal histories, artefacts, symbols and routines that the community has adopted as part of its practice.

_It includes the discourse by which members create meaningful statements about the world, as well as the styles by which they express their forms of membership and their identities as members (Wenger, 1998, p. 83)._ 

Examples for this dimension include statements about unit planning and classroom teaching strategies as follows:
We use the same proformas and scaffolds to write our units... so even though we are taking work away we’re all doing it in the same format that we’ve agreed to and see that we value.

(John, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

...using the retrieval charts that you and Margo developed...

We just looked at the CBAM surveys...and Holly pointed out that the three of us, myself, her and Margo are looking very similar.

(Tracey, AGQTP Meeting, 20/10/04)

Holly spoke about graphic organisers and scaffolding—these terms once new to Middle School are cemented parts of the language.

(Researcher’s interpretation of team meeting, 3/08/06)

Scaffolds used in teaching (for example text type structures), proformas (for example Venn diagrams), maps (for example unit brainstorms) organisational structures (for example GANNT timelines) and evaluative surveys (for example PMI tables and SWOT analyses) were used again and again throughout the life of the community of practice: they were to become some of the artefacts that defined our practice (See Appendix 4I). Over time, they became part of our individual teaching repertoire, often forcing themselves into others areas of our teaching outside of the middle school. This is seen in the following excerpts, where community members discuss how these defining artefacts became part of a common teaching practice:

Middle school teachers also reported a flow-on of developed teaching skills into their mainstream classes. (Review panel member, Series 1 Interviews, 2002)

We have adopted “common sense” teaching practices. I think we have moved a long way towards deliberately putting QT into our practice.

(Margo, AGQTP Meeting, 19/11/04) A history that reflects mutual engagement over time is a characteristic that allows a repertoire of practice to become a “resource for the negotiation of meaning” in a community of practice (Wenger, 1998, p. 83). The teachers in the BCS Middle School community of practice shared a rich history over eight years. We shared planning sessions, team teaching opportunities, social occasions, arguments, negotiations, laughter and celebrations. We attended Middle School meetings, staff meetings, team meetings, organised (and unorganised) professional development
activities and conferences. In this time we developed processes, practices and a language that defined our enterprise and our identity. Wenger (1998, p. 82) described this phenomenon when he claimed that “over time the joint pursuit of an enterprise creates resources for negotiating meaning” (Wenger, 1998, p. 82).

When counting the instances of key words and phrases embedded in the three dimensions that define communities of practice, I was not surprised to find that the dimension of a shared repertoire was the most poorly represented. Being an old-timer in the community had prepared me for this, so much of what we did, said and felt became automatic and assumed, it was embedded deeply in our practice and part of the taken-for-granted enterprise. In looking through the data yet again for evidence of this dimension, it seemed that what was left *unsaid* was more important than what was said. Holly summed this up best when she reflected that:

> We’re so different in so many ways, yet as I said with our interjecting into people’s conversations all the time, nine times out of ten we’re going to say exactly the same thing, and it’s really interesting to be that close to people.

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

### 4.2.1 Locating the fourteen indicators in the data

Because Wenger (1998, p. 125) does not see the need for a “community of practice to be reified as such in the discourse of its participants”, he identified fourteen indicators that would confirm a community of practice had been formed. These indicators have been listed in the opening paragraphs of this chapter and need not be repeated here. These characteristics also indicate that the three dimensions of a community of practice: mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire, are present to a substantial degree. Appendix 4D outlines the analysis undertaken to locate the indicators within the data (meeting transcripts, interviews and observations) whilst Table 4.2 below depicts the actual count of key words and phrases. To avoid a repetitious argument no further analysis is undertaken here as the indicators directly map back to the three dimensions that define a community of practice, but reference to Table 4.2 clearly shows that all of the indicators were present to varying degrees in the data, again confirming that the teachers involved in the BCS Middle School Program were indeed members of a community of practice.
Table 4.2  Summary of indicator incidence across sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community of Practice Indicator</th>
<th>Incidence of key words/phrases across sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sustained mutual relationships- harmonious or conflictual</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shared ways of engaging in doing things together</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very quick set up of a problem to be discussed</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sustained overlap in participants’ descriptions of who belongs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mutually defining identities</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specific tools, representations and other artefacts</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>certain styles recognised as displaying membership</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis will now consider this community of practice in terms of a teacher community of practice that evolved from a beginning form in 2001-2002 to a mature form in 2008 (Grossman, Wineburg & Woolworth, 2000).

### 4.3 The evolutionary nature of communities

Grossman et al. (2000) report on their experiences with a teacher professional development project in the USA and propose a model for studying the formation and development of teacher community (See Figure 4.1, below). They are careful to note that the term ‘community’ has been used extensively across the education literature under the banner of “communities of learners”, “discourse communities”, “learning communities”, “teacher communities” and “communities of practice” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 6). For the purposes of this inquiry, I was interested in applying their model to track the evolution of the BCS Middle School community of practice; a community whose existence has been clearly established in the previous analysis.

The model was used in preference to Wenger’s (1998) discussion around cultivating communities of practice, because it is a model that relates directly, and only to, teacher...
professional communities. In applying this model I drew upon my own participation, over time, in the community and the teachers’ voices, heard once again in the transcripts of interviews, meetings and observations, as “claims about teacher community should be supported by evidence from the interactions of its members” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 44). The analysis, from which the following discussion arises, is detailed in Appendix 4G. Again data was examined for key words and phrases that provided links to the constructs identified by Grossman et al.’s (2000) model (See Figure 4.1).

![Figure 4.1 Model of the formation of the teacher professional community](Grossman, Wineburg & Woolworth, 2000)
As previously discussed, the model outlines four schematic markers, within three evolutionary levels of maturity (beginning, evolving and mature), that would indicate teacher community formation. For convenience, here I recall that these are:

- Formation of group identity and norms of interaction;
- Understanding difference/navigating fault lines;
- Negotiating the essential tension;
- Taking communal responsibility for individuals’ growth.

4.3.1 Formation of group identity and norms of interaction

The first marker within the model is concerned with the formation of group identity and the subsequent development of norms of interaction. Initially, when a group forms a community, members may still identify with factions or sub-groups within the larger group (Grossman et al., 2000). In 2001-2002, the early days of the BCS Middle school community of practice, volunteer teachers were identified, and identified themselves, as either primary or secondary teachers. The middle school initiative was intended to rethink these distinctions differently, and as noted by the Review panel in the Series 1 interviews (2002, p. 5), it was seen as “...having the potential to link the school’s primary and secondary departments”.

The teachers involved recognised that they were part of a unique project, but they did not yet identify themselves as ‘middle school teachers’. Their identity, as teachers, sat outside of the initiative. This is seen in the following excerpt as Holly describes her entry to the community:

...we were left with the beginnings of a middle school project.
(Holly, Series 1 Interviews, 2002)

Holly is clearly identifying herself with a group of teachers, evidenced by her use of the word “we”, but as yet there is no feeling of being connected to the enterprise, the Middle School or the community. There was a considerable history attached to the Middle School initiative at BCS, whereby its conception involved the previous Principal sending two members of the school executive to another school in a neighbouring
district to view a transition model. These teachers returned with scant information and little interest in pursuing the project. The four volunteer ‘oldtimers’, were then left to pick up the pieces as they tried to reconceptualise the ‘nuts and bolts’ of the program (Wenger, 1998).

As the community evolved however, a sense of “pseudo-community” was felt and spoken, as teachers both inside, and outside, the community begin to sense a ‘new’ group forming (Grossman et al., 2000, p. x). The Review panel noted this phenomenon in interviews with other teachers in the school and the following excerpts depict the beginnings of a change in identity for members of the BCS Middle School community:

‘Middle school staff ‘were identified as a group separate from ‘other teaching staff’.

…the focus is on consolidating the middle school as an effective school entity.

(Review panel member, Series 1 Interviews, 2002)

John, new to the school as an intern teacher, was very aware of the group having a clear identity within the school long before he became a member of the community.

I know there’s a middle school team that meet every week.

(John, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

This strong sense of ‘new identity’, of course marked the group as ‘special’, and as Margo (2004) noted:

I think we were also viewed as a bit elitist.

(John, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

In early 2004, the identity of the middle school teachers seemed to be formed more by those outside of the community, hence the term “pseudocommunity” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. x). Threats of balkanisation may be seen through terms like “That Group” and
“elitist”. By late 2004-2005 however, the members of the community of practice had begun to forge their new identities as ‘middle school teachers’ through their long standing mutual engagement and commitment to the enterprise, and also as a result of the strong interpersonal relationships that had grown out of their regular meetings and a growing need to defend the enterprise against calls for accountability. This development of a new identity is shown through the following excerpts from Margo who reports on the out-of-hours meetings. In the Series 2 interviews (2004), she makes the following comments about the growing sense of community generated within the group:

The Wednesday/Thursday night thing is not a burden at all...I sometimes go in feeling tired....but once you’re in there, the energy just comes and away you go.
So there’s the collegiality, the fun that we have, the friendships and the support.
...a sense of school community has been the key.
The middle school works as an integrated ‘whole’ and it is difficult to analyse parts of the project in isolation.

Holly, too, notes the pleasure that participation in the group was providing:

... and then when we got back together it was like, thank God, we’re home again...

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

The strength of the relationships between community members is felt in the words “collegiality”, “friendship”, and “support”. The importance of regular, voluntary, meetings to these relationships, echoes through phrases like “not a burden” and “the energy just comes”, while a sense of community maturity comes through the realisation that the middle school was working as an ‘integrated whole’ within the school and a ‘sense of community’ was now clearly felt by members.

In neophyte teacher communities, members are often viewed as interchangeable; “if a member leaves and someone else joins, little is lost” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 46). However, as the community evolves, the unique contributions of individuals come to be recognised and members “feel a sense of loss when members leave” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 46). When the BCS middle school teachers were first brought together,
individuals’ potentials were not yet realised; the team was comprised of a group of volunteers and what each individual could contribute to the enterprise was an unknown entity. Over time, “the distinct voices and perspectives” of each community member came to be recognised and valued (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 45). This ‘recognition’ is reified in the following comment from Holly:

*I don’t think it would have happened [with] any one body missing from it.*

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

In 2003, when Richard left the middle school to work closer to home, his loss was deeply felt by the rest of the group on a personal level, but he was soon replaced within the community by Juliet. By the end of 2004, however, the threat of members leaving the community, and the issue of the sustainability of the model, were persistent concerns. These concerns are highlighted through the following comments from Holly, who had been urged to apply for a promotional position outside of the school:

*Um, I had many comments and only a few select people knew I was applying for a job and everyone I spoke to was really concerned that it was going to be the end of middle school...*

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

She was equally concerned about the effects that the potential loss of Margo from the school might have on the program:

*...she really is an integral part of our team and I guess that concerns me greatly.*

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

My own observations, later in the evolution of the Middle School team echo these concerns in relation to a staffing change:

*Sara raises concerns on how the MS can be sustained when a core member (Tracey) has left and 3 neophytes (Lynette, Carol and Anne) have joined.*

(Researcher interpretation of observations from team meeting, 18/07/06)
These excerpts clearly show how each team member within the community becomes cementsed within that community and remaining members “mourn the loss” of their perspectives (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 46).

As teacher communities evolve individual responsibilities are also gradually replaced by new “interactional norms”, particular to that group and a sense of ‘individualism’ overrides responsibility to the groups’ functioning” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 45). In 2001, Sara’s role in the community was that of an ‘outsider on the inside’ and she was referred to only as “the Linkages consultant” in the Series 1 interviews (2001, p. 5). As the community evolved, her identity within the group also evolved: she was no longer seen as an individual, but as an integral part of the team as she went from being identified as the Linkages consultant to a critical friend. This changing role, over time, was noted by our academic partner:

...she continued to act as a critical friend
(Academic partner, observation, 2004)

This evolution of group identity was reinforced through the open recognition and discussion of interactional norms through to the development of new interactional norms representative of the community.

In 2002 it was noted by the Review panel that:

...the middle school project has supported the growth of a ‘general language’ of the curriculum.
(Review panel member, Series 1 Interviews, 2002)

And:

Middle school teachers reported a flow-on of developed teaching skills into their mainstream classes.
(Review panel member, Series 1 Interviews, 2002)

By 2004, there were definite signature processes, procedures, artefacts, and philosophies that were unique to the middle school community and its members. John identifies some of these processes and procedures, focusing on the out-of-school times that the team had
agreed upon for programming and the use of specific formats for planning units and lessons (see Appendix 4H):

*But we always have a couple of days in the holidays where we get together to program the units... even though we’re taking away we are all doing the same format that we’ve agreed to...*

(John, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

One of our academic partners also identified some of the common signature practices used by the middle school team, noting the emergence of reflective practice and action research:

> They already had an established pattern of regular meetings, in their own time, when they reflected on practice and planned actions in their action research.

> For these teachers action learning had already become part of their normal practice

> In short there was a commitment to evidence based practice, driven by the teachers shared sense of responsibility to their students.

(Academic partner observation, 2004)

This development of new interactional norms was also very evident to community members and was often a point for discussion at meetings:

> Another comment was made that QT (Quality Teaching) manifested itself in our teaching in spontaneous ways.

(AGQTP Meeting transcript, 20/10/04)

> In middle school we have adopted ‘common sense teaching practices’.

(AGQTP Meeting transcript, 19/11/04)

The processes and procedures that had developed within the mature community included regular meetings each week and formal meeting agendas, while specific artefacts included various tools for unit programming, designing teaching and learning activities and program evaluation. Sara describes some of these:
...we’ve already done a huge amount on Bloom’s and actually incorporated that into programming….we look at the use of graphic organizers to promote thinking….we use those tools to evaluate the meetings...

(Sara, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

My own observations in 2006 highlighted how these processes and tools had become embedded into the mature community’s practice and conversations:

Holly spoke about graphic organizers and scaffolds…these terms once new to MS are cemented parts of the language.

(Researcher’s interpretations of observations from team meeting, 3/08/06)

Our students within the Middle School also became very familiar with tools like graphic organisers, scaffolds and evaluative structures (See Appendix 4I). These same tools were used consistently by the middle school team during meetings and became, over time, part of the community’s way of doing things.

As the following excerpts show, new interactional norms evolved with the community as teachers within the community came to understand and espouse, in their day to day practice, the negotiated meaning of the enterprise (Wenger, 1998):

Over the course of this project, the participants have come to a shared understanding....

(AGQTP Meeting transcript, 29/10/04)

Finally, the last criteria within the marker of group identity formation, is the recognition that as a teacher community evolves, “members begin to formulate a sense of communal responsibility for the regulation of group norms and behaviour” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 46, author’s emphasis). Whilst there were no explosive disagreements within the group, evident in the data or in the researcher’s memory, tensions were noted at various times. These usually centred on the need to align primary and secondary philosophies in relation to teaching and assessment practices or arose when conflicting responsibilities drew team members away from middle school business. Looking back to the early days of their teacher community, Grossman et al. (2000) discussed how group members
turned to others to solve group tensions. As the community developed, group members not only recognised the tensions but took steps to resolve or prevent them.

In the BCS Middle School, tensions around assessment practice were often evident as our primary specialists, Holly, Juliet, Richard, John and Carol, championed for outcomes-based assessment and reporting practices centred around student portfolios, and Margo, Elizabeth, Margaret and myself demanded the marks, grades and ranking most often associated with secondary assessment practices. This issue was a particular concern of Margo’s as she was led to question not only how student outcome achievement was assessed, but also to what extent outcomes were achieved. The need for some form of negotiation between community members around this tension is highlighted by her following comments:

My third concern is the assessment, and this is my biggest issue...
So we’re now trying to produce an outcome tracking system. But my brick wall is still if we use the primary set of criteria rather than the well developed key descriptors that come into the high school...Doing that [on the topic of assessment] means doing that with other people, that aren’t used to working that way, and I’m daunted by that. So I’m not comfortable, I haven’t got my head around it, and I feel highly inadequate.

The next excerpt, also around the issue of assessment practices, takes the community one step forward along the evolutionary path, as Margo here goes beyond just recognising the problem, to actually placing responsibility for its solution on the group as she concludes:

I think that’s probably one of the big challenges that the group will face next, is how to resolve in a good way some of those assessment practices.

(Margo, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

In fact, in 2006-2007, when the NSW Board of Studies introduced their new Assessment and Reporting guidelines for Kindergarten to Year 12, the group’s differences around assessment came to the fore. The middle school teachers had to
verbalise their differences and negotiate a compromise that used a secondary style form of outcome descriptors in a primary style portfolio form of reporting: evidence of a very mature community indeed in terms of recognising, debating and resolving tensions.

The possibility of more personal tensions arising, as a group of teachers worked together so closely for so long, was also identified. For instance, in response to a question from one of our academic partners about any challenges I identified in working with the same team over a number of years, I noted that:

...there’s ups and downs, with working that closely with people too, in terms of keeping it together...

(Tracey, Series 2 interviews, 2004)

However, the strength of the interpersonal relationships between group members and their ‘commitment’ to making the model and the community work, pre-empted many of these potential tensions:

...the whole team is really touchy feely, we’re for ever giving each other hugs and things, and its just our way of showing support of each other on every level.

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

This care for each other was verbalised quite differently by the academic partner at the time, who noted:

There was a strong sense of commitment, shared responsibility and mutual support.

(Academic partner observation, 2004)

The ‘mutual support’ however, was clearly obvious beyond the group itself, as the following discussion will explain.

4.3.2 Understanding difference/navigating fault lines

The second dimension of community formation to be considered involves the “navigation of fault lines” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 46). In its early stages, a group
may deny differences, presenting a “united front” to all and proclaiming a “false sense of unity” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 46). In 2002, the Learning Support Review Team identified a gap between the primary and secondary departments of BCS, but the extent of this gap, in terms of the impact it would have on the model, was not understood (or even considered).

As a group spends more and more time together, “conflict will inevitably erupt onto the main stage” and as “differences become impossible to ignore, members may try to appropriate other perspectives by claiming them as mere variations of the dominant view” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 46). As previously mentioned, one of the key sources of tension for the members of the BCS community revolved around the pedagogical and philosophical differences that existed between primary and secondary sectors. As our understanding of this source of conflict developed we recognised that different structures needed to be considered. These included timetables, bell times, staff to student ratios, teaching allocations and syllabus continuums. Teaching practices also needed rethinking, particularly for the secondary teachers in the group. In reality a primary model (the dominant view) was adopted and depth of content in the teaching programs became a concern for some of the group. This can be seen in the following comments by both external observers and ‘insiders’ to the group. In 2004, the academic partner commented on the issue of academic rigour:

I know that Tracey feels it, that she’s not covering enough content area.
(Academic partner observation, 2004)

These sentiments are echoed, though from a different perspective, by Holly:

And sadly I think that in a more traditional classroom, especially in the secondary…they seem to say we’ve got this amount of content, I’m going to do this in so many weeks…and if they don’t get it I don’t care because I’ve got to go on…
(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

This difference is clearly significant because of its impact on student achievement and so it needed to be worked through until members felt a resolution had been reached.
With the formation of community, difference becomes a more accepted, and expected, feature of the community and may be dealt with on a professional and personal level quite openly. The longer that the BCS Middle School community worked together, the more this became evident as the following response from me to a question about what I saw as the difficult things about the Middle School collaboration depicts:

*That you’re people, you have personalities…so it’s interesting we don’t fight more…and we’re friends enough that I wanted to talk about it rather than bitch about it and I don’t think I’d have done that without that group feeling we’ve had over the years.*

(Tracey, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

On another, quite different issue, I noted as a participant observer at a meeting in 2006 that:

*Some tensions were noted in the group around contribution and attendance.*

(Researcher’s interpretation of observation of team meeting, 18/07/06).

These issues had been noted and discussed at several of the meetings, and I found this observation particularly interesting, as these meetings were comprised of two or three old timers (as the researcher, I had left the group at this stage) and three newcomers. My observation led me to wonder if teacher community formation is not only evolutionary, but whether perhaps cycles of evolution occur as members come and go and the community adjusts to new personalities and perspectives? Further analysis of the community over time may be needed to answer this question.

Finally, as a community matures, the differences between members are not only recognised, but understood. “With such recognition comes the ability to use diverse views to enlarge the understanding of the group as a whole” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 46). The analysis undertaken so far, in relation to the evolution of the BCS Middle School community of practice, and the discussion around divergent pedagogies, assessment practices and negotiated structures, has shown this aspect of community maturity over and over again.
4.3.3 Negotiating the essential tension

The third marker for community formation recognises that “negotiation of the essential tension” is an inevitable task for teachers’ professional communities” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 46). For Grossman et al. (2000, p. 46), “the essential tension” refers to the observation that initially student learning and teacher learning are seen as separate and, in some cases, disparate, entities. Teachers position themselves “at one end of the continuum or the other” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 46). Over time however, teachers come to recognise the symbiotic relationship between the two, and “are able to use their own learning as a resource to delve more deeply into issues of student learning, curriculum and teaching” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 46).

In beginning teacher communities, Grossman et al. (2000) found that there was a lack of agreement among members as to the purpose of the community. In my study this was not evident in the data at any time, and one could hypothesise that the voluntary nature of teacher participation was responsible for this, as was the organisational structure of weekly meetings that tended to focus (and direct) the groups’ purpose. The BCS Middle School Vision Statement (See Appendix 4F), drafted communally in early meetings, and revisited periodically, also attests to the group’s early identification of purpose. From its earliest days, the BCS teacher community of practice linked teaching practice directly to the achievement of student outcomes. “Innovative and varied teaching practice” was seen as the precursor to the “achievement of deeper levels of knowledge, higher orders of thinking and transferable values and attitudes” (BCS Vision Statement, Appendix 4F).

In evolving teacher communities there can be a “begrudging willingness to let different people pursue different activities” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 45). Again this was not evident in the data: core members were consistently willing to let other members explore their learning and take risks in their classrooms. Resources were openly shared at meetings as members “brought things to the table” in order to aid the professional development of others (Sara, Series 2 interviews, 2004). Group members also encouraged, and applauded, other team members presenting the middle school model at educational conferences and this was seen as a ‘burden willingly shared’. Juliet’s enthusiasm, and the group’s implied support for this activity is seen in her comment:
And I did go to the PSFP conference with Margo, and we presented on the middle school, and I thought it was so exciting.

(Juliet, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

Also, whilst outside responsibilities associated with our executive roles were often a source of personal tension and frustration, there was an acceptance among the group that these times away from the middle school were unavoidable. Margo’s comments below echo this frustration:

...what’s been hard about the project?
Conflict with my head teacher role. That’s the key issue and I haven’t resolved that…I’m late with things…I’m always running around...

(Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

In a mature teacher community, the group comes to recognise the inevitable interrelationship between teacher and student learning, and frustrations, such as competing role responsibilities, take a back seat to this new understanding. Evidence for this is overwhelming in the data. For example, when discussing improved student engagement in the Middle School, Margo explains:

And it’s the result of a very conscious effort to raise the profile of learning, the importance of it, the expectation in the classroom...

(Margo, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

John is also able to see a connection between his own professional development in Quality Teaching (NSWDETCS, 2003) and the development of a more sophisticated discipline language among his students, he recalls:

The other day I was in the lab…and we were looking at different equipment and I went into a bit of a sub lesson on metalanguage…and I never would have done that before any of this Quality Teaching stuff.

(John, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

Holly and I both reiterate this developing understanding of the connection between teacher professional learning and student success:
It’s so successful for us in our professional learning and where we’re going and where we’re at in our own teaching and it’s been so successful for the students we’ve had.

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

The change keeps going for the better, that we just don’t change for the sake of change, that we continue to look at what we do and improve it, I think that’s really important.

(Tracey, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

Again, something that the Middle School community observed and spoke about as ‘insiders’ was also observed from an ‘outsider’ perspective as the academic partner also noted that:

This desire ‘to be sure’ characterised the project in that the teachers were determined to gather convincing evidence so that they could be confident that their middle school strategy was working for all students...in short there was a commitment to evidence based practice driven by the teachers sense of responsibility to their students.

(Academic partner observation, 2004)

In an AGQTP meeting in 2004, Margo clearly ties student and teacher learning together as she poses the question:

Were we articulating at this time, the beginnings of a shared understanding that our own reflection on how we are learning as professionals is helping us to clarify the processes of learning of our students?

(AGQTP meeting, 3/11/04)

Each of the above excerpts illustrates how the teachers in the BCS Middle School community were coming to the realisation, quite early on, that “teacher learning and student learning were fundamentally intertwined” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 45). Raising the profile of learning for students was a conscious effort and the phrases “student success” and “shared understandings” were used simultaneously with the term “professional learning”. The professional development (around metalanguage for
example) teachers had experienced through the AGQTP meetings had found their way into the classroom and was directly benefiting students and it was identified that ‘improving’ what teachers do in classrooms leads to “change”.

4.3.4 Taking communal responsibility for individual’s growth

The final indicator of teacher professional community that Grossman et al. (2000) identify is the willingness of colleagues to take responsibility for each others’ professional growth. Schools are situated in such a way that professional growth is the responsibility of the individual. In the early days of the BCS Middle School community, there is no evidence in the data that members felt this way, and again, the voluntary nature of participation and commitment to a common vision may have been responsible for this. Certainly it was well recognised that colleagues were a resource for individuals’ learning. This is evident in the data through the comments made by the Review panel in relation to the emerging collegiality they observed after interviewing the Middle School teachers for the first time:

*Teachers also considered that the support of senior executive and the District Linkages Consultant have been essential.*

*...there was a sharing of teaching skills.*

(Review panel member, Series I Interviews, 2002)

Similarly, as a beginning teacher, John found that much of his professional growth stemmed from listening to and observing his Middle School colleagues. In an interview with the academic partner he verbalised how he was learning within the community:

*[How do I learn from them?]*

*A lot of it is from listening.*

(John, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

Carol, an intermittent member of the community of practice over a number of years, summed up her perception of how being a part of the community contributed to her professional development by stating that throughout her time in the Middle School she had always “felt supported” by the other members of the team (Carol, Meeting of the 22/03/06).
Oldtimers were also not exempt from learning from each other (Wenger, 1998). Whilst on secondment to another school in the district for twelve months, Margo continued to attend, and contribute, to the weekly meetings. The benefits she felt she received from the community are strongly outlined in the following quote from Margo at the time:

\[
\text{I’ve learnt so much, it’s amazing. I’m light years ahead of where I would have been. ...I’ve had more training and development here than I would have got in two teaching lifetimes in traditional models.}
\]

(Margo, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

A real commitment to each others’ growth became a hallmark of the community; as Sara (2004) continued, generously, to “bring things to the table”. Holly sums up Sara’s contributions as follows, highlighting the way that:

\[
...she was bringing in information...she was actually going out and searching for information...she was certainly our expert...and brought in the professional readings and activities...that we felt we actually wanted to explore and bring into our teaching.
\]

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

Team members also looked forward to sharing their learning with other colleagues at conferences and the importance we all placed on this is mirrored below:

\[
\text{We’ve got two conferences in April and May, I know that will revitalise us all again.}
\]

(Tracey, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

As a community evolves into a mature form, members fully accept responsibility of membership, moving from individuals who participate only when they feel a need to, to full members almost overly eager to clarify ideas and help articulate their colleagues’ understandings (Grossman et al., 2000). In 2006, this marker, in its earliest form, was observed by the researcher, when newcomers attended meetings. They were often reluctant to offer their perspectives unless pressed and one might wonder if this was the result of shyness, developing self efficacy or, heaven forbid, dominant oldtimers who wouldn’t let them get a word in! By 2006, it was well recognised among the oldtimers, that participation in the community was part of each members’ professional (and
personal) routine: members willingly attended most meetings and actively contributed (Wenger, 1998). Understandably perhaps, newcomers did not always share this commitment initially, and oldtimers sometimes struggled with this disparity in membership responsibility. This is pointed out in the following excerpt from an observation of a meeting in 2006:

At a previous meeting it was decided that Lynette and Anne would attend alternate meetings. Holly strongly stated that this had not been communicated well.

And:

Sara brings up the issue of night meetings. “You’ve been doing this a long time”. Holly replies “I don’t think that matters, I don’t think we’d get everything done without it”. Lynette comments “It deterred me”.

(Researcher interpretation of meeting conversation, 18/07/06).

This disparity might easily be considered a fault line within the evolving community as new members adjust fully to the implications of full membership (Grossman et al., 2000).

Finally, the acceptance of rights and obligations of community membership were well recognised in the mature community, and came through in the data whenever members discussed the issue of sustainability of the model. Sara had talked about issues of sustainability in a 2006 observation, noting that:

It’s the core that has sustained it so far
(Researcher’s interpretation of meeting observation, 18/07/06)

Oldtimers particularly felt an obligation to community membership, and Holly refers to this obligation in the following excerpt where she discusses the lengths that community members often went to in order to ensure the longevity of the Middle School Program:

…and that’s extremely frustrating, when you’re doing everything you can think of to ensure its sustainability.
(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)
Members felt that one of the foremost obligations of membership was to ensure that the Middle School, and its community of teachers, continued to be a presence within the school. They had been mutually engaged together in their work for so long, and felt that they had been successful, in terms of professional development and student growth, that they were reluctant to see the enterprise, that had evolved over the years, diminish in any way.

4.4 Summary

The preceding analysis showed that a teacher community of practice was born, and evolved, at BCS from 2001 to 2008. It is important to note that the analysis to date is unashamedly descriptive and does not seek to directly answer the research questions posed in this dissertation. At this point, the analysis serves to contextualise and confirm the presence of the community of practice: a valuable precursor to the analysis that follows. I have used Wenger’s (1998) three dimensions: mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire, to associate our practice with community, and have reified the community’s existence further by mapping the data to fourteen recognised indicators. Just as importantly however, I have listened to community members’ voices to forge an understanding of how such teacher communities of practice are formed, and how they evolve over time. It is important that we seek to understand these processes of teacher community formation, their birth and evolution, if we are to create dynamic and effective communities in our schools.

Communities of practice are not intrinsically beneficial or harmful. They are not privileged in terms of positive or negative effects. Yet they are a force to be reckoned with, for better or for worse. As a locus of engagement in action, interpersonal relations, shared knowledge, and negotiation of enterprises, such communities hold the key to real transformation- the kind that has real effects on people’s lives. (Wenger, 1998, p. 85)

The following chapter will continue the discussion around the formation and evolution of the BCS teacher community of practice as interviews, meeting observations and documents are further analysed for key themes to answer the first research question: What factors facilitated/constrained the development of a community of practice among a group of middle year’s teachers in a small, rural central school?
Chapter 5

Discussion of data 2: Natural Selection - facilitators and constraints

5.1. Introduction

In Chapter 4 the existence of the BCS community of practice was confirmed using two constructs: the three dimensions that Wenger (1998) claimed identified a community of practice and a series of fourteen related indicators that may also be used to reify its existence. Furthermore, the evolutionary path of this community was traced from its inception in 2001 to a mature form in 2008 (Grossman et al., 2000).

This chapter again follows the Analytical Framework outlined in Chapter 3 (See Figure 3.4) to further analyse the data from the study in order to determine the factors that facilitated and/or constrained the community as it went about its work. In line with my whimsical analogy, relating the community of practice to a living, evolving phenomenon, these facilitators and constraints could be seen to represent the internal and external factors or selectors acting upon the community through a process of natural selection (Darwin, 1937). This process may be defined as “the process in nature by which only the organisms best adapted to their environment tend to survive and transmit their genetic characteristics in increasing numbers to succeeding generations while those less adapted tend to be eliminated” (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003). In terms of the BCS community of practice: a social entity, evolution may be seen to incorporate concepts like human intention and purpose, environmental exploitation to achieve specific ends and the invention of tools and means to achieve this end (McKinnon, 1995). These are the concepts that will underpin the exploration of selectors that enabled or hindered the community as it was born, and as it adapted to and survived the conditions laid down in response to changes in the internal and external environments of the school.

Facilitating factors are defined as those factors that acted to enable the community to form and evolve, whilst constraining factors are those factors that hinder this process and bind the community in some way. Whilst the literature around teacher learning communities provides rich descriptions of the ways in which such communities operate,
it is almost silent on the matter of the processes by which these communities are born and develop around shared practices and norms (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Grossman et al. (2000, p. 6) agreed that “we have little sense of how teachers forge the bonds of community, struggle to maintain them, work through the inevitable conflicts of social relationships, and form the structures to sustain relationships over time”. The following analysis, outlining the facilitators and constraints that forged the BCS Middle School community of practice, in part addresses this deficit and answers the first subquestion of this dissertation. It highlights the conditions that are needed to “nurture and grow” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 12) evolving teacher communities of practice and serves to caution us against those conditions that can act to suppress or smother the community’s growth and evolution.

The concept of teacher *tenacity* will also be introduced in order to explain how the teachers at BCS balanced these facilitators and constraints to ensure that the community of practice and its associated enterprise, the Middle School Program, continued to survive and evolve over time.

### 5.2. Identifying emergent themes

Data from the Series 1 interviews (2001), Series 2 interviews (AGQTP, 2004) and meeting observations (2006) were sourced for key words and/or phrases that would imply the presence of either a facilitating or constraining factor (See Appendix 5A). This analysis was then divided into two further data sets, separating specific key words/phrases that would indicate facilitating factors (see Appendix 5B) and constraining factors (See Appendix 5C).

A preliminary list of emerging themes was identified for each data set and using a constant comparative methodology, subsequent key words or phrases were aligned to these preliminary themes or new themes developed as required (Boyatzis, 1998; Charmaz, 2006) (See Appendices 5A, 5B and 5C).

#### 5.2.1. The Facilitators

The analysis to identify those themes, subsequently known as facilitating factors that enabled the BCS community of practice to form and evolve is outlined in Appendix 5B. Table 5.1, below, details these factors and their incidence across the data analysed. It is again important to note that establishing a quantitative relationship between variables is not the intent of this analysis. The incidence and percentage of key words/phrases is
discussed simply to illuminate the relative intensity of each factor as it was unearthed from the data. The following discussion will outline each of these facilitators in turn, aligning our experiences at BCS with those previously identified in the literature, and exploring previously unearthed factors unique to our time, place and context.

Table 5.1 Incidence of Facilitating Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitating factors</th>
<th>Incidence of key words/phrases</th>
<th>Percentage of key words/phrases (56 in total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Strong interpersonal relationships</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Professional development opportunity</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teacher personal attributes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Seeing a purpose</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Recognition of success</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Community support</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Support from significant others</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. School context</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Leadership (supportive)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Financial support</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Structures</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Threats of balkanisation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.1.1. Theme 1 – Strong interpersonal relationships

Strong interpersonal relationships between members is consistently cited in the literature as a key facilitator of sustainable teacher communities (Cassidy, Christie, Coutts, Dunn, Sinclair, Skinne, & Wilson, 2007; Chalmers & Keown, 2006; Fullan, 1999; Glazer & Hannafin, 2006; Grossman et al., 2000; Hargreaves, 1992; Hoban, 2002; Nelson, Slavi, Perkins & Hathom, 2008; Raymond, Butt & Townsend, 1992 and Wenger et al., 2002). In terms of building community, Fullan (1999, p. 37) argued that successful schools and organisations “know that the quality of relationships is central to success” and that “success is only possible if [community] members develop trust and
compassion for each other”. Specifically in relation to budding communities of practice, interpersonal relationships are critical, as community members need to interact regularly on issues central to their domain (Wenger et al., 2002). Grossman et al. (2000, p. 32) take this point further stating that “teacher professional community requires its members to engage in both intellectual and social work – new ways of thinking and reasoning collectively as well as new forms of interacting interpersonally”.

In the BCS community of practice analysis, the presence of strong interpersonal relationships was found to be the most prominent facilitating factor, accounting for 21.4% of the key word and phrases examined (See Table 5.1). Raymond et al. (1992) cite trust and support as necessary pre-requisites for collective risk taking in communities and I reinforce this idea as I reflect on the “comfort” and “bond” I felt with Holly after taking a risk and team teaching in the middle school with her over a number of years:

> And I suppose Holly and I have a bond in terms of being team teachers...you build up that comfort and you tend to know each other’s practice so well.

(Tracey, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

As a newcomer to the BCS middle school community of practice, Carol was asked by the researcher to identify her feelings about teaching in the Middle School and being a part of the community, even though it meant attending meetings in ‘her own time’. She replied, “What’s nice is feeling useful and valued…I feel supported”. This “support” for peripheral participation is recognised by Wenger et al. (2002) as a key component in terms of cultivating communities of practice: initiating different levels of participation and designing activities or processes that allow participants at all levels to feel like full members.

Margo (2004) reinforces Grossman et al.’s (2000, p. 32) emphasis on the social element of teacher community when she states that “the social aspect has been very important to me”. This social element was also consistently noted by the researcher at Middle School meetings as evidenced by a comment in observational notes recorded on the 18/07/06, where I noted that “a social environment permeated[s] the meeting”.

Over the years, our regular meetings, opportunities to inquire and build knowledge together, collaborative professional development activities (workshops and
conferences) and celebrations of student and school successes built an environment that fostered both intellectual and social relationships within the community. Importantly however, these relationships went beyond professional collegiality and even beyond friendship. They were relationships built from a common purpose towards a common purpose: commitment to student improvement and school reform (Nelson, Slavit, Perkins & Hathom, 2008).

5.2.1.2. Theme 2 – Professional development opportunity

The second strongest facilitating theme to emerge from the analysis, with an incidence of 14.3%, was the presence of professional development opportunities that arose for teachers as a result of community membership. Fullan (1999, p. 38) argued that knowledge creation is central to an organisation’s success and the power of collaborative cultures resides in the fact that not only do they “stir emotions” and “motivate” people, “they function to access tacit knowledge of all organisational members (thereby making it explicit) while also seeking new ideas and knowledge in the world outside”. Knowledge is generated from both inside and outside of the community and members also know that their own contributions will come back to them (Wenger et al., 2002). It was noted by the Learning Review Team in 2001 that:

...engagement in extensive professional development by the Middle School team has resulted in significant enhanced understanding...

(Member of the Learning Review Team, Series 1 Interviews, 2001).

This collective passion for professional development that contributed to the sustainment of the community over a number of years, is evident as both Holly and John reflect on how their involvement in the BCS community of practice had contributed to their learning as teachers:

...we’ve come to the belief that it works so well, it’s so successful for us in our professional learning...it’s been just so successful for the students.

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

...it might take a bit more effort to do it, but I’m getting so much more out of it.

(John, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).
These excerpts also reinforce the idea that in order for a teacher community to work, both learning for teachers and learning for students needs to be considered (Grossman et al., 2000).

Gaining knowledge from the outside to shape the community’s work and sharing the knowledge generated from this work became part of a professional development cycle as members made a number of early school visits and attended and presented at educational conferences from 2001 through to 2004. In a planning meeting held in 2004, I suggest an agenda for one of these professional development cycles:

So next year I’d like to suggest we visit again, do more visiting and sharing...we’ve got two conferences...I know that will revitalise us all again.

(Tracey, Series 2 Interview, 2004).

Wenger et al. (2002, p. 32) described thriving communities of practice as those whereby “the goals and needs of an organisation intersect with the passions and aspirations of participants” and note that “the intersection of personal meaning and strategic relevance is a potent source of energy and value”. The professional development opportunities that membership in the BCS community of practice provided teachers became that point where “personal meaning” intersected with “strategic relevance”. As the community evolved, its value to members also changed (Wenger et al., 2002). Initially our energies were focused on solving a problem; how best to design and implement a Middle School Program. In the latter stages our focus became more concerned with knowledge generation and the requisite professional development needed to achieve it.

5.2.1.3. Theme 3 – Teacher personal attributes

The personal attributes of individual teachers was the third most prevalent facilitating theme to emerge from the data with an incidence of 12.5%. I question whether this factor is closely aligned to, and in part accounts for, the first two themes identified? Is the ability to form close and positive relationships with colleagues and exhibit a passion for personal professional development inherent, or potentially inherent, in individual teachers who become part of teacher communities?
In my interview with one of our Academic Partners in 2004, I identified a ‘commonality’ or ‘sameness’ among the members of the BCS community when I was asked what was easy about working at BCS:

> Working with like-minded people who also like to work hard, I find it frustrating to work with people who don’t want to work hard. It’s easy to bounce ideas off each other. It’s easy to chat and laugh socially, and enjoy your work. Um…it’s easy just to think a lot.

(Tracey, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

A sense that the teachers within the community shared certain personal characteristics or inherent traits began to emerge from the data. Working with these teachers in a teacher community became “easy” and work became ‘enjoyable’.

Identifying this facilitator led me to consider the concept of the ‘ideal community teacher’: a teacher who is shaped by the processes of the community of practice to become ‘naturally’ collaborative and driven to develop professionally.

The voluntary nature of participation in successful communities is regularly cited in the literature (Raymond et al., 1992; Wenger et al., 2002) and also has implications for the argument that teachers’ personal attributes play a significant role in community of practice formation and sustainability. Grossman et al. (2000, p. 11), in a discussion around “summer activity” professional development, whereby teachers attended optional summer learning experiences at various institutions around the USA, describe a particular kind of teacher volunteer: “individuals passionate about their own learning and who can afford the time and tuition”. They go onto to argue that that there is already an intellectual match between the programs offered and those who volunteer. The corollary of this, of course, is that those teachers who do not attend such sessions are in fact those most in need of intellectual broadening. Does this then support the notion of a predisposition towards certain personal attributes in community of practice members? Or does it reinforce the privilege that success in previous collaborative experiences brings to individuals, so that they are able to take the risk, knowing already that this can pay off in terms of personal pleasure and benefit?

Glazer & Hannafin (2006, p. 186) shed further light on this question when they identify six factors that appear to influence reciprocal interactions in a teacher community of practice, noting that the “affective domain, which comprises emotions and attitudes,
plays a valuable role in an individual’s decision to interact with a peer”. They identified that proactive, assertive teachers make time to interact and that motivated teachers seek these interactions. Most importantly they noted that, in these teachers, “the desire for professional growth and collaboration focuses on thinking and learning in the classrooms” (Glazer & Hannafin, 2006, p. 190).

In 2001, the Learning Support Team Review members noted certain ‘personal’ attributes among the core teachers who had volunteered to become a part of the Middle School implementation team: they commented on their “enthusiasm and skills” and their “commitment to the project”. Core members, Holly, Margo and I (2004) often commented on the benefits of working with a “passionate group that wanted to do things and wanted to change”. Grossman et al. (2000, p. 47) confirmed that “teacher community works most smoothly when teachers self-select into groups of like-minded colleagues”.

At this point in the analysis, whereby what appear to be inherent personal attributes were identified as a facilitating factor for cultivating teacher communities, I found myself pondering the question: can these attributes be explicitly developed in teachers? DuFour and Eaker, (1998) outlined four pre-requisites that they felt were necessary to create effective collaborative teams. These were: time built into the school day for collaboration; an explicit purpose for collaboration; individual responsibility to work with colleagues; and accountability on the part of the school to ensure that teachers were trained and supported to be effective collaborators. They argued that individuals can be encouraged and supported to develop the interpersonal skills necessary to build successful and professional collegial relationships if they have the opportunity to experience them. This is a persuasive argument for schools wishing to cultivate effective teacher communities of practice with transformative agendas.

Further research around the notion of the ‘ideal community teacher’ would seem warranted if schools and systems decide to tread a path that encourages and promotes individuals’ participation in teacher communities.

5.2.1.4. Theme 4- Seeing a purpose

There is (also) a basic human desire to belong, to feel a part of a collective endeavour [...] Above all else, there is a basic human desire to live a life of meaning, to serve a higher purpose, to make a difference in this world. (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 280)
The concept that communities of practice are fostered if members see a purpose for their membership and interactions was evident in 12.5% of identified key words and phrases in the facilitator analysis (See Appendix 5B). The desire to know that what they were doing was making a real difference for students is evident in the following sequence of excerpts as Holly, John and Margo reflect on their involvement in the Middle School Program and associated community of practice:

*The reason we’ve developed this [referring to the middle school program] is because we think it’s the best thing for our students.*

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

*I like to think I’ve changed a few things.*

(John, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

*It’s rewarding, kids are happy, and I’m happy, and we have fun together, it’s nice. I’m being effective here...I’m making real differences to people who need it.*

(Margo, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

If members of a community of practice cannot see the ‘bigger picture’, and if they fail to see how they personally benefit from their contributions, they will not “invest” themselves in the enterprise and the community will “fail to thrive” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 18). Similarly, from the perspective of the organisation or school, if the community’s value to the organisation is unclear, “it is difficult to justify investing resources in the community and to legitimise its voice” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 19).

Wenger et al. (2002) introduced this idea of ‘collaboration for a purpose’, when they discussed the concept of a *domain*. Recall that communities of practice all share a basic structure: a domain of knowledge, a community of people who care about this domain and the shared practice they are developing in order to be effective in their domain. The domain gives rise to common ground and can legitimise a community by “affirming its purpose and value to members” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 27). The domain brings members together, guides their work and periodically acts to generate new energy. Zorfass and Rivero (2005, p. 53) reinforced this point, stating that “by anchoring the work of the community in an authentic need, concern, or question, the sense of purpose becomes both explicit and shared by the participants”.

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The theme of ‘purpose’ is also implied in the inquiry stance that a community may choose to take. Domains that bridge personal meaning and strategic relevance “inspire the kind of thought leadership and spirit of inquiry that are hallmarks of vibrant communities of practice (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 32). Earl and Katz (2005) included ‘enquiry’ as one of seven key features underpinning networked learning communities. The BCS Middle School community of practice began with a single question: “How can we re-engage our disengaged students”? This became the impetus for an avalanche of related questions and cycles of inquiry; such impetuses are deemed necessary by McLaughlan and Talbert (2006) if teacher learning communities are to develop and evolve in schools.

The personal meaning of work can also be enhanced when it provides a mutually agreed organising principle, serves sociability needs, sustains status and self-respect, establishes personal identity, provides a routine, distracts from worry, offers achievement and contributes to a cause. (Author’s emphasis) (Raymond et al., 1992, p. 156).

For the teachers in the BCS community of practice, the thought that we were “contributing to a cause”, that is, that we were working together to improve outcomes for our students and trying to ‘turn our school around’, gave our work “personal [and collective] meaning”.

5.2.1.5. **Theme 5 – Recognition of success**

Recognition of success, from inside and outside of the community, was also a significant theme in terms of the community’s evolution and sustainability. It was identified as a facilitating factor in 12.5% of the key words and phrases analysed. Nias (1998, p. 1261), in her studies around professional interactions among teachers, described praise and recognition of others as “the interpersonal attribute both most valued and most noticeable for its absence”. Recognising individuals or groups is traditionally contrary to the existing culture of most schools, and teachers who ‘call attention’ to themselves through their achievements are often regarded with suspicion by colleagues. In many schools, if recognition is given to an individual, it is often done behind closed doors (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

Wenger et al. (2002, p. 13) tied the concept of a community of practice to recognition of success when they suggested that organisations can actively cultivate an environment that allows communities to prosper when they “value the learning that they do”. Hoban
(2002, p. 151), in his study of professional learning systems, also identified “recognition of performance” as one of five key features required to sustain on-line teacher communities.

At BCS, the concept of ‘success breeding success’ was felt by teachers quite soon after the Middle School Program was developed. The Learning Support Review Team noted in 2002, six months after the program had commenced that:

*Teachers indicated that the middle school project has been one contributor to an overall improvement in the culture of the school during 2002.*

Holly (2004) at this time also felt ‘buoyed’ by early observable successes, commenting that “we were reaping some wonderful rewards”. This sentiment was to grow much stronger over the next two years, as recognition of success became more concrete and public. In 2004 the BCS Middle School Program was awarded a National Literacy and Numeracy Award, followed by several state, system and local awards for excellence in innovative teaching practice. For the middle school community of practice this was a strong motivating factor and another shared experience, helping to build “a sense of common history and identity” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 35) and “establish a community of memory – a constitutive narrative” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 9).

Celebrating individual and collective achievements has been cited as a major factor in developing positive organisational cultures, a strategy for improving organisational effectiveness and a “necessary condition for creating a learning community” (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 141). This type of collaborative learning culture is reinforced through the recognition of success, and for DuFour and Eaker (1998, p. x), the advent of such celebrations allow recipients to “feel noted and appreciated, reinforces shared values, provides living examples of these values at work and fuels individual and group momentum”.

5.2.1.6. **Themes 6 and 7 - Support from the community and significant others**

Upon further reflection, it seemed a natural move to link these two emergent themes together in terms of context, though their respective percentage incidence in the data were quite different, 10.7% and 7.1% . From the earliest days, it was recognised by the school, the Middle School teachers and the Learning Support Review Team that if the BCS Middle School Program was to have any chance of being sustainably
implemented, community support was critical. Our parent community needed to understand the intentions of the program and its anticipated benefits for their children: we were as much accountable to them as we were to the school’s district supervisors. It was noted by the Learning Support Review Team in 2002, that “the school is a significant resource for, and has strong links to, the local community”.

McLaughlin & Talbert (2006, p. 79) ask that we consider how “others in the broader context affect teachers’ learning communities” and they go on to argue that “even the best designed professional development resources will fall short, and the most robust professional community will dissolve, when other elements in teachers’ professional context ignore, frustrate or work at cross purposes with the learning and change they intend”. Teachers’ classroom efforts and reform agendas are significantly affected by parent and community expectations, attitudes and knowledge base (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). The school community at BCS was extremely supportive of the Middle School Program during its inception and into its second year, though their understanding of the model’s structures and pedagogies was still developing. In an early parent survey carried out by the Learning Support Team in 2002, members noted that:

92% of parents believe that the MS (middle school) is a successful model ...the majority of students and parents involved are supportive and value the innovation.

Margo (2004) also summed up the importance of community support in terms of the longevity of the BCS Middle School Program and associated teacher community of practice when she declared that “…a sense of school community has been the key”.

Of course it was not only the support of the school community that facilitated the birth and evolution of the BCS community of practice: the effects of significant others were also felt. As previously discussed, Sara was a key player in the community, both as a “broker” and community “core” member (Wenger, 1998, p. 105, 165). Her support, in both capacities, emerges from the data on a number of occasions: the Learning Review Support Team (2004) praised the efforts of the District Linkages consultant, citing her contribution to the project as “essential”, whilst the teachers in the community fondly referred to her as “the critical friend” (AGQTP meeting, 2004, author’s emphasis). Wenger et al. (2002, p. 51)
discussed the importance of an “open dialogue between inside and outside perspectives” and saw this dialogue as a way of “stewarding” knowledge in the process of cultivating a community of practice. Sara not only brought new knowledge to the community, she “brought information from outside into the dialogue about what the community could achieve” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 51).

Smylie (1995, cited in Hoban, 2002, p. 43) lists “accessibility of external sources of learning” as one of seven conditions necessary for optimal school learning environments, whilst Earl and Katz (2005, cited in Cassidy et al. 2007, p. 230) identified the “building of capacity and support” as a key feature underpinning networked learning communities. As an external source of learning and support, Sara’s primary contribution was assisting the community to build the necessary capacity that allowed it to evolve from a beginning to mature form (Grossman et al., 2000).

5.2.1.7. **Theme 8- School context**

Concepts related to school context were identified in the facilitator analysis in 7.1% of key words and phrases examined (See Table 5.1). These concepts included the unique stage structures of a Central School (Kindergarten to Year 12 classes), staffing structures in terms of Primary and Secondary specialist teachers and the stability of staff (particularly those in leadership roles). Cassidy et al. (2007), in a review of literature around how communities develop, found that how a community operates is often governed by its structure and context, including the extent to which it is affected by changes in the internal or external environment.

In 2000, BCS was in a prime position, in terms of context, to ‘take a risk’. As previously discussed, the general consensus among the staff and school community was that there was ‘nowhere else to go but up’, and the fact that both the Primary and Secondary departments were housed in the same physical space meant that a middle school was not only an opportunity, it was a real possibility. Nelson et al. (2008, p. 1291) highlighted the importance of ‘taking risks’ for learning communities when they proposed that “collaborative inquiry involves risk-taking, and deliberately employing collaborative norms provides safe structures for engaging in this risky yet transformative process”. Within the ‘safe’ environment of a community of practice, teachers at BCS were more inclined to collaborate when planning, teaching and trialling innovative practices. The
teachers collaborated across departments and Key Learning Areas when they scrutinised unfamiliar syllabuses to develop knowledge continuums, when they entered each others’ classrooms and lay their practices open to critique, and when new co-operative and cognitive teaching strategies were tried and tested, often against the accepted norms and understandings of the rest of the school. Schwier (1999, cited in Hoban, 2002, p. 151) called this kind of environment a “safe and open atmosphere” and identified it as one of four conditions deemed necessary to “promote the sharing of ideas” when “growing” a learning community. In considering the evolution of the BCS community of practice, many of the previously identified facilitators like strong interpersonal relationships, teacher personal attributes and support from the community and significant others, also contributed through the theme of context to build and sustain this optimum environment.

5.2.1.8. Theme 10 - Financial support

The theme of financial support, whilst not highly significant within the data (accounting for only 3.6% of the key words and phrases analysed), was an important facilitator in terms of the work it allowed the community to carry out. The initial Linkages Program Seed Grant (See Appendix 5D) of approximately $13,000 was used to ‘kick start’ the Middle School Program and provided funds for a multitude of professional development initiatives: casual relief for middle school teachers to attend planning meetings and share a meal together, travel re-imbursement for teachers to look at middle school models operating in other schools, conference registrations that allowed middle school teachers to draw from innovative practices elsewhere and to share their own ‘new’ practices and money to purchase teaching resources not readily available within the school.

In order to “seed” and “cultivate” communities of practice within an organisation, Wenger et al. (2002, p. 13) emphasised the need to remove potential barriers and to make time and resources available. Grossman et al. (2000, p. 11) found that offering a “financial stipend ” was an incentive for some teachers to join learning communities and participate in project work in their own time, and they were able to use research grant money to provide casual substitute staff when teachers were required to attend all-day meetings. Similarly at BCS, when a second financial opportunity presented itself, in the form of a National Literacy and Numeracy Award in 2004 and AGQTP funding in
2004 and 2005, monies from these initiatives were used initially to free teachers to meet during school times and to ‘compensate’ teachers for after school planning meetings. As time progressed however, compensation didn’t seem to be so important, as professional and personal relationships had developed to such an extent that meeting after school to discuss and share teaching practices and experiences was no longer a chore. Holly sums up this subtle change in the following excerpt as she discusses the meeting process with one of the community’s academic partners:

*It was really bizarre. I’m not sure when it happened...2002? Initially we started this and we thought yes, we’ll have these meetings and professional learning time is the only time we can get together, we’ll meet for a couple of hours one afternoon a week for a term. The term went into two terms, and then it went into three terms...then suddenly we had to stop meeting...things came up. I think it was actually the fourth term in the first year when we got back together and it was like thank God, we’re home again...we all missed it, and we all needed that time...it really is amazing how close that totally different people can become about a project.*

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

Whilst financial support would seem an obvious facilitator for ‘kick-starting’ any organisational structure in schools, Wenger et al. (2002, p. 13) remind us that it is “difficult to channel resources (both time and financial) in the absence of active engagement with the organisation”. The strength of the BCS community of practice in terms of impetus and longevity went beyond the promise and provision of financial support alone.

### 5.2.1.9. Theme 11 – Structures

In the literature around various forms of learning communities, a number of authors cite ‘structures’ as a key facilitator for success (Bain, 2007; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 1999; Glazer & Hannafin, 2006; Hoban, 2002; Hung et al., 2006; Raymond et al., 1992; Wenger et al., 2002 and Zorfaus & Rivero, 2005). These structures include such concepts as regular structured meetings over time, self-organising capacities and processes, the development of public and private spaces, networks and pathways, organisational goals and feedback mechanisms, archives of interactions and access to peers and resources. The interview and meeting observation data in this analysis showed that structures accounted for only 1.8% of the key words and phrases identified. However, an examination of the many artefacts collected during the period 2001-2008, including meeting agendas and minutes, Middle School Program evaluations, teaching
and learning programs and professional development resources, painted a very different picture. Fullan (1999, p.39) argued that collaborative schools have “self-organising capacities” and that while leadership is an essential component, teachers in collaborative cultures “spontaneously self-organise”. They have a respect for complex environments, and constantly seek and assess internal and external data. They know that stasis and coherence is never achieved as “membership changes, (and) new threats and opportunities intrude” (Fullan, 1999, p. 39). Bain (2007) also claims that self-organising schools need organisational structures if genuine collaboration is to occur. This was certainly the case at BCS: meeting agendas were faithfully set around identified areas of need (See Appendix 3C), regular meetings yielded comprehensive minutes (See Appendix 5E) and the Middle School Program was constantly evaluated and subsequent actions amended, according to the feedback generated (See Appendix 4J & Appendix 5F).

McDermott (2001, cited in Chalmers and Keown, 2006, p. 149) identified that successful communities of practice “focus on topics of vital interest to the community members” and that members “use forums for thinking together as well as systems for sharing information”. Certainly professional development for teachers in the Middle School was always an area of interest, and many meetings over the years provided forums for discussion around new teaching practices, resources and programs targeted to middle years, learners. Sara led the community into collaboratively building and sharing knowledge around topics as diverse as student learning styles, technology integration, authentic assessment practices, adolescent development, program differentiation, integrated curriculum, quality teaching practices (NSWDETCS, 2003), and cognitive thinking strategies.

5.2.1.10. Facilitator Summary

For the purpose of this dissertation, facilitating factors have been defined as those factors that enabled the teacher community of practice at BCS to form, function successfully and evolve over time. The preceding analysis and discussion identified twelve facilitating factors with varying degrees of influence: strong interpersonal relationships, opportunities for professional development, teacher personal attributes, seeing purpose in the work of the community, being recognised for successes, support from the community and significant others, the school context and structures and the availability of financial support. Wenger et al. (2002, p. 63) reminded us that while
“communities of practice develop naturally, an appropriate amount of design can be a powerful engine for their evolution”, and therefore I suggest that the facilitating factors listed above need to be carefully considered when schools begin the process of designing or cultivating a teacher community of practice. The concept of the ‘ideal community teacher’ was also raised as an impetus for further research in this area. Having clarified the facilitating factors that supported the success of the BCS Middle School community of practice, I now turn to those factors that appear to have worked to constrain or limit the community and its work.

5.2.2. The Constraints

The analysis to identify those themes, subsequently known as constraining factors, that hindered the work of the community of practice, is outlined in Appendix 5C. Table 5.2 below, details these factors and their incidence across the data analysed. As with the analysis detailing facilitating factors, the incidence and percentage of key words/phrases is discussed to illuminate the relative intensity of each factor in the data set. Again the following discussion will examine each constraining factor in relation to the existing literature and will identify new factors unique to the evolution of the BCS community of practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraining factors</th>
<th>Incidence of key words/phrases</th>
<th>Percentage of key words/phrases (39 in total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Additional workload</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Threats of balkanisation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. External pressures and accountabilities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sustainability concerns</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Group tensions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Insular membership</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Leadership (lack of)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Communication outside of the CoP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2.2.1.  **Theme 1 – Additional workload**

As the previous discussion has illustrated, members of the community of practice spent considerable energy and time designing the Middle School Program at BCS. The additional workload, associated with developing innovative practices through community of practice participation, accounted for 33.3% of the key words/phrases analysed in the data. A lack of time to meet and plan, implement and evaluate such practices is referred to consistently in the wider literature as a major constraint in the development of successful teacher learning communities (Buchanan & Khamis, 1999; Cassidy et al., 2007; Grossman et al., 2000; Hargreaves, 1992; Nelson et al., 2008; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006 and Raymond et al., 1992). As Glazer and Hannafin (2006, p. 180) point out, “professional learning is difficult when limited opportunities, as well as time, are available for exploring, self-teaching and reflecting due to teachers’ different roles and responsibilities”. For teachers, professional learning is therefore often ‘done alone’ and in ‘their own time’ as “structural, cultural and vocational impediments [also] exist in schools to impede teacher learning” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 10). Hargreaves (1992, p. 227) also claimed that collaborative cultures are difficult to create and sustain, because “the preferred culture of teaching is just not compatible with the prevailing context of teacher’s work” and, one significant aspect of that context, is time.

In the earliest days of the Middle School Program, the Learning Review Support Team (2001-2002), predicted that ‘time’ would become a constraining factor for the teachers in the middle school and suggested that:

> …the Middle School project timetable could be enhanced through the provision of greater planning time and allocation of leftover periods.

As the project continued, we began to feel the pressures of a ‘lack of time’ more and more. I articulate the “exhaustion” we all felt as planning and programming

dynamic, integrated units of work, in our own time, became a normal and expected part of our practice:

> Our programming is only a term ahead of the kids and it reflects where our kids are at and where they need to go. I guess I see an endless ten years of programming ahead of us and that’s exhausting. Yeah I see the future... we have to try to find the energy to keep improving... for me I feel the energy is running low at times.

(Tracey, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).
Newcomers (Wenger et al., 2002) to the community were not always prepared for the impact that ‘time’ would have on their participation. In a discussion with one of our academic partners and Sara, John and Lynette both raised their concerns around this constraint in the following excerpts:

...I didn’t anticipate that the commitment would be to one of those weekly meetings...it was going to be a big commitment.

(John, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

When I was first asked if I wanted to join the middle school I had concerns...the after school meetings...they deterred me...

(Lynette, Researcher’s interpretation of team meeting, 18/07/06).

Wenger et al. (2002, p. 13) stressed the importance of “making time and other resources available” for the work of community members if an organisation is committed to creating an environment in which the community can prosper.

5.2.2.2. Theme 3- External pressures and accountabilities

The second most prevalent theme to emerge from the data related to pressures from external sources and the need to be constantly accountable to the systems through which schools operate. This theme was evident in 12.8% of the key words and phrases analysed. Fullan (1999) identified the effects of these pressures and accountabilities as “an anxiety” and claims that:

There is an anxiety between organisations (schools), educational districts and state (government) systems. High levels of anxiety will always exist in complex systems and induced discomfort is a condition of creative problem solving. The deepest meaning of inside/outside collaboration is keeping anxiety in balance, simultaneously provoking and containing it (p. 61).

Despite the school district’s initial support for the Middle School Program in 2001-2002, in the form of the Learning Review Support Team’s recommendations (see Appendix 5G), pressure to ‘perform’ was often felt by the teachers in the community. I outline the community’s concerns in the following conversation with one of our academic partners:

Academic Partner: I think you’re on the cutting edge...you’re five steps ahead of everyone else.
Tracey: That’s nice to know because we don’t always feel it, and its going to get harder, because the lens is coming in now, like we were a school that
could experiment and drift and do things and try and fail and all that sort of thing, and it’s a bit of a worry now that other people will be looking and evaluating. And finding fault. I think we have to be even more accountable, and that’s going to be a pressure.

(Academic Partner and Tracey, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

Holly (2004) wholeheartedly agrees with this concept of a mounting pressure and renewed accountability when she uses the following analogy to describe the relationship of the school to its district supervisors, “…we were very much under the microscope”. Wenger et al. (2002, p. 191), claimed that “the ‘aliveness’ of a community, no matter how passionate and active its members, will be severely limited unless it finds ways to integrate itself with the surrounding organisation”.

The pressure for Middle School students to meet (and exceed) district expectations around standardised test outcomes was keenly felt by the teachers in the community. In NSW, at this time, students sat a Basics Skills Test for Numeracy and Literacy in Years 3 and 5, and an ELLA (English, Language and Literacy Assessment) and SNAP (Secondary Numeracy Assessment Program) test in Years 7 and 8. Individual performance data were then calculated as ‘bands’ and analysed against District means. Schools, and indirectly teachers, were then held accountable for these outcomes. A more comprehensive description of these results, and their implications, is discussed in Chapter 7. It is not the intent of this dissertation to evaluate the Middle School Program at BCS, and it is important to remember that from its inception, the teachers who constructed the program did so with the intention of improving all student outcomes, ranging from academic learning outcomes through to social and emotional outcomes. When asked by one of our academic partners to identify the ‘high points’ of her involvement in the middle school program, Holly expresses the importance of this holistic view of student achievement:

Um…seeing what (Student A) has achieved, seeing him get a Band 2 in the BST, seeing the excitement on the two boys’ faces who discovered a skeleton in the agriculture plot during our HSIE unit, its those little things we carry with us…and keep close to our hearts...sharing those light bulb moments that teachers love to see.

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).
A focus on achieving only academic outcomes for students, measured primarily through standardised testing, was not in alignment with the BCS Middle School Vision Statement (See Appendix 4G), and introduced an element of tension into the community’s work. McLaughlin and Talbert (2006, p. 62) warned against “the press for immediate gains in test scores” if school districts wish to avoid undermining the development of school learning communities. They identified that “norms of collective responsibility and collaborative teaching practice develop slowly, yet high-stakes accountability systems demand fast, significant improvement in student achievement” (p. 62). This is an important constraint to consider, and a timely warning for schools and districts wishing to explore the concept of teacher communities of practice in the future, as it mitigates against their sustainability and continuation.

5.2.2.3. Theme 4 – Sustainability concerns

While concerns with the sustainability of the BCS Middle School Program and the associated teacher community of practice, accounted for a relatively minor percentage of key words and phrases analysed (7.7%), it was a consistent theme throughout the data from 2001-2008. One of the key recommendations of the Learning Review Support Team in 2001-2002 (See Appendix 5G) was to “extend the middle school project developmental activity to involve other areas of the school” and to “involve additional staff”, amidst concerns that discontinuity might result if any of the teachers involved in the program left the school.

In 2004, after both Richard and John had moved on, Holly also considered leaving the school for a promotional position elsewhere, and in a frank discussion with one of our academic partners, she expressed her concerns over the sustainability of the program if, and when, she left:

“I had many comments and only a select few people know that I was applying for a job and everyone I spoke to was really concerned that it was going to be the end of middle school, and as you know Tracey’s also thinking, and I mean Margo’s there, but Margo isn’t really a driving force like Tracey and I…and I guess that concerns me greatly, because I know the benefits of it…and I want it to continue, but it’s got to be able to continue without me and it’s got to be able to continue without Tracey.”

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).
Then in 2006, after I had left the school and newcomers Juliet, Lynette, Carol and Anne drifted in and out of the Middle School, Sara also raised similar concerns at a middle school meeting (18/07/06), questioning whether newcomers could commit the time to the program and pointing out that “it’s the core that has sustained it so far”. A community of practice is its members, and as Wenger et al. (2002, p. 47) claimed, a community is more likely to be sustained if “its domain is clear and practice well established so that people can come and go”. As core members, Holly and Margo continued to focus on the domain’s practice, and newcomers were introduced to the practice as needed through the process of legitimate peripheral participation. I would at this point argue, though, that it was the very nature of the learning that occurred in the BCS community of practice that led to the issue of sustainability being less constraining than originally predicted by key stakeholders. This concept is explored further in Chapter 6.

Learning in communities of practice is reliant on participation, and this in turn can vary between members; not everyone joins the community with the same motivation and members have the opportunity to come and go as the domain develops and changes, as different contributions are valued at different times or when members just feel that they want to learn more about the community’s practice (Wenger et al., 2002). Thus membership and participation ebbs and flows with the community’s rhythm and rigid concepts like sustainability in this kind of dynamic, fluid environment can become almost inconsequential.

5.2.2.4. Theme 5 – Group tensions

The fifth constraining factor to emerge from the data was that of group tensions; again a relatively minor factor accounting for only 5.3% of the key words and phrases analysed. My memory, as a participant, and the data analysed from the Series 1 and 2 interviews, shows that the only real sources of tension within the group arose from the philosophical differences members had as a result of primary or secondary teaching experiences and the occasional uneven distribution of workload experienced as a result of executive commitments.

Issues around the different teaching strategies and assessment practices commonly utilised in primary and secondary settings have been previously discussed in Chapters 1 and 4 and will not be dealt with again here. Grossman et al. (2000) argued that teachers
do indeed vary in their understandings around such issues as their goals of teaching, the structure of curriculum, the purposes of education and the role of assessment. This is in turn influenced by such factors as grade level, prior education, the community served and subject area. For the BCS community of practice, these differences simply resulted in a series of negotiated decisions and practices that were always measured against program evaluations and student outcomes. Margo’s experiences with coming to terms with her need for a negotiated practice is outlined below where she discusses the difficulties she initially faced in aligning middle school outcomes-based assessment practices with standards-based Higher School Certificate expectations:

“There’s conflict there – and it’s the core of our problem – that I’m still coming from that endpoint in Year Twelve where a mark comes back. You take the mark out of the equation and you get descriptive feedback. I’ve worked very hard on internalising a standard...a set of structures for internalising things....”

All of the core members of the BCS community of practice were also members of the school’s leadership team and had additional executive roles as well as teaching roles. This role duality, in the face of increasing time constraints, occasionally led to tensions among the group. When asked what had been ‘hard’ about setting up the middle school project, Margo verbalised this role conflict:

“What’s been hard? Conflict with my head teacher role. That’s the key issue, and I haven’t resolved that. I’m late with things, I’m always running around, I haven’t done filing for a month, and I feel disorganised and ineffective.”

(Margo, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

Holly reinforces Margo’s feelings as she recounts the “pressures” and “negative impact” being tied to two roles had on her ability to do her job well:

“We’ve been invited to a conference every month this year...and it’s time we are out of our classes...and well when we come back, it’s a pressure you don’t need. When you’re leaving all the time it has a negative impact on what you’ve worked so hard for, and you seem to be picking up the pieces when you get back and you’re starting again.”

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).
I related this role conflict to the theme of group tension, when I reflected on some of the consequences that resulted from community members being ‘too busy’ for the community’s day to day practice:

*I’m comfortable when things get done my way...and Holly and I are both like that so it’s interesting we don’t fight more than we do. Sometimes though the workload doesn’t get evenly distributed...I think that happens in any group. When I feel that way I guess I think that at some point in my life within this group, I will be unable to pick up the bag and I hope that other people can pick it up for me. Those glitches come...but that’s any working group.* (Tracey, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

In terms of community of practice learning theory (Wenger, 1998), community members can go through a succession of forms of participation whereby identities form trajectories, both within and across communities. The term *insider trajectory* may be considered in relation to the tensions our dual roles imposed whereby the formation of identity within the community does not end with full participation, “new events, new demands, new inventions, and new generations all create occasions for renegotiating one’s identity” (Wenger, 1998, p. 154).

Nelson et al. (2008, p. 1289), in a study to determine the facilitators and constraints involved in establishing teacher professional development initiatives around collaborative inquiry determined that any group comprised of individuals from diverse professional backgrounds “may encounter challenges associated with perceived status, differing reward systems or work tempos, or different goals and/or agendas embedded in the work”. The strong focus that the community held in terms of the ‘domain’ (Wenger, 2002) and their commitment to the enterprise and to each other, helped to reduce, or at least to diffuse, these challenges.

5.2.2.5. **Theme 6- Insular membership and Theme 8- Communication outside of the CoP**

An insular membership, and issues surrounding communication with people outside of the community, accounted for just 5.3% and 2.6% respectively of all key words or phrases analysed. They have been considered together in this discussion as they have been developed from the same data in many instances and occur together quite naturally in the literature. These themes also relate strongly to the twelfth facilitating and third
constraining factor, balkanisation. This factor will be analysed in more detail later in this discussion.

In 2002, the Learning Review Support Team identified that one of the challenges for the Middle School community would be ensuring “a quality communication between the home and school” and that it was important that parents felt that they were “fully informed” about the programs intentions and results (p. 5). The BCS community of practice recognised the importance of home-school partnerships but like many PSP7 (Priority Schools Program) schools that draw from socially disadvantaged areas, bringing parents into the school community was an ongoing challenge. Wenger et al. (2002, p. 146) described a potential disorder of communities known as “localism”, whereby a “community lets geographical, departmental, or company boundaries define its own borders”. When this happens the community fails to develop “the range, intensity and diversity of connections that would maximise the synergy between people and groups” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 146). For this reason, it was important that the BCS community of practice kept the ‘channels of communication’ between itself, other communities of practice, brokers and the ‘outside world’ open. Over the years sharing knowledge and practice at conferences and inviting other middle schools into the school for observation sessions became paramount to overcoming the next related constraint; the formation of an insular membership.

Insulated communities of practice can become a barrier to newcomers. They may become blinded to new ideas and practices and may develop a reluctance to critically analyse their practice. The qualities that strengthen a community of practice and make them ideal sites for learning (i.e. a shared perspective on domain, an established practice and close, long-standing relationships) may be the same qualities that undermine its evolution and “hold it hostage to its history and achievements” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 141). The threat of the community becoming a “clique”, whereby relationships among members are so strong that they “dominate all other concerns” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 145) was a very real concern at BCS for both members of the community and teachers outside of the community. John articulates this best when he discusses his dual membership in the community and in another ‘faction’ within the school:

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7 The NSW Priority Schools Program is a Government initiative that supports public schools in low socio-economic areas. These programs provide funding and resources to schools to improve student literacy and engagement.
Academic Partner: Are there negatives in being involved in this {Middle Years program} for you?
John: I guess professionally there’s this idea in the school at times that there’s ‘that group’ and I guess for some reason from the perspective outside, a lot of people see me as not in that group quite as much, so they can have a bit of a gripe to me.
Academic Partner: Is there a perception that these people are working too hard?
John: Yeah they do say that.
Academic Partner: Have people tried to ‘lure you away’?
John: Yes
Academic Partner: Do you think you could be lured away?
John: I’d give up too much I think. I like to keep the rapport going, where they feel I can still be one of the boys and look in, but at the same time I like to be on the inside and get what I’m getting out of it.

(John, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

5.2.2.6. **Constraints Summary**

Constraining factors have been defined as those factors that hindered or bound the teacher community of practice at BCS. They acted to impede its birth, stall its development or challenge its evolution. The preceding analysis and discussion identified six constraining factors: an additional workload for teachers, external pressures and accountabilities, concerns with community sustainability, group tensions, the threat of an insular membership and communication issues with other stakeholders. These constraining factors not only have the potential to stunt the evolution of teacher communities of practice, they may also act, over time, to drive the community to extinction. In cultivating teacher communities of practice schools need to negotiate with communities around these constraints. Wenger et al. (2002, p.14) warned us that “you cannot violate the natural developmental processes and dynamics that make a community function as a source of knowledge and arbiter of expertise” and we “must learn to understand and work with these processes and dynamics”.


5.2.3. Factors acting as both facilitators and constraints

One of the most interesting facets to emerge from the data was the ability of some themes to act as both facilitators and constraints to the evolution of the BCS community of practice depending on context, timing and stage of evolution. Table 5.3 below details these factors and their incidence across the data analysed. Calculating the percentage incidence was not relevant in this part of the analysis as the relative strength of each factor, in either capacity, was apparent in previous analyses (See Tables 5.1 and 5.2).

Table 5.3 Incidence of Facilitating/Constraining Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitating/ constraining factors</th>
<th>Incidence of key words/phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Leadership</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Threats of balkanisation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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5.2.3.1. Threats of balkanisation

This theme aligns closely to the previous discussion around the constraining themes of an insular membership and issues centring on communication outside of the community of practice. Balkanisation occurs “when strong loyalties form within a group with a resultant indifference or even hostility to other groups” (Fullan, 1993, p. 83). It often occurs in large schools when subcultures develop and can inhibit innovative initiatives (Fullan, 1993). In terms of community of practice theory, Wenger et al. (2002, p. 143) used the terms “marginality” and “factionalism” to describe this type of phenomenon. Marginality occurs when communities, for whatever reason, fail to legitimise their domain in the eyes of the rest of the organisation and remain marginal to the organisation. Factionalism can occur within the community through members’ strong commitment to their domain, or as in the case of BCS, between the community and the rest of the organisation (Wenger et al., 2002). Concerns that the BCS Middle School teachers would become ‘balkanised’ within the school community are consistently threaded throughout the data. In 2002, the Learning Review Support Team recommended that mainstream teachers in the school should be encouraged to teach in the Middle School in order to “enhance understanding of the project” and to “ensure that all staff remain positive and supportive” (p. 5). In 2004, as previously discussed in reference to the Series 2 interview data, I, John, Margo and Holly repeatedly aired our concerns around the divisive situation that was developing between the community of practice and the other teachers in the school. We were referred to, and in some cases
referred to ourselves as “that group” (John, 2004) and “an elite little bubble” (Tracey, 2004) and felt “frustrated, uncomfortable and angry” (Margo, 2004) when other teachers indulged in “sniping” because they didn’t understand or agree with the Middle School structures, curriculum or practices.

Then in 2005, one of our academic partners noted that mainstream teachers in the school were concerned that the Middle School was “too concentrated around a small group”, and that the Middle School teachers felt that any dialogue around teaching and learning practices in the middle school “would not be welcomed by others in the school”. However, in interviews with mainstream teachers, the academic partner also noted that many of the teachers felt that they knew very little about the program, that they should have made more effort to find out about the program and that they would like to know more. Interestingly, one teacher explained that he felt that “this position had not been conveyed to the Middle School team and that, by not showing an active interest, he may have given an unintended negative perception”. The ‘heartbreak’ that this “negative perception” generated is poignantly summed up by Holly in the following excerpt when another of our academic partners asked how the rest of the staff perceived the community and the program:

_“I don’t know. I really don’t know. I guess we were a little heartbroken when it was announced that we got the literacy and numeracy award because there wasn’t any great “Oh isn’t this wonderful for our school”, and because we are who we are, we see it as a school thing, not a half thing, and that was really devastating and heartbreaking, and we basically received stunned silence. What we predicted would happen, happened, and that was really uncomfortable...it’s really heartbreaking that they just can’t acknowledge it and they can’t just go out and celebrate as a whole school.”_ (Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

Fullan (1993, p. 83) captured the relationship between balkanisation and inward looking subcultures, when he reminded us that “innovative whole schools, - at first blush seemingly ideal – can also become balkanised from their surroundings”. He warned that groupthink and balkanisation can “feed on each other” and that “intra-group interaction may limit access to, and due consideration of, other areas in the environment” (p. 83).
Conversely, the threat of balkanisation, on occasion, also acted as a facilitating factor for the community’s evolution. Looking back I do wonder if this was a reactive stance on the part of the community born from sheer stubbornness, perversity, or in a kinder light, tenacity. As the group felt more and more distanced from the mainstream teaching community, the desire to keep going with the project, and our conviction that it ‘was working’, grew stronger. Though clearly disillusioned with what she saw as disinterest from other teachers, Holly was able to turn this constraining factor into a motivator to keep going and to keep “expectations high” and to “prove everybody wrong”:

I guess we didn’t want to see the lowness and we wanted to make sure that we were going to prove everybody else wrong, so we had really high expectations right from the start, this was going to work and this was going to be the vehicle of change.

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

The concept of tenacity, in relation to the community’s determination to continue with current practice in spite of the obvious opposition from many in the school, is discussed in more detail towards to the end of this chapter.

5.2.3.2. Leadership

Supportive leadership as a facilitating factor and lack of leadership as a constraining factor, resonated consistently throughout the data, accounting for 5.3% of the key words and phrases analysed in both the facilitating (See Table 5.1) and constraining analyses (See Table 5.2). Leadership was recognised on two levels, both in the data and the literature, as being external to the community in the form of head teachers, Principals and district personnel, and internal in the form of “thought leaders” among community members (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 32). Wenger et al. (2002) claimed that to allow communities of practice to flourish, multiple levels of leadership are required: leadership to address community development, to foster a knowledge system and to promote a vision of the knowledge organisation.

Fullan (1999, p. 39) argued that schools with collaborative cultures have “self-organising capacities” and that whilst leaders are essential, teachers in collaborative cultures must be able to spontaneously self-organise. The health of any community of practice depends on both the voluntary engagement of its members and on the emergence of internal leadership (Wenger et al., 2002). Internal leadership allows the community to “keep questioning the status quo, see what is possible in a domain,
connect the people who care about it, and help develop an effective practice together” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 159). Internal leaders in communities of practice are a diverse group: they can be community organisers, topic experts, “thought leaders” and “boundary spanners” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 36). In the BCS community of practice leadership was distributed and was often passed down through the ranks depending on the community’s needs at that time. In its initial phases, when professional development was identified as a key need, Sara emerged as an internal leader, and when English continuums needed to be developed (See Appendix 3A) Margo’s expertise put her in the leader’s seat. Then, when the community’s members began to become more engaged with external agencies and events and organisational capabilities were required, I took up the mantle of leadership and became fondly known as the “Fat Controller”\(^8\) (Meeting Observation, 22/03/06). After I left the school (but not the community) in 2006, Margo and Holly jointly became responsible for staffing the Middle School, determining meeting agendas, programming and teaching, organising and attending Middle School professional development and presenting the project at district conferences.

In terms of external leadership, Miguel, as school Principal, played a complex role in the community’s evolution. He had been thrust into the position, as relieving Principal, and had inherited the concept of a Middle School Program from his predecessor. He was relatively new to the school community, and became responsible for overseeing the implementation and development of a program that he had little connection to, or knowledge of. The task must have seemed overwhelming. In the early days, the team was mostly left to their own devices. Major decisions in terms of staffing, structure and budgets, were passed through Miguel, but the day to day planning, implementation and evaluation was left up to the Middle School teachers. From an outsider’s perspective, Miguel appeared to be a supportive leader: he attended a few early meetings, supported the Middle School teachers’ professional development, met Middle School staffing and budget requests, celebrated successes and lamented failures and generally allowed teachers ownership of the program. Holly fondly recalled Miguel’s support each time we attended conferences and presentations:

...because he’s just beautiful and rings to wish us luck in the mornings...

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

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\(^8\) The Fat Controller is the station master character in the popular children’s television show *Thomas the Tank Engine*. In this context it was seen to be associated with a controlling person.
However, leadership to sustain, to feed and grow a healthy teacher community of practice, needs to be more than “beautiful”. The collegial culture required by communities of practice will only occur when “teachers and principals describe and call for it, model it, reward it and defend it” (Raymond et al., 1992, p. 156). An organisation, through its leadership, needs to be well aligned to the community of practice it fosters, or “it will not recognise and leverage its contributions” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 13). The balkanised culture that developed at BCS was perhaps the most damaging challenge the community faced. Hargreaves (1992, p. 225) argued that this type of divided teacher community does not “result merely from principals or head teachers failing to develop their teachers by valuing them. They result from failing to value many of the things that they do, the things for which they stand”. Miguel, seemingly supported the community’s work but whether he understood it or valued it openly is another matter:

“It’s scary…I mean he’s supportive in terms of you have the freedom to do what you want to do, but he hasn’t been supportive in time, he hasn’t been supportive in really understanding what we’re trying to do I don’t think…he has no knowledge…no real knowledge of what it is we do…”

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

5.2.3.3. Facilitator and Constraint Summary

One of the most interesting results to emerge from the facilitator/constraint analysis was the dual effect that leadership and the threat of balkanisation had on the BCS community of practice. These factors acted in both capacities to alternatively inhibit and drive the community forward at different points in its evolution. This in turn seemed to be a contextual phenomenon dependent on a number of variables over time: community membership, staff changes, levels of community and staff support for the program, and the efficacy of the school’s leadership. I argue that the significance of this finding is that when schools embark on the process of creating and cultivating a teacher community of practice they should not assume that it will be a smooth or linear path from inception to maturity; facilitating factors have the potential to become barriers and constraints can become powerful drivers for tenacious teachers.

At this point I now turn to conclude this chapter with a discussion of the concept of teacher tenacity as a facilitating factor for teacher communities of practice. As alluded to in the previous discussion, this factor appears to link with the ideal of the good
community teacher, and remains, tantalisingly, still, unresolved for me at the end of my study.

5.3. The tenacity of the BCS teachers

As I searched the data to identify the factors that facilitated and/or constrained the BCS community of practice, I became very aware of what the data was not telling me: the insights that were not shared by participants, or perhaps more correctly, not obvious to them. I kept asking myself, “Why are you still there?” In fact this question became a key question in the Series 3 interviews conducted in 2008-2009 (See Appendix 3D). The community’s core members still met every week to plan, assess and evaluate a program that by this time was slowly being pulled apart: declining student numbers had reduced the Middle School teaching staff to three, team teaching was no longer a viable option, a second middle years’ review had produced disappointing outcomes resulting in a loss of confidence for staff, and students from Year 8 had been removed from the program to study Mathematics and English in single-grade traditional secondary classes.

Again, why were Holly, Margo and Lynette still there? Why did Sara and I continue to act as mentors, consultants and community members? There were answers to these questions in the data, but they were not explicit and not necessarily consciously acknowledged by the community at the time. The concept of teacher tenacity, or its related construct, teacher resilience, weaves its way through the data, not in what is actually said, but in the rich history of the community of practice and in the evolutionary path it forged as it met its constraints and challenges.

Resilience may be defined as the “ability to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions related to self-efficacy” (Day, Stobart, Sammons, Kington, Gu, Smee, & Mujtaba, 2006, p. 50) and has been described as a “multi-faceted, unstable construct” that can be “determined by the interaction between the internal assets of the individual and the external environments in which the individual [lives] and [grows]” (Oswald, Johnson, & Howard, 2003, cited in Day et al., 2006, p. 50). In analysing the history and work of the teachers in the BCS community, I use the term ‘tenacity’ to describe their resilience with the added dimension of determination: that quality whereby an individual exhibits a “tendency to stick firmly to any decision, plan or opinion without changing or doubting it” (Encarta Dictionary, 2008).
In theorising the concept of teacher tenacity as one of the key facilitators that enabled the BCS community of practice to evolve and be sustained over the course of this study and beyond, I call upon the work of Day et al. (2006, p. vi) who claimed that “teachers’ capacities to be effective were influenced by the variations in their work, lives and identities and their capacities to manage these”. They arrived at the conclusion that a teacher’s sense of identity was a major factor in determining their capacity to be committed and resilient, and that the extent to which they were resilient was in turn dependent upon their capacity to manage interactions between personal, professional and situated factors (Day et al., 2006). The construct of a teacher identity, with the personal, professional and situated dimensions in balance is represented in Figure 5.1 below.

![Figure 5.1: Dimensions in balance](Day et al., 2006, p. 151)

Day et al. (2006, p. 149), defined the personal dimension in their model as being based on one’s life outside of the school, professional identity as being open to the influences of policy and social trends and the situated or socially located dimension being aligned
to a specific school context. When external factors within any of these domains create instabilities, “stresses in the fabric of identity need to be managed” and teachers need to be resilient and/or tenacious, in order to manage these instabilities and sustain positive identities (Day et al., 2006, p. 146). When one dimension dominates and distorts others, when, for example, the situational dimension may dominate due to a change in school structures, fluctuations may be managed in the short term and may depend on internal and external factors like self-efficacy or additional support from colleagues. MacLure (1993, cited in Day et al., 2006, p. 146) proposed the concept of an “active” teacher self which is formed through the “discursive practices and interactions in which individuals engage”, and hence we see that identity is not a possession of the teacher, but is in fact “constructed within social relations”. I propose at this point, that for the teachers in the BCS Middle School, their community of practice provided the supportive social arena necessary to construct and sustain positive teacher identities and that it also enhanced each teacher’s ability to draw on and produce the tenacity needed to overcome or manage the resultant instabilities caused by an imbalance in their personal, professional and situated dimensions. For example, when situational factors dominated and the Middle School Program lost one of its teachers, or when professional factors dominated and the teachers lost self confidence after a damaging review, the community of practice provided teachers with the additional support needed to enhance their identity as a community member, augment their resilience and take action to bring the dimensions back into balance.

In line with the organic metaphorical thread running through this dissertation, I theorise that the constructs of teacher tenacity, and teacher communities of practice can exist in a symbiotic relationship: the tenacity of members acts to sustain the community against constraining and/or challenging factors, whilst the very nature of the community and the relationships on which it is built, enhance and potentially develop tenacity in teachers. Day et al. (2006, p. 259) called for research on teacher retention that goes beyond a focus on factors that cause teachers to leave the profession, to a perspective that explores the “moderating and mediating factors” that enable teachers to maintain their commitment over the course of their careers. Teacher communities of practice may just have the potential to be one of these moderating and mediating factors.
5.4. Summary

The preceding analysis has identified the *selectors* or factors that acted to either constrain or facilitate the genesis and evolution of the BCS community of practice. Ten facilitating factors and six constraining factors were identified, whilst two factors: threats of balkanisation and leadership were found to act as either facilitators or constraints depending on time and context. Also within this analysis, the symbiotic relationship between the construct of teacher tenacity and communities of practice was also theorised as a potential opportunity to improve teacher retention in schools.

In the following chapter I will utilise data from recent interviews (Series 3 Interviews) to explore the professional development, and more importantly, the learning that the BCS Middle School teachers experienced as a result of their membership in a community of practice. This will seek to answer the second research question: in what ways does a community of practice lead to or provide professional development for teachers?
Chapter 6

Discussion of data 3: Learning in a teacher community of practice

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 5 a series of facilitating and constraining factors was identified as natural selectors in the process of community evolution at BCS. The community of practice was facilitated by strong interpersonal relationships, professional development opportunities, the personal attributes of teachers, a sense of purpose, the recognition of success, support from the community and others, school context (including specific structures) and financial support. The construct of teacher tenacity was also identified as a significant facilitating factor. Conversely, constraining factors were identified: additional workload, the pressures of external accountabilities, sustainability concerns, group tensions, an insular membership and communication outside of the community. Finally, the dual influence of leadership and balkanisation was theorised as they acted in both capacities at different times during the community’s evolution.

In this chapter, following the analytical framework outlined in Chapter 3 (See Figure 3.4), data from the Series 3 interviews (2009) is analysed using Wenger’s (1998) conceptual framework of learning to explain the nature of teacher learning at BCS in relation to participation in the Middle School community of practice. This framework considers learning as an intersection of four components: meaning, practice, community and identity. Learning, in the context of a community of practice, involves members experiencing changes in these “deeply connected and mutually defining” components (Wenger, 1998, p. 5). For Wenger (1998), “learning is maximised if one maximises learners’ access to participation in, and the resources of, a community of practice in which the development of identities in relation to that community are supported (cited in Graven, 2004, p. 182). This analysis extends Wenger’s (1998) original framework by suggesting, that for teachers, a fifth component of learning must be considered: the component of teaching (Graven, 2004). In this study, teachers consistently referred to the benefits of structure, scaffolding and targeted professional development activities for their learning as they participated in the BCS Middle School community of practice.
Whilst the following chapter (Chapter 7) will expand upon some of the specific changes teachers experienced as a result of their participation in the community, this chapter will primarily focus on the processes that led to changes in meaning, practice, community and identity for members, and the community, as a whole (Wenger, 1998). As a result of this analysis, an answer to the second research question will be determined: in what ways does a community of practice lead to or provide professional development for teachers?

6.2 The first component: Meaning

Data from the final series of interviews (Series 3) with participants was sourced for key words or phrases that would indicate the processes through which teachers experienced changes in meaning in relation to how they approached and understood their work in the new context of the BCS Middle School community of practice (See Appendix 6A). For this analysis I have drawn from the work of Graven (2004), who used Wenger’s (1998) interrelated model of learning to explain the teacher learning that occurred within an in-service mathematics program associated with curriculum change. Graven (2004) characterised meaning as the new knowledge, experiences and understandings the mathematics teachers gained from their participation in their community of practice.

One of the first challenges that the Middle School teachers had to overcome, in terms of the development of new knowledge, was how to align the outcomes from the NSW Stage 3 and Stage 4 syllabuses in order to produce integrated Middle School teaching and learning units of work. Holly described her feelings when faced with this challenge:

_I was nervous. Scared. Unsure of the expectation and how I [was] going to do it. Had no idea of the Stage 4 curriculum, and suddenly I was supposed to teach Year 7 and 8. And I’m going oh shit, how do I do this? How do I fit the curriculum that I don’t know what it is, that’s supposedly content based, and I’ve got no idea what the content is? So, it was all very overwhelming and daunting I guess._

(Holly, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).

New knowledge, in terms of these syllabuses, was developed over time through the acknowledgement of individual strengths and specialties, and through a process of verbally sharing expertise, taking risks with our teaching and supporting each other along the way. When asked if drawing from each other had been an important part of this process, Holly responded:
Yeah. And being able to just have the time to verbally present those ideas to each other. So you didn’t have to go, its in the syllabus on page dah, dah, dah...just go and read that and try and get your head around it. It was that ability to be able to verbally share things. And I think that’s when we started, I don’t know, even with, before we got to integrating the curriculum, being able to see those ways where things could relate when were sharing how to teach things and what skills and focus areas we needed to look at, and the content we needed to cover.

(Holly, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).

Holly’s response showed that not only had she learnt how to access new syllabuses, she was now able to understand the concept of “integrating the curriculum” between key learning areas and across stages. Meaning around unfamiliar syllabuses had been developed to a higher level because of the opportunities, afforded by community membership and participation, for sharing and discussion. Her new knowledge and her newly gained confidence are echoed in the following excerpt:

*We bounced around so many different teaching concepts and contexts. And that really, you know by working with so many different syllabuses, I guess I’m saying that really makes you understand how syllabuses actually function. And now I think I’ve got much more of an idea of syllabus implementation than I ever had or a theoretical basis of what a syllabus is and how it works.*

(Holly, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).

Another challenge that the teachers faced in the community’s early days, centred upon the kinds of pedagogies that were required to teach students in the Middle Years. We recognised that our students needed to be more engaged but were unsure how to go about making this happen. In the following excerpt, Margo explained how her knowledge (and our practice) around “authentic pedagogies” changed as a result of our participation in the Middle School:

*The idea of authentic pedagogies had never ever been mentioned. I’d never heard the term…I had no awareness of any of that research or any of that stuff that was going on in the USA. Well we learned by all having different strengths in contributing things and that contributed to the effectiveness of it, but it also, as a professional learner, makes you see other ways of doing things. I think the focus on authentic pedagogies forced us all to really think about what it was that we wanted to get across and how we were going to do that.*

(Margo, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).
Our “different strengths” were seen to contribute to not only our individual learning but also to the learning of the whole community as we began to “see other ways of doing things”.

As the community of practice evolved new understandings developed along with new knowledge and experiences. Margo and I were particularly susceptible to this change. As secondary teachers we held relatively traditional views about the role of a teacher and how students learnt. Margo (2009, p. 5) described herself as being in a “very traditional secondary space” and saw her role as “the expert” who was “the font of knowledge” and whose job it was to “stand in front of the class and deliver it [her subject]”. After participating in the Middle School community of practice this perception changed dramatically. In the following excerpt she articulates her new understandings:

If you want someone to learn something, then you go through the process of making sure they understand and that they have the opportunity to implement it and reflect on it. I have a clear understanding that the kids all have their individual needs, that they’re all coming from different places and that the basis is what they’re learning and how they’re going to learn it. And that I have a far, far better idea of how, the sorts of things that have to happen for those individuals in order to get them to learn stuff.

(Margo, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).

Margo concluded her interview by reflecting on ‘the teacher she was’ in her secondary context and stated that, “I’m anything but that now!” Recognising that middle years’ students needed a different ‘sort of teacher’ and participating in middle school meetings where an action research approach was taken to professional development, helped Margo to develop a new understanding of learning for herself, and her students. The processes of “making sure they [the students] understand” and providing opportunities to “implement” and “reflect” on new knowledge replaced her old habits of expecting students “to sit there and listen and take it in” (Margo, 2009, p. 5).

As part of a social theory of learning, recall that Wenger (1998, p. 5) characterised meaning as “a way of talking about our (changing) ability- individually and collectively- to experience our life and the world as meaningful”. The preceding analysis has shown that for the core teachers in the BCS Middle School community of
practice, meaning (in terms of new knowledge and understandings) was developed through processes that valued the sharing of individual expertise (aligned to Wenger’s (1998) concept of overlapping competencies), individual and collective critical reflection (one of the key tenets of community of practice learning theory) and collegial support (a benefit derived from mutual engagement) (Wenger, 1998).

The importance of developing meaning in a community of practice was exemplified when teachers were asked to consider why some newcomers to the community seemed reluctant (or unable) to participate. Elizabeth and Margaret, both Deputy Principals within the school, were part of the Middle School team at different points in time for a period of twelve months. They remained on the periphery of the community during this time despite teaching full loads in the Middle School and being invited along to meetings each week. Margo responded to the question in the following way:

*Nope, they didn’t understand it…she [Margaret] didn’t see that we were catering, she didn’t see that there was differentiation in the programs, she didn’t see that the social structures provided the support, she didn’t see the things that we thought we could see.*

(Margo, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).

Holly (2009, p. 13) also felt that Margaret and Anne did not become full participants within the community of practice because they “had no real understanding of the concept [the Middle School] and what we were trying to achieve”. Whilst Margaret and Elizabeth’s individual expertise was always valued by the community, for these newcomers, opportunities for them to participate in collective critical reflection and access collegial support were limited by their infrequent attendance at Middle School meetings. Their experiences demonstrated that a ‘regular presence’ (either physical or virtual) is needed within a community of practice for mutual engagement and the development of the kind of professional and personal relationships that lead to negotiated meanings around practice.

I would also argue that in a community of practice, without meaning; without an understanding of how the community functions (mutual engagement), what it is about (joint enterprise) or what it does (shared repertoire), participation, and therefore learning, cannot occur (Wenger, 1998).
6.3 The second component: Practice

The second component of learning to be explored through the Series 3 interview data centred upon the BCS Middle School teachers’ change in practice or more correctly, the processes through which changes in their practice occurred. A more detailed analysis of specific changes in terms of planning, curriculum design, pedagogies, assessment, evaluation and teacher collaborations follows in Chapter 7. For the purpose of this analysis, key words and phrases were sourced that would indicate that newcomers to the community had made meaning, and altered practice, from their own experiences through the process of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP), and in the case of the BCS community practice, through a process of reverse legitimate peripheral participation (Hung et al., 2006; Lave & Wenger, 1991) (See Appendix 6A).

As previously discussed in Chapter 2, Lave & Wenger (1991) coined the term LPP and viewed it as a way for newcomers to become part of a community of practice. It requires that newcomers experience a progressive trajectory from peripheral to full participation in the community and gain legitimacy through access to the genuine work of the community (Warhurst, 2008). Through LPP “a person’s intentions to learn are engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a socio-cultural practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29). At BCS however, because a small core group of oldtimers operated as a community of practice over a prolonged period of time in a relatively segregated fashion within the school, newcomers more commonly came to the community through a process of reverse legitimate peripheral participation. Recall that Hung et al. (2006) used this term to refer to the evolving process of a community of practice from the mature community’s, rather than the newcomer’s, perspective. The process begins with a group of core members that gradually grows to encourage new members into the community of practice such as was the case at BCS (Hung et al., 2006). Identity formation and an enculturation of practice are at the centre of the reverse legitimate peripheral participation process (Hung et al., 2006).

For Lynette, enculturation into the BCS Middle School community of practice took several years. In 2001-2002, Lynette was employed as a Special Education teacher in the secondary department of the school. She was housed in a classroom next to Richard’s Middle School class, with a group of ‘challenging’ students, who had learning
and behavioral difficulties for a variety of reasons. When asked to reflect back to that
time she recalled:

...my room was next to Richard’s and I saw some great things happening
and some really good fun things and I thought “Oh yeah, that’d be fun”.
(Lynette, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).

When Lynette’s class was dissolved in 2002-2003 and Richard left the school to take up
a promotional position, she was asked to if she would be willing to teach a Middle
School class. She accepted, and “was more than happy to go” (Lynette, 2009, p. 3).
However, as the following excerpt shows, she did have reservations about her abilities
to do the job:

So I went in with a bit of “Ooh, gees you know, like I don’t”, I went in
thinking that I wouldn’t be up to scratch. I went in thinking “Oh I’m
never going to”, you know, “I won’t be any good with middle school
because I’m not the sort of teacher they want”. That’s what I thought.
(Lynette, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).

When asked what actually happened when she began teaching in the Middle
School Lynette replied:

I loved it. I thought it was great. For the first time in my career I
had someone to sound off, I had someone to talk to...Holly was
amazing. She, you know, like I went in there going “Oh crap”
you know and nothing was a drama, nothing was a bother to her.
You know I went in going “Oh I’m not going to these frigging
meetings after school and this is crap” but I went to them and I
liked them.
(Lynette, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).

Lynette (2009, p. 4) elaborated on her feelings about the out-of-hours Middle School
meetings, claiming that at the meetings, “anything you said was always valued” and that
she recognised that “everyone was always looking to improve things” and she came to
feel that “the meetings were really valuable”. Through her participation within the
activities of the community, Lynette had become enculturated into the practices of the
community. Hung et al. (2006, p. 301) claimed that through enculturation, newcomers’
“behavior or identity changes and, in the process, they become prepared to engage in
similar activities in the future”. Lynette oscillated between peripheral and full
participation in the BCS Middle School community of practice for six years, and when asked what impact this had on her, she replied:

It kept me thinking. It kept me busy. It kept me active and it kept me wanting to deliver stuff that was better, stuff that was going to be effective. It holistically improved me. It definitely improved my programming, definitely improved my assessments. It challenged me and that’s why I liked it so much.

(Lynette, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).

Wenger (1998, cited in Hung et al., 2006, p. 301) identified two critical aspects needed to create “an experience of identity” for newcomers in a community of practice: process and place. For Lynette, the BCS Middle School community of practice provided both a process (in the form of Middle School beliefs, principles and practices) and a place (Middle School meetings and team teaching opportunities) for her learning.

For Margaret and Elizabeth however, enculturation into the community (and its practice) did not occur. Wenger (1998) distinguished between two forms of non-participation in a community of practice: peripherality and marginality. Wenger (1998) claimed that our identity is actually shaped by the interplay between participation and non participation in our various communities of practice. In the case of peripherality, some degree of non participation is deemed necessary to enable a kind of participation that is fruitful though not full, whilst in the case of marginality, non participation dominates and actually prevents full participation (Wenger, 1998). I suggest that for Margaret and Elizabeth, their participation became restricted by their non participation (Wenger, 1998) and they therefore remained in a marginal position within the BCS Middle School community of practice and were unable, over time, to conceive of any other trajectory within the community.

Hung et al. (2006) utilised the process of reverse legitimate peripheral participation (described above in the case of Lynette) to form and nurture a sustainable community of practice within a school cluster in Singapore. They concluded that the process was a promising framework for establishing teacher communities of practice and that fostering members into such communities of practice where “every member contributes to others and receives from others within a knowledge management framework would enable knowledge to flow dynamically within a school” (Hung et al., 2006, p. 313). Their experiences, and ours, add credence to the argument developed throughout this
dissertation that, for many teachers, communities of practice may provide opportunities for a more transformative model of teacher professional development in schools.

### 6.4 The third component: Community

Data from the Series 3 Interviews was also analysed for key words and phrases that would indicate the BCS Middle School teachers had experienced a new sense of belonging (that is, a change in *community*) within their own community of practice and with other overlapping communities of practice (for example, other Middle School communities of practice).

Wenger (1998, p. 5) theorised community as “a way of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognizable as competence”. Warhurst (2008, p. 459) associated the concept of community with a process of “collective meaning making” that was derived from the everyday interactions of community members. Newcomers thus learn through the “social construction of meaning” from these everyday interactions as they participate in the community’s work (Warhurst, 2008).

The process of “collective meaning making” (Warhurst, 2008, p. 459) was instigated by Sara (as a ‘broker’) in the early days of the community’s inception and continued, in a slightly different form, throughout its evolution. She discussed this process and its benefits for the community, in the following excerpt:

> Very quickly I think it was realized that the collective brain approach, where the ideas were put together, saved a lot of time. But everyone also I think, really enjoyed the company and the rapport built up through the professional dialogue. It was very very, I don’t know if intense is the right word but it was very stimulating, the conversation, because I hadn’t been in a group that was quite so intent at a professional level. So that was a new experience for me as well. I felt that I learnt a lot about team work...I keep coming back to that collective brain- what dynamic and innovative stuff you can do when you actually work and share together. (Sara, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).

Sara was able to identify not only her new sense of belonging in the community as she “enjoyed the company” and the “rapport”, but was also able to articulate how that sense of belonging to the community contributed to her learning. She was also able to relate a
sense of “collective” belonging and working to “dynamic and innovative” practices. There is a sense of real pleasure in the intensity of the practice of collegiality evident in Sara’s words here, much of which I claim arose through the mutuality of learning together.

Throughout this report of my study, the importance of interpersonal relationships for the formation and sustainability of ‘community’ has been emphasised. Interestingly though, the obvious personal and professional bonds between core members, developed after several years of mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998) in the Middle School Program, worked to both attract and repel newcomers to the community. Lynette’s insightful comment below articulated this point:

*You could see a very solid bond between those teachers in particular. And it was never to the point that you wanted to exclude people, it was to the point that people didn’t want to go in. That’s to me, that’s what it was. It wasn’t that the barriers were up, because I found a great supportive network and the barriers were never up, but it was that people weren’t prepared to pass the line. (Lynette, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).*

Miguel echoed Lynette’s thoughts:

*And the others coming in found, because of the personalities involved, you can’t quantify that, there was the united group that had the same wavelength. Some people coming from outside, they didn’t quite, could not get into this particular world, although they understood enough to make a contribution. (Miguel, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).*

Lynette and Miguel’s comments stand as a timely reminder that within communities of practice, the significance of community cannot be overstated. Without a sense of belonging members are unable (or unwilling?) to truly move from forms of peripheral to full participation, and in a socio-situated theory of learning; without participation there is no learning. Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 35) reminded us that in legitimate peripheral participation “the form that the legitimacy of participation takes is a defining characteristic of ways of belonging, and is therefore not only a crucial condition for learning, but a constitutive element of its content”.

The teachers in the BCS Middle School community of practice also came to feel a sense of belonging to other, overlapping, educational communities of practice. During the
community’s inception the BCS Middle School teachers visited a number of established middle schools (as neophytes) to gain insights into middle years’ curriculum, pedagogies and structures. As the Middle School Program entered its consolidation phase, the teachers were asked to present and share their model at a number of middle years’ conferences as an exemplar of middle years’ practice. The community of practice had developed legitimacy in the broader educational community (for example, practice communities and teacher educator communities).

6.5 The fourth component: Identity

The final component for learning that Wenger (1998) identified centred upon a change in identity. For Graven (2004, p. 195), this meant “new ways of being ‘identified’ by others, identifying with the profession and imagining future trajectories within it”. For Wenger (1998, p. 5), the concept of identity centred on “how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities”. Data from the final series of interviews (Series 3) was therefore sourced for words or phrases that would indicate that teachers had come to see themselves in a new professional light and that this ‘new way of becoming’ could be aligned in some way with their participation in the BCS Middle School community of practice (Warhurst, 2008). Teachers were asked a seemingly simple question: who were you then and who are you now? The following discussion explores their answers.

Margo (2009, p. 5) talked extensively about the teacher she was before her experiences in the Middle School and the kind of teacher she was now. Initially she described herself as, “this very traditional, back to the 1950’s mode of being a teacher”. She later acknowledged that she “was anything but that now” and that without her involvement in the Middle School Program, and without the “common faith that was built up in what we were doing, and in each other”, there was “no way that [she] would be anywhere near where [she was] without it” (p. 15).

Lynette finished her interview by thanking the core group of teachers for her “journey” and credited her new, professional identity to a process of “empowerment”:

No you know, like thank you guys for the journey because without you guys in the initial start up then none of this, you know, I could have been a plain old Year 5 or 6 teacher, or you know, continually have the ass
end of every behavior class in the world. You know, and professionally it, you know, gave me structure and, you know, have my own class, a bit of ownership, you know, that empowerment again, it’s a powerful thing and I think if you were to put Middle School under one umbrella, it would have to be empowerment of the teacher...

(Lynette, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).

Miguel, an outsider in some ways, was able to see the connections between the meanings we made through our practice and the professional learning that developed as a result of reforming our identities within the community (Warhurst, 2008). This interconnection is outlined in the following quote:

So in terms of the professional development of the staff, I could see the growth. I could see the awareness, for example by secondary teachers, of the excellent work by the primary teachers and the responsibility primary teachers have, how difficult primary teaching is. The fundamentals and so on. And I think the primary teachers would see that, you know, specialists go so far, but deep down they are teachers like everyone else. Those barriers that you see...were completely gone...it was great to see how, due to that effort, their willingness and their belief in this philosophy and this approach to linking and developing students, how they grew and they developed and became excellent professionals.

(Miguel, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).

Miguel used words like “growth” and “awareness” to signal that he recognised that changes were occurring in our practice and in our ‘sense of self’. Wenger (1998, p. 145) reinforced that “issues of identity are an integral aspect of a social theory of learning and are thus inseparable from issues of practice, community and meaning”. Miguel also went on to describe our “willingness” to venture outside of our ‘comfort zones’ when we put “effort” into breaking down traditional “barriers” between primary and secondary sectors.

Finally, for Holly (who had recently moved out of the Middle School to teach a Kindergarten class- a significant challenge after a career spent teaching in the higher levels of the primary school)) professional identity was not an easy construct to articulate. Her answer to my question was:

I don’t know. That’s a pretty tough question. I don’t know. I guess we were just, I don’t know. I’d like to think I’ve always been engaged and
motivated and enthusiastic. But, I think we were more than that at that period of time. We were just,... we were immersed in it all weren’t we? Like it was just, I don’t know. It was a huge part of our lives. And it’s hard reflecting on it because we know what we’re missing out on now.

(Holly, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).

Holly’s participation in the community of practice strongly influenced her identity as she became “immersed” in practice and the community became a “huge part of [her] life”. In terms of trajectories, Holly has taken what she learnt in the Middle School and applied it to her new role (her new identity) as a Kindergarten teacher:

*I’m doing an integrated curriculum. I don’t know any other way of teaching now. And it makes so much more sense, and its so contextual. And it’s how kids learn. And I guess we’re seeing the results of that hugely.*

(Holly, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).

In this exploration of Wenger’s (1998) four components of learning as a suitable framework to explain the nature of the learning experienced by the BCS Middle School teachers, I have argued that learning for each of us occurred through processes that: valued individual expertise, collective critical reflection and collegial support (that is the development of meaning), utilised reverse peripheral participation (that is the enculturation of new practices), collectively constructed meaning within a social context (that is the strengthening and espousing of community) and consequently, reformed our professional identity. The following discussion extends Wenger’s (1998) framework of learning as I now consider the role that teaching played in our learning.

### 6.6 The fifth component: Teaching

Graven (2004) asserted that Wenger’s (1998) model of learning was problematic in school settings in that he neglected to consider to the role that teaching played in learning; particularly in relation to teacher learners. She claimed that in “breaking down the teacher/learner dyad they [Lave & Wenger, 1991] shifted from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning and emphasised that teaching [was] not a precondition for learning” (p. 184). As previously discussed in Chapter 2, Fuller et al. (2005, p. 65) also recognised the limitations of Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory of workplace learning for complex institutional contexts like schools, claiming that it was “overly dismissive
of the role ‘teaching’ play[ed] in the workplace learning process and of learning in off-
the-job settings”.

In analysing the data from the Series 3 interviews (See Appendix 6A) it was apparent
that the teachers felt that teaching had a significant role to play in their learning and
subsequent professional development as members of the BCS community of practice.
Margo, for instance, claimed that the structured, weekly Middle School meetings helped
her to learn in two ways:

The original ones [meetings] were just about the actual professional
learning itself...so there would be that initial work we’d do in two teams.
All of that, I mean you learned about all those things and how they’re
important and how they work in real classrooms and all that. I think that
gets the ideas fizzing. We bounced around so many different teaching
concepts and contexts...I think we kept learning by keeping the structure
alive, and by having to do the things that had to be done to keep it alive.
(Margo, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).

Margo found that Sara’s targeted professional development activities gave her “ideas” in
the form of “teaching concepts and contexts” that she could trial in her classroom and
then, through a process of ‘collective critical reflection’, evaluate and incorporate into her
own teaching practice. The last section of this excerpt refers to the processes we adopted,
after Sara moved to the periphery of the community, whereby Middle School meetings
continued to have an action-research focus and structure.

Sara’s role as ‘broker’ and facilitator was significant throughout the community’s lifespan
and Margo stressed the importance of this facilitation for our “professional learning” in
the following quote:

She made us focus on what did we want to achieve here and what sorts of
things are we going to do to achieve it? And then, you know, she
understood very clearly then what kinds of professional learning would
need to be provided to achieve what we had in mind...I think she directed
us the first couple of years very effectively and we couldn’t have done it
without her at all...that real sense of focus and purpose was really
important.
(Margo, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).
Holly (2009, p.7) also felt that Sara’s facilitation was crucial for our learning as she “brought new ideas to us and helped guide and direct us in the path we were taking”. Sara (2009, p. 2) described this facilitation in terms of: meetings, workshops, presenting ideas, training, discussing, evaluating and sharing.

Teaching, in a variety of forms (from facilitation through to collegial action-research) played a vital role in our learning in the community at both an individual and collective level. Perhaps because we were teachers ourselves we demanded the familiar: structure, scaffolding, modeling etcetera. Whilst Wenger (1998, p. 267) claimed that teaching and learning were not inherently linked and was at pains to point out that “teaching does not cause learning”, he also acknowledged that for complex forms of knowledge:

…an excessive emphasis on formalism without corresponding levels of participation, or conversely a neglect of explanations and formal structure, can easily result in an experience of meaninglessness (p. 67).

Hoban (2002, p. 42), also identified the strengths and weaknesses in both “training” and “learning community” models for teacher learning. He concluded that whilst training models presented teachers with new ideas in the form of ‘formal knowledge’, they ignored the classroom context. Similarly, he suggested that even though a ‘learning community’ model provided a framework to sustain learning by focusing on shared knowledge, it often ignored the importance of introducing new ideas and practices. Hoban (2002) cited several models that managed to integrate the two modes of learning successfully. These included models where teachers shared social, personal and professional experiences over extended time frames in the context of educational research, and models that involved teacher educator researchers and classroom teachers working together in schools to share ideas about teaching and learning. The PEEL Project (Project for Enhancing Effective Learning) model (Baird & Mitchell, 1987), discussed in Chapter 2, was cited by Hoban (2002) as an exemplar of one such sustainable, integrated model.

As teachers, in order to develop meaning and form an identity within our community, I suggest that, in the BCS teacher community of practice we needed to feel that we were participating in a practice that led to intentional, rather than incidental, learning. This intentional learning was initially facilitated through Sara’s targeted professional
development activities at Middle School meetings and later through the reflective action research approaches we adopted in our classrooms.

6.7 Summary

The analysis of interview data in this chapter has detailed the learning, and subsequent professional development, that the BCS Middle School teachers experienced as a result of their participation in a community of practice. It has therefore provided an answer to the second research question: In what ways does a community of practice lead to or provide professional development for teachers? My interviews with these teachers have shown that meaning (in the form of new syllabus and pedagogical knowledge, new understandings of how students learn and the role of the teacher in that learning) was developed through processes that valued individual expertise, individual and collective critical reflection and collegial support. Practice was developed through a process of reverse legitimate peripheral participation (Hung et al., 2006), and community was fostered through the process of collective meaning making and a strong sense of belonging brought about by the relationships built between members and their interactions in overlapping communities of practice. The reformulation of identity, and the promise of future trajectories, was developed through the interconnection of the above three components (Wenger, 1998). Finally, I have argued that, for teachers, a fifth construct, that is teaching, is also a significant requirement for learning and professional development within a community of practice.

In the following chapter I will analyse a rich database of documentary evidence to determine, holistically, what impact this learning had on the teachers, students and school. In doing so, I provide an answer to the final research question raised in this dissertation: What is the nature of the relationship between teacher communities of practice, teacher professional development, curriculum reform and school change?
Chapter 7

Discussion of data 4: Teacher, student and school change

7.1 Introduction

In Chapter 6 the learning (and professional development) experienced by the members of the BCS teacher community of practice was analysed according to a four-part learning framework outlined by Wenger (1998). Teacher learning was found to develop through processes that led to changes in meaning, practice, community and identity, and a fifth component, teaching, was theorised.

This chapter continues to follow the Analytical Framework outlined in Chapter 3 (See Figure 3.4) to analyse the data from the series of teacher interviews, teaching and learning artefacts, student work samples and reports and school-based documentation, to explore the links between the BCS community of practice (and its associated domain: the Middle Years Program), community members’ professional learning, and the effects these constructs had on student outcomes and school culture. In structuring this chapter, I sought to further build knowledge in order to answer the main research question raised within this dissertation: What is the nature of the relationship between teacher communities of practice, teacher professional development, curriculum reform and school change?

In order to determine links (and ultimately the relationship) between the BCS teacher community of practice, our professional development, the middle years’ reform and outcomes for our students and school, three dimensions of ‘measurable change’ were considered: teacher change, student change and school culture change.

7.2 Evidence for teacher change

Richardson (1990, in Fullan, 1997, p. 194) suggested that while “teacher change literature provides a way of thinking about systemic change…the conceptual framework within which the research is conducted does not include a conception of individual teacher change”. She went on to argue for a need for research that focused on “individual teachers’ cognitions, knowledge and actions” when considering the impact of change efforts on practice (p. 194). In considering the concept of ‘teacher change’, I wanted to understand how our involvement in the BCS community of practice (with its
Definitions of teachers’ pedagogical practice seem to be as varied as the practices themselves. My search of the literature indicated that definitions varied widely and included definitions of pedagogy as: the art or profession of teaching and preparatory training or instruction, the principles, practice or profession of teaching and the function or work of a teacher (Goldwag, 2007). In order to conceptualise the changes that occurred for us, in terms of our practice as members of the BCS community of practice, I have chosen to use the definition of pedagogical practice as ‘the function or work of a teacher’ (Goldwag, 2007) in combination with the framework Bernstein (1977) uses to define educational knowledge: pedagogy, curriculum and evaluation. I therefore called upon the following tenets that I believed, in part, defined our practice or ‘work’ as teachers: planning and preparation for teaching, curriculum design and implementation, methods of instruction, assessment and reporting of teaching and learning, reflection and evaluation and teacher collaborations. Middle School meeting minutes, teaching and learning programs, teacher interviews and student work samples and portfolios were used as data to track our development and ‘changing practice’ in these key areas.

### 7.2.1.1 Planning and preparation for teaching

Prior to our involvement in the BCS community of practice, we had worked individually as teachers (often in isolation) to plan and prepare our classroom structures, content scope and sequences, student profiles and teaching and learning units of work. Working in a small central school in different sectors and across disciplines limited not only our opportunities to plan and prepare with others, but also the possibilities for sourcing ‘new’ ways of doing ‘old’ things. When Sara began the process of aligning our Middle School meetings with a professional development agenda, talk about ‘the way I’ve always done it’ became far less frequent as we began a journey into ‘the way we do things in Middle School’. Our planning and preparation processes began this journey.

Rather than sitting down, alone in the staffroom, with last year’s upper primary (Years 5 and 6) and junior secondary (Years 7 and 8) scope and sequence maps and units of
work, the teachers in the BCS community of practice came together each week to collaboratively plan new and integrated teaching and learning units, specifically designed for middle years’ students, through a very defined and collective backward mapping process (Loughland & Parkes, 2004). This process usually began with the group sitting around a table at the local District Education Office (See Figure 7.1), after school hours, with a syllabus continuum map (See Appendix 3A) for each content area and four planning questions in mind as described by the state education department (NSWDETCSD, 2003):

1. What do we want students to learn?
2. Why does this matter?
3. What am I going to get students to do?
4. How well do I expect them to do the task I set?
Following on from the four planning questions, unit outlines (See Appendix 4H) were developed to link syllabus learning outcomes across disciplines (in the case of integrated units) and stages whilst group brainstorming maps (See Appendix 7A) were constructed to identify each unit’s content area, possible learning strategies and assessment tasks. Finally, a series of detailed lesson plans (See Appendices 1A and 3B) were collaboratively developed to facilitate consistent, quality learning experiences in each Middle School classroom.
This level of planning, and the collaborative nature of the processes involved, was new to each of us in the community, and over time, became part of a shared and negotiated practice. The artefacts that were produced by these processes: syllabus continuums, content maps, unit outlines and lesson plans were to become hallmarks of the joint enterprise with which we were associated and entrenched components of our shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998).

7.2.1.2 Curriculum design and implementation

The second indicator that our practice had changed as a result of our membership in the BCS community of practice centred on the kind of curriculum that we envisioned and enacted for our middle years’ students. In accordance with middle years’ literature we aimed to develop a curriculum that set high expectations within a supportive and stimulating learning environment, encouraged students to see the purpose in their learning beyond school and empowered them to view their world critically (Luke et al., 2003).

Prior to our involvement in the BCS community of practice, students in Years 5 and 6 were engaged in a ‘traditional’ primary curriculum consisting of six, relatively separate, key learning areas structured around two to three learning sessions per day. Their Year 7 and 8 counterparts, also followed a ‘traditional’ mode of secondary curriculum delivery: a mixture of core subjects and select elective subjects delivered in discrete 45-60 minute time slots with different teachers in different discipline area classrooms.

In 2001-2002, when the Middle School was first established at BCS, we realised that a new curriculum, tailored to the needs of our middle years’ students, needed to be designed within the constraints of our context and under the mandated guidelines of our primary and secondary syllabuses (NSW Board of Studies, 2004; 2006; 2007). We began by visiting a number of ‘exemplary’ middle schools within our state to see how they structured their Years 5 to 8 groups, how teaching sessions were organised throughout the day, which subjects were taught and how these subjects were taught and assessed. We realised very quickly, that the old, ‘traditional’ curricula would no longer work for our students and in fact we were beginning to see that it no longer seemed to work for us either. We began to explore (and become excited about) middle years’
concepts like: block scheduling\textsuperscript{9}, team teaching, home rooms and teachers\textsuperscript{10}, student-centred teaching approaches and the promise of enhanced student engagement through ‘real-world’, relevant forms of curriculum.

Perhaps the most significant change to our practice, in terms of curriculum, was the professional development we engaged in around the design of interdisciplinary, integrated units of work for students across Years 5 to 8. Sara led a series of targeted workshops that encouraged us to explore links between separate disciplines and also disciplinary links between primary and secondary stages of schooling. The BCS Middle School English Continuum (See Appendix 3A), developed at one of Sara’s professional development workshops, shows how Stage 3 (Years 5 and 6) and Stage 4 (Years 7 and 8) syllabus learning outcomes were linked through specific interdisciplinary, integrated English units of work. This continuum guided the content and structure of literacy sessions through a set of teaching cycles for the first two years of the Middle School Program. Appendix 7B shows an Integration Wheel for a middle school unit; one of the process tools Sara introduced the team to in order to ‘visualise’ possible knowledge and skills links between different disciplines during the planning stages of unit development.

In a study by Shulman and Armitage (2005, p. 373), urban middle school teachers engaged in “weekly ‘discovery-orientated’ interdisciplinary curriculum-planning workshops to reformulate curricula into lessons that actively involved students in their learning”. In an experience that mirrored our own, teachers involved in this professional development initiative indicated that they were transformed in a number of ways: they were empowered within their schools, made dramatic changes from teacher-centred approaches to student-centred approaches and formed meaningful professional relationships with colleagues. This study highlighted how productive the teachers were during this period of curriculum exploration as they produced a collection of interdisciplinary, discovery-based curriculum materials. In the BCS context, as a measurable indicator of change, during the period from 2001-2006 the production of

\textsuperscript{9} Block scheduling is a structure often used in schools to give students more time in a timetabled session to engage with a learning experience or subject.

\textsuperscript{10} In many middle schools, students spend most of their school day in a single classroom with a single teacher.
over 25 original, interdisciplinary, integrated teaching and learning units for middle
years students by the BCS community of practice can be cited.

7.2.1.3  Methods of instruction

The third, most telling factor, that indicated a change in our collective and individual
pedagogical practices, involved the ways we took up and worked with the instructional
strategies we were exposed to in Sara’s professional development workshops and the
frequency with which we used these strategies in our classrooms. As a secondary
specialist Science teacher, I would not be honest if I did not acknowledge at this point
that the most dramatic change, in terms of the use of a more student-centred teaching
approach, occurred for Margo (a specialist secondary English teacher) and me as we
groppled with instructional strategies and structures more common in primary than
secondary classrooms.

Sara showed us how to make use of cognitive tools like Y-charts (See Appendix 4I),
Venn diagrams, Fish Bones, Vocabulary Clines and Bone Diagrams (See Appendix 7C)
in order to assist students to achieve higher orders of thinking (for example comparison,
sequencing and analysis). As previously mentioned, we often used these same tools in
our Middle School meetings to plan and evaluate the Middle School Program.
Similarly, Schulman and Armitage (2005, p. 373) noted that teachers in their Middle
School Reform Project (Project Discovery) “given prolonged opportunities to be
learners using active, inquiry-orientated approaches” were able to “transfer this mode of
learning to their classrooms, creating student-centred, motivating, and vibrant learning
environments”. The transfer of student-centred instructional strategies from Middle
School professional development meetings to our classrooms was a frequent occurrence
for the BCS community of practice.

The use of cognitive strategies was not the only instructional approach that transferred
from our professional development sessions to our classrooms. The collaborative
process, a pivotal part of our Middle School meetings, was used repeatedly in our
lessons as we asked students to come together in co-operative groups to brainstorm
ideas, build partnerships, develop and present solutions to problems, analyse texts, carry
out experiments and summarise and reflect on their learning (See Figure 7.2).
Our professional development sessions with Sara on the concept of instruction significantly changed the way we, as learners, collaboratively sought knowledge and then used new knowledge in our practice. Randi and Zeichner (2004, p. 181) articulated this link between ‘teacher as learner’ and ‘teacher as practitioner’ when they identified that: “as teachers seek and construct knowledge, their own knowledge base grows. And, as they share their knowledge among colleagues, both within and across schools, their shared ‘professional knowledge base’ grows as well”. In line with our own experiences too, Knapp (2003) also reported on the convergence between teachers
modelling ‘preferred’ instructional strategies in both their classrooms and in adult learning situations and the positive effect this has on their teaching and learning practice.

7.2.1.4 Assessment and reporting of teaching and learning

The fourth significant change to our pedagogical practice, again felt more acutely by Margo and me as secondary trained teachers, was the shift from a ‘norms-referenced’ approach to an ‘outcomes or standards-based’ approach to assessment of student learning outcomes. In a norms-referenced approach student performance is measured in relation to other students, whereas a standards-referenced approach refers to the “process of collecting and interpreting information about students’ learning, using outcomes as key reference points for decisions about their progress and achievement” (NSW Board of Studies, 2007, p. x). In line with ‘traditional’ secondary approaches to assessment, students in Year 7 and 8 had in the past been graded on a series of subject specific assessment tasks that primarily involved written examinations conducted in the middle and at the end of the school year. Depending on the subject and the teacher involved, assessment might also have included more ‘authentic’ tasks like investigative reports, case studies, web pages and models, however, even these tasks were seen as ‘end products’ to assess student learning, against set standards at key points, in the school’s assessment schedule.

In the BCS Middle School we were encouraged by our primary colleagues, and Sara, to take a more outcomes-based approach to assessment whereby assessment of teaching for learning replaced the mindset of assessment of learning (NSW Board of Studies, 2007). To this end, student portfolios were introduced into the middle school whereby teachers and students were given the opportunity to select, throughout the school year, samples of classroom work that acted as evidence of the attainment of syllabus learning outcomes for individual students (See Appendix 7D).

The way in which student academic progress was reported to parents also underwent a significant shift for students in Years 7 and 8 as students were no longer allocated a summative ‘mark’ for the year and graded against each other. Again, following a primary model, students’ classroom work was assessed using marking criteria and each assessment task in the portfolio was aligned to relevant learning outcome statements from the syllabus (See Figure 7.3).
Assessment of student academic learning outcomes in the BCS Middle School was always a problematic issue that involved continual negotiation. Margo and I had to come to terms with an outcomes-based portfolio approach and Holly, Juliet and the other primary trained teachers had to accept some level of normalised assessment in line with the demands, and traditions, of the secondary school. The community of practice gave us all a space to negotiate these tensions within the vision we held for the Middle School and our students’ learning.

7.2.1.5 Evaluation and Reflection

Form its earliest days, the BCS community of practice recognised the need to constantly evaluate the Middle School Program as its innovative nature, and the ‘poor’ image that the middle years’ students had in the school and wider community, meant that we were visibly accountable to multiple stakeholders. This level of accountability, whilst implicitly expected (though to a lesser degree) when we taught outside of the middle school, was certainly new to us and impacted significantly on our collective and collective efforts.

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**Sample 1: Marking criteria for an assessment task**

**Sample 2: Learning statement from a student portfolio**

**Figure 7.3: Student portfolio assessment components**
individual practices. As previously noted, we regularly evaluated the progress and outcomes of the program in terms of structures, processes, staffing requirements, teaching practices, community liaison and student attainment through tools like the ‘Parking Lot’ and ‘SWOT’ analyses (See Appendix 5F). The Learning Review Support Team (2001 p. 5) commented that the “development of the middle school had involved staff in a critical evaluation of curriculum, teaching practice and the organisation of the school” and that this evaluation was supported by our “willingness to critically analyse teaching practice, consider change and share the results”. In the Series 2 interviews (2004), my conversation with one of our academic partners identified the formative nature of our evaluative processes:

The change keeps going for the better…that we don’t just change for the sake of change, that we continue to look at what we do and improve it, I think that’s really important. Because while some outcomes for kids are improving we’re not working on other outcomes. So it’s really looking at what’s working, and keep going, what isn’t working…we change. (Tracey, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

Whilst evaluation was always part of our work as teachers, our practice changed as we learnt to view evaluation as more than an ‘end process’. It became part of an action-research process we adopted as part of our involvement in the Australian Government Quality Teaching Project (AGQTP) in 2004 and we took up this agency’s call for the development of evidence-based practice. In order to determine if the Middle School was ‘working for our students’ we gathered extensive data from lesson observations, feedback processes from students, individual reflective journals, focus group discussions, meeting minutes and surveys in order to gauge the program’s success and ‘fine tune’ our practice to meet our middle years’ students’ learning needs.

The way in which we used reflection in our practice, as individuals, was also influenced by our involvement in the BCS community of practice. Initially our reflections, both individually and collectively, revolved around the professional development activities Sara was delivering that focused on learning new classroom strategies and approaches. We would try these in our classrooms and reflect on their implementation through group sharing. As the community of practice evolved however, the nature and function of these reflections became
more complex. Margo explicitly outlines this evolution in the following observation:

As a team we have ‘internalised’ a great deal over the last four years. The changes we make to pedagogy and assessment are now based on reflective professional practice- reflecting on the relationship between our cohort, our community and our professional practice. The internalisation of this professional learning means that we are now at a stage where reflection encapsulates, articulates and explains the complex dynamics of what happens in our classrooms. In other words, rather than being based wholly on learning the ‘new’, our professional development and discussions are based on evaluating and understanding what we are doing.

(Margo, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

Schulman and Armitage (2005) also noted that teachers who participated in curriculum reforms became more reflective: it gave them opportunities to experiment, receive feedback and propelled them to change their ideas about how they taught. This was certainly our experience in the BCS Middle School community of practice.

7.2.1.6 Teacher collaborations

The final change to our pedagogical practice has been discussed, to varying degrees and in varying contexts, in previous chapters. It centres on the collaborative processes and practices we engaged in through our membership in the community. Prior to membership, we largely planned, taught, evaluated and reflected alone. On occasion we would come together to discuss issues in staff meetings (as teachers must), attend mandatory staff development days and contribute to teaching team discussions around class sizes and allocations, policy implementation and occasionally, student welfare. Within the community of practice, professional and social bonds were formed and continually strengthened, experiences were shared and common understandings reached that gave us all greater confidence to become ‘risk-takers’ with our learning and our teaching. The Middle School Program (the community’s domain) provided us with “consistent and extended opportunities for meaningful, collegial teacher collaborations” (Schulman & Armitage, 2005, p. 373). Little (2003, cited in Randi & Zeichner, 2004) described a powerful form of learning that occurred through the collegial interactions of teacher groups (similar to our community of practice) whereby teachers had a clear
collective identity and a professional task orientation. Teachers in this kind of collaborative setting, act as knowledge sources for each other and it seems only logical to assume that students also benefit from this collaborative construction of knowledge, for as Barth (1990, p. 47) reminded us, “only a school that is hospitable to adult learning can be a good place for students to learn”.

In the preceding discussion, I have used evidence from a variety of sources to demonstrate how our pedagogical practices, our work as teachers, changed as a result of our membership, and participation in, the BCS Middle School community of practice. I have tracked our pedagogical evolution in terms of changes in our planning and preparation; the curriculum we designed and implemented; our methods of instruction, our assessment and reporting strategies; the ways in which we evaluated the program and reflected on our practices and the teacher collaborations we invested in so heavily.

7.2.2 Attitudes towards teaching and learning

In this section I discuss the second dimension, in relation to ‘teacher change’, that was a focus for my inquiry, our changing attitudes towards teaching and learning as a result of our membership in the BCS community of practice and the implementation of the Middle School Program. Shulman and Armitage (2005, p. 389), in their Project Discovery study, primarily defined the change in a teacher’s attitude to teaching and learning according to the “personal efficacy” dimension of a 16 item, Likert-scaled teacher self-efficacy survey. The items in this section of the survey reflected how capable a teacher personally felt in affecting changes in his or her students. Some of the statements, relating to ‘personal efficacy’ and one’s capability to ‘affect change’, included the following:

- When a student does better than usual, many times it is because I exerted a little extra effort.
- When a student gets a better grade than usual, it is generally because I found better ways of teaching the student.
- When I really try, I can get through to most difficult students.
- When the grades of my students improve, it is usually because I found more effective teaching strategies.
If a student masters a new concept quickly, this might be because I knew the necessary steps in teaching that concept.

The influences of a student’s home experiences can be overcome by good teaching. (Shulman & Armitage, 2005, p. 386).

In order to establish that our attitude to teaching and learning had undergone a change during the period of our involvement in the community of practice, I have drawn from this work to re-evaluate interview data in light of how we came to feel in terms of our capabilities to affect student change. I selected these six questions as a lens to view teacher interviews through because I felt that they directly linked a teacher’s practice (evident through terms like; “effort”, “ways of teaching”, “effective teaching strategies” and “good teaching”) to gains in students’ outcomes (evident through terms like; “better than usual”, “improve” and “masters”). Guskey (2002, p. 384) asserted that “the key element in significant change in teachers’ attitudes and beliefs is clear evidence of improvement in the learning outcomes of their students”. It is important to note at this point, that I have adopted Guskey’s (2002) broad definition of student learning outcomes as one that includes both cognitive achievements and improvements in a range of student behaviours and attitudes. Consequently, learning outcomes include “whatever kinds of evidence teachers use to judge the effectiveness of their teaching” (Guskey, 2002, p. 384). The following discussion will examine teacher participants’ stories in terms of their renewed personal efficacy as a result of community membership, and the confirmation that their teaching could make a difference for students.

As previously discussed in Chapter 3, Margo came to BCS in 1998 from a large comprehensive high school in coastal NSW, and admitted to feeling “ineffective” and “burnt out” by her experiences as a secondary English teacher who “loved her job” but was no longer getting any “personal satisfaction” from it (Series 2 Interviews, 2004). However, her attitude to teaching and learning underwent a dramatic shift as a result of her involvement in the Middle School, and she identifies this change in the following excerpt:

Since I’ve undertaken the middle school I am a very different teacher. I will tell you that I’m also a very different disciplinarian, highly different,
and I think that’s been a function of my comfort with other aspects that I can just step back and focus. For the first time I can critically evaluate the way I deal with children and the strategies I use…I can establish a supportive environment. It’s rewarding, kids are happy, and I’m happy, and we have fun together and it’s nice. I personally get a lot…I’m being effective here…I’m in a place and I’m working where I’m making real differences to people who need it.

(Margo, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

In terms of Schulman and Armitage’s (2005, p. 386) self efficacy survey, Margo realised that she could reach “difficult students” and that she could, through “good teaching” overcome some of the negative “influences of a student’s home experiences”.

Holly also recognised that the improvements in learning outcomes for her students reflected the changes she had experienced in terms of her attitude to teaching and learning. She discussed this with one of our academic partners as she looked back on some of our more successful teaching units:

Um...seeing that Ricky has achieved, seeing him get a Band 2 in the Basic Skills Test...seeing the excitement on the two boys faces who discovered a skeleton in the Agriculture plot- it's those little things that I think we really carry with us...and keep close to our hearts, and just the opportunity I guess that we do on a regular basis in sharing those little experiences and those little light turn-ons that every teacher loves to see...what we've done has achieved this, and it's really nice.

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

For Holly, satisfaction comes “when a student does better than usual” or “gets a better grade than usual” because of something she has done: through that “little extra effort” (Schulman & Armitage, 2005, p. 386). This is again confirmed when Holly explicitly aligns her “teaching” to her students’ holistic “success” in the following reflection:

Yes, I just think big picture-wise, we know that our exclusive teaching is achieving far greater success and far greater understanding with the students than what it is in a normal classroom that we don’t really need to worry if we can get one outcome in HSIE, or three outcomes in History... I think the bigger picture is far, far more...it supersedes that sort of outcome checklist.

(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).
This analysis has shown that significant changes in a teacher’s attitudes and beliefs can come about after they have gained evidence of improvements in their students’ learning outcomes. For the teachers in the BCS community of practice, these improvements resulted from changes we made to the curriculum, to our teaching pedagogies, and to the ways we solved problems and set directions through collaborative practices. We believed these changes worked because we saw that they worked and that experience shaped our attitudes and beliefs (Guskey, 2002). Consequently, we felt a sense of agency; we truly believed that we could effect change.

7.2.3 Commitment to the profession

The final dimension of ‘teacher change’, that I wish to explore in this chapter is the sense of renewed commitment we felt towards the teaching profession as a result of our membership in the BCS community of practice and our experiences with the Middle School Program. Defining a teacher’s commitment to the teaching profession was a complex task and so to ‘tease’ out this construct I turned, briefly, to the literature around organisational learning (Senge, McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton & Kleiner, 2000), with a focus on the importance of a teacher’s personal ideology and sense of purpose (Intrator & Kunzman, 2006), and to the work of Somech & Bogler (2002) on teachers’ organisational and professional commitment.

Intrator and Kunzman (2006, p. 39), using the analogy of Maslow’s well known hierarchy of needs, claimed that traditional models of teacher professional development posit teachers’ lower order motivational needs, such as technical training in instructional strategies and classroom management techniques, before their higher motivational needs such as the “passion and the purpose that animate teachers’ ongoing commitment to students and learning”. They go on to assert that teachers “yearn” for professional development experiences that not only address their immediate need for skills and knowledge, but also evoke their “inner life” to engage them in activities that serve to “cultivate their capacity to teach with greater consciousness, self-awareness and integrity” (p. 39). Consequently I reviewed the data from teacher interviews to see if I could capture our renewed commitment to teaching through the identification of one or more of the preceding constructs, that is, passion, purpose, self-awareness, integrity and a greater consciousness (Intrator & Kunzman, 2006).
I looked for the concepts of ‘passion’ and ‘purpose’ through the language used in the series of teacher interviews conducted between 2002-2008/2009. The Learning Support Review Team in their 2002 report consistently used words like “enthusiasm”, “willingness”, “commitment” and “dedication” to describe the efforts that the BCS Middle School teachers were making to implement the program in the school. Our ‘passion’ for teaching in this new context was also evident in the language we used when our academic partners interviewed us in 2004. Holly used terms like “driving force” to describe a colleague’s role in the community of practice and acknowledged that her own “heart and soul” had been “poured into the middle school project”. In terms of our professional ‘purpose’, Holly affirmed that we were teaching in the Middle School “for the kids, we’re not here for ourselves, we’re not here for any other purpose”. At this time Margo also identified with the concepts of a ‘passion’ and ‘purpose’ for teaching when she described her time teaching in the middle school as the “the most rewarding moments” of her life. Margo was also able to articulate a growing self-awareness among the group in terms of our ability to reflect upon our professional actions in a more reflexive way as we developed a “greater confidence to become risk-takers and adopt and adapt classroom practices outside of our traditional experiences”.

Somech and Bogler (2002) defined committed people as those who work towards organisational goals, and are more likely to remain in their organisation and invest more effort in their job. Committed teachers therefore may have strong psychological ties to their students, subject discipline or school and their behaviour may vary depending on which allegiance is the strongest. Research distinguishes between two dimensions of teacher commitment: organisational commitment and professional commitment (Cohen, 1999; Firestone & Pennell, 1993). Whilst organisational commitment refers to an individual’s specific involvement in the organisation in terms of identifying with its goals and values and feeling a sense of loyalty to remain in the organisation (Mowday, Steer & Porter, 1979), professional commitment refers to the extent to which one is engaged in carrying out the specific tasks in the present work environment and the degree of importance that work plays in one’s life (Lodhal & Kejner, 1965). The professional commitment of the BCS Middle School teachers in terms of engagement in the work environment and importance of work in our lives was clearly evidenced by our continued attendance, during out-of-school hours, at Middle School meetings for several hours each week over an extended time period of eight years. During this time
we also volunteered our time, energy and resources to share professional knowledge at a number of local and state conferences including:

- The NSW Public Education Equity Conference (2004)
- The NSW Science Teachers’ Association Conference (2004)
- The MYSA (Middle Years of Schooling Association) Conference (2005)
- The ATEA (Australian Teacher Educators Association) Conference (2005)
- The NSW PSFP (Priority Schools Funding Program) Conference (2005)
- The IES (Independent Education) Literacy and Numeracy Conferences (2005)

It is also important to note that in 2005, both Sara and Holly reaffirmed their professional commitment by undertaking postgraduate (Masters Degree) studies in Middle Schooling, Richard accepted a new leadership challenge in a larger school and I re-enrolled in a professional doctorate degree that I had deferred several years before.

I argue here that the nature, amount and consistency of professional activity listed above, along with the comments made in reflection on our work, indicates that as a result of our involvement in the BCS community of practice and the Middle School Program, we experienced a renewed sense of professional commitment: one of three indicators used to gauge teacher change (Schulman & Armitage, 2005).

### 7.3 Evidence for student change

There are very few studies that systematically explore the relationship between teacher professional development and/or learning and measures of student learning or change (Kennedy, 1999 cited in Schulamn & Armitage, 2005, p. 392). Consequently, at this stage of the analysis I was interested in exploring the links between the professional learning we had experienced as members of the BCS community of practice and the learning outcomes of our middle years’ students. Recall that I have taken a broad view of student learning outcomes that includes measures of both cognitive and achievement indices in order to consider not only student academic achievement but also student progression (Guskey, 2002). In an extensive longitudinal study of school effectiveness
carried out by Stoll (1992) pupils’ progress and attainment were followed in academic terms (reading, mathematics etcetera) but their development was also monitored in terms of attitudes, behaviours, self-concept and attendance. The belief underlying Stoll’s (1992) study was that a good school was one in which a broad range of student outcomes were positive and that only by studying progress could proper account be taken of the very different levels of skills students possessed during various stages of schooling. Consequently, student change was considered using the following constructs: matched student standardised test results for students in Years 7 and 8, student behaviour and attendance, retention data for middle years’ students transitioning from Year 6 to Year 7, student reports and parent comments and case study evidence.

7.3.1 Behaviour

BCS had experienced a relatively transient leadership structure prior to 2000, with the appointment of approximately five Principals in as many years. For this reason, meaningful longitudinal data in relation to student behaviour notifications was difficult to secure. Also, despite the introduction of a state-wide student behaviour database system in 2000, referred to as ‘RISC’ (Record of Individual Student Contact), accurate records of student misdemeanours delineated by offence and grade were not available until 2006. Consequently I sourced information (key words and phrases) from the school’s Annual Reports from 1999 to 2007 that would indicate whether any change, for the better, had occurred in middle years’ students’ classroom and playground behaviours. Details of this analysis may be found in Appendix 7E.

In the 1997 and 1998 Annual School Reports (ASRs), prior to the implementation of the Middle School Program, student behaviour in general was identified as a concern. It was recognised that “extensive support” and “programs to develop positive behaviour management and social skills” needed to be implemented at BCS in order to address the needs of students “with learning and behavioural difficulties” (ASR, 1997; 1998, p. 2-4). There were some pro-active behaviour management strategies enacted during this time like the use of teachers’ aides to “support students in playground interaction”, additional support from district behavioural consultants and a student rewards system to reinforce appropriate behaviours (ASR, 1998, p. 2). In 2000 this pattern continued and responses from a staff survey indicated that “staff [were] concerned about the level of responsibility taken by students in relation to their own learning and the lack of student engagement in the learning process” (ASR, 2000, p. 5).
In 2001 however, with the appointment of Miguel as relieving Principal, the tone of the Annual School Reports began to change. The Middle School Program was perceived as one solution to the problem of a disengaged middle years’ population in the school. Miguel hoped that the “way to address a sense of disappointment with school life in Year 7 and 8 (would) be through the Middle School” (ASR, 2001, p. 2). Pro-active strategies to improve student behaviour also included the appointment of a Welfare Head Teacher, the introduction of a new Mentoring Program for students in years 5 to 8 and the formation of a school community anti-bullying committee, a student representative council (SRC) and a parent group initiative. By 2002, it was noted that “the majority of students interviewed in the school survey recorded a high level of satisfaction in the care and respect shown towards them by their teachers” and that the “middle school had been a contributor to overall improvement in the culture of the school” (ASR, 2002, p. 3-4). This positive tone continued throughout the ASRs for 2003 and 2004 with the school executive noting a decline in the number of discipline referrals and a “significant improvement in student attitude and behaviour towards school in general and classroom participation in particular” (ASR, 2004, p. 3).

In 2006 and 2007, after I had left BCS, student behaviour was tracked in a more systematic way using a computer database, and it was noted that “the positive and substantial reduction in the number of negative entries (27%) is clear evidence of the improvements achieved in student welfare” (ASR, 2006, p.19). Whilst it is important to acknowledge that a number of successful initiatives were implemented at BCS under Miguel’s leadership during 2000-2007, it is also clear that the Middle School Program (and its associated philosophies, structures, pedagogies and teacher community of practice) is acknowledged as having contributed significantly to the increased engagement and improved behaviour of students in the middle years.

7.3.2 Retention

The second indicator of student change considered in this analysis was the retention of students from Year 6 into Year 7: traditionally a transition point for students from Year 6 (Primary) into Year 7 (Secondary). Main and Bryer (2007, p. 102) identified retention as a way of tracking student engagement and claimed that, in comparison to enrolment data, retention was a “stronger indicator of sustainable success”. A school’s ability to attract students may be considered a measure of short term success but its ability to retain those students through transition points and into senior school reflects success in
the long term. Consequently, whilst enrolment figures (Kindergarten to Year 12) have been recorded in the ASR analysis in Appendix 7E, only retention figures have been used as evidence for sustainable student change.

Traditionally at BCS, student retention at key transition points fluctuated for a variety of reasons including: parent and student perceptions of a limited academic and/or sporting curriculum, extra-curricular opportunities available through larger secondary schools nearby, religious education preferences and the community’s belief that the school had a poor or negative culture (ASR, 2001-2007). BCS retention data for students moving from Year 6 into Year 7, Year 10 into Year 11 and Year 11 into Year 12 are summarised below in Figure 7.4. At this point it is important to note that any form of quantitative analysis of this type of data, with small cohorts of less than 20 students, should be viewed with caution in terms of validity, and therefore I have used the data to show ‘trends’ over time rather than as statistical measures.

![Figure 7.4: BCS Retention - 1997-2007](image)

Retention of students from Year 11 into 12 varied across the period of study, beginning at 64% in 1998, increasing steadily to 100% in 2002-2003 and dropping again to 56% in 2005. The peaks in retention for these students coincided with the implementation phase of the Middle School Program, and whilst these students were not involved in the middle school, a possible explanation is that this reflected a period in the school’s
history when the school and its community felt a renewed sense of optimism about the future and were willing to continue their children’s senior education at BCS. The sudden decline in 2005 (the final year for the first round of Middle School Year 8 students) is more difficult to interpret as 2004 and 2005 were highlight years for the Middle School. One possible interpretation is that one of the key areas of focus in the school’s management plan during this time was vocational education. From 2005 to 2007, Miguel implemented a series of initiatives aimed at increasing students’ opportunities to access alternative educational pathways through apprenticeships and traineeships. Students in Years 10 and 11 and 12 were actively encouraged to ‘take up’ these opportunities if their academic progress was not consistent or if university aspirations were not a consideration. Unfortunately, post school destination data for the 2005 cohort was not available to validate this interpretation.

Retention of students from Year 10 to 11 consistently fluctuated during the period under study, beginning at 60% in 1998, rising to a peak of 95% in 2003, dropping down in 2004-2005 and rising again in 2006 and 2007. This pattern was difficult to interpret and the absence of data from 1997 and 1999, a period in time prior to the implementation of the Middle School, compounded this difficulty. At this point I can only note that the peak retention period for students transitioning from Year 10 to senior years occurred 3 years after the Middle School was first implemented at BCS and again this may be aligned to the community’s changing perception of the school’s culture.

Given a Middle School context, the most important transition point considered in this analysis was the retention of Year 6 primary students into the secondary school in Year 7. As noted in previous chapters, the BCS community had lost faith in the school and the retention figure for 2001, that is 50%, certainly reflected this situation. Parents were not willing to trust the school with their young adolescents and felt that the behaviour of students in the secondary school would be a negative influence. Consequently many students left BCS after Year 6 to attend comprehensive secondary schools in neighbouring communities.

However, from 2002 to 2006, parent confidence in the school appeared to increase and retention figures climbed steadily to reach a peak of 92% in 2004: a time of celebration at BCS as the Middle School Program received a number of prestigious district, state and national awards. Retention remained high until a sudden ‘dip’ occurred in 2007 and retention fell to 58%. One possible explanation for this phenomenon could be that in
2006, Year 8 were removed from the Middle School as a result of a K-8 school review on literacy and numeracy and Margaret’s general dissatisfaction with the Middle School Mathematics Program. One is left to speculate on the effects that this might have had on parent confidence levels and further research around this issue may be warranted when the school’s 2008 ASR is released. An analysis of the 2008 ASR will also be highly significant as the 2008 graduating class will be the first cohort to have been fully schooled (from Year 5 through to Year 8) in the Middle School.

An analysis of the retention figures for students transitioning from Year 6 to 7, Year 10 to 11 and Year 11 to 12 for the period 1997-2007 have indicated a fluctuating, but generally positive trend in terms of the ability of BCS to retain students at key transition points in their schooling lives. It has been shown that this positive trend, indicative of student change, has been the most significant during the period from 2002-2005: a period of consolidation and celebration for the BCS Middle School.

7.3.3 Attendance

The third indicator of student change used in this analysis was student attendance. Schulman and Armitage (2005, p. 381), measured student engagement, following an instruction intervention, through gains in standardised test scores, grades on report cards and improvements in student attendance rates. They noted that the” first noticeable change in student behaviour was that they started coming to school more”. Chronic absenteeism among students has been noted as one of the many symptoms of alienation from school (Rothman, 2001).

School districts, in New South Wales, use school and state comparative data to track student attendance by the term, and annually. Details of attendance rates, derived from district reports in the ASRs, may be found in Appendix 7E, and trends across the study period have been graphically represented in Figure 7.5 below. Complete, matched data for school and state attendance categories were not available prior to 2000.
Historically, student attendance rates at BCS have been below the state average, and this is represented across the period of study from 2000 – 2007. However in 2001, the year that the Middle School Program was designed, school attendance figures improved and matched those of the state. Across the period of study, in 2002 (during the Middle School implementation phase) and in 2006 (during the Middle School consolidation phase) the ‘gap’ between school and state averages decreased and school attendance rates approached the state average. Miguel (ASR, 2002, p. 10) noted in 2002 that “the student attendance rate had improved”, and in 2004 he commented that “student absenteeism [was] well below that of comparable schools and these are the best participation figures in four years according to the HSLO 11” (ASR, 2004, p. 5). At this point there was no explanation identified for the decrease in attendance in 2007 but Miguel (ASR, 2007, p. 5) reported that while “overall school attendance rates [had] shown a decrease from 2006 in Years 7 to 10, an increase in attendance for students in Year 11 and 12 [had] been reported”.

The trends identified in the Kindergarten to Year 12 attendance data, across the study period from 2000-2007 indicated that students at BCS attended school more regularly during key points in the implementation and consolidation phases of the Middle School. I suggest that this trend would have been even more significant if comparable data had

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11 HSLO refers to the district Home-School Liaison Officer who is responsible for collecting and reporting school absenteeism figures.
been available prior to 2000 and if the existing data had been able to be reconfigured to reflect middle years, rather than whole school, attendance.

7.3.4 Academic attainment

The fourth indicator used as evidence for student change in this analysis is the attainment of academic outcomes for middle years’ students. Academic gains were analysed using a number of outcome measures including standardised test scores (English Language and Literacy Assessment [ELLA] and the Secondary Numeracy Assessment Program [SNAP]), the results from external state-wide testing (School Certificate and Higher School Certificate), and parent and teacher comments on student reports and portfolios.

7.3.4.1 Standardised test scores (ELLA and SNAP)

The English Language and Literacy Assessment (ELLA) has been administered to Years 7 and 8 students in NSW Government schools since 1997 (Year 7) and 1998 (Years 7 and 8), and was used for last time in 2007. The test was introduced to assess the literacy skills of students making the transition from primary school to high school and included reading, writing and language skills. The ELLA test was designed as a criterion-referenced test that allowed for the measurement of individual student attainment and progression in terms of literacy. Test results were reported comparatively with state averages in bands ranging from low to high levels of skill attainment.

The reporting of ELLA results in the BCS ASRs also varied across the period of study as reporting requirements and statistical supports changed. Comparative data for progression in literacy from Year 7 to 8 was available in the ASR from 2000, and it was reported that “the majority of Year 7 and Year 8 students were placed in the proficient bands for all three aspects” of the test (ASR, 2000, p. 9). In 2001, the nebulous comment was made that “there [were] two distinct groups within the Years 7 and 8 cohorts: one group performed commendably within the proficient to high range, while the other [larger] group performed at the other end of the scale” (ASR, 2001, p. 4). A similar trend was reported in 2002, with just under half of the students achieving in the proficient in the bands. In 2003 however, two years after the Middle School Program had been implemented, Miguel claimed that “historically the 2003 Year 7 ELLA results were the strongest achieved at BCS” (ASR, 2003, p. 2). This positive trend continued
into 2004 and 2005 with ELLA results confirming that “we (BCS) are closing the gap between our student performance and the (state) average” (ASR, 2005, p. 11).

In 2006 and 2007, as with the BST results, ELLA results were analysed quantitatively at a district level, and attainment levels from 2002 to 2007 are represented below in Figure 7.6.

![Figure 7.6: BCS ELLA Year 7 Results for 2006 and 2007](image)

Again results fluctuated during the period of study and across means of reporting and therefore definite trends were difficult to determine. In 2006 there was an increased number of students in the two lower bands, which was concerning, but in 2007 Miguel concluded that “67% of students achieved the high and proficient bands while 12.5% of students achieved the low band, representing a pleasing 16% decrease in the number of students in this band from 2006” (ASR, 2007, p. 12).

The Secondary Numeracy Assessment Program (SNAP) was introduced into NSW Government schools in 2000 to test and monitor Year 7 and Year 8 student attainment and progression in the area of numeracy. Students are tested in number, measurement, space and data, and again, results are reported in bands ranging from low to high and in relation to school, district and state data.
BCS ASRs began specifically reporting students’ SNAP results in 2002, and it was noted that Year 8 had exhibited “consistent or positive progress” and that “the implications from these results is that the MS [Middle School] project had a positive impact on numeracy at BCS” (ASR, 2002, p.8). This positive trend in the attainment of numeracy skills continued into 2003-2004, reaching a peak in 2005 when Miguel commented that “the Year 7 students gave us the best numeracy indication in many years and our results were close to state average in many areas” (ASR, 2005, p. 11).

Once again however in 2006 and 2007, with the onset of new reporting measures, the picture was not so clear. Figure 7.7 shows the BCS SNAP achievement results for Year 7 from 2006 and 2007. The majority of Year 7 students remained in the two lower bands in 2006, but in 2007 the data displayed “a positive improvement with students, thereby closing the gap on the state average” (ASR, 2007, p. 7).

![Figure 7.7: BCS SNAP Results for 2006 and 2007](image)

The ELLA and SNAP results for middle years students at BCS across the period of study did not provide strong evidence of student change in relation to the attainment of academic learning outcomes, again because cohort numbers were very small and the means of analysing data and reporting results each year varied considerably.
Munoz, Ross and McDonald (2007) examined the impact of a middle years’ comprehensive school reform model on student achievement and attendance after a three year implementation period. They raised the concern that student achievement on state-mandated tests might not be noticeable after only three years. Whilst the Middle School Program had been in operation for longer than three years, I shared this concern in relation to relying too much on the results of ELLA and SNAP tests to measure student academic attainment and/or progression in a relatively short time frame. For this reason I decided to also examine our middle years’ students’ results in external tests: namely the NSW School Certificate and Higher School Certificate.

7.3.4.2 **External test results**

Students from the BCS Middle School sat for their School Certificate from 2004 to 2007 after students had spent periods of time from one to four years in the Middle School Program. Very little data for the School Certificate was reported in the ASRs prior to 2000, when it was noted that “the school’s average performance was below state average” in the three mandated curriculum areas: English, Mathematics and Science” (ASR, 2000, p. 10) and in 2001 a very similar picture emerged. In 2002 a small “upward trend “was reported (ASR, 2002, p.8) with a “marked improvement” noted in 2004 (ASR, 2004, p. 8) and a “credible” performance in 2005 (ASR, 2005, p. 11). In 2006, there were fewer students achieving in the lower bands (bands 1-3) in English, Science and Geography and there were increased numbers of students in Band 4 in Mathematics and History. In 2007 there was a general trend of few to no students in the lowest band across the curriculum areas.

Though beyond the period of the study, the BCS 2008 School Certificate results also bear a mention here. Figure 7.8 shows the value adding data from Year 5 to Year 10 for the 2008 School Certificate cohort: a cohort that had spent their entire time from Year 5 to Year 8 in the Middle School (ASR, 2008, unpublished data). This figure shows that these students achieved positive relative growth in five of the six key learning areas assessed in the NSW School Certificate and that this growth by far exceeded the comparative data obtained in previous years.

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BCS middle school students began their Higher School Certificate in 2006. Prior to this year, student performance varied considerably across courses and comparable data was difficult to obtain as cohorts were as small as four students. When comparing School Certificate and Higher School Certificate results, the understated conclusion was reached in 2001 that “there [was] room for improvement in value adding when all courses combined [were] considered” (ASR, 2001, p. 7). In 2006, again, a small cohort limited available data and only English results were reported. Interestingly however, Miguel concluded that these results “reflected a positive trend” and “showed pleasing improvement on the previous four years results with no student achieving in the lowest band and an increase of 3.5 in the mean mark for English over the previous four years” (ASR, 2006, p. 12). There were no courses reported in the 2007 ASR due to a cohort number of less than 10 but value-adding data from Year 10 to Year 12 showed the highest performances across middle bands (Bands 3-4) with a slight increase in the lower bands. Again, though beyond the period of study, the BCS Higher School Certificate results, for a cohort schooled primarily within the Middle School, were reported as “the best ever at BCS” with a lower number of students showing relative growth from Year 10 to Year 12 in the lowest bands and a high number of students
showing positive growth in the middle bands (ASR, 2008, unpublished data) (See Figure 7.9).

Figure 7.9: BCS Higher School Certificate data for 2008

The results from external tests (the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate) across the period of study were again difficult to compare due to inconsistent reporting criteria over the ten year timeframe and small cohort numbers. However, as the Middle School Program evolved and students spent more time in the program, a positive trend in terms of relative growth from Year 5 to Year 10 and from Year 10 to Year 12 was reported for the majority of key learning areas assessed.

7.3.4.3 Parent and teacher comments on reports and portfolios

The final academic outcome measure, used as evidence for student change, was the teacher, student and parent comments from the Middle School assessment portfolios. At the end of each term, teachers and students selected a series of work samples for a portfolio folder that was then used as evidence of attainment of specified learning
outcomes. At the back of this folder parents were asked to make comments relating to the following stems:

- The best thing about my child’s portfolio is…
- I feel that my child has made pleasing progress in…
- Things I would like to see in next terms’ portfolio are…
- General comments are …

Given the need for confidentiality, individual students’ and parents’ names have not been referenced in the following analysis and quotes across portfolios have been used to ‘paint’ an impression of student attainment linked to their involvement in the Middle School.

Parents identified that their children were “making progress” in the Middle School particularly in relation to “learning and leadership”. Students in Year 6 (the upper primary cohort) and Year 8 (the upper secondary cohort) were often expected to take on leadership roles as peer coaches or tutors and group leaders. Several also recognised the benefits of the integrated nature of the curriculum, commenting that their children’s portfolio was “an excellent example of how [child’s name] is improving in all areas” and how their child “thrived on the work in the Middle School”.

Students were also asked to comment on their portfolios, and their comments generally focused on their enjoyment of the Middle School program reflecting improved engagement. Their combined comments are highlighted below:

*Middle school is very enjoyable and I look forward to doing more great work next term.*

*I have had a great time this term, just the best term.*

*This year was good, I got good marks in my exams. I hope I do as well next year. I had fun this year.*

(Amy, Peter and James, Middle School Portfolios, 2004)

Middle School student portfolios, used for both formative and summative assessment of student learning outcomes, provided evidence that parents were pleased with their children’s progress and attitudes to learning, students had achieved intended learning outcomes and, most importantly, were now clearly engaged in the classroom.
7.3.5 The case of “Ricky”
Ricky entered Middle School as a Year 5 student in 2002. He had been at BCS since Kindergarten and lived close to the school. He had been diagnosed with a mild intellectual disability in Year 1. Ricky was the eldest of three children and both of his parents were alcoholics. His mother was involved in full time home duties and his father worked in a local mine.

Ricky received varying levels of school-based academic and social support from Year 1 to Year 4 but his disability did not qualify him for additional government funding. He intermittently accessed the support of a classroom teacher’s aide and received remedial tuition in literacy and numeracy. Ricky entered the Middle School with some trepidation. He did not socialise well with children of his own age so the thought of being in the same class with older, secondary children was daunting. Ricky had very little self confidence and his experiences in school had taught him to believe that he was ‘dumb’.

After a year in Middle School, Ricky blossomed. Though not what one could call a perfectly behaved student, Ricky was now independently engaged in all classroom tasks: enthusiastically answering teachers’ questions, participating in (and often leading) co-operative group work, completing homework with pride and often volunteering to present class work to peers and other adults. Figure 7.10 depicts Ricky presenting his model of an ancient mummy and an oral summary of the mummification process to his peers as part of an integrated unit titled, “Ancient Remains”. It was to be the first of many such presentations.
In an interview with one of our academic partners in 2004, when Ricky was in Year 7, he was asked whether he thought that the Middle School was a good way to learn, he replied:

“Yeah... it’s a lot easier to learn when you’ve got two teachers helping you, and there’s like group work, work where there’s easy work to hard work for everybody else. I help the younger kids with maths, division, time stables and art”.

(Ricky, Academic Partner Interview, 2004).

Ricky felt supported by the co-operative structures in the Middle School and was able to use these structures to act as a peer coach himself to assist younger children. Perhaps for the first time, Ricky felt valued in school and this increased his confidence to take risks with his own learning. In terms of literacy and numeracy, Ricky progressed from Band 1s in Year 3 to Band 2s in Year 5. He also successfully completed a Life Skills School Certificate\textsuperscript{12} in 2008.

\textsuperscript{12} The NSW Board of Studies offers a Life Skills School Certificate to students, with disability or special learning needs, who cannot access regular syllabus outcomes and content.
In the Series 3 interviews (2009), Lynette fondly recalled Ricky’s time in the Middle School, commenting that:

“I think it was really good for him I think it cater[ed] to his needs in the fact that he could, yeah, he could work it. He could get results you know and I think that his results were probably, you know, working beyond. Like he was, I think it was really good for him”

(Lynette, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).

She concluded with a powerful statement:

“I really think that middle school empowered him. And I see a very confident young man now.”

(Lynette, Series 3 Interviews, 2009).

Ricky is currently in Year 11 at BCS with ambitions of completing his Higher School Certificate, continuing his post-school education at the local TAFE and one day owning his own computer games business. He is also completing a vocational educational placement as a teachers’ aide in the BCS Kindergarten class with Holly.

Ricky is just one of a number of cases, but I have included his story here as I consider it is the one that truly captures the concept of student change at BCS.

7.4 Evidence for school culture change

The final dimension of ‘change’ to be considered in this analysis is the change in school culture that was observed at BCS form 1997-2007. It is important at this point to clearly define the term ‘school culture’ in order to differentiate it from associated terms like ‘school improvement’, ‘school effectiveness’ and ‘school change’ (Fullan, 1992). Sergiovani (1984, p. 9) defines the culture of a school as the beliefs, values and norms that govern “what is of worth to this group and how the members should think, feel and behave”. He went on to explain its importance to a school in terms of shared meaning and assumptions:

The more understood, accepted, and cohesive the culture of the school, the better able it [the school] is to move in concert towards ideals it holds and objectives it wishes to pursue. (Sergiovani, 1984, cited in Grimmett & Crehan, 1992, p. 59)

School culture depicts a “framework of beliefs” that provides teachers with a basis of action and ultimately holds them accountable (Grimmett & Crehan, 1992, p.60). It is also an influential determinant of the teaching and learning that takes place within a
school Weick, 1982). Grimmett & Crehan (1992) identified four kinds of school culture:

1. **Strong** school cultures – where tightly structured beliefs, values and norms sit within loosely coupled organisational structures.

2. **Weak** school cultures – where a loosely coupled organisational structure is accompanied by a loosely structured framework of beliefs, values and norms.

3. **Cult-like** school cultures – a tightly structured set of beliefs, values and norms sits within a tightly structured organisational structure.

4. **Stifling** school cultures – a tight organisational structure overlayed by a laissez-faire set of beliefs, values and norms.

Of these four categorisations, only the first two are generally found in schools because, by their nature, schools do have a tightly structured framework of beliefs, values and norms accompanied by loose (and occasionally tight) organisational coupling (Grimmett & Crehan, 1992). Little (1981) and Weick (1982) however, claimed that the majority of schools could not be classified as having a strong culture because there is another factor that must be taken into account when attempting to classify school culture: it is the “nature of the beliefs and values which together constitute the basis for normative action” (Grimmett & Crehan, 1992, p. 61). This factor differentiates the typical school culture, where a culture of contrived collegiality is the norm, from a strong school culture where a culture of collaborative interdependence has been established (Little, 1981). Hence, strong school cultures are often associated with collaborative action research.

It is not my intention in this analysis to categorise the culture at BCS, as I feel that this would be an attempt to impose a rather simplistic framework over an extended experience that can only be described as complex and dynamic. Rather it is my intention to use the BCS annual school reports from 1997 to 2007 (the ASRs for 1999 and 2003 were not available), to explore, what I argue, are the changes in the school’s organisational structure (Grimmett & Crehan, 1992), collaborative processes (Little, 1981), educational foci and the explicit (and implicit) beliefs, values and norms expressed within the language and structure of these documents (Sergiovani, 1984) (See Appendix 7E).
The Annual School Reports from 1997-1999

In 1997, the school’s ASR could only really be described as minimal. There was no ‘hard’ data used to describe mandated measures like new enrolments, retention, attendance, behaviour or standardised test results. The Principal’s comments were brief and the targeted school priorities were quite general with no scope for measurable outcomes. Whilst some very positive programs were mentioned: enrichment programs, mentoring systems and various excursions, the report made consistent reference to student behaviour and support programs with very little mention of teaching and learning and no mention of the teachers in the school except to ensure us that “the teaching staff [consisted] of a blend of youth and experience and all [were] qualified in their role” (ASR, 1997, p. 2). Both the teachers’ and students’ voice were notably absent from the report and accountability rested with the author: the school’s Principal. The school’s purpose was simply outlined as “endeavouring to successfully cater for the educational, emotional and social needs of students” (ASR, 1997, p. 1).

In 1998, a temporary Principal was appointed to the school to ‘improve’ its standing in the community, as student behaviour and school results were anecdotally reported as poor. That year the ASR held an overtone of increased accountability: enrolment, retention and attendance data were reported more accurately, a full financial statement was tabled and progress results for the year’s targets were reported in a more comprehensive manner. A more positive tone permeated the report as student achievements were celebrated and a number of preventative programs were introduced to proactively manage student behaviour. Community was one of the major focuses of the report and parents were reported to have been actively involved in the school Parents and Citizens Association, classroom literacy programs, the school musical performance and an Early Start Kindergarten Program. Whilst the Principal remained as the ‘author’ of the report, the student voice was echoed through the notice of establishment of a Student Representative Council. Most importantly however, teaching and learning was a prominent focus in the report: an evaluation of the school’s assessment and reporting process was carried out, a whole school approach to the teaching of literacy was adopted, technology access was upgraded, the school executive participated in extensive leadership training and educational targets with measurable indicators were developed for the following year.
From 1997 to 1999, a slight shift in school culture is observable. Though the ASR in 1999 reflected a more accountable structure, this accountability was ‘shared’ among the school community as parents were invited to take a role in the school and whole-school solutions to problems were proposed; organisational structures were loosening. Collaborations between teachers were not yet evident in the reports, but the educational focus for the school had certainly moved from student behaviour to student learning. A stronger sense of shared beliefs and values began to emerge in the 1999 ASR through the setting of specific, measurable targets in line with the broader state-wide public education priorities (ASR, 1998, p. 11).

7.4.2 The Annual School Reports from 2000-2002

In 1999-2000, another new Principal was appointed to the school. The ASR was now compiled by a school ‘self-evaluation’ committee comprising the Principal, Assistant Principal, Head Teacher, School Assistant and a parent representative. A significant component of this ASR was a report detailing the results of an “Educational and Management Practice Evaluation” (ASR, 2000, p. 5). The school’s self evaluation committee conducted a survey with parents and teachers to gauge the school’s performance in the area of student learning. The committee concluded (with a 7% return rate) that the survey results “painted a positive picture of parental perceptions about student learning” but that “staff responses focused on the negative aspects of student behaviour rather than student learning” and “staff responses [showed] that staff [were] concerned about the level of responsibility taken on by students in relation to their learning and the lack of student engagement in the learning process” (ASR, 2000, p. 5). What exactly this focus on evaluation meant in terms of organisational structures was unclear: certainly leadership (and accountability) now seemed to be shared across the school with the formation of a self-evaluation committee, but this committees’ work seemed to be aimed at increasing teacher and student accountability through “tightened organisational control” rather than through the development of a shared set of assumptions, beliefs and values (Grimmett & Crehan, 1992, p. 60).

In 2001, the Deputy Principal, Miguel, was appointed to the position of Principal in a relieving capacity half way through the first school term, at a time when the community had lost faith in the school. An evaluation of management practice was again carried out, with an emphasis this time on school culture. The Quality of School Life survey was administered to the students in the school and the results indicated that that 90% of
primary school students were satisfied with school life, perceiving themselves to be “happy and proud” to come to school each day (ASR, 2001, p. 2). However, only 67% of secondary students felt satisfied with their life at school and felt that their teachers took “no personal interest and [didn’t] listen” (ASR, 2001, p. 2). Consequently, 2001 was a year ‘to take stock’ and put into place a number of initiatives to address perceived deficits. These initiatives included; planning for a Middle School Program, the appointment of a Head Teacher for Welfare, the establishment of a parent and student council, offering an increased number of vocational courses for students, implementing an Early Literacy Initiative and developing an Outdoor Education Program. The concept of a “relevant curriculum” and “higher expectations and demands through comprehensive teaching strategies” became the focus for 2002 (ASR, 2001, p. 2).

In 2002, a sense of what could only be described as optimism pervaded the ASR. The school evaluation committee reported numerous student achievements in the areas of the Arts and Sport, describing the year as “busy”, “productive” and “fantastic” with students who were “active”, “excelled” and “proudly represented the school” (ASR, 2002, p. 1). The student voice was evident in the report from the Student Representative Council and for the first time since 1997, photographs of students participating in school excursions, sporting events and classroom activities were included. There were now a number of sections in the ASR that described and evaluated curriculum initiatives like the Middle School Program, Remedial Literacy and Numeracy Programs, equity programs and various extension programs. It was also reported that student attendance had improved, the Middle School had impacted on standardised test results and the majority of students interviewed by the Learning Support Review Team now felt “a high level of satisfaction in the care and respect shown towards them by their teachers” (ASR, 2002, p. 3).

Again, from 2000-2002, a positive cultural shift was evidenced through the loosening of organisational control (a shared accountability) and a more explicit espousing of the school community’s beliefs and values as the educational focus became more learning-centred and student successes were openly valued and celebrated.

7.4.3 The Annual School Reports from 2003-2005
I have titled 2004 as the “year of achievements and celebrations” at BCS (See Appendix 7E). A new school uniform was implemented across Kindergarten to Year 12, student diaries were issued to students to “improve avenues of communication” (ASR, 2004, p.
3) and the school ‘reinvented’ itself through the declaration of a new vision statement: “Opportunity, Innovation and Student Success” (ASR, 2004, p. 1). The new vision was proudly displayed on the school’s banner, school stationery and in the foyers of the school’s main buildings. Additionally, the school received a number of awards including; a National Award for Excellence in Literacy and Numeracy, the NSW Award for Excellence in Literacy and Numeracy, a NSW Director General’s Award for Excellence in the Middle Years of Teaching, a state Award for Excellent Administrative Service to NSW Public Education and students in the Year 12 Visual Arts course were announced as state finalists in a prestigious film festival (ASR, 2004, p. 1). The relationship between teachers, students and parents strengthened as a result of these successes. We shared in the celebrations as a whole school, and parent participation in school events and meetings improved (See Figure 7.11). Sarason (1971, p. 59) suggested that it is the relationships, “student to teacher, teacher to teacher and school to community” that make up much of the culture of any school.

The year, 2005, was declared a “year of consolidation as well as a year of planning new initiatives” (ASR, 2005, p.1). Collegiality within the BCS Middle School community of practice remained strong, with members still regularly attending weekly meetings and now also presenting the community’s work at educational conferences throughout New South Wales and Queensland. New collegial partnerships were also formed outside of the Middle School as the BCS Mentoring Program brought students, teachers and academics from other local schools and the local university together each week to help

![Photograph 1: A Middle Years’ student displays the 2004 National Literacy and Numeracy Award](image1)

![Photograph 2: Margo receives an Education Excellence Award for the Middle School from the NSW Minister for Education at a school assembly.](image2)

*Figure 7.11: The school community celebrating ‘success’*

(Permissions granted to reproduce photographic images)
build tertiary aspirations in middle years’ students. Such collaborative cultures produce, within teachers and schools, a “greater willingness to take risks, to learn from mistakes, and to share successful strategies with colleagues…” (Fullan, 1997, p. 68).

A sense of “interdependent collegiality” was now observed (Grimmett & Crehan, 1992, p. 62). The school’s organisational structures again ‘loosened’ as Miguel openly supported experimentation (through the Middle School and Mentoring Programs) and teachers taking risks, leading them to feel “empowered to act- to be given the necessary responsibility that releases their potential and makes their actions and decisions count” (Sergiovani, 1984, p. 121 cited in Grimmett & Crehan, 1992, p. 62). At the same time a tighter framework of beliefs and values was being developed as this experimentation and risk taking spread beyond the teachers in the Middle School, threatening to become the ‘norm’ rather than the exception. Little (1986, cited in Grimmett & Crehan, 1992, p. 62) argues that when schools begin to frame tightly structured “professionally orientated beliefs and values”, that become “the basis for normative action”, around a “loose bureaucratic structure” they begin to move from a typical culture to a strong culture.

In the ten year period under study, the ASRs from 2004 and 2005 record the greatest shift in culture as organisational structures loosened through shared accountabilities and a more interdependent form of collegiality developed between teachers. Furthermore, a shared set of beliefs of values, expressed through the acknowledgement of the importance of experimentation and risk-taking in teaching and the open celebration of student success, was now explicit in school documentation and in the conversations between teachers, parents and students.

7.4.4 The Annual School Reports from 2006-2007

In 2006, BCS was the subject of a district review targeted around the literacy outcomes of students from Kindergarten to Year 8. There were concerns that students in these years were performing poorly in standardised literacy tests in comparison to state benchmarks. Consequently, the 2006 ASR contained comprehensive, quantitative data detailing student literacy and numeracy performance and growth over a five year period. Similarly, School Certificate and Higher School Certificate results were more comprehensively reported and for the first time, value-added performances were calculated.
There was an increasing number of new targeted programs detailed in the report including: a Kindergarten Transition Program, an Industry Vocational Program, a new Music Program, a Sailing Program and a Community Literacy Program. The student voice was very evident through the activities of the Student Representative Council and again, student successes across the curriculum were reported and celebrated. Interestingly a new section titled “Respect and Responsibility” echoed a cultural shift with the following opening statement: “An important aspect of the development of the culture of the school over the last five years has been the promotion of respect and responsibility in our school community” (ASR, 2006, p.15). Following this, for the first time, “teacher professional learning” was an explicit focus of the report, and it was noted that “a comprehensive program of professional learning at BCS in 2006 ensured that a wide range of training and course development activities were accessed by all members of staff” (ASR, 2006, p. 22).

The 2007 ASR, whilst very similar to the 2006 report, was obviously influenced quite strongly by the school’s response to the 2006 Literacy Review. A literacy committee was formed in 2007 to carry out an evaluation of “literacy teaching across the curriculum, K to 12” (ASR, 2007, p. 23). A detailed account of the committee’s findings and conclusions are detailed along with descriptions of the numerous literacy initiatives planned for the following year. Whilst “teacher professional learning” was again a key focus of the report, it was noted that a significant number of the training and development opportunities offered to staff were literacy based. Perhaps the most interesting component of the report however, was what was ‘missing’ rather than what was present. From 2002-2006, a significant proportion of the school’s ASR was devoted to the BCS Middle School: its structures, curriculum, teachers, students and successes. In the 2007 ASR the Middle School was summarised in a single paragraph: students in Year 8 had been totally removed from the program, three classes had been collapsed into two and another teacher had been removed from the team. The findings of the Literacy Review in 2006, coupled with Middle School staffing changes, decreased student numbers, a loss of confidence in the Middle School Program by some teachers external to the program and a growing sense of balkanisation (signalled in Chapter 5) had clearly had an adverse effect on the Middle School Program. The result of this development in terms of school culture and its effects on the BCS Middle School community of practice are considerations for future research.
An analysis of the BCS ASRs across the period of study, from 1997 to 2007, has demonstrated that an observable change in the school’s culture occurred as organisational structures loosened, educational foci moved from student behaviour to student learning and teacher professional development, interdependent collaborations between teachers began to form and the school community’s shared beliefs and values were openly espoused to become a platform for action and celebration.

7.5 Summary

This chapter has analysed the data from teacher interviews, Middle School artefacts and school-based reports to examine the links between the BCS teacher community of practice and its associated domain (the Middle School Program), and the measurable changes that occurred for teachers (in terms of professional development and personal efficacy), BCS Middle years’ students (in terms of learning outcomes) and the school community (in terms of culture). These links will be confirmed in the following chapter as I consolidate the results from Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 and propose a model that answers the final research question: What is the nature of the relationship between teacher communities of practice, teacher professional development, curriculum reform and school change?
Chapter 8

Final Discussion and Conclusion: Evolution versus extinction

8.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes this report of my research. Its purpose is to summarise, and draw together, the key findings of the study to formulate an answer to the final research question: What is the nature of the relationship between teacher communities of practice, teacher professional development, curriculum reform and school change? In addition, I will discuss some of the implications of this research for teachers’ practice and professional development and will provide suggestions for further research in this area.

8.2 The Relationship between teacher communities of practice, teacher professional development, curriculum reform and school change.

In Chapter 3 I outlined the analytical framework (see Figure 3.4) that guided my analysis. This framework consisted of the following constructs; a middle years’ reform, a teacher community of practice, teacher professional development and learning and the concept of change from the perspectives of teacher change, student change and school culture change. I will now use these constructs and the preceding analyses and discussions (outlined in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7) to propose a model that answers the main research question posed in this dissertation: what is the nature of the relationship between teacher communities of practice, teacher professional development, curriculum reform and school change?

Figure 8.1 below, mimics the original analytical framework (see Figure 3.4) utilised throughout this study, with one important exception; it not only outlines the constructs considered in this study, it now depicts, and explains, the relationships between them. These relationships will now be finalised in the discussion that follows and I will revisit this model periodically in order to highlight, and elaborate, on them. My discussion will also serve to summarise the methodologies of data collection and analysis utilised throughout the study that enabled these relationships to be determined.
In Chapter 1, the context for this research was described in terms of the case study school (its demographics and history) and the antecedents for the Middle Years’ reform that was enacted at the school (a negative school culture and falling enrolments). The reform, that is, the BCS Middle School program, was then ‘unpacked’ and a full description of its structure and organisation, pedagogy, curriculum and staffing was provided. Because the research sought to understand how teachers in a specific community of practice learned together, and how their learning translated into professional development, and subsequent change, a qualitative, constructivist paradigm was utilised (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Both the teachers’ voices, and my own as a participant researcher, were used in a hermeneutic method of inquiry and interpretation (Thomas, 2003) that drew on a rich data set comprised of interviews, observations, and school-based data and documents.

Whilst I acknowledged that community numbers were unusually small, in Chapter 4 the existence of a teacher community of practice at BCS was verified using a community of practice lens to view interview data through two, overlapping constructs. Wenger’s (1998) three dimensions of practice: mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire, were found within the data to varying degrees. The established indicators of
a functioning community of practice (Wenger, 1998) were also reified in the data, confirming that the teacher participants in the study (including myself) had in fact been engaged in a community of practice from 2001 until 2008. In addition to this, the evolutionary nature of this community was explored through the formation of a group identity and norms of interaction, an understanding and navigation of difference, a negotiation of essential tensions and the development of a communal responsibility for community members’ professional growth (Grossman et al., 2000).

The relationship between the BCS Middle School Program and the BCS teacher community of practice was found to be reciprocal in nature (See Figure 8.1). The Middle School Program was, in part, the joint enterprise in which community members were involved (Wenger, 1998). It provided the community with a ‘platform’ upon which mutual engagement (and meaning) could be built and sustained. The enterprise required a continual form of negotiation on the part of community members that eventually led to a new way of learning for the teachers involved. The BCS Middle School Program was also considered in the light of a ‘domain’: a structure that brought community members together to guide, and energise them in their work. The BCS Middle School Program provided the community of practice with a purpose, thereby bridging “personal meaning and strategic relevance” in the formation of an “indigenous enterprise” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 32, 79).

McLaughlin and Talbert (2006, p. 41) stressed the importance of impetus, in the form of a “precipitating event or evidence that existing instructional routines are not working”, to encourage teachers to work collaboratively in teacher learning communities. Wideen (1992) also examined a school whereby staff, supported by the district, created a setting in which teacher development occurred naturally within a school improvement project and concluded that teacher development could be enhanced when it occurred within, and around, such a project. The findings from this research have shown that at BCS, the Middle School Program (a school improvement project) acted as the impetus for the development of our teacher community of practice and subsequent professional development.

Conversely, the BCS teacher community of practice also acted to structure and sustain the reform (the BCS Middle School Program) beyond the initial implementation process. The BCS Middle School Program, by 2008, was not the same program that was implemented in 2001; the evolving practice of the BCS teachers shaped the program in
new ways. As discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, as meaning developed (in the form of learning around middle years’ curriculum and pedagogies) and as the community balanced the facilitating and constraining factors acting upon it, the program experienced changes in organisational structures, staffing, forms of leadership and outsider perception and support. In terms of Wenger’s (1998) three dimensions, the BCS teacher community of practice stamped elements of its ‘shared repertoire’ upon the Middle School Program in terms of identifiable artefacts (for example, integrated units of work, evaluative formats and specific teaching strategies) and routines (for example, weekly meetings and educational conferences).

In Chapter 5, the facilitating and constraining factors that shaped the BCS teacher community of practice were identified and consequently an answer to the first research question was formulated. In line with the organic thread running through this dissertation, these facilitators and constraints were likened to the natural selectors that act upon, and direct, the evolutionary processes of living organisms (Darwin, 1937; McKinnon, 1995). Facilitating factors were defined as those factors that enabled the BCS teacher community of practice to form and evolve over time. In this study, ten facilitating factors were identified: strong interpersonal relationships, professional development opportunities, the personal attributes of teachers, a sense of purpose, the recognition of success, support from the community and others, school context (including specific structures) and financial support. The construct of teacher tenacity, defined as a hybrid of teacher resilience and determination, was also identified as a significant facilitating factor. Calling upon the work of Day et al. (2006), I proposed that, for the teachers in the BCS Middle School Program, their community of practice provided the supportive social arena necessary to construct and sustain positive teacher identities. In turn, this enhanced each teacher’s ability to draw on and produce the tenacity needed to overcome or manage any instabilities caused by imbalances in the personal, professional or situational dimensions of their lives. This facilitating factor was therefore identified as an important agent for the sustainability of teacher communities of practice in schools.

In terms of factors which hindered the evolution of the BCS teacher community of practice and bounded the community in some way, six constraints were identified in this study: additional workload, the pressures of external accountabilities, sustainability concerns, group tensions, an insular membership and communication outside of the community. Furthermore, two factors; leadership and balkanisation, were identified as
having a dual role in the formation of the community as they acted as both facilitators and constraints during its evolutionary process.

The identification of facilitating and constraining factors was a highly significant finding in this study. It highlighted some of the conditions needed to “nurture and grow” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 12) teacher communities of practice in schools, cautioned against those conditions that suppressed this process and filled an identified ‘gap’ in the literature around how teacher communities of practices are born, evolve and sustained over time (Hoban, 2002; Grossman et al., 2000; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006).

In Chapter 6, the research findings indicated a direct link between the BCS Middle School teachers’ membership (and participation) in the teacher community of practice and their learning, and subsequent professional development (See Figure 8.1). Learning, for these teachers, was characterised by changes in meaning, practice, community and identity (Wenger, 1998).

Changes in meaning centred upon new knowledge, experiences and understandings of primary and secondary syllabuses, middle years’ curricula, student learning and the role of the teacher in classrooms. The processes through which changes in meaning occurred were found to be those that valued individual expertise, individual and collective critical reflection and collegial support. For newcomers to the community, changes in practice were found to be facilitated by a process of reverse legitimate peripheral participation (Hung et al., 2006). Through this process, identity formation occurred through an enculturation of practice that was directed, and encouraged, by ‘old-timer’ core members (Wenger, 1998). Teachers in the community of practice also experienced a new sense of belonging (or community) as they participated in both their community, and in other overlapping middle years’ communities. This, in turn, led to new forms of participation and legitimacy. As a result of their participation in the BCS teacher community of practice, teachers were also able to reform their professional identities through empowering processes like the formation of strong and positive personal relationships, collegial support and an immersion in practice.

Interestingly, Wenger’s (1998) framework of learning was extended when a fifth component was identified from the data in the study. The concept of teaching was seen to play a significant role in the professional development of the BCS Middle School teachers. Learning within the teacher community of practice was found to be enhanced through an action research approach that imposed structure and collective reflective
processes onto teacher interactions. Hoban (2002, p. 42), when comparing “training” and “learning community” models of teacher learning, also identified the importance of “introducing new ideas to extend teachers’ thinking”. Drawing from the work of Little (1981), Barth (1990, p. 31) celebrated the idea that when teachers work together collegially in schools, they “teach each other what they know about teaching, learning and leading” and as a result, “craft knowledge is revealed, articulated and shared”.

These findings, around teacher learning (and subsequent professional development) in communities of practice, provided an answer to the second research question raised in this dissertation: in what ways does a community of practice lead to or provide professional development for teachers?

The analysis and discussion outlined in Chapter 7 revealed a direct, transformative link between the learning and professional development experienced by the BCS Middle School teachers within their community of practice, and the resultant constructs of teacher, student and school cultural change (See Figure 8.1). Firstly, teacher change was measured in terms of our pedagogical practices, our attitudes towards teaching and learning and our commitment to the profession. The study found that through our learning in the teacher community of practice, our work as teachers changed; we prepared and planned more systematically and collaboratively, we developed and implemented a new middle years’ curriculum, our methods of instruction became more student-centred and motivating, our methods of assessment and reporting shifted to an authentic and outcomes-based paradigm and the frequency and intensity of our collaborations gave us a greater confidence for ‘risk-taking’ in teaching and learning.

The personal efficacy of the BCS Middle School teachers also changed as a result of their membership, and participation, in the community of practice. Teachers reported that they came to believe that their teaching could make a difference for students and their community and that they felt a new sense of “agency”. This in turn led us, each in our own way, to recommit to the profession of teaching and to our ongoing learning and professional development. This was evidenced by our willingness to share new knowledge and practice with other teachers at educational conferences, take on leadership roles in other contexts and begin postgraduate courses of study.

Secondly, the impact of the BCS teacher community of practice on the construct of student change was considered. Holistic student outcomes were measured and positive changes in student behaviour, retention, attendance and varying degrees of academic
attainment were identified. Parents noted that their children were making progress in the Middle School and they were pleased with their attitude to learning and their levels of engagement and motivation. It is also important to note, that the study found that there was a reciprocal relationship between teacher change and student change (See Figure 8.1). Whilst this was a heartening finding, it was not a new one. Researchers have reported for some time that for most teachers, becoming a better teacher related directly to the enhancement of student outcomes (Fullan, 1999; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Guskey, 2002). Guskey (2002, p. 382) claimed that “what attracts teachers to professional development” is “their belief that it will expand their knowledge and skills, contribute to their growth, and enhance their effectiveness with students”. For the BCS Middle School teachers, improvements in their students’ outcomes contributed to their sense of efficacy as teachers and spurred them on to take advantage of further professional development opportunities within the teacher community of practice with the promise of improving student outcomes even more.

The final construct that was considered in relation to the impact of teacher learning and professional development was school cultural change. Through an examination of the BCS Annual School Reports from 1997 to 2007, changes in school culture; measured against organisational structure, collaborative processes, educational foci and espoused beliefs, values and norms, were determined. Findings indicated that during this period the school’s organisational structures loosened, the educational focus moved from student behaviour to student learning, interdependent teacher collaborations became more common in the school and a strong, shared belief system began to permeate the school community. In short, the school culture became a more positive one.

Figure 8.1 also depicts reciprocal relationships between changing school culture and teacher change and student change. Findings suggested that as the school culture became more positive, teachers, in the community of practice, felt a renewed sense of purpose, value and commitment and students began to experience new levels of engagement and motivation for learning. The relationship observed between the BCS Middle School teachers’ learning and professional development and teacher, student and school cultural change has also supported the original proposition I raised in Chapter 1 of this dissertation; that teacher communities of practice can act as vehicles for a transformative mode of professional development in schools.
The preceding discussion has served to summarise, and draw together, the research findings outlined in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 in order to illuminate a model (See Figure 8.1) that answered the final research question outlined in this dissertation: What is the nature of the relationship between teacher communities of practice, teacher professional development, curriculum reform and school change?

I will now consider these findings in terms of the implications they may have for teachers’ practices, collaborations and professional development in school contexts.

### 8.3 Implications of the findings for practice

The purpose of this research, as discussed in Chapter 1, was to explore, and explain, the nature of a teacher community of practice that was born, and evolved, in a small central school in rural NSW. In addition, the research considered this community of practice in terms of a vehicle, that acted both as a means of implementing a Middle Years’ reform in the school and offered teachers a pathway to a transformative form of teacher professional development. The research addressed several gaps in the literature that were identified in Chapter 2 and was significant for the following reasons: 1) it explored the actual formation of a teacher community of practice within a middle years’ context, 2) it examined how a teacher community of practice evolved in a school setting and how it was sustained in that setting over time and 3) it determined how a teacher community of practice, rather than a series of professional development activities, might be used to improve teacher professional development in order to enhance personal and organisational learning (Yamagata-Lynch, 2001).

The following discussion will outline some of the implications of these research findings for practice on a number of levels; for our society, for our schools, for teachers, and ultimately, for our students.

Firstly, a democratic society demands a democratic schooling system; one that values “the premise that individual voices are important, that different perspectives can be productive, and that ultimately the wisdom of the collective exceeds the wisdom of any individual” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 55). If, as teachers, we want our students to be able to participate fully in such a society, if we want them to be able to appreciate difference, work together to understand others and solve an ever-increasing number of problems and inequities in their world, we need to model a sense of community (Grossman et al., 2000). Teacher communities of practice offer a possible way to
achieve this in our schools. For the teachers in the BCS community of practice, this research confirmed that “when educators connect with one another, they can accomplish far more collectively than they could ever hope to accomplish individually” (Dufour & Eaker, 1998, p. 282).

Secondly, in offering a summation of the facilitating and constraining factors that acted to shape the BCS community of practice, I also recommend that schools need to consider these factors when they began the process of community formation. At a systems level, teacher communities of practice need to be given the support (philosophical, financial, structural) to ‘get off the ground’ and recognition when they achieve gains for students that are not easily measured by comparative performance data. Fullan (1992, p. 120) claimed that “individual schools can become highly innovative for short periods of time without the district” but without support from the district “they cannot stay innovative”. At the level of the school, leaders need to provide the same kinds of support in a more direct form; a shared ethos and vision, opportunities for outside facilitation, specialised timetables, appropriate levels of staffing for teaming and release-time for planning. In order to sustain the community of practice, school leaders, need to be cautioned against those factors (for example balkanisation) that may undermine the community’s evolution and bring it to the brink of possible extinction (Darwin, 1937). The support required from systems and schools also needs to be maintained beyond the formation phase, for as internal and external conditions change, the teacher community of practice needs to be able to change, and evolve, with them in order to remain viable and dynamic. Thirdly, the most significant finding from this study was the direct relationship observed between the BCS teacher community of practice and the transformative outcomes achieved for teachers, students and the school. Teachers working in isolation are left with limited resources for the kinds of professional development required to assist them in achieving these transformative outcomes (Rosenholtz, 1989). In conversations around educational reform, there is a “renewed emphasis on the importance of involving teachers as informed agents, problem solvers, and collaborators in the educational change process” (Englert & Tarrant, 1995, p. 2). In terms of implementing reforms, like the BCS Middle School Program, traditional models of teacher professional development based on a ‘training’ paradigm, are no longer adequate. Little (1994) asserted that:
Emerging alternatives to the training model, though small in scale, embody assumptions about teacher learning and the transformation of schooling that appear more fully compatible with the complex demands of reform and the equally complex contexts of teaching (p. 1)

In this dissertation I have argued that teacher communities of practice in schools offer one such alternative to traditional models of teacher professional development and as such, can act as vehicles for reform implementation and subsequent school change. Teacher communities of practice can develop the levels of “collegiality and experimentation” needed to successfully implement new programs in schools (Langer, 2000, p. 436). If we truly wish to initiate change in our schools, we need to “honour the visions of school people”, as these are:

...the prescriptions for school reform that have the best chance to be taken seriously, enacted and sustained by teachers and principals. Changes in schools may be initiated from without, but the most important and most lasting changes will come from within (Barth, 1990, p. 159).

Teachers who volunteer to become part of a community of practice also have responsibilities within that community. In order to sustain the community they need to find ways to work together, negotiate professional and personal tensions and differences, value professional development opportunities, embrace greater leadership roles, find purpose in the collective work of the community and celebrate successes together. Sustaining the passion for their work, in the face of additional workloads, increased external accountabilities and the threat of balkanised cultures, is also vital and requires tenacity on their part. Teachers will need to balance the personal, professional and situated dimensions of their lives if they wish to participate fully, and over time, in their community of practice (Day et al., 2006).

Finally, systems, schools, and teachers themselves, need to recognise, and value, how learning occurs within communities of practice if they aim to cultivate and sustain them. The findings from this research have indicated that for teachers, identity formation within a community of practice requires more than an ‘incidental’ development of meaning through practice and participation. The teachers in the BCS Middle School demanded a component of teaching for their learning. The wider implication of this for schools is that they need to consider both structure and process when they embark on the journey of community development. The importance of outside facilitation (in the
form of a broker) and insider leadership is also flagged as a consideration (Wenger, 1998).

The preceding discussion has outlined the key findings of this study in light of their implications for practice at the level of society, systems, schools and teachers. The following discussion will now expand on this, by suggesting avenues for future research.

**8.4 Suggestions for further research**

Effective learning communities in schools are rare in the literature, and it is “unclear as to what combinations of conditions will encourage such long-term teacher learning” (Hoban, 2002, p. 42). Though critics of single case-study approaches may call for larger scale forms of research to determine the effectiveness of teacher communities of practice in schools, I would argue that each and every case study adds another layer of understanding to the processes through which these communities might be fostered and sustained over time. Despite the significant number of case-based reports in the literature, there are few empirical studies that document how communities of practice work and how they can be sustained in educational communities (Kirschner & Lai, 2007). There is a need to explore more of these unique teacher communities of practice in context to fully understand how schools might go about the business of cultivating them (Wenger, 1998).

Two constructs, related to building and sustaining communities of practice, were also raised in this dissertation and require further theorising: the concept of teacher tenacity (and the ‘ideal community teacher’) and the process of reverse legitimate peripheral participation (Hung, et al., 2006). Teacher tenacity was identified in this study as one of the facilitating factors that acted to shape, and more importantly, sustain the BCS teacher community of practice. It was characterised as a teacher attribute that united the dimensions of resilience and determination. I hypothesised that a symbiotic relationship existed between the community of practice and the tenacity of its teachers. The teachers’ tenacity acted to sustain the community against constraining factors, and the very nature of the community, and the relationships upon which it was built, enhanced and developed this tenacity further. This relationship needs further theorising so that schools wanting to begin the process of community formation can consider the effects of tenacity, and other teacher personal attributes, on member participation and community longevity. I also suggested that the concept of teacher tenacity, as a
possible moderating and mediating factor for teacher retention in general (Day et al., 2006), needed further exploration.

The process of reverse legitimate peripheral participation (Hung et al., 2006) was identified in this study as one of the key ways in which newcomers to the community were encultured into its practice. If enculturation into a community of practice is a necessary prerequisite for identity formation, then any process that facilitates it warrants further investigation. Schools wishing to embark on the process of forming a teacher community of practice, or schools that already have an existing community but wish to expand on its membership, would benefit from research into exactly how reverse legitimate peripheral participation encultures newcomers into a community and how it can be intentionally utilised as a “nurturing framework” (Hung et al., 2006, p. 313).

8.5 Conclusion and final reflection

“The centrality of the teacher in focused, purposeful and effective, educational reform can scarcely be overstated” (Buchanan & Khamis, 1999, p. 2). As a result of our experiences in the BCS Middle School, the “centrality of the teacher” could be read as the ‘centrality of the teacher community of practice’ (p. 2). In 2001, a small teacher community of practice was born at BCS; it required four volunteer teachers, a desperate situation and a ‘wobbly’ vision of a better way of learning for a group of very disengaged, but very special, middle years’ students. From 2002 to 2007 this teacher community of practice evolved. As it encountered challenges it adapted, as it engaged in practice it developed new professional knowledge, and as professional knowledge grew it developed new and better practices. As a result of this evolutionary process, the BCS Middle School teachers experienced new ways of learning and being, Middle School students experienced a sense of belonging and success (some for the very first time) and the school celebrated the promise of impending change.

This dissertation does not rehearse a fairy tale; it doesn’t claim to provide a recipe or list for change and it doesn’t pretend that all of the changes described can, or will, be sustained. I acknowledge that the change process in schools is a complex one, that it takes years of hard work to bring about school improvement and that many times, when change is planned on a small, localised scale, schools succeed for short ‘bursts’ of time and eventually return to the ‘status quo’ (Fullan, 2001). But that can’t mean that we don’t keep trying; “pockets of success” can, and do, happen (Fullan, 1993, p. 6). The Middle School teachers at BCS were changed, professionally and personally, by their
participation in a community of practice and the feelings of “empowerment” that Lynette (2009, p. 14) spoke about do last beyond a specific context of time and place. The Middle years’ students described in this study have completed their compulsory, and in many cases, post compulsory education and when I visit BCS now, several of them (including Ricky) run to the school gate to reminisce with me over those special middle years. Whether BCS sustains the changes initiated and continues to maintain a more positive culture is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but I take heart from the words of Ronald Edmonds (cited in Barth, 1990, p. 32):

*If I can show you one school that can do it, it can be done.*
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The tenacity of teachers: The evolution of a teacher community of practice.

Tracey Ella Borg

Volume 2

A Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Education at Charles Sturt University.

2009
# Appendices

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Appendix 1A

BCS Middle School teaching unit lesson plan: “Overhead and Underground”
### Lesson 7-10
**Energy Conservation and Transformation**

#### Focus Activity:
- Students recall a simple energy chain (Sun – wheat – grain – chicken – drumstick – human – CO2 – wheat)
- Students view diagrams of complex energy web and discuss/record the **Law of Conservation of Energy** – that energy can never be created or destroyed, it can only be changed from one form to another.
- The teacher demonstrates the lighting of a match and asks students to identify the energy changes involved:
  1. Striking the match – Kinetic becomes heat and sound
  2. Heat energy from friction causes a chemical reaction.
  3. Chemical potential energy is released as heat and light.
- Students could display this in a poster.

#### Activities
- Students explore the concept of energy transformation through a series of practical investigations:
  1. Popcorn
  2. Falling Bodies
  3. Hydrating Plaster of Paris
  4. Model Dynamos
  5. Electric Motors
  6. Electrical Heating
  7. Cotton Reel Dragster

#### Concluding Activity
- Students write their investigation reports into their Science Journals.

### Key:
- Depicting hands on learning experiences

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### Notes
- **CYCLE UNITS**: The cycle and unit specific to each activity.
- **SKILLS AND CONTENT**: The skills and content developed in each activity.
- **READING VIEWING**: The reading activities involved in each project.
- **COMPOSING REPRESENTING**: The composing activities involved in each project.
- **TALKING LISTENING**: The listening and speaking activities involved in each project.
- **GRAMMAR PUNCTUATION**: The grammatical and punctuation aspects covered in each project.
- **LANGUAGE FEATURES**: The language features developed in each project.
- **COMPUTING**: The computing activities involved in each project.
- **OUTCOME ASSESSMENT**: The assessment criteria for each project.
Appendix 3B

BCS Middle School constructivist lesson plan from the unit “Funnie Families”
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<td>● Students view an Overhead Transparency listing the themes of the unit and the understandings they need to develop.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● The teacher reads out a list of famous Shakespeare quotes. Students are asked if they have ever heard of them and do they know any others?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Students brainstorm previous knowledge about William Shakespeare and his plays, listing play titles, storylines and characters.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● As the unit progresses students will be creating a wall display about the life, times and works of William Shakespeare. Students can begin creating and displaying the information brainstormed in the focus activity. This will include: names of characters, plays, lines, phrases, jokes, insults, 16th language, images etc. Students will be encouraged to use graphic organizers to collect and display data on the wall.</td>
<td></td>
<td>PASH, pg 141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Using an Expert Jigsaw Strategy, students will use library and internet resources to research the life, times, works and legacy of William Shakespeare. Each expert group will be given 5-10 focus questions to report on.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reflections on Classroom Thinking strategies, pg 89-90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● In home groups, students will discuss what they have learnt, and prepare a group presentation to share with the rest of the class. The presentation should include elements that may be added to the class display wall (images, phrases, words, explanations, timelines, quotes etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Getting to Know Shakespeare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Students recall their knowledge of William Shakespeare and produce a list of facts/phrases/stories etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td>English Power 2, pg 143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Students produce items for the display wall.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dramathemes (Purple and Green)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Students successfully play drama mimes individually and in groups.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Research focus questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key:**

- Depicting the use of cooperative learning strategies
- Depicting the use of cognitive (thinking) strategies
- Depicting the use of ‘constructivist’ learning approaches
Appendix 3C

Meeting agenda from a BCS Middle School meeting that was designed and implemented by Sara
Changing Pedagogy – A Team Approach to Learning

Session focus: Equity Conference Presentation & Future Directions Date: 5th February, 2003

Outcome: To plan presentation for the Equity Conference
Decide on professional development strategies/processes needed for 2003

Sharing and reflection
- Holiday news
- Overview of program for new staff

Team discussion of Pre-session task:
1. Purpose and audience of conference
2. “Characteristics of a good middle school program” – affinity diagram
3. Data analysis

Team Task
1. Plan conference session
2. Bone diagram

A bone diagram is used to help everyone understand the big picture of change. It also allows participants to understand the difficulty of advancing an organisation toward a desired state.

In class, use the bone diagram to:
- Improve classroom management
- Design experiments
- Study transitions throughout history
- Understand how to transition from poor performance or attendance.

1. Brainstorm statements which identify the present state of the program
2. Reverse the process and identify the future state of the program
3. Next identify positive forces that create growth and then negative forces that prevent growth and place these above and below the bone diagram.

Reflection
Complete journal
Appendix 3D

Series 3  Semi-structured Interview Questions – 2008/2009
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Core and Peripheral members

1. What kind of professional development opportunities have you been involved with in the past in schools? How have these experiences impacted on your learning as a teacher?

2. Reflecting back to these experiences, what strategies were used by the facilitators (eg. handouts, lectures, workshops, discussion, group tasks etc)? Which strategies did you feel ‘worked’ for you? Why/why not?

3. When you first became involved in the BCS Middle School Program, how did you feel? What did you expect? Were your expectations realised? Why/why not? How do you feel now?

4. What strategies are, and have been, used in the BSC Middle School program that help/hinder your professional development as a teacher? How do these strategies and your experiences differ from those in Question 2?

5. What would you call the BCS Middle School ‘group’ of teachers? How has the group worked over the years in terms of strategies, resources, structures and relationships?

6. Who are you, as a teacher NOW? Who were you six years ago? What happened?

7. (For core members only). Why are you still there?

School Principal

1. Reflecting back to 2001, how did you feel about the BCS Middle School Project? What were your expectations for the school, teachers, students and community?

2. Were these expectations realised? Why/why not?

3. What did you see happen to, and for, the teachers involved in the project? How did they professionally develop? Why do you think this happened?

4. What do you think your role was during 2001-2006?

4. What do you think will happen now for the project, school and these teachers?
Appendix 3E

Sample of split page format from observation field notes (2006/2007)
References:


Explanatory Notes:

Meeting observations were recorded as field notes and the context of each meeting was set under the headings: Date, Venue, Meeting purpose, Attendees. On the opposite page, observations were reframed under the analytical headings: Reflection on analysis, Reflection on method, Reflection on Ethics, conflicts and dilemmas, Frame of mind and Clarification.
Appendix 3F

AGQTP agenda and meeting transcript
AGQT PROGRAM – 2004/2005

WEEKLY RELECTIONS

TERM: 4  WEEK: 1

DATE: 13/10/04

PRESENT AT MEETING: 

AGENDA

1) CBAM completion (rolled on)
2) Introduction to QT
3) Plan for the October 19th meeting and November meeting – possibility of change of date for Jade.

Business Arising
1) Q1 Portfolios copied, Year 8 to do
2) Submission posted to , need to re-email as she has not received it yet.

General Business
* Next meeting 20/10 – 2:00pm - 3:30pm at for 2 week trial

ACTIONS FOR NEXT MEETING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are we doing</th>
<th>Who is responsible?</th>
<th>What will they need?</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) QT Programming Checklist + AGQT Plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) PACT Books for teams members</td>
<td>20/10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) CBAM Surveys</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Sending amended AGQT plan, Purple QT booklet and copies of IS programs</td>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) QT Workshop documentation</td>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Assistance with IS program copying
* Purple QT booklet from
* QT material from
QUALITY TEACHING PROJECT
PORTLAND CENTRAL SCHOOL, 2004-2005
MEETING TRANSCRIPT ANNOTATIONS

The following transcript annotations constitute a list of concerns, reflections and observations taken from the meeting recordings of the Portland Central School AGQTP, 2004-2005.

Team members: Tracey Borg, Gaye Hoskins, Jodie Mason, Chris Nelson, Jack Priestley.
Project Advisor: Melanie Meers.
Academic Partners: Jane Mitchell and Joanne Reid.

The first meeting was held at Bathurst SEA Office.

Key questions for further consideration:

- Is the question of depth of understanding and the breadth of our curriculum still our key issue?
- Is this a function of our structure or would individual subject teachers face this issue anyway when changing pedagogy to fit the QT framework?
- Are we articulating our professional learning about programming for maximum student engagement (Item 6)?
- Do we still have work to do in explaining the Intellectual Quality of our teaching and learning experiences to our older students?
- Now that we have a cohort having gone all the way through the Middle School, at the end of this year, do we still feel that Year 8 engagement is a wider pedagogical issue or are we overcoming transitional issues inherent in creating the Middle School structure?

1. The project’s central concern was expressed – covering mandated syllabus content within the framework of a multi-disciplinary integrated curriculum structure and the depth of understanding of students when units cover such a range of content.
2. Tracey repeated concern over time spent in the laboratory in relation to the Science component of Integrated Studies.
3. The emphasis on experimental design was identified as a positive aspect of our curriculum structure.
4. The possibility of lesson evaluation and coding being a confronting experience was identified, particularly when teachers were teaching out of their areas of expertise.
5. Registration issues were raised when QT strategies became part of teaching methodology but were not articulated in teaching programs.
6. The belief was stated that Middle school programming practice had evolved to the point that existing programs could not be re-used and that existing programs would have to be reviewed to meet the student needs of a changing cohort and to maximize student engagement.

7. Difficulties with project methodology identified regarding the reliability of student survey responses – students answer differently, depending on context and audience.

8. A long standing concern for the whole Middle School project – that of disengagement of older Middle School students who perceived the project as holding them back, certainly socially, but also educationally.

9. The question as to whether this identified issue with Year 8 was a short-term transitional issue or a wider pedagogical issue.

10. Another issue was raised about time given off class for professional learning and the unique nature of the classroom environment - that is, that our students do not appear to be flexible in their learning when given another teacher. Could this professional learning time be used to fill in the perceived gap in our students’ skills?

11. The reflection was offered that are identified “problems” are balanced by the quality of the programs being developed.
Appendix 3G

Information sheet and Consent form
You are invited to participate in a voluntary research study conducted by Mrs Tracey Borg, Doctor of Education student from the Faculty of Education at Charles Sturt University, Bathurst.

**Project title:** The tenacity of teachers: the evolution of a teacher community of practice.

**Purpose and design of the research:** This research seeks to determine the factors that facilitated and/or constrained the development of a community of practice among a team of middle years teachers in a small central school in NSW. It will explore the relationship between this community of practice, innovation and school change. The research will take the form of a qualitative case study and data will be collected through interview, observation and document analysis.

**Participant Involvement:** Participants agreeing to take part in this study will be asked to:
- Attend a 30 minute open-ended interview with the researcher, whereby the interview will be tape-recorded for transcription.
- Be prepared for the researcher to take observational notes at school meetings attended by the participant.
- Provide permission for the researcher to access teaching programs, personal journal entries and interview transcripts, meeting transcripts, unmarked work samples and school-based data (Principal permission).

**Use of Data:** Any data (retrospective or prospective) collected during the study will be coded and analysed using an appropriate methodology. Results and interpretations will not be used outside of the boundaries of the research. Participants will be encouraged to view, and comment on, personal data transcripts and the final report.

**Risks, Discomforts and Inconveniences:** You may feel uncomfortable discussing your thoughts and feelings during interview sessions or may find an independent observer at meetings intrusive. The researcher will endeavour to make you feel as comfortable as possible during these processes and you will be reminded that your participation and contributions are voluntary and that all discussions will be confidential.

**Confidentiality:** All interviews and observation recordings, notes and transcripts are confidential. Your identity will remain anonymous and no identifying information will be recorded.
Your rights: Your participation is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate. You may end your participation at any time. Should you decide not to participate or end your participation, you may do so without penalty or discriminatory treatment.

Contact Details: If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study you may contact the researcher on:

Tracey Borg  
Phone : 63384464  
Email: trborg@csu.edu.au

Prof. Jo-Anne Reid  (Principal Supervisor)  
Phone : 63 384433  
Email: joreid@csu.edu.au

Charles Sturt University's Ethics in Human Research Committee has approved this project. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact the Committee through the Executive Officer:

The Executive Officer  
Ethics in Human Research Committee  
Academic Secretariat  
Charles Sturt University  
Private Mail Bag 29  
Bathurst NSW 2795  

Tel: (02) 6338 4628  
Fax: (02) 6338 4194

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.
SCHOOL OF TEACHER EDUCATION  
CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY  

Consent Form

Project Title: The tenacity of teachers: the evolution of a teacher community of practice.

Researcher: Mrs Tracey Borg  
Phone: 63384464  
Email: trborg@csu.edu.au

Prof Jo-Anne Reid  
Phone: 63384433  
Email: joreid@csu.edu.au

This is to certify that I, -----------------------, hereby agree to participate in the research project titled – “The tenacity of teachers: the evolution of a teacher community of practice” and :

- The purpose of the research has been explained to me, including the potential risks and discomforts associated with the research and I have read and understood the written information given to me.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation in the research at any time and that if I do I will not be subjected to any penalty or discriminatory treatment.
- I permit the researcher to tape record my interview as part of the research.
- I understand that any information or personal details gathered in the course of this research about me are confidential and that neither my name or any other identifying information will be used or published without my written permission.

Signature: --------------------------

Date: --------------------------

Charles Sturt University's Ethics in Human Research Committee has approved this project. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact the Committee through the Executive Officer:

The Executive Officer  
Ethics in Human Research Committee  
Academic Secretariat  
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Appendix 4A

Series 1 Interviews- COP Dimension Analysis

Data: Series- 1 Interviews from the Learning Support Team Review (2001)

1. **Mutual Engagement (Code Item 1)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence – Specific Quote</th>
<th>Reference Theme or Researcher Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Primary and secondary teaching staff…..have invested considerable time and effort into</td>
<td>Both sectors working together- non-homogeneous grouping (p75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the development of an organisational structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Link the schools’ primary and secondary departments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• …enthusiasm and skills of the involved teachers</td>
<td>Engagement in the enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• …the commitment of the involved teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• exceptional commitment of personal time demonstrated by the middle school team</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ….considerable skill and dedication</td>
<td>Brokerage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• willingness to critically analyse teaching practice, consider change and share the</td>
<td>Relationships(p76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>results</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• …support of the Linkages consultant</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• sound relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The quality of staff and student relationships and student behaviour has improved</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>over recent times</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Involved teachers also reported a higher level of comfort with their “non familiar”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>department of the school, leading to better staff and student relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>•</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Evidence- Specific Quote

- *The growth of a general ‘language of the curriculum’*
- *Engagement in extensive professional development*
- *Teaching and learning programs have achieved a greater priority*
- *Sharing of teaching skills*
- *...the model for professional development used in the middle school has appropriately focussed on current research, sharing and reflecting on classroom experiences, discussing new strategies and allowing time for implementation*
- *...model developed is sound and worth maintaining*
- *Share the project with the broader DET community through professional journals, web sites, visits to and from other like sites and presentations at educational functions (Recommendation 3 of the review)*

### Reference Theme of Researcher Interpretation

- Communal response (p80)
- Negotiated meaning (p82)
- Negotiated response to situation (p77)
- A shaping of practice (p80).
3. *A shared repertoire (Code Item 3)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence- Specific Quote</th>
<th>Reference Theme or Researcher Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Teaching and learning programs have achieved a greater priority</td>
<td>Negotiated meaning (p82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ... leading to a community of instruction</td>
<td>Communal response (p80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- reported a flow-on of developed teaching skills into their mainstream classes</td>
<td>Sharing practice – becoming a way of doing things (p83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ...the middle school project has been one contributor to an overall improvement in the culture of the school...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4B

Series 2 Interviews- COP Dimension Analysis

1. Mutual Engagement (Code Item 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Evidence- Specific Quote</th>
<th>Reference Theme or Researcher Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Juliette    | ● *How do you make connections? – going to the nights*  
              ● *we presented on the middle school and I thought – and it was so exciting*  
              ● *What was easy? – the programming because you did it all together….I don’t even mind like if it’s an afternoon, or whatever, because you’re doing it together*  
              ● *When you work out how many man-hours are in there, its heaps* | A sense of “team”  

Holly | ● *I mean it pulls heartstrings because it’s been our baby for five year; our hearts and souls have been poured into this thing*  
  ● *it’s those little things that I think we really carry with us … and keep close to our hearts*  
  ● *in sharing those little experiences*  
  ● *collegial dialogue*  
  ● *because together, with what we’ve done has achieved this*  
  ● *so we got over or little hump and we found ourselves thinking ‘hey, we can do this’* | Atmosphere/relationships, the job takes on a “unique significance” in individual lives (p 75)  
  Early signs of “in it together”  
  Practice does not exist in the abstract (p73). Dense |
- Everyone else I talk to in the profession talked about the importance of the social aspect of the group and how that coping ... and comradeship and friendship has kept you together – do you agree?- Absolutely.... it really is amazing how close that totally different people can become about a project; and we are, we’re so different in so many ways
- and it’s just amazing how close it’s brought us all
- Gaye was still coming to the meetings, so she didn’t want to lose anything ...
- I’d want to be there and be part of this very passionate group that wanted to do things and wanted to change and wanted to learn all the time
- the whole team is really touchy feely, we’re forever giving each other hugs and things, and it’s just our way of showing our support of each other on every level

John
- I know there’s a middle school team that meets every week just started with the middle school, and I attended all of their out of school hour meetings and everything else, and just tried to involve myself as much as possible.

A tight node of Interpersonal relationships (p76)

A neophyte entering the COP- the meetings were the “gateway”

relationships are sustained (p74). A kind of coherence transforms mutual engagement into a COP – a COP does not require homogeneity (p75).
- Just opportunities kept arising for me, and it was just a great experience for me…. but I'm getting so much more out of it.
- you’ve got the classroom focus, but then you’ve got this other quite big focus that’s the collaborative one... But you can see how it’s benefiting everyone
- Do you think you could be lured away? - I'd give up too much, I think. I like to keep that rapport going
- But we always have a couple of days in the holidays where we get together to program the units

| Sara | and I've worked with them for so long
- Originally I was coming in delivering the professional learning in a structure, you may have seen the structure, this conglomeration of everyone bringing things to the table- it’s fabulous
- what I've learnt is the only way to make change is you’ve got to work with the people, become part of the group
- I think part of it is the friendship, because that developed over the first term, and then they wanted to go on |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement over time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mutual engagement – negotiation in terms of PD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margo</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracey</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I guess I think at some point in my life within this group, I will be unable to pick up the bag, and I hope other people can pick it up for me.

And we’re friends enough that I wanted to talk rather than bitch about it

It’s easy to bounce ideas off each other. It’s easy to chat and laugh socially, and enjoy your work

### AGQTP Project

- There was lots of reading and lots of professional dialogue
- Transcripts of meetings showed an openness and willingness to critique, reflect and collaboratively investigate new strategies and processes.

### 2. A joint enterprise (Code Item 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Evidence- Specific Quote</th>
<th>Reference Theme or Researcher Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juliette</td>
<td>See I'm a team person, I like to do things together, I don’t want to go off and do something on my own, and I don’t even mind like if its an afternoon, or whatever, because you’re doing it together. I found after being on one for three</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
for 31 years, I had no homework, because it was all done. And everybody had put in, but I just went, hey, I can sit down and watch telly. That was just an incredible feeling. When you work out how many man-hours are in there, its heaps.

| Holly | • it’s so successful for us in our professional learning and where we’re going and where we’re at in our own teaching, and it’s been just so successful for the students that we’ve had, and we just didn’t want to see that go ...
  | • The structures are there, but you need a huge level of commitment for it to happen, and I’m not sure whether the people here are willing to give that
  | • it’s been our baby for five year; our hearts and souls have been poured into this thing
  | • everything is in place to happen, and that’s | Response to the need to help kids (p78) | Accountability for sustainability-recognising key participants must be “done without” – what happens to the COP if its not there eneterprise? | Everything in place despite the constraints of the situation (p79) |
what we find most frustrating, because we do want this programme to continue

- you’re doing everything you can think of to ensure its sustainability

- I guess at the beginning, not knowing what we were doing, not knowing the reason we were doing it, and not even knowing how we were going to get there

- So I guess we just grabbed it with both hands and thought we either run with it or we spend years trying to plan it and getting nowhere

- so we had really high expectations right from the start, and that this was going to work and this was going to be the vehicle of change, and we were doing everything we could to keep those expectations high and our own personal

The birth of the joint enterprise and the COP

Negotiation of the enterprise – collective process(p77)

The enterprise evolving
understandings enough to be in front of ourselves

- And then we had to try to refine a process or identify a process that we could follow again, for this to be successful, and that was really hard too, that seemed to be ever evolving in itself

John

- We talked about degrees of involvement
- There’s an idea in the school at times that there’s ‘that group’
- Is that the sort of perception that these people are working too hard, and they haven’t got a life outside of school? - Yeah, they do say that
- We’ll just sit down and get ideas out and plan and have a direction, and then some ideas for lessons that might come from that. And then it will either be breaking that one unit up, and each of us going away and taking

Beginning participation in the COP- LPP- on the fringe
A joint enterprise shutting others out – balkanisation?

Routines (p83)

Shared practices-breaking up the workload
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sara</th>
<th>we use those tools to evaluate the meetings and all that sort of stuff</th>
<th>Evaluation of enterprise as part of accountability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Margo | - And it is a result of a very conscious effort to raise the profile of learning  
- I'm still not sure that we did the right thing, I'm still not sure that we didn’t cave in  
- Because there's that conflict there and it’s the core of our problem  
- Doing that means doing that with other people, that aren't used to working that way, and I am daunted by that  
- I think that’s probably one of the big challenges that the group will face next, is | What the group are “there to do” (p74), work is required (p74)  
Shared responsibility – strong use of “we”- responding to issues together  
Discussing the issue of assessment – a negotiation around this issue (p78)  
Recognising that a COP has conflicts –enterprises must be negotiated around them – a diverse group of people (p75) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>how to resolve in a good way some of those assessment practices</strong></th>
<th><strong>But you do all the planning together</strong></th>
<th><strong>Planning is done collaboratively</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Tracey** | • Working with like minded people who also like to work hard  
• I think we have to be even more accountable, and that’s going to be a pressure. The change keeps going for the better, that we don’t just change for the sake of change, that we continue to look at what we do and improve it | **Accountability for the enterprise** |
| **AGQTP Projects** | • For these teachers, action learning had already become part of their normal practice  
• In short there was a commitment to evidence based practice, driven by the teachers shared sense of responsibility to their students |
...this contributed to a shared responsibility and interdependence among teachers in each team.

3. A shared repertoire (Code Item 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Evidence- Specific Quote</th>
<th>Reference Theme or Researcher Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juliette</td>
<td>so you hadn't had the chance to be involved- I did a bit the end of last year, but not as much, because they were really flowing, because they’d been doing it, and coming in is really hard.</td>
<td>A nice description of “knowing how things are done” –“they flow”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>....because we’ve come to the belief that it works so well, it’s so successful for us in our professional learning and where we’re going and where we’re at in our own teaching, and it’s been just so successful for the students that we’ve had, and we just didn’t want to see that go ... we’re so different in so</td>
<td>Stories/concepts adopted-reificative aspects (p83)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
many ways, yet as I said with our interjecting into people’s conversations all the time, 9 times out of 10 we’re going to say exactly the same thing, and it’s really interesting to be that close to people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>John</th>
<th>The proformas for how we write our units, we drew into all of that, and each time you have to do those questions. So even though we’re taking away, we’re all doing it in the same format that we’ve agreed to and see that we value, and mapping the outcomes so that we’re all aware of what’s going on, it’s not foreign when you go from one to another or if you go through the unit.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>So when they’re talking about things like the higher order thinking, we’ve already done a huge amount on Bloom’s, and actually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using a common QT language- filtering down to kids</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Incorporated that into programming
- So I think, again, it might not be up front, but its certainly- we talk about it, it’s written in, it’s a major part of that starting point anyway
- We've talked the metalanguage over with you, I think that comes across very well with the kids, and their talk about their learning and the tools they use and stuff like that.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Margo</th>
<th>And I think we were also viewed as a bit elitist.</th>
<th>A sign of balkanisation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tracey</th>
<th>The teachers enjoyed the professional dialogue and the support it gave them in their teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGQTP Projects</td>
<td>The QT model provided a language to improve the existing dialogue ....</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4C

Meeting transcripts COP Dimension Analysis
1. **Mutual Engagement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Reference/Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“we do” Supportive Learning Environments very successfully (20/10/04)</td>
<td>Unique identity (p76) Shared practice (p76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...when we said we’ve got a proposal for you, and you just said “yep I’m there, what is it?”...she’ll just say yes to anything in working with us. (20/09/04)</td>
<td>A tight node of interpersonal relationships (p76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...you get a lot personally from it, you wouldn’t do it if you didn’t and I think that’s what you were saying about the connection. (19/11/04)</td>
<td>Engagement in practice (p76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why don’t we write down the periods we all have free, and cross match them... (20/09/04)</td>
<td>Diversity (p75) Challenges and disagreements (p77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve just started working through ...I’ve copied 15 articles...so I am collecting them...and when I’ve got them all I’ll photocopy it for everybody. (20/10/04)</td>
<td>Complementary contributions (p76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...I’ve got a booklet of all those sorts of strategies that look at how you set up cooperative learning. (27/10/04)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over the course of this project, the participants have come to a shared</td>
<td>Shared practice (p76) Negotiation of meaning (p73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding (29/10/04)</td>
<td>What they are there to do (p74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It was noted at this meeting that the three team members who have been with the Middle School Project since its inception had relatively similar CBAM survey results. (29/10/04)</td>
<td>Creating similarities through working together (p73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ...the beginnings of a shared understanding that our own reflection on how we are learning as professionals is helping us to clarify the processes of learning for our students (3/11/04)</td>
<td>Overlapping forms of competence (p76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It was acknowledged that the discussion was valuable, particularly in relating the framework to our classroom practice (10/11/04).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do we still see the shared understandings of the team approach as the main reason for our success with QT so far? (19/11/04)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It was noted at this meeting that the three team members who have been with the Middle School Project since its inception had relatively similar CBAM survey results. (29/10/04)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ...you’re not actually in a situation where you are just beginning, you’ve actually been working at it for some time (29/10/04)</td>
<td>Sustained relationships- dense relationships (p74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ... and that’s something we’ve wanted to do for a long time. (27/10/04)</td>
<td>Defining belonging (p74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Someone (?Holly) credited our level of commitment to the Middle School</td>
<td>Coherence (p74)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to the professional knowledge and understanding we have gained and shared from our involvement with the project. (19/11/04)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Reference/Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OK, can I just go through the last one’s agenda, what we were going to do? (27/10/04)</td>
<td>Relationships organised around “what they are there to do” (p74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...the continued professional development through collegial dialogue (19/11/04)</td>
<td>Tensions- non harmonious relationships (p77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...no we still haven’t got that far, and I’m still not happy...(27/10/04)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **A Joint enterprise**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Reference/Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An overview of the project format was given…. (20/10/04)</td>
<td>Communal negotiation of the enterprise (p78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...general meetings may be one way of formalising and addressing these concerns. (20/10/04)</td>
<td>Shaping the practice (p80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was agreed by the team that more information was needed. (29/10/04)</td>
<td>Mutual accountability (p78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.....credited our level of commitment (19/11/04)</td>
<td>Shaping the practice (p80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle school programming practice has evolved to the point… (20/09/04)</td>
<td>Mutal accountability (p78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well, I guess we have to set up a meeting time and stick to it…. (20/09/04)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over the course of this project, the participants have come to a shared understanding (29/20/04)</td>
<td>Communal negotiation (p78)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. **A Shared repertoire**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Reference/Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The importance of discussion and</em></td>
<td>Words/symbols that become part of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Can we pencil that in as a workshop.</strong> (27/10/04)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>So, any questions? How do people feel about everything?</em> (20/09/04)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>What do you think about recording instead of minutes? Well, I don’t know, I’d like written minutes as well. I would too, because …</em>(20/09/04)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>You can debate with me if you like. I agree with your statement.</em> (20/10/04)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>…the program was constantly being evaluated.</em> (20/20/04)</td>
<td>Response to conditions(p79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>So, they’re just to get together, on task, in the right direction and in the right frame of mind, and we need everybody here together.</em> (20/09/04)</td>
<td>Mutual accountability (p78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>And the other option that was interesting was that a lot of people actually paid themselves-you know how we do after school hours meetings…</em>(20/09/04)</td>
<td>Interconnection through engagement (p79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Discussion of the use of the GANNT tool as a visual representation of the project deadlines to assist in planning.</em>(10/11/04)</td>
<td>Working within constraints (time and funding)(p79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>…do a lot of programming in holiday times…</em>(19/11/04)</td>
<td>Inventive practice – makes it all their own (p79)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
substantive conversation to the
development of teacher
understanding of the dimensions was
discussed.(20/10/04)

- … and I think our scaffold helps us to
do that… (20/10/04)
- I think we have moved a long way
towards deliberately putting QT into
our practice (20/10/04)
- …the beginnings of a shared
understanding (3/11/04)
- …relating the framework to OUR
classroom practice…(10/11/04)
- …do we still need the shared
understanding of the team
approach…(19/11/04)
- …we have adopted “common sense”
teaching practices.(19/11/04)

- That comment would have been
intended both seriously and
humorously, if I know us. (19/11/04)
- Who’s the dominating fat controller
now? (19/11/04)

- ….beginning to address this through
the four key programming questions
and through the Bloom’s Taxonomy
grid completed on all our teaching
programs. (2010/04)
- I think we have moved a long way
towards deliberately putting QT into
our practice (20/10/04)
- …using the data retrieval charts you

practice (p83)  Stories/shared jokes (p83)  Tools – ways of doing things (p83)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>and Margo developed earlier on… (20/10/04)</th>
<th>Shared beliefs (p84)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● …we just looked at the CBAM surveys… and Holly points out that the three of us, myself, her and Margo are looking very similar. (20/10/04)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● …that QT manifested itself in our teaching in spontaneous ways. (20/10/04)</td>
<td>Routines (p83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Middle school programming practice has evolved to the point… (20/9/04)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● …we meet at night on a Wednesday or Thursday… (20/10/04)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● …yet they’re in our incidental thinking.. (20/09/04)</td>
<td>Genres/actions (p83)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4D

Mapping the fourteen indicators of a COP across sources
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Evidence/Artefact</th>
<th>Source of data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) sustained mutual relationships- harmonious or conflictual</td>
<td>• Longevity of the BCS Middle School Team (2001-2006) with four core members (Tracey, Holly, Margo and Sara)</td>
<td>• Researcher’s Journey Folders (2002-2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <em>Primary and secondary staff</em>…….<em>have invested considerable time and effort</em>….</td>
<td>• BCS Newsletters (2001-2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <em>exceptional commitment of personal time</em>….</td>
<td>• Award nominations (2004, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <em>involved teaches</em>….</td>
<td>• Series 1 Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <em>sound relationships</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <em>involved teachers also reported a higher level of comfort</em> ….<em>leading to better staff and student relationships</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <em>I know there’s a middle school team that meets every week… (John)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <em>Doing that means doing that</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
...with other people that aren’t used to working that way, and I am daunted by that. (Margo)

- ...as the group goes on....
- The social aspect has been very important to me. The Wednesday, Thursday night thing is not a burden at all....once you’re in there the energy just comes and away you go.... So that hasn’t been the hard bit. (Margo)

- ...so there’s the collegiality, the fun that we have, the friendships and the support. (Margo)

- ...a sense of school community has been the key. (Margo)

- ...collegial dialogue that happens on a weekly basis..(Holly)

- ...and then when we got back together it was like; thank God we’re home again....we all missed it..(Holly)

- ...how close it’s brought us all....(Holly)

- ...the whole team is really touchy feely, we’re forever giving each other hugs and things and it’s just our way
of showing support of each other on every level…(Holly)

- …and I’ve worked with them for so long…(Sara)

- I think part of it is the friendship, because that developed over the first term and then they wanted to go on. (Sara)

- So when those little glitches come – but that’s any working group. (Tracey)

- …linkage consultant had developed a close relationship with the middle school teachers. (Researcher Paul)

- The teachers enjoyed the professional dialogue and support it gave them in their teaching. (Researcher Paul)

- …we said we’ve got a proposal for you and you just said “yep, I’m there, what is it?” we just giggled amongst ourselves and said “isn’t she a doll, she’ll just say yes to anything in working with us, she doesn’t know what the commitment is, what the time is or anything”.

- …one of the key benefits of the QT project was the

- AGQTP meeting-20/09/04

- AGQTP meeting – 19/11/04
substantive conversation around the project and the continued professional development through collegial dialogue.

(2) shared ways of engaging in doing things together

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision Statement and process of construction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers indicated that the middle school project had supported the growth of a general language of the curriculum...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...the engagement in extensive professional development by the middle school team has resulted in their significantly enhanced understanding of the continuum....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sharing of teaching skills across traditional boundaries....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The middle school project has provided students and staff with more consistent contact, leading to continuity of instruction...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...the model for professional development used in the middle school has appropriately focused on .....sharing and reflecting on classroom experiences....</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher’s Journey Folder (2002)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Series 2 Interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
... the conscious effort to engage... we certainly think about it to a much greater extent... (Margo)

...a very conscious effort to raise the profile of learning (Margo)

The structures are there, but you need a huge level of commitment for it to happen...(Holly)

And its very nice feeling effective, in control of what we’re doing.(Margo)

Planning is done collaboratively...(Margo)

I attended all of their out of school meetings...(John)

...these people are working too hard, and they haven’t got a life outside of school.(John)

But I mean they’re really good at bringing ideas forward and flowing the ideas.(John)

But we always have a couple of days in the holidays where we get together to program the units.(John)

It is still a team.(John)

...we presented on the middle

- AGQTP meeting – 20/10/04
- AGQTP meeting – 20/09/04
- AGQTP meeting – 19/11/04
- AGQTP meeting – 19/11/04
school...and it was so exciting. (Juliet)

- ...because they were really flowing (Juliet).
- ...in sharing those little experiences...(Holly)
- ...and then to see each others’ faces light up because together, with what we’ve done has achieved this...(Holly)
- So it was bridging those links, and I guess really we found that out altogether...(Holly)
- ... and be part of this very passionate group that wanted to do things and wanted to change and wanted to learn all the time..(Holly)
- ...this conglomeration of everyone bringing things to the table-it’s fabulous.(Sara)
- Working with like minded people who also like to work hard...(Tracey)
- There was lots of reading and lots of professional dialogue (Researchers Paul)
- For these teachers action learning had already become part of their normal practice. (researcher Paul)
• The teachers enjoyed the professional dialogue and support it gave them in their teaching. (Researcher Paul)

• Holly expresses the view that “we do” supportive learning environments very successfully.

• But we’re eager to start.

• Do we still see the shared understandings of the team approach as the main reason for our success with QT so far?

• Someone credited our level of commitment to the Middle School to the professional knowledge and understanding we have gained and shared from our involvement with the project.

• ...do a lot of programming in holiday times, but it’s more the after school commitment, because it’s not the money.....

• ... so we love the learning, so we like to learn, and I think that is a huge part of it

• But you know you get a lot personally from it, you wouldn’t do it if you didn’t
and I think that’s what you were saying about the connection……  

| (3) the rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation | • Middle School professional development meetings held weekly (2002-2005)-agendas, minutes, readings, structural tools, copies of newsletters and awards  
• ...the middle school model is innovative and has considerable potential to link the school’s primary and secondary departments.  
• ...the development of the Middle School has engaged involved staff in a critical evaluation of curriculum, teaching practice and the organisation of the school.  
• ...the Middle School project timetable could be enhanced through the provision of greater planning time…  
• ...the Middle School model was a significant and unique educational innovation, deserving of recognition at both local and state level.  
• This process has required considerable skill and dedication and has been supported by extensive |
| • Researcher’s Journey Folders (2002-2003)  
• Series 1 Interviews |
• documentation. (English and Maths continuum development)
• ...engagement in extensive professional development....
• It is intended the middle school curriculum will expand to include other KLAs.
• ...the Middle School project has challenged and informed staff
• Middle School teachers reported a flow on of developed teaching skills into their mainstream classes.
• Teachers also believed that, as the project develops, avenues to engage a wider range of staff in middle school developmental activities should be identified and supported.
• All teachers agreed that the model developed is sound and worth maintaining.
• ...the project will continue in the light of staff changes.
• ...through the allocation of additional support from the Science consultant (on including Science in the Middle School curriculum)

• Series 2 interviews
• We’ll just sit down and get ideas out and plan and have a direction and then some ideas for lessons that might come from that (John).
• Because I’ve had more training and development in the last three years than I would have got in two teaching lifetimes in traditional models. (Margo)
• …their knowledge is much broader than they believe it is. (Sara)
• …we have already done a huge amount on Blooms and actually incorporated that into programming. (Sara)
• ..because I think you’re right on the cutting edge. (researcher, Julie conducting interview with Tracey)
• This is a striking, natural means of knowledge generation and distribution driven by a subtle, incidental process of exchange of information. (Researcher Paul)
• Transcripts of meetings showed an openness and

• AGQTP meeting – 20/09/04
• AGQTP meeting – 20/09/04
• AGQTP meeting – 19/11/04
willingness to critique, reflect and collaboratively investigate new strategies and processes. (Researcher Paul)

- *Keeping the program small and limited to an enthusiastic group allowed it to move quickly in a mutually supportive environment.* (Researcher Paul)

- Several conversations going on at once – unable to pick up thread (transcribers comment)

- *I’ve got three jobs now…do you want me to do one?…I’ve got four….do you need any help?…can anyone else think of anything?* (allocating jobs)

- *The importance of protocols to keeping discussion focused was mentioned.*

<p>| (4) absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process | …the growth of a general language of the curriculum… Teachers indicated that the process of including additional staff would need to respect the preparation that has already taken place | Series 1 Interviews |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>58</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in developing the Middle School.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ...we’re always talking about what happened in the last unit. (John)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Series 2 Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• OK, can I just go through the last one’s agenda, what we were going to do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• All talking over each other (transcribers comment)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• AGQTP meeting - 27/10/04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• AGQTP meeting – 20/10/04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) very quick set up of a problem to be discussed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Series 1 Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Series 2 Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Of particular merit has been the work done in creating a Years 5 to 8 English and Mathematics curriculum.....</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The review team believes that this level of teacher interaction with the syllabus is to be highly commended.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ...and then it will be either breaking that one unit up and each of us going away and taking a bit...or one person might do each unit. (John)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ...we just grabbed it with both hands and thought we either run with it or spend years trying to plan it and</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| getting nowhere. (Holly) • And then we had to try to refine a process or identify a process that we could follow... (Holly) | • AGQTP meeting-29/10/04
| So where do you think we need to go from here? • So the submission three, set meeting date, set meeting time... | • AGQTP meeting – 20/09/04
| I’ve got three jobs now...do you want me to do one?....I’ve got four....do you need any help?...can anyone else think of anything? (allocating jobs) | • AGQTP meting – 20/09/04
| The importance of protocols to keeping discussion focused was mentioned. | • AGQTP meeting-19/11/04

| (6) sustained overlap in participants’ descriptions of who belongs | • ...given the exceptional commitment of personal time demonstrated by the Middle School team
| ...it’s been our baby for five years, our hearts and souls have been poured into this thing....(Holly) | • Series 1 Interviews
| The sharing of teaching skills across traditional | • Series 2 Interviews

| (7) knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they |
can contribute to an enterprise boundaries has also
developed teachers’ ability
to cater for a range of age
groups.

- Trace is the science person. (John)
- I’ve spoken to Trace at length about it. (Margo)
- Holly and Tracey are very effective disciplinarians. (Margo)
- ...she’s more of an independent person, yes she really is still an integral part of our team... (Holly)

- Holly expresses the view that “we do” supportive learning environments very successfully.
- I’ve got three jobs now...do you want me to do one?...I’ve got four....do you need any help?...can anyone else think of anything? (allocating jobs)
- ...the beginnings of a shared understanding that our own reflection on how we are learning as professionals is helping us clarify the processes of learning of our

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>60</th>
<th>Series 2 Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGQTP meeting-20/10/04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGQTP meeting-20/09/04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGQTP meeting – 3/11/05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
mutually defining identities

- Consistent referral to the Middle School team as a construct or identity - referred to as “involved staff” in early parts of the interview

- ...there’s an idea in the school at times that there’s “that group”... (John)

- No, it’s that they’re leaders in that they’re having ideas and going places. (Juliet)

- ...but you need a huge level of commitment for it to happen, and I’m not sure whether people here are willing to give that. (Holly)

- ...so we really had high expectations right from the start... (Holly)

- ...she just couldn’t get it to work (speaking about a member who did not fit in to the COP) (Holly)

- ...being seen as this elite little bubble. (Tracey)

- We’ve tried so hard to bring people in... (Tracey)

- Working with like minded people who also like to work hard... (Tracey)

- The challenges are not to be seen as that little elite group

---

Series 1 Interviews

Series 2 Interviews

AGQTP meeting - 20/10/04

AGQTP meeting – 19/11/04
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(9) the ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products</th>
<th><strong>that shut others out.</strong> (Tracey)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Holly expresses the view that “we do” supportive learning environments very successfully.</strong></td>
<td><strong>...and I did have a comment about is it nobody there has a life; seriously I’ve had people say that..</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>...the development of the middle school has engaged the involved staff in a critical evaluation of curriculum teaching practice and the organisation of the school.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Researcher’s Journey Folders (2003-2004)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>...their willingness to critically analyse teaching practice, consider change and share the results.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Series 1 Interviews</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>...the process has been supported by extensive documentation.</strong></td>
<td><strong>The evaluation of one cycle will inform the development of the resultant cycles.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>...the Middle School project has challenged and informed</strong></td>
<td><strong>Researcher’s Journey Folders (2003-2004)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
involved staff on the nature of their teaching practice, resulting in significant enhancement to the delivery of lessons.

- The model for PD used in the Middle School has appropriately focused on current research....

- Teachers also believed that as the project develops, avenues to engage a wider range of staff in MS developmental activities should be identified and supported.

- Teachers indicated that the MS project has been one contributor to an overall improvement in the culture of the school during 2002.

- As the year has progressed teachers believed that students have demonstrated a greater level of satisfaction with the MS model.

- They believed that the project should be viewed as an important element of the school’s efforts in marketing and developing educational programs....
• ...a very conscious effort to raise the profile of learning...(Margo)

• There’s a decision made at the beginning...(Margo)

• For the first time I can critically evaluate the way I deal with children and the strategies that I use.(Mago)

• Transcripts of meetings showed an openness and willingness to critique, reflect and collaboratively investigate new strategies and processes.(Researcher Paul)

• So, the argument would be to have a tool that would pre-assess our QT knowledge now......

• She just asked me about the process of collecting data....it sounds as if we have a significant amount....

• ...because we are constantly evaluating things.

• ...the beginnings of a shared understanding that our own reflection on how we are learning as professionals is helping us clarify the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Processes of learning of our students.</th>
<th>Unit Programs (2002-2006)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(10) specific tools, representations and other artifacts</td>
<td>Student work sample folders (2002-2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson plan pro-formas, IC wheels, unit overviews</td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student work samples</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…the curriculum has been designed to include four cycles…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students provided specific examples of middle school teaching and learning activities that had engaged and inspired them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But more of a focus on the metalanguage straight up. (Margo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The explicit articulation of the varying thinking strategies that we do through the graphic organisers, through the processes, of the kids learning skills. (Margo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The proformas for how we write our units, we drew into all that...so even though we are talking away we’re all doing it in the same format that we’ve agreed to and see that we value…(John).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…we use those tools to</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>AGQTP meeting – 20/10/04</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGQTP meeting – 10/11/04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGQTP meeting – 19/11/04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- evaluate the meetings and all that sort of stuff. (Sara)
- ...that they are prepared to use the terminology of the learning tool or technique, and that they are being exposed to that skill.
- HOT tools...
- Discussion of use of the GANNT tool as a visual representation of the project deadlines to assist in planning
- The importance of protocols to keeping discussion focused was mentioned.

- (11) local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter
- ...it’s been our baby for five years...(Holly)
- “I’m a life-long learner”..that comment would have been intended both seriously and humorously, if I know us.
- Who’s the dominating fat controller now?
- Series 2 Interviews
- AGQTP meeting – 19/11/04
- AGQTP meeting – 19/11/04
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(12) jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones</th>
<th>• ... with our interjecting into peoples’ conversations all the time, 9 times out of 10 we’re going to say exactly the same thing...(Holly)</th>
<th>• Series 2 Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| (13) certain styles recognised as displaying membership | • Continual reference to “involved teachers”
Eg. .....enthusiasm and skills of the involved teachers....
• Continual use of the term “middle school team”
Eg. ...engagement in extensive PD by the middle school team
• Use of the term “mainstream” to indicate teachers outside of the middle school team
Eg. Teachers indicated that mainstream staff are aware of the middle school project...... | • Series 1 Interviews
• Series 2 Interviews |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(researcher Paul)</th>
<th>(AGQTP meeting-29/10/04)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A difference was noted between the school staff as a whole and the Middle School Team. (Discussing CBAM results on QT knowledge)</td>
<td>AGQTP meeting-20/10/04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was noted at this meeting that the three team members who have been with the Middle School since its inception had relatively similar CBAM results…</td>
<td>AGQTP meeting – 19/11/04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…and I did have a comment about is it nobody there has a life; seriously I’ve had people say that.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(14) a shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world

- Teachers indicated that the middle school project has supported the growth of a common language.....

- ...and it's being read or developed in a way that goes against the whole belief and the whole philosophy of what we perceive middle school to be...(Holly)

- Because you build up that comfort, and you tend to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series 1 Interviews</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Series 2 Interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
know each other’s practice so well. (Tracey)

- In short there was a commitment to evidence based practice, driven by the teachers’ shared sense of responsibility to their students. (researcher Paul)

- Transcripts of meetings showed an openness and willingness to critique, reflect and collaboratively investigate new strategies and processes. (Researcher Paul)

- The teachers enjoyed the professional dialogue and support it gave them in their teaching. (Researcher Paul)

- We do challenge them regularly. (Speaking about expectations of students)

- Over the course of this project, the participants have come to a shared understanding......

- I guess one other thing....is that we tried really hard to get our kids the sense of expectations are high, no matter what.....

- It was noted at this meeting

- AGQTP meeting - 27/10/04
- AGQTP meeting 29/10/04
- AGQTP meeting – 20/10/04
that the three team members who have been with the Middle School since its inception had relatively similar CBAM results...
Appendix 4E

Summary of indicator incidence across sources
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community of practice Indicator</th>
<th>Incidence of key words/phrases across sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) sustained mutual relationships- harmonious or conflictual</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) shared ways of engaging in doing things together</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) the rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) very quick set up of a problem to be discussed</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) sustained overlap in participants’ descriptions of who belongs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) mutually defining identities</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9) the ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10) specific tools, representations and other artifacts</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11) local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(12) jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>(13)</strong></td>
<td>certain styles recognised as displaying membership</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>(14)</strong></td>
<td>a shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4F

BCS Middle School Vision Statement

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MIDDLE SCHOOL VISION STATEMENT

Our middle school will facilitate the transition from primary to secondary education.

This will be evident through engaged students who are independent and confident learners.

It will be characterised by innovative and varied teaching practice where students are encouraged to meet challenges.

This is leading to the achievement of deeper levels of knowledge, higher orders of thinking and transferable values and attitudes.
Appendix 4G

BCS COP Evolution Analysis
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identification with subgroup</th>
<th>Pseudocommunity</th>
<th>Identification with whole group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer teachers identified as primary or secondary staff, not yet identified as middle school teachers. (Series 1 Interviews, 2002)</td>
<td>Middle school staff identified as a group separate from “other teaching staff” (Series 1 Interviews, 2002)</td>
<td>“The Wednesday/Thursday night thing (referring to out of hours meetings) is not a burden at all… I sometimes go in feeling tired…but once you’re in there, the energy just comes and away you go”. (Margo, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle school initiative labeled as having the potential to “link the school’s primary and secondary departments” (Series 1 Interviews, 2002)</td>
<td>“…the focus is on consolidating the middle school as an effective school entity” (Series 1 Interviews, 2002)</td>
<td>“So there’s the collegiality, the fun that we have, the friendships and the support” (Margo, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“…we were left with the beginnings of a middle school project” (Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)</td>
<td>“I know there’s a middle school team that meet every week” (John, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)</td>
<td>“…a sense of school community has been the key” (Margo, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I think we were also viewed as a bit elitist” (Margo, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“…there’s an idea in the school at times that there’s that group…” (John, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undercurrents of incivility</td>
<td>Recognition of unique contributions of individual members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not evident in the data</td>
<td>“I don’t think it would have happened without any one body missing from it”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Middle school teachers were initially a random collection of 4 volunteers- in late 2002 Richard left and was replaced in 2004

- CBAM survey results, used to assess staff’s knowledge of QT differed between the MS team and the rest of the staff. (AGQTP Meeting, 29/10/04)

- “Its like the teachers are constantly trying to pull us down” (Holly-speaking about the teachers in the school who were not involved in the middle school-Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

- “and then when we got back together it was like, thank God, we’re home again…” (Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

- “The middle school works as an integrated “whole” and it is difficult to analyse parts of the project in isolation” (Margo, AGQTP Meeting, 29/10/04)

- Recognition that a group is enriched by multiple perspectives- a sense of loss when someone leaves

- “Um, I had many comments and only
| 2003 by Juliet. (Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004). | Sense of individualism overrides responsibility to group’s functioning  
- During the time of (Holly, Juliet, John and Richard), secondary maths/science (Tracey), organizational and PD skills (Sara) as a consultant and critical friend, discipline specialties and years of experience.  
- Juliet attempts to divide tasks up between team members. (Meeting observation 19/07/06) | a few select people knew I was applying for a job and everyone I spoke to was really concerned that it was going to be the end of middle school…(Holly-core member, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)  
- …she really is an integral part of our team and I guess that concerns me greatly. (Holly-speaking on the potential loss of Margo from the school, …(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)  
- “A change in team structure opened spaces for others” (Researchers comments after Meeting observation 19/7/06 - researcher as a core member had left the COP)  
- Sara raises concerns on how |
the Learning Support team review (2002) Sara was only referred to as “the Linkages Consultant” (Series 1 Interviews, 2002)-by 2004 she was considered an integral part of the team....”I’ve worked with them for so long” (Sara, Series 2 Interviews, 2004) …she continued to act as a critical friend (Academic partner observation, 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open discussion of interactional norms</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• It was noted that “the middle school project has supported the growth of a ‘general language’ of the curriculum” (Series 1 Interviews, 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Middle school teachers reported a flow-on of developed teaching skills into their mainstream classes” (Series 1 Interviews, 2002)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the MS can be sustained when a core member (Tracey) has left and 3 neophytes (Lynette, Carol and Anne) have joined. (Meeting observation 18/07/06)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development of new interactional norms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • “But we always have a couple of days in the holidays where we get together to program the units… even though we’re taking away we are all doing the same format that we’ve agreed to……its more that’s our lesson. (John, Series 2 Interviews, 2004 –discussing the programming process the MS...)}
team had developed).

- “…its being’ read in a way that goes against our whole philosophy of what we perceive middle school to be” (Holly, Series 2 Interview, 2004 - discussing her concerns on others would ‘run’ the MS if she were to leave.

- “…part of this very passionate group that wanted to do things and wanted to change and wanted to learn all the time….” (Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

- “…we’ve already done a huge amount on Blooms’ and actually incorporated that into programming….we look at the use of graphic organizers to promote
thinking….we use those tools to evaluate the meetings… (Sara, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

- “It’s easy to bounce ideas off each other” (Tracey, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).
- “They already had an established pattern of regular meetings, in their own time, when they reflected on practice and planned actions in their action research. (Academic Partner observation, 2004)
- “For these teachers action learning had already become part of their normal practice” (Academic partner observation, 2004)
- In short there was a commitment to evidence based practice, driven by
Recognition of need for regulation of group behavior

- “Doing that *(on the topic of assessment practices)* means doing that with other people, that aren’t used to working that way, and I am daunted by that” (Margo, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)
- “…there’s ups and downs, with working that closely with people, too, in terms of keeping it together…” (Tracey, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)
- “The teachers enjoyed the professional dialogue and the support it gave them in their teaching” (Academic partner observation, 2004)
- “…we do supportive learning environments very successfully” (Holly, AGQTP Meeting, 20/10/04)
- Another comment was made that QT (Quality Teaching) manifested itself in our teaching in spontaneous ways. (AGQTP Meeting transcript, 20/10/04)
- Middle school programming practice had
evolved to the point that existing programs could not be re-used. . .
(AGQTP Meeting transcript, 20/09/04)

- Over the course of this project, the participants have come to a shared understanding. . .
  (AGQTP Meeting transcript, 29/10/04)

- “In middle school we have adopted ‘common sense teaching practices’.
  (AGQTP Meeting transcript, 19/11/04)

- “Holly spoke about graphic organizers and scaffolds…these terms once new to MS are cemented parts of the language”
  (Researcher’s interpretations of MS meeting observation, 3/08/06)
Communal responsibility for and regulation of group behavior

- “I think that’s probably one of the big challenges that the group will face next, is how to resolve in a good way some of those assessment practices” (Margo, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)
- “…the whole team is really touchy feely, we’re forever giving each other hugs and things, and its just our way of showing our support of each other on every level.(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)
- “And we’re friends enough that I wanted to talk about it rather than bitch about it, and I don’t think I’d
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>have done that without that group feeling we’ve had over the three years. (Tracey, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• There was a strong sense of commitment, <em>shared responsibility</em> and mutual support. (Academic partner observation, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sara regularly brought discussion back on track. (Researcher observation at MS meeting 18/07/06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Anne brought the meeting to order after Margo asked “So what’s on the agenda?” (Researchers interpretation of MS meeting, 9/08/06)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. **Understanding difference/navigating fault lines**

- For this marker, the major difference encountered would revolve around curriculum/pedagogical/assessment/philosophy views of the primary and secondary perspective. As the model evolved tensions around this would arise, requiring continual negotiation among primary/secondary members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denial of difference</th>
<th>Appropriation of divergent views by dominant position</th>
<th>Understanding and productive use of difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The MS was identified as “having the potential to link the school’s primary and secondary departments” (Series 1 Interviews, 2002). Whilst a “gap” was identified the impact this gap would have on the model was not fully identified at this stage.</td>
<td>As our understanding of the “gap” developed we’ve recognized that different structures/organizational components needed to be developed (eg. Timetables and syllabus continuums) “The review team sighted evidence of significant progress made by middle school staff in developing a curriculum continuum in English and Mathematics” (Series 1 Interviews, 2002)</td>
<td>In 2006 differences around primary and secondary assessment came to the fore when the NSW BOS introduced a new reporting and assessment system K-12. The MS team then had to verbalise their differences and negotiate a compromise that used high school like outcome descriptors in a portfolio style of assessment and reporting. No evidence available at this stage but this will be</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
teaching skills across traditional boundaries has also developed….”
(Series 1 Interviews, 2002). In reality a student-centred primary model of teaching was developed—depth of content was often an issue raised by the secondary teachers, for example: “I know Tracey feels it, that she’s not covering enough content area” (Academic partner, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

To combat this an integrated approach was adopted in 2003/4: “And sadly I think that in a more traditional classroom, especially in the secondary….they seem to say we’ve got this amount of content, I’m going explored in the Series 3 Interviews, 2008.
Conflict goes backstage, hidden from view

- Not evident in the data

Conflict erupts on main stage and is feared

- Personality conflict was evident at one

to do this in so many weeks….and if they don’t get it I don’t care because I’ve got to go on… (Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

- A primary model of assessment dominated the MS for several years - assessment based around portfolios. Secondary teachers were concerned about this as evidenced by: “But my brick wall is still if we use the primary set of criteria rather than the satisfactory well developed –the sort of descriptors that come into the high school… I don’t like it…. ” (Margo, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

Conflict is an expected feature of group life and dealt with openly and honestly

- Q- “So what are the difficult things? A – “ That you’re people, you have personalities….so its interesting we don’t fight more…..and we’re friends enough that I wanted ti talk about it rather than bitch about ii and I don’t think I’d have done that without that group feeling we’ve had over the three years” (Tracey,
Stage between Juliet and Margo:
“…and I wanted a role model and Margo isn’t really…and she’s not a person you can support and she’s not a team person…she used to say ‘my classroom’ and I’d say ‘our classroom” (Juliet, Series 2 Interviews, 2004).

- “I’ve had my own personal issues but I’ve kept quiet about them” (Margo, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

In 2006, tensions were noted by the observer at MS meetings around issues of commitment and meeting attendance of new neophyte members:
“Some team tensions noted. AND “Tensions between members centre around contribution and attendance-new members seem as annoyed as core members” (Researchers interpretations of MS meeting, 18/07/06). I wonder if teacher communities undergo a cyclic model of evolution as membership changes over time?

3. Negotiating the essential tension

| Lack of agreement over purposes of professional community | Begrudging willingness to let different people pursue different activities | Recognition that teacher learning and student learning are |
- Not evident in the data- a common purpose for the MS was evident from the earliest days, as seen in the vision Statement- perhaps the voluntary nature of core members participation in the project was responsible for this as was the organizational structure of weekly meetings to focus the group.

- Not evident in the data- core members were always willing to let members explore and take risks – sharing of resources at meetings was openly encouraged and appreciated and attendance at conferences was the result of group consensus. Planning and programming was always a negotiated and communal responsibility. 

Outside responsibilities (H/T and A/P roles) were often a source of personal tension but responsibility to pursue these roles was not begrudgingly agreed to.

- Evident in the data from the earliest days: “The review team agreed that the engagement in extensive professional development by the MS team has resulted in their significantly enhanced understanding of the continuum… teachers have used the continuum to plan and implement programs to meet identified student needs…there is evidence that this has led to higher expectations of students’ learning and a growth in student engagement with their learning” (Series 1 Interviews, 2002).

- “The review team believed that the
majority of students have been advantaged by their contact with the variety of teaching practices available in MS lessons”
(Series 1 Interviews, 2002)

- “And it is the result of a very conscious effort to raise the profile of learning, the importance of it, the expectation of it in the classroom…”
(Margo, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

- “Because I’ve had more training and development in the last three years than I would have got in two teaching lifetimes in traditional models…I’m being effective here”
(Margo, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

- “The other day I was in the lab…and we were looking at different
equipment and I went into a bit of a sub lesson on metalanguage…and I never would have done that before I had any of this QT” (John, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

- “It’s so successful for us in our professional learning and where we’re going and where we’re at in our own teaching and its been just so successful for the students that we’ve had..” (Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

- “…We’re here for the kids, we’re not here for ourselves, we’re not here for any other purpose” (Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

- “The change keeps going for the better, that we don’t just change for the sake of
“change, that we continue to look at what we do and improve it, I think that’s really important.”
(Tracey, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

- “This desire to ‘be sure’ characterized the project in that the teachers were determined to gather convincing evidence so that they could be confident that their MS strategy was working for all students…”
(Academic partner observation, 2004)

- “In short there was a commitment to evidence based practice driven by the teachers shared sense of responsibility to their students”
(Academic partner observation, 2004)

- “Were we articulating at this time, the
beginnings of a shared understanding that our own reflection on how we are learning as professionals is helping us to clarify the processes of learning of our students? (AGQTP meeting transcript, 3/11/04)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Taking communal responsibility for individual’s growth</th>
<th>Recognition that colleagues are resources for one’s learning</th>
<th>Commitment to colleagues growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Belief that teacher’s responsibility is to students, not colleagues – intellectual growth is the responsibility of the individual | • “Teachers also considered that the support of senior executive and the District Linkages Consultant have been essential” (Series 1 Interviews, 2002)  
• “…sharing of teaching skills…” (Series 1 Interviews, 2002)  
• “Involved teachers also reported a higher level of” | • “And I did go to the PSFP conference with Margo, and we presented on the middle school, and I thought- and it was so exciting” (Juliet, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)  
• “…so she (Sara) was bringing in information…she was actually going out and searching for” |
comfort with their engagement in their ‘non-familiar’ department of the school, leading to better staff and student relationships” (Series 1 Interviews, 2002)

- Q: “How do you learn from them?”
  A: “A lot of it is from listening” (John, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

- Margo was still coming to meetings, so she didn’t want to lose anything…(Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

- “Originally I was coming in delivering the professional learning in a structure, you may have seen the structure, this conglomeration of everyone bringing things to the table—its fabulous” (Sara, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

was certainly our expert in all of those (strategies etc) and brought in the professional readings and activities and knowledge…that we felt we actually wanted to explore and bring into our teaching” (Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

- “…we’ve got two conferences in April and May, I know that will revitalize us all again” (Tracey, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)
Contributions to group are acts of individual volition

- This marker is really only present in the researchers observations of MS meetings, after I had left the group in 2006. It seemed to apply only to neophyte members – perhaps a sign of ‘shyness’ or ‘low self efficacy’ or perhaps core members dominated the meetings?

Examples are:

1. “Lynette, a ‘fringe dweller’ previously in the COP seemed to keen to participate in the meeting – she was energized and professionally reborn?”

Recognition that participation is expected of all

- “At previous meeting it was decided that Lynette

Acceptance of rights and obligations of community membership

- “I know that there’s a middle school team that meets every week…I didn’t anticipate that the commitment would be one of those weekly meetings” (John, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)

- Implied throughout the data is the necessity, and more.
2. “Carol continued to very quiet throughout the meetings”  
   (Researcher interpretation of Meeting observation, 22/03/06 and 19/07/06)

3. “Anne taking on the ‘fat controller’ role, keeping notes, keeping to an agenda”  
   (Researcher interpretation of Meeting observation, 22/03/06)

and Anne would attend alternate meetings. Holly said that this had not been communicated well”. A feeling of disapproval is felt.  
   (Researcher interpretation of Meeting observation, 6/09/06)

- “Sara brings up the issue of night meetings ‘You’ve been doing this for a long time’, Holly replies ‘I don’t think that matters, I don’t think we’d get everything done without it’. Lynette comments ‘it deterred me’”  
   (Researcher interpretation of Meeting observation, 18/07/06)

so the acceptance, that weekly meetings were necessary and would need to continue.

- The issue around the need to sustain the model also permeates the data. This is seen as an ‘obligation of membership’
   Examples are:

- 1. “Sara talks about issues of sustainability “ it’s the core that has sustained it so far”  
   (Researcher interpretation of Meeting observation, 18/07/06)

- “…and that’s extremely frustrating, when you’re doing everything you can think of to ensure its sustainability”  
   (Holly, Series 2 Interviews, 2004)
Appendix 4H

Middle School Sample Unit Outline
APPENDIX 4

UNIT 4

Chapter and Definitions

Unit Overview and Underpinnings

1. Introduction

The assessment brief for Unit 4: Overview and Underpinnings in the context of their company, following the guidelines provided in the course syllabus.

2. Learning Objectives

- Understand the significance of understanding and interpreting data in decision-making processes.
- Develop skills in analyzing and interpreting data for business analysis and decision-making.
- Recognize the importance of data ethics and privacy in data analysis.

3. Key Terms

- Data
- Data Ethics
- Privacy

4. Assessment Criteria

- Demonstrate understanding of key terms and concepts.
- Apply data analysis techniques to solve real-world problems.
- Evaluate the ethical implications of data analysis.

5. References


6. Study Material

- Unit 4 Study Guide
- Data Analysis Workshop Materials

7. Support Services

- Library Resources
- Tutor Support

8. Feedback and Evaluation

- Self-assessment quizzes
- Peer review exercises
- Feedback from tutors and peers

9. Final Exam

- Format: Written examination
- Duration: 3 hours
- Required reading: Units 1-4

UNIT 3

Chapter and Definitions

Unit Overview and Underpinnings

1. Introduction

The assessment brief for Unit 3: Overview and Underpinnings in the context of their company, following the guidelines provided in the course syllabus.

2. Learning Objectives

- Understand the significance of understanding and interpreting data in decision-making processes.
- Develop skills in analyzing and interpreting data for business analysis and decision-making.
- Recognize the importance of data ethics and privacy in data analysis.

3. Key Terms

- Data
- Data Ethics
- Privacy

4. Assessment Criteria

- Demonstrate understanding of key terms and concepts.
- Apply data analysis techniques to solve real-world problems.
- Evaluate the ethical implications of data analysis.

5. References


6. Study Material

- Unit 3 Study Guide
- Data Analysis Workshop Materials

7. Support Services

- Library Resources
- Tutor Support

8. Feedback and Evaluation

- Self-assessment quizzes
- Peer review exercises
- Feedback from tutors and peers

9. Final Exam

- Format: Written examination
- Duration: 3 hours
- Required reading: Units 1-4
Appendix 4I

Student work samples and Meeting work samples
Sample 1: Parking lot evaluative tool

Sample 2: Graphic Organiser: Y-chart

Sample 3: Brainstorm map

Sample 4: Timeline tool: Gantt chart
Appendix 5A

Facilitators/Constraints Initial Analysis
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excerpt</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>F/C</th>
<th>Potential Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• <em>The school is a significant resource for, and has strong links to, the local community.</em></td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Situation/resource that helped instigate the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <em>BCS attracts considerable funding and support as a PSFP participant.</em></td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Funding support for the initiative that led to the development of the COP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <em>Primary and secondary teaching staff….</em></td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Potential for knowledge sharing and interchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <em>…provide enhanced district support for its further development….</em></td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Support from experts-professional development opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <em>They believed that the enthusiasm and skills of the involved teachers</em></td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teachers wanting to be involved – voluntary participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Necessary skills already</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>has been critical to the process.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• ...exceptional commitment of personal time...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ...as has their willingness to critically analyse teaching practice, consider change and share results.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F/C</th>
<th>Personal time, outside of the system, needed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F/C</td>
<td>A certain KIND of teacher is willing to be involved in a community ? Predisposition?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>• ...the support of senior executive and the District Consultant have been essential.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>• ...92% of parents believe that the MS is a successful model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>• The majority of students involved expressed strong support for the model.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• ....the majority of students and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Series 1 Interviews |
| F |

| Support from major stakeholders (parents and students) |
The commitment of the involved teachers...

The difficulty in ensuring a quality

Parents involved in the MS project are supportive and value the innovation.

A small number of parents who have been involved with the development of the MS project are believed by teachers to be actively supporting the concept in the wider community.

Teachers indicated that the MS project timetable could be enhanced through the provision of greater planning time and allocation of ‘leftover’ periods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional planning time outside of teaching load required - lack of time in a teachers’ day</td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher commitment to the enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of influences of major stakeholders – both positive and negative</td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Initials</td>
<td>Commentary</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication between the home and school…</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…engagement in extensive professional development by the MS team has resulted in significant enhanced understanding…</td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>New knowledge generation and the desire to develop professionally was beneficial to the work of the Cop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sharing of teaching skills across traditional boundaries…</td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>F/C</td>
<td>Aligning primary/secondary boundaries acted as a source of tension and as a bridge between community members – allowed for multiple perspectives- deeper understanding of members perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…MS teachers are enthusiastic about the project</td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Wanting to be involved, keen to participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS teachers also reported a flow-on of developed teaching skills into their mainstream classes.</td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Seeing the value in the work of the COP for the individual as well as the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…the model for PD used in the MS…focused on current research,</td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>The COP had a structure to meet around – purpose and process added value to the enterprise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Teachers indicated that the mainstream staff are aware of the MS project, understand the basic details but rarely have and specific involvement with the project.

- …the communication on curriculum issues between MS staff and staff who take MS students in a mainstream context is not always complete

- …in terms of being seen as this elite little bubble

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sharing and reflecting on classroom experiences, discussing new strategies and allowing time for implementation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers indicated that the mainstream staff are aware of the MS project, understand the basic details but rarely have and specific involvement with the project.</td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…the communication on curriculum issues between MS staff and staff who take MS students in a mainstream context is not always complete</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Tracey</td>
<td>Tall poppy syndrome – threats of balkanisation-division between school staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…in terms of being seen as this elite little bubble</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, John</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Academic partner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Series 2 Interview Tracey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High work load</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I guess professionally, there’s an idea in the school at times that there’s ‘that group’

Hence these few felt unsupported and a little envious.

We’ve tried so hard to bring people in, we encourage the professional development, we still get very tired.

The challenges are not to be seen as that elite group that shuts others out

But it was, and it’s really heartbreaking that they just
can’t acknowledge it and they can’t just go out and celebrate as a whole school.

- It’s like the teachers are constantly trying to pull us down and that’s really sad…

| Teachers indicated that the MS project has been one contributor to an overall improvement in the culture of the school during 2002. | Series 1 Interviews | F | Success breeds success – value of the enterprise to the ‘big picture’ – purpose and recognition for efforts

| Teachers indicated that the leadership of the school executive is also a significant contributor to this change. | Series 1 Interviews | F/C | Importance of leadership for any change

<p>| Teachers indicated that the | Series 1 Interviews | F/C | Issue of sustainability acted as a F and C at different times |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School has a current strategy to ensure that the project will continue in the light of staff changes.</th>
<th>Series 1 Interviews</th>
<th>F/C</th>
<th>...during the community’s evolution.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>...the school should access a range of information sources when considering the longer-term future of the MS project...</strong></td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Tracey</td>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
<td><strong>Influence of PD on the community? Influence of external support?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>...it’s going to get harder, because the lens is coming in now...now that other people will be looking and evaluating.</strong></td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Tracey</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Accountability of the community, responsibility for outcomes a pressure for members</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I think we have to be even more accountable and that’s going to be a pressure.</strong></td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>...we were very much under the microscope...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observation: It’s</strong></td>
<td>Series 2</td>
<td><strong>F</strong></td>
<td><strong>Need for positive</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **a tremendous achievement**  
**Response:** Good. That gives us heart. I hope the rest of the team took heart… | Interviews, Tracey |   | reinforcement to keep the community going |
| **● And that’s going to have issues for all of us…we’ll lose a team member, we’ll lose a class.** | Series 2 Interviews, Tracey | C | Numbers game of the system – lose students-lose teachers-little recognition of innovation |
| ...the pull out of the teacher....and from outside looks like the rug has been pulled out... | Series 2 Interviews, Academic partner |   |   |
| **● And I suppose Holly and I have a bond in terms of being team teachers…you build up that comfort** | Series 2 Interviews, Tracey | F | Benefits of team teaching in the MS- building personal and professional close relationships |
| **● Working with like-minded people who also like to work hard.** | Series 2 Interviews, Tracey |   | Predisposition of members – common work practices and philosophies |
| **● Sometimes the workload doesn’t** | Series 2 Interviews, Tracey | C | Normal group tensions when people work together |
get evenly distributed...and I think that happens in any group

- ...we’re friends enough that I wanted to talk about it...

- I think part of it is the friendship..

- ...I mean it really is amazing how close that totally different people can become about a project.

- ...showing our support for each other on every level

- ...so there’s the collegiality, the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Series 2 Interviews, Sara</th>
<th>Series 2 Interviews, Tracey</th>
<th>Series 2 Interviews, Margo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tracey</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strong interpersonal relationships
<p>| Fun we have, the friendships and the support. | Series 2 Interviews, Tracey | F/C | Works as a C in terms of extra work load and a F in terms of being willing to work extra hours for mutual benefits - professional/social benefits and benefits to students. |
| Time is certainly an issue for us, but all of us are willing to give up our time. | Series 2 Interviews, Tracey | C | Extra work load associated with innovation |
| And I guess I see an endless 10 years of programming ahead of us, and that’s exhausting. | Series 2 Interviews, Tracey | C | Sustainability concerns if group member leaves - concerns with a ‘top heavy’ community in a school? |
| ...some members of the group have promotional ambitions... | Series 2 Interviews, Tracey | F | Opportunity to gain new knowledge and to share knowledge with others |
| ...we have to try and find the energy to keep improving...I feel like the energy is running low at times. | Series 2 Interviews, Tracey | C | Extra work load associated with innovation |
| ...we’ve got two conferences...I | Series 2 Interviews, Tracey | F | Passion for the community, enterprise and PD |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>know that will revitalise us all again</td>
<td>Tracey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...what I’ve learnt is the only way to make change is you’ve got to work with the people, become part of the group.</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Sara</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>External support-expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fact that we’ve had a stable staff has been incredible. But because everyone was in relieving positions when I first came, and I think just to get that stability really helped the whole school.</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Sara</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Stable staff within a community and within the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...we’ve come to the belief that it works so well, it’s so successful for us in our professional learning...it’s been just so successful for he students.</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Seeing personal and professional value in the enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Tag</td>
<td>Note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its got to be able to continue without me and it’s got to be able to continue without Tracey.</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Issue of sustainability of the model and the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...reaping some wonderful rewards...</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Reward for efforts-compensation for extra work load?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s a pressure that you don’t need when you’re leaving all the time (to attend a conference)</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Taking advantage of benefits (conferences) to the detriment of the classroom – conflicting demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...he’s just beautiful and rings to wish us luck (at conferences)</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Support of the Principal – leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...collegial dialogue that happens on a weekly basis.</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Collegial relationships – personal/professional/both?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...because together, with what we’ve done has achieved this...and it’s really nice.</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sense of mutual achievement- seeing the COP work for student benefit-value and purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...just seeing their little faces light up.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I guess at the beginning, not knowing what we were doing, not knowing the reason we were doing it, and not even knowing we were going to get there.</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>...because it was at such low depths that we didn’t know how we were going to get out.</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>...we were going to prove everybody else wrong, so we had really high expectations right from the start, and that this was going to work and this was going to be the vehicle of change...</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.....could not meld with us ...could not mix with us...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Series 2 Interviews, Holly

C  Importance of vision and purpose for the community.

F  Impetuous for the enterprise – the school had no where else to go, nothing to lose

F  High expectations- a need to prove others wrong brought the group together- school pride? Stubbornness?

---

C  Issues arise when a neophyte member cannot ‘fit’ in with the COP- why the mismatch –personal disposition?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Different vision?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>….I’d want to be there and be part of this very passionate group that wanted to do things and wanted to change</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>….the mount of time that Margo and Tracey have off…</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>….supportive in terms of you have the freedom to do what you want to do….but he hasn’t been supportive in really understanding what we are trying to do…. (speaking about the Principal)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The reason we’ve developed this is because we think it’s the best thing for our students.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>…I didn’t anticipate that the commitment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, John</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• would be to one of those weekly meetings.
  • ...it was going to be a big commitment.
  • ...it might take a bit more effort to do it, but I’m getting so much more out of it.

| Series 2 Interviews, John | F | Offsetting time commitment with PD |

• I like to think I have changed a few things.

| Series 2 Interviews, John | F | Personal purpose - sense of achievement |

• **Question:** What was easy?
  • **Answer:** The programming, because you did it all together.

| Series 2 Interviews, Juliet | F | Sharing the work - the value of team |

• **Question:** Do you sense that perception ....that a lot of the people involved are leaders within the school?
  • **Answer:** No, its that their leaders in that their they are having ideas and going places..

<p>| Series 2 Interviews, Juliet | F | Predispositions of members – inherent leaders-type of person who ‘puts their hand up” |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● So when they said “who wants to”...I was there very quickly.</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Margo</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Voluntary nature of participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● I loved my job and I wasn’t getting any professional satisfaction.</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Margo</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Motivation to seek professional change-type of person? predisposing factor?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Doing that means doing that with other people that aren’t used to working that way, and I’m daunted by that.</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Margo</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Different perspectives – primary/secondary tensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Conflict with my HT role</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Margo</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Role conflict within schools-barrier to taking on new things/barrier to innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● The social aspect ha been very important to me.</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Margo</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Importance of building relationships within the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● It's rewarding, kids are happy, and I’m happy, and we have fun together, it’s nice.</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Margo</td>
<td></td>
<td>Importance of professional and personal reward, importance of achieving outcomes for kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● ....I’m being effective here...I’m making real differences to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| People who need it… | **Question:** Do you think the MS program on its own would have been achieving that or do you think it's a combination?  
**Answer:** Yes, of the support, and of other moves to reinforce the expectation in the school...a sense of school community has been the key. | Series 2 Interviews, Margo | F | Importance of whole school community support for the innovation to be effective - COP can’t evolve in isolation? |
<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>A small drop in student numbers...this threatened the MS program.</strong></td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Academic partner</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>System requirements – no consideration for the innovation as unique.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>There was an undeniable feeling akin to visiting a large family in the country...</strong></td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Academic partner</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Importance of learning environment – feeling of community-interpersonal relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>They already had an established pattern of regular meetings, in their...</strong></td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Academic partner</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Structure Commitment out of school hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- *...it looked like a great opportunity to have financial support to meet in school time...*
  
  Series 2 Interviews, Academic partner Series 2 Interviews, Academic partner and Holly (conversation)  
  
  F  
  Financial support- external funding

- *This commitment to basing actions on evidence was strengthened by the teachers recognition that they were trying something unusual and their need to be convinced that what they were doing was ‘working for their students’.* Series 2 Interviews, Academic partner

  
  F  
  Purpose for the enterprise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose for the enterprise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Small number of enthusiastic members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. External funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Supportive principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Professional reward – conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sense of commitment, responsibility and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Support | Series 2 Interviews, Academic partner-constraints for AGQTP | C | 1. NSWDET staffing formula (system structures)  
2. Primary/secondary tensions  
3. Role conflicts  
4. Negotiation of release time |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6. Professional development opportunities  
7. Academic partner assistance  
8. Positive effects on students |

- *...feeling useful and valued...we feel supported*  
  - Meeting Observation, 22/03/06  
  - Carol  
  - Neophyte entering the COP-recognising the value of supported membership |

- *...Holly comments “we are no longer team teaching due to class restrictions”*  
  - Meeting Observation 22/03/06  
  - System restrictions - numbers |

- *...we’re having difficulty getting promised timetable release.*  
  - The team were juggling the timetable to fit in  
  - Meeting Observation, 18/07/06  
  - Conflicting roles, time issues for innovation given school duties |
other commitments.

- executive roles of members makes timetabling very difficult.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting Observation 18/07/06</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Strong interpersonal relationships, importance of social aspect - relationship beyond the professional.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A social environment permeates the meeting...</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Importance of executive support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Observation 18/07/06</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Time constraints for new members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara was concerned that as more neophytes entered the team, out of school hours would not happen ...Lynette comments “it deterred me”.</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Sustainability of the innovation and COP is a concern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Observation, 18/07/06</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Sustainability of the innovation and COP is a concern.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sara talks about issues of sustainability... a short discussion followed about members moving in and out.
Appendix 5B

Facilitator Analysis
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excerpt</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>F/C</th>
<th>Potential Theme</th>
<th>Alignment to Developed Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The school is a significant resource for, and has strong links to, the local community.</td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Situation/resource that helped instigate the community</td>
<td>Community links and supports (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• BCS attracts considerable funding and support as a PSFP participant.</td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Funding support for the initiative that led to the development of the COP</td>
<td>Financial supports (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Primary and secondary teaching staff….</td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Potential for knowledge sharing and interchange</td>
<td>School context (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…supported by the District Linkages Consultant…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…provide enhanced district support for its further development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They believed that the enthusiasm and skills of the involved teachers</td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Support from experts-professional development opportunities External support (funding/staff?)</td>
<td>Support form significant others (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers wanting to be involved – voluntary participation Necessary skills already</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

has been critical to the process.

- *the support of senior executive and the District Consultant have been essential.*
  
  Series 1 Interviews  | F | Inside and outside support (school and District) | (4)

- *92% of parents believe that the MS is a successful model*

- The majority of students involved expressed strong support for the model.

- *the majority of students and parents involved in the MS project are supportive and value the innovation.*

- A small number of parents who have been involved with the development of the MS project are believed by

Series 1 Interviews  | F | Support from major stakeholders (parents and students) | (1)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers to be actively supporting the concept in the wider community.</th>
<th>Series 1 Interviews</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Teacher commitment to the enterprise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The commitment of the involved teachers...</strong></td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>New knowledge generation and the desire to develop professionally was beneficial to the work of the Cop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>...engagement in extensive professional development by the MS team has resulted in significant enhanced understanding....</strong></td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Wanting to be involved, keen to participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MS teachers also reported a flow-on of developed teaching skills into their mainstream classes.</strong></td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Seeing the value in the work of the COP for the individual as well as the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>...the model for PD used in the MS...focused on current research, sharing and reflecting on classroom</strong></td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>The COP had a structure to meet around – purpose and process added value to the enterprise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PD opportunities (6)**

**Seeing a purpose for the COP and its work (7)**
experiences, discussing new strategies and allowing time for implementation.

- Teachers indicated that the MS project has been one contributor to an overall improvement in the culture of the school during 2002.

  | Series 1 Interviews | F | Success breeds success – value of the enterprise to the ‘big picture’ – purpose and recognition for efforts | Recognition of success (8) |

- Teachers recognised that the leadership of the school executive is also a significant contributor to this change.

  | Series 2 Interviews, Tracey | F | Importance of leadership for any change | Supportive Leadership (9) |

- **Observation:** It’s a tremendous achievement

  **Response:** Good. That gives us heart. I hope the rest of the team took heart...

  | Series 2 Interviews, Tracey | F | Need for positive reinforcement to keep the community going | (8) |
- *And I suppose Holly and I have a bond in terms of being team teachers...you build up that comfort*

  Series 2 Interviews, Tracey  
  F  
  Benefits of team teaching in the MS- building personal and professional close relationships  
  **Interpersonal relationship** *(10)*

- *Working with like-minded people who also like to work hard.*

  Series 2 Interviews, Tracey  
  F  
  Predisposition of members – common work practices and philosophies  
  **(5)**

- *...we're friends enough that I wanted to talk about it...*

  Series 2 Interviews  
  F  
  Strong interpersonal relationships  
  **(9)**

- *I think part of it is the friendship.*

  Series 2 Interviews, Sara  
  Series 2 Interviews, Holly  
  Series 2 Interviews, Tracey  
  Series 2 Interviews, Margo  

- *...showing our support for each other on every level*
- **...so there’s the collegiality, the fun we have, the friendships and the support.**
  
  | Series 2 Interviews, Tracey | F | Opportunity to gain new knowledge and to share knowledge with others | (6) |

- **...we’ve got two conferences...I know that will revitalise us all again**
  
  | Series 2 Interviews, Tracey | F | Passion for the community, enterprise and PD | (6) |

- **...what I’ve learnt is the only way to make change is you’ve got to work with the people, become part of the group.**
  
  | Series 2 Interviews, Sara | F | External support-expert | (4) / (9) |

- **The fact that we’ve had a stable staff has been incredible. But because everyone was in relieving positions when I first came, and I think just to get**
  
<p>| Series 2 Interviews, Sara | F | Stable staff within a community and within the school | (3) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>that stability really helped the whole school.</strong></td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Seeing personal and professional value in the enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>...we’ve come to the belief that it works so well, it’s so successful for us in our professional learning...its been just so successful for he students.</strong></td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Reward for efforts-compensation for extra work load?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>...reaping some wonderful rewards...</strong></td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Support of the Principal – leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>...he’s just beautiful and rings to wish us luck (at conferences)</strong></td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Collegial relationships – personal/professional/both?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>...collegial dialogue that happens on a weekly basis.</strong></td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sense of mutual achievement- seeing the COP work for student benefit- value and purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>...because together, with what we’ve done has achieved this...and it’s really nice.</strong></td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>...just seeing their little faces light up..</strong></td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• ...because it was at such low depths that we didn’t know how we were going to get out.

• ...we were going to prove everybody else wrong, so we had really high expectations right from the start, and that this was going to work and this was going to be the vehicle of change...

• “...I’d want to be there and be part of this very passionate group that wanted to do things and wanted to change...”

• The reason we’ve developed this is because we think it’s the best thing for our students.

• “...it might take a bit more effort to...”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...because it was at such low depths that we didn’t know how we were going to get out.</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...we were going to prove everybody else wrong, so we had really high expectations right from the start, and that this was going to work and this was going to be the vehicle of change...</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“...I’d want to be there and be part of this very passionate group that wanted to do things and wanted to change...”</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The reason we’ve developed this is because we think it’s the best thing for our students.</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“...it might take a bit more effort to...”</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Impetuous for the enterprise – the school had no where else to go, nothing to lose
- High expectations- a need to prove others wrong brought the group together - school pride? Stubborness?
- Feeling part of a ‘passionate’ group – common purpose
- Seeing purpose in the community and enterprise - big picture – gain for students
- Offsetting time commitment with PD
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series 2 Interviews, John</th>
<th>John</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>do it, but I’m getting so much more out of it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>I like to think I have changed a few things.</em></td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, John</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Personal purpose- sense of achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question:</strong> What was easy?</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Juliet</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sharing the work - the value of team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series 2 Interviews, Juliet</th>
<th>Juliet</th>
<th>F</th>
<th><em>Answer:</em> Yes, the programming, because you did it all together.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series 2 Interviews, Margo</th>
<th>Margo</th>
<th>F</th>
<th><strong>Question:</strong> Do you sense that perception...that a lot of the people involved are leaders within the school?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Answer:</strong> No, its that their leaders in that they are having ideas and going places.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series 2 Interviews, Margo</th>
<th>Margo</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>So when they said “who wants to”...I was there very quickly.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| | | | |

**Series 2 Interviews, John**

**Personal purpose - sense of achievement**

**Sharing the work - the value of team**

**Predispositions of members – inherent leaders-type of person who “puts their hand up”**

**Voluntary nature of participation**
- I loved my job and I wasn’t getting any professional satisfaction.
  
  Series 2 Interviews, Margo
  
  F
  
  Motivation to seek professional change-type of person? predisposing factor?
  
  (6)

- The social aspect ha been very important to me.
  
  Series 2 Interviews, Margo
  
  F
  
  Importance of building relationships within the community
  
  (10)

- It’s rewarding, kids are happy, and I’m happy, and we have fun together, it’s nice.
  
  Series 2 Interviews, Margo
  
  F
  
  Importance of professional and personal reward, importance of achieving outcomes for kids
  
  (7) / (8)

- …I’m being effective here…I’m making real differences to people who need it...

  Series 2 Interviews, Margo

  F

  Importance of whole school community support for the innovation to be effective- COP can’t evolve in isolation?

  (1) / (3)
<p>| Expectation in the school…a sense of school community has been the key. | Series 2 Interviews, Academic partner | F | Importance of learning environment – feeling of community-interpersonal relationships | (10) |
|⋅ There was an undeniable feeling akin to visiting a large family in the country... | Series 2 Interviews, Academic partner | F | Structure Commitment out of school hours | Structures (12) (3) |
|⋅ They already had an established pattern of regular meetings, in their own time.... | Series 2 Interviews, Academic partner Series 2 Interviews, Academic partner and Holly (conversation) | F | Financial support- external funding | (2) |
|⋅ This commitment to basing actions on evidence was strengthened by the teachers recognition that they were trying something unusual and their | Series 2 Interviews, Academic partner | F | Purpose for the enterprise | (7) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>need to be convinced that what they were doing was ‘working for their students’ Series 2 Interviews,</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|   | Series 2 Interviews, Academic partner-facilitators for AGQTP | F | 9. Small number of enthusiastic members  
10. External funding  
11. Supportive principal  
12. Professional reward – conferences  
13. Sense of commitment, responsibility and support  
14. Professional development opportunities  
15. Academic partner assistance  
16. Positive effects on students |
|   | •...feeling useful and valued...we feel supported | Meeting Observation, 22/03/06. Carol | F | Neophyte entering the COP- recognising the value of supported membership |

(4) / (10) / (7)
- A social environment permeates the meeting...

| Meeting Observation 18/07/06 | F | Strong interpersonal relationships, importance of social aspect-relationship beyond the professional. | (10) |
Appendix 5C

Constraints Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excerpt</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>F/C</th>
<th>Potential Theme</th>
<th>Alignment to Developed Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Teachers indicated that the MS project timetable could be enhanced through the provision of greater planning time and allocation of ‘leftover’ periods.</td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Additional planning time outside of teaching load required- lack of time in a teachers’ day</td>
<td>Additional workload (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● The difficulty in ensuring a quality communication between the home and school...</td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Recognition of influences of major stakeholders – both positive and negative influence</td>
<td>Communication outside of the COP (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Teachers indicated that the mainstream staff are aware of the MS project, understand the basic details</td>
<td>Series 1 Interviews</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Tall poppy syndrome – threats of balkanisation-division between school staff</td>
<td>Threats of balkanisation (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
but rarely have and specific involvement with the project.

- The communication on curriculum issues between MS staff and staff who take MS students in a mainstream context is not always complete.

- In terms of being seen as this elite little bubble.

- I guess professionally, there's an idea in the school at times that there's 'that group'.
unsupported and a little envious.

- We’ve tried so hard to bring people in, we encourage the professional development, we still get very tired.

- The challenges are not to be seen as that elite group that shuts others out.

- But it was, and it’s really heartbreaking that they just can’t acknowledge it and they can’t just go out and celebrate as a whole school.
- It’s like the teachers are constantly trying to pull us down and that’s really sad…

- ...it’s going to get harder, because the lens is coming in now…now that other people will be looking and evaluating.

- I think we have to be even more accountable and that’s going to be a pressure.

- ...we were very much under the microscope...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Series 2 Interviews, Tracey</th>
<th>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</th>
<th>Accountability of the community, responsibility for outcomes a pressure for members</th>
<th>External pressures and accountabilities (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And that’s going to have issues for all</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Numbers game of the system – lose students- lose teachers- little</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Tracey</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Extra work load associated with innovation</td>
<td>Sustainability concerns (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of us…we’ll lose a team member, we’ll lose a class.</td>
<td></td>
<td>recognition of innovation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- "...we have to try and find the energy to keep improving... I feel like the energy is running low at times."  
  - Series 2 Interviews, Tracey  
  - C  
  - Extra work load associated with innovation  
  - (1)

- "It's got to be able to continue without me and it's got to be able to continue without Tracey."  
  - Series 2 Interviews, Holly  
  - C  
  - Issue of sustainability of the model and the community  
  - (6)

- "It's a pressure that you don't need when you're leaving all the time (to attend a conference)."  
  - Series 2 Interviews, Holly  
  - C  
  - Taking advantage of benefits (conferences) to the detriment of the classroom – conflicting demands  
  - (1)

- "I guess at the beginning, not knowing what we were doing, not knowing the reason we were doing it, and not even."  
  - Series 2 Interviews, Holly  
  - C  
  - Importance of vision and purpose for the community.  
  - (F -7) Not having initial purpose
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>..., could not meld with us...</th>
<th>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>Issues arise when a neophyte member cannot ‘fit’ in with the COP- why the mismatch –personal disposition? Different vision?</th>
<th>Insular nature of COP (7) (F – 5) Not having personal attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...the mount of time that Margo and Tracey have off...</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Conflicting and competing work roles</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>..., supportive in terms of you have the freedom to do what you want to do...but he hasn’t been supportive in really understanding what we are trying to do... (speaking about the Principal)</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, Holly</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Importance of supportive Principal and direction of leadership</td>
<td>Lack of leader support (8) aligns with (F – 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>..., I didn’t anticipate that the commitment would be to...</td>
<td>Series 2 Interviews, John</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Time commitment beyond normal hours</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- one of those weekly meetings.
  - ...it was going to be a big commitment.
  - Doing that means doing that with other people that aren’t used to working that way, and I’m daunted by that.

| Series 2 Interviews, Margo | C | Different perspectives – primary/secondary tensions | (5) |

- Conflict with my HT role

| Series 2 Interviews, Margo | C | Role conflict within schools-barrier to taking on new things/barrier to innovation | (1) |

- A small drop in student numbers...this threatened the MS program.

| Series 2 Interviews, Academic partner | C | System requirements – no consideration for the innovation as unique. | (4) |

| Series 2 Interviews, Academic partner-constraints for AGQTP | C | 5. NSWDET staffing formula (system structures)  
6. Primary/secondary tensions  
7. Role conflicts  
8. Negotiation of release time | (4) |

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Meeting Observatio 22/03/06</th>
<th>System restrictions - numbers</th>
<th>(4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• ...Holly comments “we are no longer team teaching due to class restrictions”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ...we’re having difficulty getting promised timetable release.</td>
<td>Meeting Observation, 18/07/06</td>
<td>Conflicting roles, time issues for innovation given school duties</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The team were juggling the timetable to fit in other commitments.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ...executive roles of members makes timetabling very difficult.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A comment was made that the DP does not support the program…</td>
<td>Meeting Observation 18/07/06</td>
<td>Importance of executive support</td>
<td>(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sara was concerned that as more neophytes entered the</td>
<td>Meeting Observation 18/07/06</td>
<td>Time constraints for new members</td>
<td>(7) / (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sara talks about issues of sustainability ... a short discussion followed about members moving in and out.

| Meeting Observation, 18/07/06 | C | Sustainability of the innovation and COP is a concern. | (6) |
Appendix 5D

Linkages Program seed grant application
Adapted by the researcher from original documentation on the 17/02/09 to preserve participant anonymity. Partial omissions on original documents complicated the scanning process.

“EXPRESSION OF INTEREST”
LINKAGES INITIATIVE

Part A

Brief outline of proposal
The Middle School program addresses three essential needs in our school.
Firstly, it meets immediate Literacy and Numeracy needs of our student target groups.
Secondly, it will meet longer term literacy and numeracy objectives across the entire curriculum.
Thirdly, it will continue to address the professional development requirements of Primary and Secondary staff as they develop a unique curriculum focused on maintaining continuity in Years 5 to 8.

This initiative contains the necessary elements to provide an environment:

- whereby greatest possible engagement of students in Stages 3 and 4 will occur
- where student entitlement to their best possible education is enhanced, and
- where student self esteem and student, parent and school expectations are improved.

Timeframe: Terms 2-4, 2002
KLA Focus: Literacy/Numeracy
Anticipated Funds: $21887.00

Schools involved in the project:

* [Redacted] Central
* [Redacted]
* [Redacted]

Have the Principals of the schools listed been involved in the proposal process?
(please comment)

Yes, [Redacted] has been involved in the initial planning and early implementation stage. He spent considerable time working with school timetabling and other school structures so that the Middle School model would become an integral part of the whole school K-12 structure.
**Part B**

**DISTRICT LINKAGES INITIATIVE FUNDING OUTLINE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Initiative Title</th>
<th>Coordinators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle School Implementation</td>
<td>Team: [Redacted]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools Involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Central School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Focus in relation to Linkages criteria**
- Entitlement
- Expectations For All
- Engagement in Learning

Through better engagement, improved entitlement. Raising Self esteem/school culture. Curriculum Planning & Strategies

**Proposed Budget (School)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salaries</th>
<th>Proposed Funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Days @ $</td>
<td>Linkages Funds Requested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Relief: 3600.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>Resources: 12387.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please list)</td>
<td>Catering: 900.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Excursion: 3800.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Certification:**
This initiative has been developed in line with school plan(s). Participation in District Linkages Initiatives require school commitment to:

- Implement a Middle School project
- Monitor and document the progress
- Evaluate change using a range of tools
- Share the project and outcomes within the district/state

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal:</th>
<th>School:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal:</td>
<td>School:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal:</td>
<td>School:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Part C**

**LINKAGES SCHOOL ACTION PLAN 2002**

| Rationale/Background | After evaluations of [Central School] during 2000 – 2001, we are aware that to receive equitable achievement of outcomes in a K-12 continuum we need to:  
- consider closely the diverse needs of our students to enhance the serious issue at [Central School] of poor student engagement  
- address the present culture of poor student and family expectations  
- act upon the fact that not all students at our school were making the most of their entitlement to have access to syllabus outcomes.  

We know that the three key issues mentioned above need action through the successful implementation of our plan because of:  
- careful consideration of our school’s DET test results (SNAP, ELLA, BST etc.)  
- self observation of school performance and culture  
- student questionnaires  
- poor Stage 3 to Stage 4 retention levels  
- parent responses to questionnaires about retention  
- parent concerns brought forward at parent information-sharing meetings. |
| Description | **Term 1 2002,** saw the implementation of a Middle School plan at [Central School] designed to address the issues listed above. This involved considerable planning by a team of dedicated professionals which included:  
- Primary and secondary teachers  
- Support teacher/Learning Difficulties  
- The Linkages consultant  
- Parent involvement.  

After just one term, the team is fully convinced that the key issues of engagement, expectations, and entitlement can and will be addressed at [Central School]. But it also became clear that to develop the best possible model, initial financial assistance was both desirable and necessary.  

During Terms 2 to 4 (2002) we plan to develop our Middle School project so that the identified areas of expectations, student engagement, and student entitlement for access to outcomes are enhanced. It is envisaged that this will be achieved through:  
- Teacher training through weekly after-school workshops held at District Office  
- A planning and evaluation day each term  
- Group planning of a high-interest program designed to enhance student engagement  
- Identification and remediation of students at risk particularly in the areas of Literacy and Numeracy  
- An extension program to further implement and develop Literacy strategies across a wide range of Key Learning Areas  
- Development of stronger teacher and student computer literacy to enhance Literacy and Numeracy skills across all KLA’s  
- Direct teacher and student training through the involvement of computer training by a skilled computer teacher  
- A student and teacher team-building project including an overnight excursion involving outdoor education and team building activities  
- The implementation of a Student Leadership program. |
| Outcomes | We are trying to achieve the following outcomes:  
- Successful student transition from Stage 3 to Stage 4 across all KLA’s  
- Improved retention of Year 6 to Year 7 students at [Central School]  
- Improved engagement of Stage 3 and Stage 4 students  
- Closer and more dynamic working relationships between Primary and Secondary colleagues  
- Whole school approach to the teaching and learning of Literacy and Numeracy  
- Development of linkages between the Literacy and Numeracy and all other KLA’s  
- Enhanced welfare needs of adolescents. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How will you know if you have been successful?</th>
<th>We will know if we have been successful when:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Retention figures from Years 6 to Years 7 improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• School results in DIFT tests (ELLA, SNAP, RST etc.) improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Basic skill level of students in need improves in the test results listed in the point above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Discipline and welfare issues decline measured through: RISC records, suspension and expulsion records, primary detention records etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Middle School teachers, including Primary, become involved in across school planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teachers from other K.I.As are involved in the development of future planning guidelines of Middle School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Starting date</th>
<th>Finishing date</th>
<th>Short description of elements of this activity</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher relief/Program implementation</td>
<td>T2/Wk 1</td>
<td>End T4</td>
<td>Parent interviews/programming/progress reviews/assessment review and evaluations</td>
<td>$2,400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and development Teacher relief/Cross curricular</td>
<td>Term 2</td>
<td>Term 4</td>
<td>Extension/implementation of Literacy skills across other KLA's (Lote, Science, HSIE, D&amp;T, PDHPE, Mathematics).</td>
<td>$1,200.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Software – cross curricular</td>
<td>Term 2</td>
<td>Term 4</td>
<td>Appropriate software for use across KLA's Performance-Maths Text-type word processor program</td>
<td>$450.00 $520.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer Hardware</td>
<td>Term 2</td>
<td>Term 4</td>
<td>3 X PC Computers 3 X printers for the above</td>
<td>$4,800.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer Consultant time</td>
<td>Term 2</td>
<td>Term 4</td>
<td>4 X 1 day release for team-teach computer skills to each Middle School teacher.</td>
<td>$800.00 $500.00 $600.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardboard/laminating materials for Stimulus Board Games for Maths Teacher aids</td>
<td>Term 2/2</td>
<td>Term 2</td>
<td>4 X $150 per Middle School Class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics Resources</td>
<td>Term 2</td>
<td>Term 2</td>
<td>Problem Solving Kit Elementary Maths Mastery - Middle School Mathscape Mid School Daily Problem Puzzles Maths Discoveries 6-8 Maths Challenge Numeration based resources (Chinese abacus, counters, tape measures, calculators Maths Discoveries /Date Yrs 6-8 Brain Compatible Maths Hawker Brownlow Problem Solving Pack World of Maths Ed Resource Pack Superconductor Kit (Mimosa)</td>
<td>$187.00 $120.00 $240.00 $100.00 $60.00 $70.00 $600.00 $40.00 $50.00 $240.00 $325.00 $85.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>T2/Wk 1</td>
<td>Term 2</td>
<td>40 magazines</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading materials (high interest/low ability through to more challenging texts)</td>
<td>T2 on T2/Wk2</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>20 X H/W texts 4 X bookboxes (storage &amp; acquisition)</td>
<td>$200.00 $200.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Top-up H/W books (new students) Book Boxes</td>
<td>T2 Wk 1</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>4 X each tests</td>
<td>$160.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Targeting Teaching/Test in action</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Program 1 x release day for program planning.</td>
<td>$220.00 $560.00 $1300.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excursion 2</th>
<th>ADVENTURE EDUCATION</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>1 x Release day for (absolving) Bus Student Overnight Accommodation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Furnishings/Stimulus CDs</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Lockable cupboards for 2 secondary rooms – to house Middle School specific materials Stimulus CDs</td>
<td>$400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School Literacy materials CD player Listening post set</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>T4</td>
<td>1 x CD player 1 x L/Post set</td>
<td>$250.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>6 x catering for workshops held during evenings, $150.00 per catering.</td>
<td>$900.00</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Part G**

**MEASURES**

- Improvement of School Guidance and Counseling
- Identification of students with special needs
- Professional development of school staff
- Parental involvement

**RESOURCES**

- Funding from the government
- Funding from local businesses
- Funding from private donors

**PHASES**

**Phase 1: Awareness and Planning**
- Conducting workshops for teachers and parents
- Developing a comprehensive planning document

**Phase 2: Implementation**
- Allocating resources to the various phases of the project
- Monitoring progress of the project

**PHASE 3: Evaluation and Feedback**
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the program
- Collecting feedback from students, teachers, and parents

**ACTION PLAN**

- Increase the awareness about the program
- Allocate resources to the program
- Monitor the progress of the program
- Collect feedback from all stakeholders

**STANDARDS**

- Compliance with all relevant laws and regulations
- Quality of education provided
- Student satisfaction

**TIMES**

- Phase 1: 2022
- Phase 2: 2023
- Phase 3: 2024
Appendix 5E

Middle School meeting minutes
MIDDLE SCHOOL MEETING – 6/09/02.

Present : T. Borg, ___

1. Education Week
   - Thursday is open day- Middle School needs to present itself well on this day – parents invited for periods 1/2/3. Suggestion to do a powerpoint display.

2. Working Mathematically
   - Tuesday at District Office 4-6, Steve, Tracey and ___ to attend if possible.

3. Learning Support Team review
   - ___ will complete English Continuum and overview.
   - Tracey and ___ will work on typing up Maths/English Programs.
   - Points to be made include: that MS is in its infancy (3-4 year plan)
   - ___ : Timetabled time for programming and communication is essential.
   - ___ : Pictures to be published in journey folder

4. Maths Challenges
   - Going ahead in Week 10 with ___

5. Radio Recording
   - Tuesday of Week 10.
   - ___ would like kids to work on introductions and background music.
   - An announcer should be selected to bind program together.

6. MS Newspaper
   - Individual class efforts to be joined together in Week 9/10, name to be voted on.

7. Tracey during next week
   - Tracey has offered to combine with other classes if needed. ___ would prefer not to, ___ is OK with it.

8. Year 8 students
   - ___ feels that their negativity is improving.

9. Students for MS Interviews
Appendix 5F

Middle School program evaluation
Sample: Parking Lot Evaluation

CENTRAL SCHOOL - MIDDLE SCHOOL MEETING
MARCH 19TH, 2002

Present: [Redacted]

Introduction: [Redacted] presented a document called “Linkages” which we have a copy of. Linkages is about spanning the curriculum between Stages 3 and 4.

PCS Middle School model is of interest to Trevor Wootton as part of linkages research.

Evaluation:

Parking Lot

+ What’s going well

- Socialisation going well between Years 5, 6, 7 & 8
- Extension of younger group
- Learning engaged
- Lower class sizes
- Resources
- Timing – length, time of day
- Flexibility – kids needs individually addressed
- Co-operative learning encouraged
- Regularly reporting through newsletter/media

(What issues)

- Mixed ability in Maths
- Classroom setting – Resources, homeroom.
- Assessment/reporting
- Preparation time.
- Spelling
- Responsibility
- Understanding (shared) of Stage 3/4 syllabuses

- Communication between teachers
- Resources
- Strategies
- Assessment needs
- Technology – use of:
  - numbers of computers
  - software
  - (Performance Maths)

- Integration of K.L.A.’s for a core group
- How are you reporting on Middle School Outcomes?

- A meeting was set for 2/5/02 at [Redacted] District Office for a workshop in Learning Styles.
- Further dates set.

Action Plan
- Refer to A3 sheet
Appendix 5G

The Learning Review Support Team’s recommendations – 2000/2001
**Part A**

**Section 3**

**RECOMMENDATIONS and STRATEGIES**

**Recommendation 1**
Extend middle school Project developmental activity to involve other areas of the school

**Strategies**
- Review and consolidate the school’s current timeframe for curriculum development in the light of DET policy releases and local need.
- Involve additional staff in the development of any new curriculum mapping for the middle school and extend the product beyond Stages 3 and 4.
- Ensure the coordination of homework in the middle school in the context of the school’s policy.
- Develop a model of collegial support in quality teaching practice, pairing a middle school and mainstream teacher.

**Recommendation 2**
Enhance the current middle school model

**Strategies**
- Investigate the potential of a fully or partly integrated curriculum model for the middle school.
- Include an additional curriculum area into the model in 2003.

**Recommendation 3**
Promote the middle school Project in both the local and the broader educational community

**Strategies**
- Share the project with the broader DET community through professional journals, web sites, visits to and from other like sites and presentations at educational functions.
- Nominate the project for an appropriate educational award.
- Access and become involved in the DET’s Linkages and middle school networks.
- Implement an enhanced process to inform Stage 2 parents of the middle school and its aspirations for the students.
- Access additional opportunities to raise the positive profile of the middle school, and its teachers and students, in the Community.

**Recommendation 4**
Address the immediate issues that are impacting on the community’s perception of Central School

**Strategies**
- Engage the students to assist in the improvement of the physical appearance of the secondary classrooms.
- Involve the parents and students in a process to re-assess the rules and procedures for leaving the school grounds.
Part B

Teachers felt strongly that [redacted] Central School will benefit from greater staff stability. A resolution of the current executive positions and the appointment of staff with a long-term commitment to the school would contribute significantly to this purpose.

Teachers, parents and students reported that the poor physical presentation of some secondary rooms, especially in contrast to the administration area and the primary block, contributes to a poor impression of the school. Students, parents and teachers felt that the visibility of students behaving inappropriately in the town area during the day can also contribute to a community perception of poor discipline at the school. Parents also identified poor school uniform as a negative for the image of the school.

Students and teachers advised that children who left [redacted] Central School to attend other secondary schools discuss a perceived greater academic rigour and progress at their new school with [redacted] Central School students, often to the detriment of the [redacted] Central School educational program.

Students and parents indicated that the reasons students elect not to remain at [redacted] Central School for Year 7 include:

- concerns about student safety and the behaviour of secondary [redacted] Central School students;
- the size of [redacted] High School, thus providing a greater range of subjects and opportunities for academic advancement;
- family and social connections; and
- the greater sporting opportunities at [redacted] High School.

Conclusion

The review team believed that the school should immediately introduce programs and procedures to address the perceived image problems, as identified through discussions with staff, students and parents.

The review team further believed that an image audit involving staff, parents and community members, should be conducted to clarify the challenges of marketing [redacted] School and to establish future directions.

The review team believed that [redacted] Central School offers a variety of unique characteristics that could be effectively marketed with a view to retaining and attracting students. The benefits accrued from the small size of the school, the capacity to provide an individualised welfare focus, the K-12 curriculum and the vocational education programs are some examples of these characteristics.
Appendix 6A

Series 3 Interviews - Components of Learning Analysis

Data: Series- 3 Interviews (2008/2009)

1. *Learning as Meaning*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Evidence- Specific Quote</th>
<th>Researchers Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Margo</td>
<td>• <em>It’s about awareness raising, well you know, that’s not how people learn, to me, now. If you want someone to learn something, then you go through the process of making sure they understand and that they have the opportunity to implement it and reflect on it (p.2).</em></td>
<td>• Developing new understandings of how people learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <em>I have a clear understanding that the kids all have their individual needs, that they’re all coming from different places, and that the basis is what they’re learning and how they’re going to learn it. And that I have a far, far better idea of how, the sorts of things that have to happen for those individuals in order to get them to learn stuff. And that sums me up (p.16)</em></td>
<td>&gt; New understandings on student discipline and the role of the teacher as ‘expert’ versus facilitator. Also points to ‘old practices’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- I actually had to deliver and assess and report. I had to get to the space where you have to set out very carefully what you expect from the kids and very carefully how they are going to go. So all that, you know, criteria and assessment, I think I conquered a lot of that (p. 6).

- Well we learned by all having different strengths in contributing things, and that contributed to the effectiveness of it, but it also, as a professional learner makes you see other ways of doing things. I think the focus on authentic pedagogy forced all of us to really think about what it was that we wanted to get across and how we were going to do that. How we were going to support the kids to access those concepts and how we were going to assess it. It really makes you think very carefully. My actual understanding of how human being learn conceptual things is just...I begin – no, before that. I now think I’ve built a basis of really strong understanding of how you, how people learn stuff (p. 8).

- We bounced around so many different teaching concepts and contexts. And that really, you know, by working with so many different syllabuses, I guess I’m saying. That really makes you understand how syllabuses actually function. And I now think I’ve got much more of an idea of syllabus implementation than I ever had or a theoretical basis of what a syllabus is and how it works (p.8).

- And I think that the things that I was learning from other people about how you attack different things was very good, to come out of my subject area. And I actually found, having to teach maths for a couple of years, that was probably one of the best things to teach them, how you teach somebody to access something (p. 9)

- Developing understandings of how the MS teachers learnt, of how students learn. New knowledges – authentic pedagogy.

- New understandings of unfamiliar syllabuses – Stage ¾ continuums.

- New knowledge-learning to teach in an unfamiliar discipline-multidisciplinary approach to programming and an integrated mode of teaching.
• **I:** But you don’t feel she’s become part of the community?

**P:** Don’t know.

**I:** What do you think’s stopped her if she hasn’t?

**P:** Um…that’s a hard one. The depth of syllabus knowledge and understanding. The development of an understanding of the continuum of learning that we came to, that I don’t think is there (p. 12).

• Nope, they didn’t understand it. And I think that the whole concept to her, she’s got fairly traditional ideas about things. The whole idea of putting 5, 6, 7 and 8 together, you know, she didn’t see that we were catering, she didn’t see that there was differentiation in the programs, she didn’t see that the social structures provided the support, she didn’t see the things that we thought that we could see (p.15).

• The stress and kerfuffle that goes on at reporting times is illustrative to me, that it’s about the depth of understanding. It’s about knowing what’s going on in that stage three syllabus and what the intention is and how that builds into stage four, and you know, looking at the syllabus and thinking carefully about what it is you’re doing and trying to get across (p.13)

**Holly**

• Nervous. Scared. Unsure of the expectation and how I’m going to do it. Had no idea of the stage four curriculum, and suddenly I was supposed to teach Year Seven and Eight. And I’m going, oh shit. How do you do this? How do I fit the curriculum that I don’t know what it

• Reflecting on what happens if ‘meaning’ is not present – members are not able to participate easily.

• Without meaning there is no participation, no community and no learning.

• New syllabus and reporting knowledge.

• Pre-learning stage in relation to Stage 4 curriculum knowledge
is that’s supposedly content based, and I’ve got no idea what the content is. So, it was all very overwhelming and daunting, I guess. And it stayed like that for quite a while, I think (p.5)

- I don’t know. I think, even when we actually started it, because we were just thrown into that deep end. We really didn’t know what we were doing to begin with. We were just thrown in feet first, and sort of struggling around trying to find ourselves, and I don’t think we really knew what we were doing for a while. And I think we just went with the flow, went with the flow of it all, and just tried to find ourselves and just did what we thought. Sort of learned on the hop on the way, I think, and supported each other in trying to do that (p.5).

- I think, just by being there and saying, let’s try this. This is here. Using each other’s knowledge of those key curriculum areas. You have the key concept in science. And I guess, quite a lot in maths to stage four, even though when we got into it stage four maths was quite repetitive of stage three maths. There wasn’t really that much new material in mathematics. And Gaye just has the expertise in English. So, having that content knowledge that could be verbally shared, saying, this is what we need to focus on. This is the direction we need to go in, made it much easier (p.6)

- And being able to just have the time to verbally present those ideas to each other. So you didn’t have to go, it’s in the syllabus on page dah, dah, dah. Just go and read that and try and get your head around it. It was that ability to be able to verbally

- Initial process of learning- collegial support, learnt through practice

- Using individual skills to develop shared understandings of new curriculum

- Collegially identifying the direction learning needed to take
share things. And I think that’s when we started, I don’t know, even with, before we got to integrating the curriculum, being able to see those ways where things could relate when we were sharing how to teach things and what skills and focus areas we needed to look at. And the content in which we needed to cover (p.6)

- And with her change in role within her job status, her role with us then changed as well. And it moved to a different level. But I think she was always the one that brought new ideas to us. And helped guide us and direct us in the path that we were taking. Because we were too caught up in the curriculum content side of things, in trying to actually on the ground teach and figure out where we were going. Where she was on the outside looking in going, you’ve got to do more. You’ve got to really think about where you’re going in the future, and how you’re going to get there, and what you’re going to do for these kids (p.7)

- She hated the whole, yeah. She hated the whole concept. She had no real understanding of the concept in what we were trying to achieve. What we understood as middle schooling and what we were doing. Again, I don’t think she really takes on board the middle school issues that are there, in being able to teach kids and meet their needs. She’s more a power down sort of a teacher. And I think that didn’t go with our philosophy of middle schooling. She loves sheets [0:28:20] and we didn’t like sheets [0:28:21]. That wasn’t our whole concept of teaching mathematics. So, I think everything that she did just went basically against what we were trying to do (p.13).

| Lynette | • I think [5:32] I had a gap in my | • Importance of the broker in terms of leadership to construct/direct meaning |
|         | Initial | Reflecting on why a newcomer did not become part of the CoP – did not develop meaning of the MS concept/curriculum or pedagogy - unable to participate. |
timetable and I think I actually, cause I had withdrawal class and then they all eventually petered out to nothing, and then a gap popped up in middle school and I think [5:56] I think it was to give, initially it was to take withdrawal literacy and numeracy kids, if I remember rightly. It was something, I’d got some great things happening cause my room was next to Steve [6:17]. And I saw some great lessons happening and some really good fun things and I thought “Oh yeah, that’d be fun”. So when you’re asked, yeah, I was more than happy to go (p.3)

- ...yes the program is great and the expectations are high, and it’s wonderful, but sometimes it has to be tweaked. And I’ve found that that’s how I survived a lot, particularly this year and over the past couple, this idea [33:01] tweaking of the program, you know, and sometimes I’ve often got, oh shit if they actually saw what I’m doing what they’re programs they’d go [33:10] well not with their programs, just [33:14] you know, like…(p.11)

- Yep. You know, like, you always liked the stage three, the stage four, you know, there is still stuff that scares the crap out of me, and that’s the science stuff, it’s the practical stuff, it’s, you know, you take [26:05] but again I believe it’s because they can sense that’s not my forte, that’s not what I’m good at, that she doesn’t, I convince myself they know I don’t know what I’m talking about. So, yeah, science is probably my biggest challenge with middle school (p.8)

- Recognising the need to develop curriculum knowledge and implementing a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sara</th>
<th>So I remember very vaguely one of the issues was raised by, I think, Gaye about not understanding the maths syllabus, for instance, when she had to teach maths. So it was</th>
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<td>Developing the confidence to differentiate MS programs after initially feeling very unsure about participating in the MS</td>
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about how do we upskill people in different areas and work on the syllabus and people would bring her expertise in all this and share it with the other teachers and your expertise in the science area, and whatever. So I think right from the start, and I don’t know whether it came from Portland or whether I had worked out if you put a process in place, present something, discuss it, let people play with it and then come back and evaluate and talk about it. And I’ve actually got that, I started writing it up in that sort of frame, that team approach and that process that you go through would be really good (p.2)

- That’s probably what I learnt too, is that for me, professional development through discussion is so powerful. Especially if you give people some stuff to think about and see it in action in classrooms. It wasn’t just reading and discussing and it wasn’t connected to the classroom. It’s highly connected [0:14:00.8] classrooms so really saw that (p.5)

- So it really came from, for the core group that I worked with, a close bonding over the years, trust developed, people weren’t afraid to sort of say, “oh I can’t do” and be [0:15:36.5] down or something. So they were quite – I do remember [0:15:41.2] of difficult curriculum areas, that people didn’t understand them so we worked through it together. So there was a real trust, I think, that people felt they could do that and they weren’t going to be talked about behind their back or whatever (p.5).

- I mean, well I suppose if you look at in different types, there was organisational and physical changes. I think there were changes in terms of, well just to look at those two. The

- learning process to gain new understandings

- Beginning to articulate that collegial processes (discussion, sharing and trust) are a vehicle for PD and learning

- New structures and spaces
The timetable had to be aligned, a whole lot of issues because parents discussed because when it first came in there were concerns about mixing primary with, you know, young primary girls in year 5 with year 8 boys. So those issues had to be worked through. There were changes in terms of where the classes were going to be and how they would set up physically so that they would be appealing. There was ...(p.7).

- Maybe in succession planning, certainly more, like you’re talking about the people who came in as the deputies, I don’t think really – we worked a lot on vision and mission and philosophy and having that as the beginning. I don’t think that was possibly done well enough maybe to bring on the new people (p.9).

Miguel

- I knew that there was a big sort of interest in this concept, in this idea in the middle years of schooling, and that it had the support of a core group of teachers, who wanted to make it work (p.1)

- And it was made very easy because of the commitment of a core group of teachers, primary and secondary, who wanted to make the project work (p.1)

- I expected obviously when you embark on a project such as this, which requires significant adjustments to timetables and the way in which the school operated, bringing into line the primary and secondary departments of the school, you’re looking for improvement (p.1).

- And there had to be some kind of a continuum in terms of curriculum and in terms of the way in which teachers approach their teaching and how kids would learn (p.2).

- The importance of developing ‘meaning’ for newcomers- limits participation

- The teachers in the Cop recognized that new learning was needed to ‘make the project work’

- New structures and curricula were needed
## 2. Learning as Practice

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<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Margo</td>
<td>And I found that inspiring, but now I look back it was in terms of awareness raising rather than actually informing the practice in any way, because there were these one-off couple of hour sessions where someone got up and talked to you. Yeah, so I found that fairly limiting, but I mean they were good, those sorts of sessions, in terms of raising your awareness of the different needs of different kids (p.1)</td>
<td>Limitations of previous PD - no effect on practice</td>
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<td>Because I’d been in that very traditional secondary space. And because in a big high school you are very much a cog in a wheel and that structure does nothing to help you not be in that space. So it was very much about “I’m an expert in this subject and I stand in front of a class and deliver it. I’m the fount of the knowledge and you kids are going to sit there and listen and take it in.” And it was very much about, you know, even the way I related to the kids was very much in terms of “you do as you’re told, because I’m inside the room and I’m the teacher.” (p.5)</td>
<td>Old practices – teacher centred approach –non constructivist theories in practice.</td>
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<td>So this whole, the pedagogy came first, there’s no doubt about that... But the actual how you teach...no. You know, other than that lip service, you know, you do a bit of group work. I mean, as an English teacher, the nature of the subject pushes you that way anyway. So that was the first thing, about getting the kids to learn different ways about catering for them to learn in different ways. About having a bit of fun with it. About relaxing, that’s why I always hated the couple of times I taught drama at Singleton. They were out of their seats and they were moving around and they were making noise, and that equated to chaos to me. I hated it (p.6)</td>
<td>Beginning to understand that MS needed a new way of teaching based on understanding how students learn and constructivist approaches. Benefits of group structures to learning.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Oh, cos it’s not chaos. Just cos you might have a bit of trouble getting them</td>
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back and focused again, it’s not chaos. But that’s the perception – if they weren’t in their seats, writing quietly, they were mucking up. You know that was the perception I had. [16:44] of perception, changes like…intellectually you would know that that’s not necessarily the case, it’s the strength of the feeling, if you’re not sitting…you know? (p.6)

- I have a clear understanding that the kids all have their individual needs, that they’re all coming from different places, and that the basis is what they’re learning and how they’re going to learn it. And that I have a far, far better idea of how, the sorts of things that have to happen for those individuals in order to get them to learn stuff. And that sums me up. I’m not standing at the front of the room delivering anymore, I’m thinking consciously about the individual lessons and the overall program in terms of this is the concept, this is the facts and knowledge, these are the sorts of thing we’re going to do to try and get you to access that, you know? (p.16)

- And that brings me, do you want to talk about the actual discipline side of it? Cos to me that was the revelation. Yeah. Yeah, pedagogy...see I’d always been “you’ll do it, you’ll do as you’re told.” And the idea that I needed to build an individual relationship with a student was anathema to me (p.7)

Holly

- I don’t know. She seems to have learned things, being able to talk about things, and about how to do things, and go about things. Yet, when you still see her in the classroom, she doesn’t seem to be delivering any differently (p.15).

Lynette

- I was really impressed with the programming, the thematic basis of the units I think are really good. And I think probably if this, if it doesn’t work don’t use it, you know. Like don’t be afraid to say “Hun,

- Reflecting on Lynette’s learning – perhaps meaning and practice need to be linked – one without the other won’t lead to transformative learning

- Identifying new knowledge in terms of integrated programming, identifying how

- New understandings of how students learn, links to changing identity – “that sums me up…”

175
that was crap” you know, and challenge yourself, but I always found because of the middle school, or particularly Jodi because I worked next door to Jodi, there was always someone to sound off, but sometimes, on the flip side, people can lean too heavily on you as well and then I thought oh crap have I done that to Jodi because when it happens it’s quite draining (p.4)

• It kept me thinking. It kept me busy. It kept me active, and it kept me wanting to deliver stuff that was better, stuff that was going to be effective. It holistically I think it improved me. It definitely improved my programming, definitely improved my assessments (p.5).

• Yeah. Yeah. I think so. I probably [14:37] probably now I try to offload a lot of the task responsibility on to the kids. And that’s something I’ve had to work on because being a special ed teacher you too readily slip into the [14:56] I’ll do it for you. You just write it. You know (p.5).

• I: So your practice has changed?

P: Yeah.

• I think I was always very good with people. I think middle school and I see really good thing, encourages you to share (p. 6).

Sara

• Yeah, I think that was – and also maybe that was through the process. Like I’m very much into process. At that time I was using a lot of thinking tools. So we might use something like a parking lot to identify what the issues were, work on those (p.2)

• So maybe the [0:17:00.8] became more models of explicit, so I’m not sure what went on beforehand.

she has learnt through collegial interactions and supports, learning through ‘challenges’.

• Lynette responds to a question on what she learnt from the MS meetings – identifying that practice has changed, linked to identity change

• New practices

• Learning to be collegial

• New practices – using evaluative tools across MS

• Learning to take risks – being innovative.
[0:17:06.9] you know, accurate in saying that. But certainly, they were willing to try really different, innovative stuff. I remember the one about the clothesline and you know, just different experiences that come to me, much more hands on practical, a sense of everyone can achieve, so no one was left behind (p.6).

- And then there was the, yeah the fun elements that were thrown into it and I think that was a real difference. And some people, maybe on the outer looking in, might have seen that as being [0:18:24.0] organised. I don’t know. I don’t know it was perceived because it was [0:18:28.0] busy. You know, the kids were up, working in groups, you had two teachers. You know, very powerful back and forth, bouncing off each other between primary and secondary. So for me that was very evident that people were learning from each other as well. You know.

Miguel

- Ah, there was nothing...oh yes, they were always accomplished professionals, but now they became cutting edge in terms of what they were doing.

- Linking changing practices to change in identity.

3. Learning as Community

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<tr>
<td>Margo</td>
<td>Yeah that too. Jodie was interesting, a couple of things she said early on did make me sit and think, hmm. And I think that’s one of the gifts that she brought to it as a primary person. And I know...Steve too, but not to the same extent. She said very wise things on occasion, and yeah, I remember thinking...and that was, certainly that is part of what I learned from working with primary teachers, that it is about the whole kid (p.7)</td>
<td>Learning from others in the CoP-sharing skills and knowledge to develop new understandings</td>
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And then I just think that the, in some ways I think the relationship that we all build up was very, very sustaining in many ways. It was, you know, I think the respect for one another was built really quickly. And I think that the things that I was learning from other people about how you attack different things was very good, to come out of my subject area (p.9)

I also think the relationship between us also kept it going. You know, it was about having common purpose, a common shared idea of what should happen. One that we sort of forged together. And it was about moving up to that, with and through one another, I’m sure (p.10)

Yep, and look they made great contributions and they, what’s interesting is that the strength of the model of the planning and programming collaboratively is drawing on the different strengths and knowledges and understanding of fields and resources of people (p.13).

And the reason for how closely we work is professional respect. We know that that person knows what they’re doing. To me, that’s got to be the first thing. And because I think there is agreement that’s built on a shared pedagogical understanding (p.16)

We were committed to the ideal, there were the people with that shared vision and we stuck with one another and we did. I can’t really talk for those other people. But to hazard a guess, I’d say because it supported them to do what they recognized were worthwhile things in

- How collegial relationships contributed to community, learning from others to develop meaning of unfamiliar curricula
- Relating community back to the three dimensions of a CoP
- Articulating the tenets of community
- Linking community to meaning, practice and identity
- Newcomers supported by oldtimers – hinting at LPP
| Holly | - I just think it was just us as a team, relying on each other, supporting each other. We all figured out our roles in that team situation. And we just worked so cohesively. We didn’t have to talk about how we were going to work with each other. Who was going to do what. Who was going to develop what. It just sort of happened. We just got to know each other that well that, I don’t know, the planning, the communicating, the working out of the content and how we were doing things. It all just jelled. And it just happened. I don’t think there was any great thought process happening there in the peak of things. It just seemed to flow (p.9)  
- Planning it together. Working out how we were going to deliver it. And then supporting each other in that delivery (p.9)  
- Yeah. The supportiveness of developing resources and things together. The supportiveness of them actually delivering it together (p.10)  
- I think it was the weekly time to be able to talk, plan, discuss what we were doing. The time to reflect, and talk about how it worked on both levels with those guys and with us. And then that bouncing off consistently as we were actually delivering it and doing it (p.10)  
- And I think the other people just didn’t really know where they fitted and what their role was, and that the expectation was for them. How they were supposed to fit in (p.11)  
- Well, I don’t think we were intentionally doing anything to be exclusive. I think we tried to offer people, I don’t know, opportunities to become involved. But maybe because we were all so ingrained in  

| Articulating how teachers learnt through community-through a process and through risk-taking within a supportive collegial environment.  
- Reflecting on why some newcomers did not learn through community membership-no development of meaning and no opportunity for LPP |
what we were doing, in our own understanding of what we were doing, people that tried to get in didn’t really have a knowledge and understanding of what we were doing, so then they didn’t find it easy to jump in and be part of the conversations and everything. And I guess, I don’t know (p.14)

- So, I think she saw the relationship side of it, and wanted part of that relationship side of that cohesive team, supporting each other, helping each other along the way. So, she came at it at a different angle to what Anne’s did, I think. And I think she therefore was willing to put more in, and got more out of it. And was able to try and, the strategies in which we were using, she took as strategies she wanted to learn as a teacher, and therefore jumped wholeheartedly into trying to actually teach and deliver using them (p.12)

- She liked the idea of being able to team teach. I think that really drew her in. The whole idea of being able to do that and work with somebody within the classroom, and be able to be supported in that context and deliver the curriculum, and plan the curriculum, and do the curriculum together and the teaching, and all that planning, and all that sort of stuff. She loves reflecting on things. So, the whole, I think she had a good understanding of the concept, and what we were trying to achieve, and she was excited by that, and wanted to be part of it, and wanted to do it (p.14)

- It was just, it was so unique. We just jelled. We all jelled. We all bounced off each other. We all had the same wants and expectations of these kids that were coming through that nobody else wanted to teach. And we could all see that they were great

- Reflecting on why Carol was able to become a full participant

- Reflecting on why Juliet was able to become a full participant

- Articulating a common purpose for the community
| Lynette | \begin{itemize} 
| | • We made a connection as people. Personalities. We understood each other. We were all there willing and ready to put in as much as each other (p.17) 
| | • Our friendship. Being able to tell each other that we were pissing each other off and we didn’t think we were doing the right thing, and need to start pulling your socks up and doing your bit. And I think if we weren’t that close, and we didn’t have that friendship to call on, and we were just colleagues, we wouldn’t have got through those times (p.18) 
| | • I had no one to bounce off. No one to share ideas with and when I wrote, you know, you look back and you look at your first IEP and then you’re holy dooly did I write that? You know, and I think that’s just the progression, you know, that happened for me before middle school (p.1) 
| | • For the first time in my career I had someone to sound off, I had someone to talk to, I had someone to say “Okay, so”, like my [8:31] contact was with Jodi and she’s just amazing. She, you know, like I went in there going “Oh crap” you know and nothing was a drama, nothing was a bother to her. You know, I went in going “Oh I’m not going to these frigging meetings after school and this is crap” but I went to them and I liked them (p.3) 
| | • Because of them. It was the collegial support, it was your input was valued. Like anything you said was always valued, you know. Like a \end{itemize} 
| | \begin{itemize} 
| | • Articulating the importance of relationship for community-consider the importance of personality for community – reinforces previous findings 
| | • No experience of community prior to MS- recognition of importance of community for learning 
| | • Finding a place in the community-linking learning to participation and membership 
| | • Feeling valued by the community-able to participate fully |
couple of times I remembered saying just [9:11] oh that might be all right and then I’d say it, and then someone would go “Oh that’s a great idea”. You know, like and it was never one of those meetings where you sort of, not powered down, you weren’t brushed over either, you know, like some meetings where people are just brushed over and they’re, it was always valued or, “Yeah, we could do that. Well how about we do this?” Or, you know, everyone was always looking to improve things, which I thought was good and I really think that those meetings were really valuable (p.3)

- You could see a very solid bond between those teachers in particular. And it was never to the point that you wanted to exclude people, it was to the point that people didn’t want to go in. That’s, to me, that’s what it was. It wasn’t that the barriers were up, because I found a great supportive network and the barriers were never up, but it was that people weren’t prepared to pass the line (p.9)

Sara

- In the end I think that model worked extremely well because it allowed us to build rapport as a group ‘cause you had a bit of a social side as well (p.1)

- But very quickly I think it was realised that that collective brain approach, where the ideas were put together, saved a lot of time. But everyone also, I think, really enjoyed the company and the rapport built up through the professional dialogue. It was very, very, I don’t know if intense is the right word but it was very stimulating, the conversation, because I hadn’t been in a group that was quite so intent on sharing at a professional level. So that was a new experience for me as well (p.2)

- Articulating the boundaries of the community? Others denied access?

- Linking community to relationship

- Articulating the role of professional dialogue for learning in the community context
I felt that I learnt really a lot about team work and how important that – I keep coming back to that collective brain – what dynamic and innovative stuff you can do when you actually work and share together (p.3)

Because I really felt that what I’d learnt was that people working together effectively can reduce the workload. And even if the workload is really hard, which it was, it was hard to do, that it didn’t seem as tough because you actually enjoy what you were doing because you were sharing and dropping of ideas. Just, I suppose, you’re getting a different perspective. You’re looking at it, it’s not just your way of doing something or you’re having, people are having an input, bringing along their wealth of experience and adding to it (p.4).

Well in, I mean everyone in the group has become extremely dear friends. You know, so I think for me and I don’t know if that would have happened if you worked weekly on a basis with people, whether that just happens or whether it was the type of commitments (p.5)

I don’t know, it sounds a bit sucky but really I thought it was a really close group of friends who had improving stuff for kids at their centre. You know, making a difference, really trying to do something different, innovative. We seemed to thrive on ‘let’s see how creative we can be’ and the programming (p.10)

Miguel

And the others coming in found, because of the personalities involved, you can’t quantify that, there was the united group that had the same wavelength. People coming from outside, they didn’t quite, could not get into this particular world,

• Describing personal learning and linking community, practice and meaning

• Shared commitment

• Articulating purpose. Linking to identity and practice

• Interesting insights into reasons for non-participation. Was ‘group think’ developing? Hints at importance of
although they understood it from the outside enough to make a contribution. But not in the creative sense, or as being part of it. So it wasn’t just the pedagogical dimension. Also the personalities involved, the fact that the group had evolved over some time and these people came in and came after the core work had been done in a certain thing and the bond had been established (p.6)

4. Learning as Identity

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Margo</td>
<td>That was an opportunity for me to perhaps contribute something, because I had taken an interest in the explicit teaching of literacy, and I did sort of feel that I had things to contribute, so it was… it was one positive in a sea of negatives (p.4)</td>
<td>Early feelings of the possibility for a new identity – imagining a trajectory</td>
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<td>So very much in this very traditional, back to the 1950s mode of being a teacher. That was my context. I’m anything but now (p.5)</td>
<td>Beginning to develop a new identity as a teacher in the MS context</td>
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<td>But yep, it’s about mentally sitting up. Because that doesn’t happen easily for me. Maybe it does these days and maybe middle school did that for me (p.6)</td>
<td>Recognition that participating in the MS CoP lead to a new teacher identity in terms of new beliefs and practices</td>
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<td>Made me listen up? Well you’ve got to. If you want to be the kind of facilitator that has to be effective in that place, you have to take the respect you expect the kids to take. You can’t stand at the front of the room or in the corner of the room and say “you get up here and do this.” It doesn’t work. I don’t think it works. So I had to. So maybe middle school has done that for me. But I had to let go of a lot of personal inhibitions (p.7)</td>
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I was a professional, and my concept of that was that I dealt with the child’s learning, and that I was about what we were doing in the classroom, you know? If a kid had come to me...I think I was very supportive of kids in very specific ways. I remember a kid who used to go to pieces in [18:12]. She was really clever and really bright. And I remember spending a lot of time talking with her and supporting her through it, because this is what you do, you know, you do your breathing exercises, you make sure you study properly, da-da-da. Which were all the strategies that she needed. But as far as what was happening to the kid at home or the boyfriend or anything like that, to me that wasn’t my place and it wasn’t my role. And so I don’t know whether it was the homes, the relationship you had with the kid, or I don’t know what it was about the structures in middle school, but it was a revelation that we were not dealing with kids that were the same as they were when I started teaching. And that you have to be worried about what happened to them last night or whether they had breakfast this morning. That that is, if you’re going to be successful at getting to that kid, that you have to build that kind of relationship. And that was, it made...a total re-evaluation of my concept of myself as a professional (p.7)

Right. [pause] Call us a professional...ooh...I was about to say ‘body’, but that’s not it either. Um...can I say, actually thinking through it now, it’s almost like we were a little bit of a religious group in a way, wasn’t it? Because there was this common faith that was built up in what we were doing, and in each other. So it was...mmm. It

• Formation of a new professional identity – related to practice at this stage rather than community or to the outside

• Development of a new professional identity now related to community
certainly built around the professional understandings that we built together, but there became this element of faith (p.15)

- **P:** Undoubtedly. There’s no doubt about that. There is no way that I would be anywhere near where I am without it. Nowhere near. It was a quantum leap.

- **I:** Are you a secondary teacher? Middle school teacher? Primary teacher?

- **P:** No, I’m a teacher. I’m a teacher. Give me the syllabus and some resources, except for those upper levels of maths and science, and I can teach anything. Nope, I’m not, I’m a teacher (p. 17)

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<tr>
<th>Holly</th>
<th><strong>She wasn’t open to it. She didn’t want to be there. She didn’t want to be a part of it. So, she really didn’t give it a chance. She wouldn’t put in the time afterwards. After hours and things, to sit down and try and understand what we were doing and how we were doing it. She wasn’t willing to see that curriculum could be delivered in a different way to the traditional way of what she knew. I don’t think she was really in tune to the needs of middle years kids, and willing to change practice to meet their needs. I think there was a whole lot of things with her. (p. 11).</strong></th>
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<td><strong>But, I think we were more than that at that period of time. We were just, we were immersed in it all, weren’t we? Like, it was just, I don’t know. It was a huge part of our lives. And it’s hard reflecting on it because we know what we’re missing out on now (p. 8)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>I’m doing an integrated curriculum. I don’t know any other way of</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Strong professional identity</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Reflecting on newcomers who were not willing to participate, did not develop meaning, did not ‘join’ the community and did not change identity. Not willing to consider trajectories.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Immersed in an identity</strong></td>
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<td><strong>New identity linked to new practices and new</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lynette</td>
<td>meanings</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>● So I went in with a bit of a “Ooh, geez, you know, like I don’t,” I went in thinking that I wouldn’t be up to scratch. I went in thinking “Oh I’m never going to,” you know, “I won’t be any good with middle school because I’m not the sort of teacher they want”. That’s what I thought (p.3)</td>
<td>● Pre-CoP perception of professional identity – no consideration of trajectories within the CoP yet- not confident in ability at this stage</td>
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<td>● To me they all looked ultra professional, and not that I didn’t look ultra professional but I had this, I don’t know if it was a stereotype, but they’re the ladies with the high heels and the, you know, the teacher’s skirts and I just didn’t think that it was something I’d [8:05] into. But I don’t even actually know why it was (p.3)</td>
<td>● Pre-CoP perception of what it meant to be a MS teacher</td>
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<td>● It kept me thinking. It kept me busy. It kept me active, and it kept me wanting to deliver stuff that was better, stuff that was going to be effective. It holistically I think it improved me. It definitely improved my programming, definitely improved my assessments. (p.5)</td>
<td>● Professional identity beginning to change due to opportunities to change practice – confidence improving</td>
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<td>● I: Great. Hang on. [36:11] middle school? As you say the teachers [36:12] you’re still there, and if you had, I suspect if you would be here next year you’d still be there.</td>
<td>● Feeling a sense of fit in the CoP – identity as MS teacher now developed- linked to community</td>
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</table>

P: Yeah. That’s where I fit [36:22]. It’s where I do my do. It’s where I work well. It’s where I get results (p.13)
• No, you know, like thank you guys for the journey because without you guys in the initial start up then none of this, you know, I could have been a plain old [39:49] year five or year six or, you know, continually have the ass end of every behaviour class in the world because once [39:58] become a dumping ground. You know, and professionally it, you know, gave me structure and, you know, have my own class, a bit of ownership, you know, that empowerment again, it’s a powerful thing and I think if you were to put middle school under one umbrella, it would have to be empowerment of the teacher, of the students, and it’s really sad to see what’s happened to us.

Sara

• Certainly I felt in the first instance I probably [0:04:15.4] to the table, so it very quickly devolved that people changed and I just became [0:04:21.8] and the presenter as such, I thought I became part of the group. And different people would bring and share and bring their strengths, I suppose, [0:04:32.1] evolved and we continued linking up weekly for about five years, I think it was. So it was a very amazing commitment from staff (p.2)

• So I suppose my role went from being the facilitator and bringer of some information to the table, that it was discussed and hopefully put into action into classrooms, to someone who was just part of the team and learning as well (p.3)

• But certainly, like anything when you first start with a team, you’re very, [0:14:40.5], I don’t think the primary and the secondary people [0:14:43.4] that well, even though they’re in the same system, same school. And certainly, I was very much an outsider. So the massive change I saw was the coming

• Different trajectories developed during her involvement in the CoP from broker to full participant to peripheral participant
- Together of a true central core I suppose and people were working together. With consultancy seen as support rather than big brother type, you know (p.5)

- Like we seemed to be getting a lot of support from outside the region or outside, you know, you go to conferences and present and people were blown away by what the school was doing and the results that they’d been able to achieve and how we seemed to work as units and stuff like that. [0:10:33.0] that I wore a Portland shirt, so very much a part of the school and I always have felt that, but yeah, very sad in the other aspect that it was never seen as worthy enough, for whatever reason, to put the time and money behind it. To actually really promote (p.4)

- I think the teachers – going back, I think teachers built a lot of confidence because suddenly we were invited to present at a range of state conferences, at principal things and all around the state. And so they had to built that skill of presenting and again, working as a team. I remember many good times sitting around putting those presentations together (p.8).

- There was something that just clicked, that seemed to work really well and that I felt even after I’d left the program, and I’ve been in a number of jobs since, that I really still wanted to stay in touch and try and get to meetings as much as I could (p.10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miguel</th>
<th>In terms of the professional development, I could see an enormous sort of bridging between stage three and stage four in the curriculum, and the primary and secondary world, sort of thing (p.3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Strong identification with the CoP – outside/inside perspective</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>New ways of being identified by others outside of the CoP, new trajectories developing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Retaining an identity within the CoP despite moving on with other trajectories - links with community</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>An outsiders view of new identities developing as CoP members identify as MS teachers not as Primary or Secondary</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• ...to have it now where you had primary-trained people and secondary-trained people working together and being the link between the stages three and four in the curriculum and with units of work that would take students from years 5-8 in a certain direction in the middle years, which are the problem years in many ways in an education structure, was very, very significant for me to see (p. 3)

• So in terms of the professional development of the staff, I could see the growth. I could see the awareness, for example, by secondary teachers, of the excellent work by the primary teachers and the responsibility primary teachers have, how difficult primary teaching is. The fundamentals and so on. And I think the primary teachers would see that, you know, specialists go so far, but deep down they are teachers like everyone else. Those barriers that you see when you’re at the conferences with the primary and secondary teachers completely gone, and later on when they were delivering presentation all over the place in Sydney and Melbourne and Brisbane, I think it was, even to Brisbane, and links with the university and so on, it was great to see how, due to that effort, their willingness and their belief in this philosophy and this approach to linking and to developing students, how they grew and they developed and became excellent professionals. So it was great to see (p.4)

5. Learning as Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Evidence- Specific Quote</th>
<th>Researchers Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Margo I</td>
<td>I: How do you think our meetings helped? Were they helpful,</td>
<td>Describing a structure in initial teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Linking new professional identities to new meaning, community and practice
those weekly meetings –

P: Yes.

I: - that went on for so many years.

P: Yes they were. They were helpful in two ways. The original ones were just about the actual professional learning itself (p.8)

- Yeah and then the two team consults. So there would be that initial work we’d do in two teams. All of that, I mean you learned about all those things and how they’re important and why they’re important and how they work in real classrooms and all of that. I think get the ideas fizzing, you know? We bounced around so many different teaching concepts and contexts (p.8)

- I: So do you think those first, in the early days remember Melanie was delivering workshop sort of things to us. Do you think, what do you think that did for us? And her role back then?

P: Covered an awful lot of material in a very short space of time, I think.

I: Do you see her role as quite valuable when we started?

P: Oh yes.

I: Could we have done it without her?

P: No, I don’t think we could have. I don’t think we had any idea of what we were doing, actually. That’s a good point. She made us focus on what did we want to achieve here and what sorts of things are we going to do to achieve it? And then, you know, she understood very clearly then what kinds of professional learning would need to be provided to achieve what we had in mind. So no, I don’t think, I think she directed us the first couple of years very effectively and we couldn’t have done it without her at all

MS meetings

- Articulating how structured PD and the role of Sara as a facilitator assisted learning
I think we kept learning by keeping the structure alive, and by having to do the things that had to be done to keep it alive (p.10)

I think they learned stuff, I think that they were never going to take it on board as much because they missed all that professional learning that went on at the start (p.10)

I really think that Juliet became... she certainly became part of it. I don’t know... she missed all that stuff at the beginning. I don’t know that, unless you’ve gone through that initial process, that you really... to me it always comes back to understanding fully what it is we were on about, and what it is we were... (p.11)

. And it, I also think that I’m not being awful, this is very honest, that highly structured meetings are necessary to keep the focus going. That there are a couple of personalities there that require that focus within a meeting context, otherwise it becomes a gossip session (p.11)

Yeah, keep us on the straight and narrow, but I don’t know that if we hadn’t had Sara that if we had a clear goal for a particular meeting that it wouldn’t have happened anyway. And I think that that real sense of purpose and focus was really important (p.13)

Reflecting on the importance of the structured PD for learning – non-participants missed out on the early sessions

Broker’s role in ‘teaching’

Changing role and perception of broker as ‘teacher’? Articulating the benefits of ‘teaching’ for the community’s learning on a...
what middle schooling was all about. So, I guess we ended up just leaning into her ideas and going with them. And in doing that, I think we just overcome the, who do you think you are telling us what to do, and got past that pretty quickly (p.6)

- Absolutely. Because we had no direction. She was the one that gave us the direction of where to go and what to do and how to get around it. I think the most valuable one, actually I really don’t know what we did until we got to the vision statement with her (p.7).

- And I think once we got that, once we did that together as a team, it brought all us in much closer. It got us all into the same mindset of where we were going and what we were doing, and what we actually wanted to try and achieve (p.7)

- But I think she was always the one that brought new ideas to us. And helped guide us and direct us in the path that we were taking. Because we were too caught up in the curriculum content side of things, in trying to actually on the ground teach and figure out where we were going. Where she was on the outside looking in going, you’ve got to do more. You’ve got to really think about where you’re going in the future, and how you’re going to get there, and what you’re going to do for these kids. And how you’re going to track it (p.7)

- She was the one that led [0:15:55] out professional development, and developed the path in which we took with our professional development (p.8)

- Yeah. But I think it was everything though. It was the pre-knowledge of the content and the where we got to in what we were doing and how we

- Hypothesising that the structured ‘teaching’ was an important part of participation for membership-
were delivering things. But I think it was also the pre-knowledge of everything. The syllabus and how it worked and how it linked together. And how the [0:23:46] overlaps. The pre-knowledge of us and our professional development on many levels. Going back right to that, working out the vision statement, of where we all were, and what we wanted to achieve from this whole thing. These people just sort of stepped in. And we did end up seeing that they needed to become part of it, and gave the, we re-evaluated the vision statement and stuff and tried to do that to make them try and feel part of it, but I don’t think it ever really changed that much. So I don’t think they really ever felt part of it (p.11)

| Sara | • In the first instance I think we just started, like after we’d formulated a plan we’d have weekly 2 ½ hour sessions after school. The idea was to focus on a particular, so it might have been focusing on learning styles or focusing on a particular theme. I don’t know if that’s the right word. But from there I’d spent researching, putting together a workshop as such. So in the first instance, my role changed quite dramatically, but in the first instance it was really presenting different ideas, different training and development. So whether it was around programming or whatever, whatever the topic was, and then people going off discussing that, having a go in class, coming back, evaluating. So we [0:04:08.6] built a cycle that looked at that. Certainly I felt in the first instance I probably [0:04:15.4] to the table, so it very quickly devolved that people changed and I just became [0:04:21.8] and the presenter as such, I thought I became part of the group. And different people would bring and share and bring their |

• Describing the structure and process of ‘teaching’
strengths, I suppose, evolved and we continued linking up weekly for about five years, I think it was. So it was a very amazing commitment from staff (p.2)

- I think you could translate because I, as I said, I typed up the process for training and development and I state that it’s a mini action research type approach, where you bring something, analyse what you want to do, bring the information to the table, discuss, train, whatever the word is. We would do examples and then let people play with it and then come back and reflect and discuss (p.11)

- But not many people are happy, or comfortable, I suppose it’s not happy, it’s comfortable to share. I think this group got to a point where they’re very comfortable to work in pairs, bring back something. As you were doing you’d break off into, when we were programming and two would go over there. And then when it was brought back it was actually a product, it wasn’t a sit around gossip session. It was very focussed, so you felt that the time put in actually produced a product (p.11).
Appendix 7A

Brainstorming map for the interdisciplinary, integrated unit: “Australians then and now”
Appendix 7B

An integration wheel: A planning tool for interdisciplinary, integrated teaching and learning units
Timing: A 10 week unit taught over 15 x 1 hour sessions per cycle

An Integrated Science, Geography, HSIE, English and Mathematics Unit.

GEOGRAPHY
- Global connections
- Renewable/nonrenewable resources
- Graphical analysis
- Global warming/greenhouse gases

MATHEMATICS
- Graphical analysis and construction
- Data tabulation

ENGLISH
- Procedural writing
- Information reports
- Explanation
- Information synthesis
- Debating
- Research Skills

SCIENCE
- Procedural writing
- Investigations
- Energy Sources
- Types of Energy
- Law of Energy Conservation
- Energy Transformation
- Greenhouse gases/Global warming
- Electricity Generation
- Local Power Sources

This unit will:
Student will develop an understanding of the significant social, environmental and economic issues that are associated with the generation and use of energy.
Appendix 7C

Sample of a cognitive strategy used in a Middle School meeting for program evaluation/analysis: A Bone Diagram
BONE DIAGRAM

Positive Forces that create growth
- Commitment/Passion
- Support from D.P.
- Funding
- Principal support
- Professional development
- Team spirit
- Improving teacher support

Future
- Higher order thinking tools
- Focus on classroom practice
- Critical friend/mentor program
- Digital Portfolio
- CSU Mentor program
- Focus on K-5 education
- Assessment schedule
- Rubrics
- Technology
- Reflective teaching practice
- Coordinated K-8 Science Program

Present
- QTP/Clancy project
- New team members
- Integrating technology
- Cycle A completed, Cycle B in progress
- Additional math classes taught by M.S. teachers

Negative Forces that prevent growth
- Time
- Commitment/Passion
- T.P.-related:
- Weekly realistic
- Planning
Appendix 7D

Middle School students’ portfolio work samples
Sample 1: An advertisement from an integrated unit titled “House and Garden Chemicals”

Sample 2: An investigation from an integrated Science unit.

Sample 3: A “working mathematically” open-ended task.

Sample 4: A sample of procedural writing from an integrated unit titled “Was DaVinci a witch?”
**Note:** The Annual School Report for 1999 could not be located in the school. The Annual School Report for 2003 was only a draft, no final copy could be located in the school.

### 1997-1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Document Theme</strong></td>
<td>The year of the ‘status quo’</td>
<td>The year of ‘accountability’ and a sense that something was happening.</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Profile Data:</strong></td>
<td>Total Enrolment: 229</td>
<td>Total Enrolment: 296</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Enrolments: NA</td>
<td>New Enrolments: NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mobility: NA</td>
<td>Mobility: NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers: 25</td>
<td>Teachers: 25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retention</strong></td>
<td>Year 6 into 7: NA</td>
<td>Year 6 into 7: 77%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 10 into 11: NA</td>
<td>Year 10 into 11: 60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 11 into 12: NA</td>
<td>Year 11 into 12: 64%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attendance</strong></td>
<td><em>Primary attendance rates are generally in line with district and state attendance rates (p.10).</em></td>
<td><em>Absenteeism was acceptable in terms 1 and 2 but higher than state average in Terms 3 and 4 (p.12)</em></td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Secondary attendance rates were also in line with district and state trends (p.10)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>A teachers aide has been employed to support students in playground interaction (p.2)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...an extensive support for students with learning and behavioural difficulties…(p.2)</td>
<td>Establishment of the ‘yellow card’ system to involve parents in modifying negative student behaviour (p.2)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is evident that programs to develop positive behaviour management and social skills need to be developed (p.3).</td>
<td>It is evident that programs to develop positive behaviour management and social skills need to be developed (p.3).</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school has the services of a very effective counsellor…to support children with behavioural difficulties (p.4)</td>
<td>Itinerent support is given by district staff 2 days per week in the area of learning and behaviour support (p.3)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...a more proactive role in dealing with behavioural issues (p.4)</td>
<td>The school has the services of a very effective counsellor…to support children with behavioural</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The levels system continued to provide re-enforcement for positive student behaviours (p.4).</td>
<td>difficulties (p.4)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardised Test Results</td>
<td>Literacy levels of students are still low despite some improvements (p.6) Numeracy skills are low for many students (p.6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BST Results</td>
<td>Literacy skills in Year 5 has improved over the past 5 years (p.7) A significant number of students are in the lower bands (p.7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Numeracy  There were no Year 5 students in the lower bands-the majority were in bands 3-4 (p.7)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The school is over represented in lower bands (p.7)??</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A supportive T&amp;D program was implemented to support staff in teaching literacy...this has resulted in significant improvement in the BST and improvement of student skills from Year 7 to 8 as shown in the ELLA results (p.5)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>BST Results</td>
<td>No Year 5 students were in the lower bands 1 or 2 (p.8) Average growth</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>...significant improvements have been made on external testing results (p.5)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
from Year 3 to 5 is below state average (p.8)

Year 5 results demonstrate improvement in all areas since Year 3 testing (p.7)

**Numeracy**
Year 5 results indicate strong growth since testing in Year 3 (p.8)
25% of students were in the top bands (p.8)
Growth from Year 3 to 5 equals state average.

**SC**
No student was below 50% in literacy...this is an indicator that the literacy support programs operating at BCS are producing improvements in student performances (p.9).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Comments</th>
<th>Principal: Mitchell</th>
<th>Principal: Bright</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- No ‘hard’ data recorded for attendance or behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- No ‘hard’ BST data recorded and no trend over previous years reported</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- No SC/HSC results reported</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Noted an emphasis on student behaviour throughout the report.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A number of improvement programs noted: card system to monitor playground, Literacy programs, Reading Recovery, TALL program, Parent Reader program. DSP introduced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A much more comprehensive and detailed annual report</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No ‘hard’ BST, ELLA, SC or HSC data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community focus</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Report shows an intensive approach to improve school culture: community links, performances, participation and recognition.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Focus on teaching and learning rather than behaviour.

### 2000-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001 Middle School Genesis</th>
<th>2002 Middle School Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Document Theme</strong></td>
<td>The year of ‘excuses’ and a recognition of the need for change</td>
<td>The year ‘to take stock and move on’- new leadership</td>
<td>The year of ‘innovation’- a sense of optimism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Profile Data:</strong></td>
<td>Total Enrolment: 292&lt;br&gt;New Enrolments: NA&lt;br&gt;Mobility: 26.4%&lt;br&gt;Teachers: 25</td>
<td>Total Enrolment: 249&lt;br&gt;New Enrolments: NA&lt;br&gt;Mobility: 13.8%&lt;br&gt;Teachers: 26</td>
<td>Total Enrolment: 239&lt;br&gt;New Enrolments: 41&lt;br&gt;Mobility: 27.2%&lt;br&gt;Teachers: 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retention</strong></td>
<td>Year 6 into 7: 89%&lt;br&gt;Year 10 into 11: 79%&lt;br&gt;Year 11 into 12: 92%</td>
<td>Year 6 into 7: 50%&lt;br&gt;Year 10 into 11: 73%&lt;br&gt;Year 11 into 12: 84.3%</td>
<td>Year 6 into 7: 76.2%&lt;br&gt;Year 10 into 11: 81%&lt;br&gt;Year 11 into 12: 100%&lt;br&gt;Staff believed the project [the MS] should be viewed as an important element of the school’s efforts in marketing and developing educational programs, particularly the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staff believed the project [the MS] should be viewed as an important element of the school’s efforts in marketing and developing educational programs, particularly the
| **Attendance** | Interpreted from graph (p.2)- Little change from 1997-2000, below state average, equal to district average in 200. | Interpreted from graph (p.10). Average attendance matches state but is higher than district. Slightly higher than 200. | Whole School : 88% interpreted from graph (p.10) 
The student attendance rate at BCS has improved in 2002 compared with 2001 and is slightly below the district average(p.10) |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Behaviour**  | High mobility rates are often indicative of schools involved in DSP (p.3)  
[Staff] survey responses show that staff are concerned about the level of responsibility taken on by students in relation to their own learning and the lack of student engagement in the learning process(p.5)  
Some staff | The way to address a sense of disappointment with school life in Year 7 and 8 will be through the Middle School (p.2).  
For Years 9-12 a relevant curriculum and mentoring roles by teachers will help(p.2)  
An additional Head Teacher Welfare to be appointed (p.6) | The majority of students interviewed recorded a high level of satisfaction in the care and respect shown towards them by their teachers (p.3)  
The middle school project has been a contributor to overall improvement in the culture of school (p.4)  
Student discipline measures are tracked on computers (p.4) |
Responses focused on the negative aspects of student behaviour rather than student learning (p.5)

Steps need to be taken to improve student behaviour so that its impact on student learning is reduced (p.5)

An antibullying committee will be formed (p.6)

TAPS (parent group) initiative – a response to students who were exhibiting challenging behaviours and for whom school appeared to have little relevance (p.6)

An SRC was reintroduced (p.6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standardised Test Results</th>
<th>BST Results</th>
<th>BST Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literacy</strong></td>
<td>46% progressed from Year 3-5 beyond state averages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls showed improvement whilst boys showed a decline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Numeracy</strong></td>
<td>18% progressed from Year 3-5 above state averages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of welfare initiatives were introduced: LIMS, LSTs, Welfare Policy review, Harrassment Registers, RISC, TAPS from 2001, Mentoring Program).

Intorrent behaviour teacher visited 1 day per week

Most encouraging progress…69% in Bands 4-6...60% showed good to very good improvement from previous Year 3 results.

85% in Bands 3 or higher- still lags behind state averages (p.7)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The Middle School program will be implemented in 2002 (p.7)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SC/HSC</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room for improvement in terms of value adding (p.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school’s average performance in SC was below state average (p.10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ELLA**
9/20 proficient in writing, 10/20 proficient in reading

**SNAP**
Consistent or positive progress for Year8 (p.8)

The implication from these results is that the MS project has had a positive impact on numeracy at BCS (p.8)

80% of parents surveyed indicated that the middle school would help to improve the quality of student outcomes (p.4)

**Counting On** in middle school led to measurable improvement in student skills and strategies in number (p.7)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Additional Comments</strong></th>
<th><strong>Principal: Small</strong></th>
<th><strong>Principal: Miguel</strong></th>
<th><strong>Principal: Miguel</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programs planned included Count me in too, Early literacy initiative and Transition for Year6/7.</td>
<td>Principal: Small</td>
<td>Quality of School life survey implemented (p2)-satisfaction 90% in primary, 67% in Secondary</td>
<td>Principal: Miguel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streamed classes in the secondary.</td>
<td>Principal: Small</td>
<td>MS planning to improve literacy and numeracy</td>
<td>Middle School Project and Mentoring program were two of the major innovations implemented. <em>(planned initiatives)</em> (p.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The year of the new HSC</td>
<td>Principal: Small</td>
<td>Spec Ed teacher appointed</td>
<td>I-Shine award in photography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLO employed</td>
<td>Principal: Small</td>
<td>CLO very active (TAPS, Antibullying committee)</td>
<td>Voc Ed focus towards a <em>balanced curriculum</em> (p.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent survey- 7% return rate – A substantial number of parents surveyed indicated that they are happy with the teaching and learning processes…a larger percentage however indicated that outcomes are only sometimes achieved…overall this paints a positive picture of parental perceptions about</td>
<td>Principal: Small</td>
<td>Major reorganisation of the school’s financial resources and administration (p.12)</td>
<td>MS- focuses on student engagement and the development of independent and confident learners who are consistently encouraged to meet challenges…enabling dynamic and effective teaching and learning programs to be developed (p.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student learning ( (p.5) )</td>
<td>Findings of the Learning review Team were detailed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy focus in 2000</td>
<td>More thorough reporting of standardised testing though no graphical representation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT focus in 2000</td>
<td>Continuation of the CLO position in the school has maintained positive contacts with the community ( (p.8) )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School networked</td>
<td>Consolidating and extending the middle school in numeracy, literacy and science set as a 2003 target ( (p.9) )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RISC implemented</td>
<td>Revised Welfare Policy implemented</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No hard data for standardised tests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 2003-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Document Theme</strong></td>
<td>NA <strong>Middle School Implementation</strong></td>
<td>The year of achievements and celebration <strong>Middle School Implementation/Consolidation</strong></td>
<td>The year of consolidation <strong>Middle School Consolidation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Profile Data:</strong></td>
<td>Total Enrolment: 234</td>
<td>Total Enrolment: 209</td>
<td>Total Enrolment: 221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Enrolments: 47</td>
<td>New Enrolments: 39</td>
<td>New Enrolments: 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mobility: NA</td>
<td>Mobility: 27.2%</td>
<td>Mobility: 27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers: NA</td>
<td>Teachers: 21</td>
<td>Teachers: 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retention</strong></td>
<td>Year 6 into 7: 70%</td>
<td>Year 6 into 7: 92.4%</td>
<td>Year 6 into 7: 91.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 10 into 11: 95%</td>
<td>Year 10 into 11: 77.3%</td>
<td>Year 10 into 11: 79.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 11 into 12: 100%</td>
<td>Year 11 into 12: 81.2%</td>
<td>Year 11 into 12: 56.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attendance</strong></td>
<td>Whole School: 90.5%</td>
<td>Whole school: 90.1%</td>
<td>Whole School: 90.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student absenteeism is well below that of comparable schools...these are the best participation figures in four years according to the HSLO (p.5).</td>
<td>Student attendance rate was comparable to the district average (p.10)</td>
<td>Student attendance rate was comparable to regional average (p14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased level of student engagement with education through lower absentee levels, detention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There has been a significant improvement in student attitude and behaviour towards school in general and classroom participation in particular (p.3)

Equally the number of discipline incidents declined markedly (p.3)

A number of welfare initiatives noted: LSTs, STLA, Home rooms and teachers in MS, school diaries, whole school Homework policy, LIMS, CALM training for staff, RISC, Go for Gold merit system, KLA achievements certificates, review of school discipline K-12, bus procedures.

Data taken from the annual bullying survey shows a continuation of a positive direction in reducing the levels of bullying within the student body (p8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standardised Test Results</th>
<th>BST Results</th>
<th>Awards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Literacy</strong></td>
<td>National Award for Excellence in Literacy and Numeracy (MS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90% matched students grew 7.7 more than state</td>
<td>NSW Director General’s Award for Excellence (MS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Numeracy</strong></td>
<td>NSW Award for Excellence in Literacy and Numeracy (MS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50% matched students grew 7 more than state</td>
<td>NSW Director Generals’ Award for Excellent Service (Mentoring)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conference Invitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>State Finalists – I-Shine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BST Results

- **Literacy**
  - 90% matched students grew 7.7 more than state
- **Numeracy**
  - 50% matched students grew 7 more than state

- Awards
  - National Award for Excellence in Literacy and Numeracy (MS)
  - NSW Director General’s Award for Excellence (MS)
  - NSW Award for Excellence in Literacy and Numeracy (MS)
  - NSW Director Generals’ Award for Excellent Service (Mentoring)
  - Conference Invitations
  - State Finalists – I-Shine

BST Results

- **Literacy**
  - School/state difference dropped from 6.3 (2004) to 3.1
  - 73% matched students progressed more than expected state growth
| **ELL A** | **State Award for Excellence in Administration Services**<br>Historically the 2003 Year 7 Ella results were the strongest achieved at BCS (p.2) | **Literacy**<br>75% band 3 or higher<br>53% matched students progressed more than state average

**Numeracy**<br>67% achieved band 4 or higher<br>79% matched students progressed more than state average

Student achievements and value adding to student learning were acknowledged by the Bathurst Area Director as exemplar among the regions schools (p.3)

**ELLA**<br>Confirmed improving literacy standards<br>Best ever ELLA results in 2003 |
<p>| <strong>Numeracy</strong>&lt;br&gt;57% achieved band 4 or higher and 36% progressed in growth&lt;br&gt;Year 7 students gave us our best numeracy indication in many years and our results were close to state | <strong>SNAP</strong>&lt;br&gt;Overall improvements from year 7 to 8 was well above state average (p11) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Comments</th>
<th>Principal: Miguel</th>
<th>Principal: Miguel</th>
<th>Principal: Miguel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No additional comment could be made</td>
<td>An unforgettable year (p.1) School image/culture became a focus of “whole school change” – school diaries, marketing strategies, new uniforms, enhanced PD.</td>
<td>No hard data for standardised tests</td>
<td>A year of consolidation as well as a year of planning new initiatives (p1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The MS innovations have developed a strong professional culture within the school…(p.4)</td>
<td>Successful AGQTP bid – “Integrated Curriculum”</td>
<td>No other school, to his knowledge [Director General] had received so many prestigious awards in such a short period of time (p1)</td>
<td>Received a LBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection as a case study school (UTS)</td>
<td>Conference presentations of the MS program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension of the mentoring program</td>
<td>Principal received a Leadership Scholarship and the Jim Harkin Award (p1)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There was a high level of family and community participation at BCS in 2004 (p11).</td>
<td>Mentoring program – 94.3% participants showed a positive response - the program is having a discernible impact on the confidence and educational and career aspirations (p.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family First innovation</td>
<td>Rich task assessment being introduced into the MS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 2006-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2006 Middle School Consolidation</th>
<th>2007 Middle School Consolidation/Maturity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Document Theme</strong></td>
<td>The year of ‘reviews’</td>
<td>The year of ‘targeted/strategic whole school improvement’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Profile Data:</strong></td>
<td>Total Enrolment:: 231</td>
<td>Total Enrolment:: 222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Enrolments: 52F/t, 21P/t</td>
<td>New Enrolments: 35 f/t, 16p/t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mobility: NA</td>
<td>Mobility: NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers: 23</td>
<td>Teachers: 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retention</strong></td>
<td>Year 6 into 7: 84.6%</td>
<td>Year 6 into 7: 58.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 10 into 11: 89.4%</td>
<td>Year 10 into 11: 91.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 11 into 12: 71.4%</td>
<td>Year 11 into 12: 76.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Attendance | Whole School: 91.1%  
Overall school attendance rates have shown a slight increase from 2005 and are above region average and commensurate with state average 2.1% improvements in secondary and 0.3% in primary | Whole School: 89.1%  
Overall school attendance rates have shown a decrease from 2006 in Years 7-10, however an increase in Year 11/12 has been reported (p5) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Behaviour | The positive and substantial reduction in the number of negative entries on RISC of 27% is clear evidence of the improvements achieved in student welfare in 2006 (p.19). | An important contributor to the development of the culture of the school over the last 6 years has been the promotion of the principles of Respect and Responsibility in our school community (p17).  
Fewer notifications in the harassment register this year than last year (p18)  
There was a positive and substantial reduction in the number of negative entries on RISC between Mar-Nov providing clear evidence of the |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standardised Test Results</th>
<th>BST Results</th>
<th>ELLA</th>
<th>SNAP</th>
<th>SC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literacy</strong></td>
<td>62% in band 4 or better</td>
<td>Increase in highest and lowest bands</td>
<td>Majority in elementary and low bands</td>
<td>Relative growth of students from Year 5 to 10 was shown across</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Numeracy</strong></td>
<td>64% in band 4 or better</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ELLA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SNAP</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SC</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**improvements achieved in student welfare in 2007 (p21)**

**BST Results**

- **Literacy**
  - 53% in bands 4 or higher

- **Numeracy**
  - 53% in bands 4 or higher

**ELLA**

- Substantial improvements (p3)

**SNAP**

- Targets for improvements easily met (p.3)

- Detailed graphical data provided as per 2006.

**In 2007, the school made significant improvements in the literacy and numeracy levels of our students (p.18).**

The overall success of PSP at BCS is reflected in the upward trend in the school’s results in state wide testing (p19).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects (p12)</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>All subjects were negative in relative growth…however improvements were made in the value-adding of students in English and History…(p14).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The SC results mirrored an ongoing trend of improving SC results (p.2)</td>
<td>HSC</td>
<td>The results reflected a positive trend in the HSC results for students at the school. Detailed Benchmark data also reported (p13-15).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional**

<p>| Principal: Miguel Voc Ed/Transition focus: transition to Kinder, Mentoring and Industry Links Project | Principal: Miguel  | BCS Industry Links program continued to expand – moving into a district initiative in 2008 Learning Logs implemented as a literacy strategy |
| More data driven report |  | Expanding Adult Education: IT, Business, Metals, Furniture, Aboriginal studies |
| More comparable standardised test results reported across 2002-2006 |  |  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invest in our schools program application</th>
<th>After school Homework Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 8 removed from MS <em>in order to target areas for improvement within specific subjects in 2007</em> (p.22)</td>
<td>Continuing programs: Mentoring and Transition programs, MS, Buddy system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent satisfaction survey showed 56% satisfied, 25% mostly satisfied</td>
<td>Numeracy committee formed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GATS policy being developed</td>
<td>Successful Invest in our schools program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on staff PD</td>
<td>Successful sailing program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School responding to 2 external evaluations – Literacy focus</td>
<td>PSP funding supported literacy and numeracy initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic challenge and competitions were targeted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>74% parent satisfaction on survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>