

STORY OF IMPACT



Collaboration: “Explore and Discover”

“(Group work is important because) it leads to negotiating, cooperating and communicating clearly!” – Savannah

Students in Year 3 have been learning what it takes to collaborate effectively. Through careful planning and an integrated approach, the learning experiences have deepened the girls' understanding across a range of curriculum areas. The overarching concept of 'Explore and Discover' was used as a vehicle for understanding and growing in collaboration skills across a variety of settings and learning scenarios.

For the students to have opportunities to grow and develop their collaboration skills, we accepted as a teaching team that we would first need to collaborate effectively ourselves. As a staff, time was spent viewing the intended learning programs in all subject areas and the key learning intentions for the term were defined. The common thread bringing each of the learning areas together was the concept of exploring and discovering. This tied in beautifully with our Geography unit, but also with other learning areas such as Mathematics and Literacy. Using the 4 Elements as a guide, the Year 3 teaching team were able to decide upon the pedagogical approaches required to ensure authentic group learning tasks were to be incorporated, where opportunities for reflection could be provided and how challenging scenarios could be crafted for the girls in order for them to experience the necessity of collaboration.

At the heart of the learning experiences were the design tools of pedagogical practices and the learning environment. An important aspect of the learning journey was establishing a shared space for documentation of experiences, understanding and overall progress. This interactive “working wall” was comprised of a range of artefacts. Some of which included: photographs, student work samples, the learning progression for the disposition and provocations. In addition to the shared space, students were also provided with a “learning passport” which was used as a medium for reflection. Furthermore, the “learning passport” acted as a platform for students to draw connections between learning experiences, new understanding and a common language related to the disposition of collaboration. In order for students to gain insight into their own capacity to collaborate deliberate decisions were made around group organisation and the structure of learning experiences. This enabled students equal opportunity to draw on their strengths, take risks and develop their tolerance for ambiguity.



One of the most exciting things we have seen has been the transferral of our intentional teaching of collaboration to our student's social play and interactions beyond the classroom. One example of this was when a group of Year 3 students noticed an environmental problem, involving local wildlife. Across all three classes girls were united in their concern and desire to better care for our resident plover population. This initiative took the form of preliminary research, poster design and culminated in a student-led assembly announcement to raise awareness of the issue. Teachers were delighted to see students exhibiting collaboration in action and in response to a real-world problem. What was most surprising was the combination of students and the preparedness of girls to work alongside peers who would usually be outside of their social preferences. Also pleasing was the individual development of students along the progression. This development was not only recognised and appreciated by teachers but also identified in student reflections.

Whilst the learning experiences for the students were indeed deepened (due to our deliberate approach to teaching the skills of collaboration through an interdisciplinary unit) we as teachers have grown significantly in our professional practice and propensity to collaborate. Teachers across the school now genuinely appreciate the deep learning framework as they recognise how transformative this process can be for both students and those involved in facilitating their learning experiences.

