



The Graham Nuthall Research Trust Newsletter

Number 1, March 2008

Trust Awards

2003

Anna Johnstone "Teacher and student interactions during writing sessions".

2004 – 2005

Michelle Clarke "‘On the mat’: An exploration of the impact of new entrant children's classroom and home experiences on their understandings of what counts as reading".

Dr Christine Rietveld "Starting pre-school: how do children with and without down syndrome become valued members of peer groups?".

2006

Jae Major "(Re)-Constructing identities in a regular primary classroom: Implications for language learning".

Fleur Harris "(Re)-Constructing Māori Children as Achieving Learners".

Graham's Influence in Schools

Southbridge School principal Peter Verstappen and Ilisa Maginness, a teacher for seven years, talk about implementing Graham's work at their school.

At the end of 2007 after *The Hidden Lives of Learners* came out Peter, who was already familiar with Graham's research, began talking to his staff about some of the 'big ideas' that he wanted them to trial in order to improve their children's learning. Ilisa began by picking up on the strategy of explicitly teaching a key concept to the children using three different and authentic learning experiences, so that they could fully engage with the concept. At the end of the school year she applied it to their work in health and in narrative writing. She found that the children gained stronger ownership of their learning and made better decisions about what they needed to focus on.

She also began conversations with children prior to her own planning for

teaching. This helped her clarify the direction of her curriculum planning, and to think through what teaching and learning processes would be best to use. Her own questions were: *what is the concept I want to focus on? how successful have I been and how do I know? and what kind of support do particular learners need?* She described how *Hidden Lives* has confirmed her in where she wants to go, and is helping her continuing journey of learning to teach.

Peter saw the fit between Graham's 'big ideas' and what he and the school were trying to do. His emphasis has been on reframing the relationship between teachers and learners, so that students become more powerful by having a better understanding about themselves as learners. The book helped him to realise the importance of the variety of experiences that children bring to the classroom. He is working with teachers to help them become more aware of how that variety influences what they need to do in their planning and their classroom practice.

Peter says the school is still learning more about the issues, but the chance to implement the new curriculum is another incentive for them to try different approaches. They are also involved in a research project with the University of Canterbury to develop indicators of levels of student engagement with their learning.

"We are informing our practice with Graham's wisdom. We are backing up what we do with some of the most thorough evidence that we have about children's classroom learning." ■

About the Trust

The **Graham Nuthall Classroom Research Trust** was set up to:

- honour the outstanding contributions made by Professor Emeritus Graham Nuthall through his research and scholarship to international understandings of learning and teaching
- help improve the quality of children's learning
- facilitate and support classroom based research to reflect a student focused approach to studying classroom contexts.

It provides an annual award for teachers and scholars to pursue classroom based research.

