Southern Area Schools' Community of Learning

Characteristics

The Southern Area Schools are: *Twizel Area School, Maniototo Area School, Roxburgh Area School, Lawrence Area School, The Catlins Area School and Waiau Area School*.

These schools are spread over a large geographical area; Western Southland, Catlins, inland Otago and the Mackenzie Basin

By nature of their area school status, the schools have a strong existing relationship based on a commonality of interest that includes sporting tournaments and e-Learning networks.

At a national level these schools are connected through Area School Executive, on which the Southern Area Schools have two representatives.

Being Area Schools they cater for all year levels from Year 1 through to Year 13. They are comparatively small in size, with 100 to 200 students.

Secondary year levels typically have a dozen or fewer students. This makes statistical analysis based on percentages invalid. Students especially in senior school have individualised programs tailored to their career and tertiary pathway/needs.

The communities are rural and isolated from major centres. They share similar challenges in providing quality education to their community. Some of these challenges include factors such as teacher recruitment and retention, professional isolation through being the sole teacher of a year level or a subject, access to professional development, low aspiration of some students and limited numbers of student pathways. These schools make extensive use of ICTs to maintain subject choice at senior levels and support connections to wider contexts but maintaining good connectivity is another challenge.

Operational process

Initially develop systems for utilising expertise from within the Community of Learning for the benefit of Student Achievement at each school. Our COL is unusual in that it doesn't have a straight linear structure where one school feeds another. Further our COL also has the geographic barriers as described above as well as the other significant costs and challenges of isolation and distance. An example of the challenge of distance is the greatest distance between 2 of the schools in the COL is 389km 5.5 hours by road (Tuatapere to Twizel) and the shortest is 58km 50 minutes by road (Roxburgh to Lawrence).
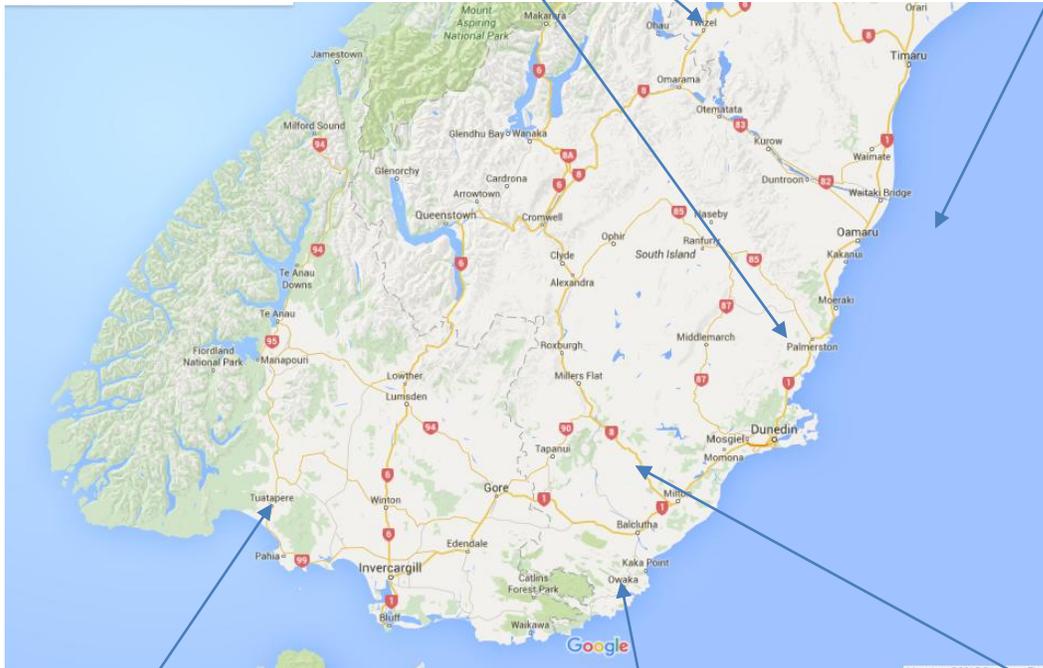
Schools in our Community
of Learning

Roxburgh Area School

'Creating our future'

TWIZEL AREA SCHOOL

'Confident, connected, lifelong learners with a passion'

Maniot Sch

'By learn

Lawrence Area School

'We develop lifelong learners who are motivated, confident and willing to contribute'

The Catlins Area School

'Be the best you can be'

Our COL has 917 students the ethnic and age breakdowns are represented below.

Ethnic Group	Number	Percent
Maori	189	20.6
Pasifika	16	1.7
Asian	27	2.9
European/Pakeha	685	73.7

Numbers of students at different year levels.

Year Level	Number of students
Years 1-6	430
Years 7-10	330
Years 11-13	157

Initial Tasks   Actions

Initial Tasks	Actions
For each school to develop buy in of the school community, including Students, Staff, BOT and whānau, via clear, reciprocal communication.	Each school has discussed the agreed achievement challenges with their staff and board.
To establish efficient lines of communication and collaboration, by developing relationships between the different schools' staff.	We have discussed and agreed upon protocols regarding communication between principals eg email. We aim to develop professional learning relationships between schools' staffs with strategies such as regular jumbo days.
To create and utilise mechanisms for effective feedback and feed forward to the COL development process	These mechanisms will be developed once the COL is up and running.
To utilise technology to overcome much of the distance between schools.	We have already used video conferencing facilities in our meetings and this along with other things like Google Hangouts will be important for the future.
To create and utilise accountability systems including effective assessment, measurement and reporting within agreed timeframes	These systems will be developed when COL staff have been appointed.

Key Goal

To increase the achievement of all Year 7 -13 students through a focus on engagement.

Identified Issues:

- Some students are reluctant to challenge themselves or strive to achieve their potential
- Some students have limited knowledge of the opportunities available to them
- Low levels of perseverance and poor study skills impede engagement and achievement

Achievement Challenges

Our COL has identified 3 achievement challenges
- Goal 1 Writing achievement in years 0-8
- Goal 2 Mathematics achievement in Years 0-8
- Goal 3 NCEA Level 2

Goal 1:
To increase the number of students who achieve the National Standard for Writing at their year level.

Achievement Target:
85% of students will be achieving at or above the relevant National Standard in Writing by the end of 2017 [539 out of 634 students, including 121 Māori students and 7 Pasifika students] Currently our student achievement data shows that 77.2% of students are achieving at or above the relevant National Standard for Writing which is 487 students. We need to move 52 students in the COL to achieve our target of 85%

Identified Issues:

- NCEA Level 1 – 3 courses make increasingly complex demands on written literacy skills. In many cases students have the knowledge and application skills in the content areas but struggle to write their ideas clearly and coherently. Analysis of data indicates this may be especially true for boys and Māori boys in particular.

- National Standards results for Writing in years 1 – 8 confirm that up to 25% of students are not meeting the standard for their year level. Analysis of teacher feedback also indicates that, generally, teachers are not confident with assessing writing.

Goal 2:

To increase the number of students who achieve the National Standard for Mathematics at their year level.

Achievement Target:

85% of students will be achieving at or above the relevant National Standard in Mathematics by the end of 2017. [533 out of 628 students, including 121 Māori students and 7 Pasifika students]

Currently our student achievement data shows that 79.6% of students are achieving at or above the relevant National Standard for Mathematics which is 502 students. We need to move 37 students in the COL to achieve our target of 85%

Identified Issues:

- Mathematics achievement in a number of schools is not increasing sufficiently.
- There is a limited ability to problem solve and problem generate. Developing conceptual understanding is essential to raising achievement in Mathematics.
- There is an imbalance between Numeracy and other strands in terms of time, focus and achievement. This needs to be reviewed across all year levels.

Goal 3:

To increase the achievement level of students achieving NCEA, through improved engagement and understanding of vocational pathways.

Achievement Target:

85% of school leavers will have gained NCEA Level 2 or equivalent by the end of 2016 and 90% by the end of 2017. [90% - 124 out of 157 school leavers, including 9 Māori students (NB numbers of Pasifika students leaving school in this CoL are negligible)]
All Year 12 and 13 students will have an Individual Educational Plan aligned with a Vocational Pathway
We aim for all of our students to get either an endorsement with merit or excellence or in a vocational pathway.

Currently our student achievement data shows that 71.8% of school leavers achieve NCEA Level 2. We need to move 10 students in the COL to achieve our target of 85% by the end of 2016 and 7 students by the end of 2017.

Identified Issues

- Whilst all the schools report high pass rates for NCEA there is a concern that some students could aspire to do better and strive for merit and excellence endorsement, and/or a vocational pathway award.
- The Southern Area Schools do not have full-time careers staff. There is an increasing number of students who traditionally might have left school at the end of Year 11 or 12, now staying for Year 13. Many of these students require high quality, informed career and course advice which should involve the vocational pathways initiative. In general terms, vocational pathways are poorly understood and not delivered in a consistent way. As a result, many students may be missing out on vocational awards as their courses are not effectively aligned with the industry tagged standards. The Ministry of Education has demonstrated the importance of Vocational Pathways through meetings with key staff and the documentation developed but this still needs to be developed and built upon to ensure that every student is given all opportunities that are available.
- Early career education, from year 7, is limited in some schools and should be taught in a more consistent and comprehensive way. It is believed that through better career education delivery learner engagement and focus will increase – as better learning programme choices can then be facilitated, and the learning content will in turn be perceived to be more relevant by pupils.

Summary

Goal	Target	Number of students we need to move
To increase the number of students who achieve the National Standard for Writing at their year level.	**2017** **85%**	**52**
To increase the number of students who achieve the National Standard for Mathematics at their year level.	**2017** **85%**	**37**
To increase the achievement level of students achieving NCEA, through improved engagement and understanding of vocational pathways. We aim for all of our students to get either an endorsement with	**2016** **85%** **2017** **90%**	**10** **7**

merit or excellence or in a vocational pathway.		

Action Plan Goal 1

Goal 1:   To increase the number of students who achieve the National Standard for Writing at their year level.

Actions	Timeframe	Personnel	Expected Outcomes
To improve literacy skills in target students, through broadening vocabulary, increasing written productivity and conventions: ● Classroom teachers observe in-school teachers with expertise in writing. Inquiry time is used to discuss observations and teaching practice. ● Use research evidence to develop and document an agreed set of teaching strategies that are proven to broaden vocabulary and accelerate achievement in writing.	2015 ongoing End of 2016	Writing team of all 6 in-school COL teachers coordinate to research and develop strategies	The combined knowledge and skills of the teachers within the COL is informing how to best support targeted students in writing.
To increase written competencies in target groups across a range of learning areas: ● Identify key characteristic of effective teaching and learning in writing especially for boys. Gather boys' views as part of the inquiry process. ● Ensure teaching teams have a system to regularly monitor the progress of targeted students	Term 1/2 2016 Start of 2016 ongoing	Writing team: in -school teachers Students, parents whānau	There is an agreed approach to teaching writing that is targeted to support boys' achievement and the achievement of Māori students. Plans for individual students are developed and include the views of students and their parents and whānau. Targeted students are closely monitored and programmes of learning adjusted accordingly
		Writing Team-engaging across	

| To strengthen teacher assessment practice through developing moderation process which provide robust feedback and feed forward information to markers:
● Use Jumbo day to establish common assessment practises and common tasks
Inquiry group across the COL helps develop consistency of OTJ's | Begin process 2015
Ongoing | the COL and with all Year 1-8 teachers in each school | There is a sound basis for the moderation of writing samples and exemplars are shared across the COL. Cross Marking between schools in the COL.

This reflects the lack of external moderation processes developed at a national level for National Standards.

We understand - based on the experience of NCEA teachers – that through the improved understanding of standards that teachers will gain via this moderation process teachers will be able to better inform their teaching practice – and hence raise achievement. |

Goal 2: To increase the number of students who achieve the National Standard for Mathematics at their year level.

Actions	Timeframe	Personnel	Expected Outcomes
To develop (or improve upon) a cohesive and comprehensive school based curriculum that engages learners of Mathematics, with progressions from Year 1 - Year 13: ● develop sequential programmes for problem solving and problem generating within each strand and at each level ● develop school-wide programmes that more fully reflect the recommended strand focus and time for each year and level ● develop school-wide programmes that give equal focus to skill development/practice and enrichment/contextual integration/application of these skills and understandings, within cross curricular contexts and real life problem solving situations	2015 - 2016	Across School Teacher works with all COL schools and in-school Maths team	Teachers can identify progressions in individual student's mathematics learning and adjust programmes to meet their needs. Students confident and successful in working in strands other than numeracy especially as they progress into the middle school years (Year 7-10) Learning programmes structured in ways to better meet the individual needs of learners.
To strengthen teacher assessment practice through developing moderation process which provide robust feedback and feed forward information to markers ● Change can be more rapidly enacted through a consistent message and the opportunity to address issues together. ● With Ministry permission achieve greater collaboration through Jumbo days, one per term	● Each Term	COL team will use the opportunity to share goals and collaborate with all staff, with support from the principals.	School issues are addressed and growth in student achievement can be quantified with more certainty giving the COL good evidential information upon which to make decisions and report findings. Reduce the effect of distance.

Goal 3: To increase the achievement level of students achieving NCEA, through improved engagement and understanding of vocational pathways.

Actions	Timeframe	Personnel	Expected Outcomes
Develop a shared Careers plan to deliver careers information and learning in a systematic way. ● Look into more collaborative and efficient ways to disseminate career information to students	2016	COL team	Improved motivation and outcomes for students. In 2014 the Ministry encouraged a similar approach within our region – but without the Area School focus. We envisage that this will have some overlap the ideas developed there by John Hogue for the Youth Guarantee.
To improve achievement and retention for all Māori students – particularly Māori boys: ● Regular meeting with each Priority student and their whānau to plan and report on progress ● Create aspirational goal setting with students and their whanau.	Each Term	All Teachers	Improved outcomes for students through increased communication and shared goals.
To ensure all staff and students are aware of the vocational pathways ● Professional learning opportunities for all staff teaching in Year 11-13 about vocational pathways ● Vocational pathway facilitation tools shared across all schools in the COL. ● Aim to have all students complete a vocational pathway by the time they leave school	2016	All Teachers	Improved outcomes for school leavers and increased relevancy of qualifications.

Action Plan Goal 4

Goal 4: To increase engagement of Year 7 -13 students.

Actions	Timeframe	Personnel	Outcomes
To identify 5/6 measurable indicators of engagement (these might include attendance, lateness, student voice etc) To collect data on these indicators across the COL to develop a baseline. To develop teaching practices that focus on these To collect data again and report on student progress against the agreed indicators	July 2017 July 2017	COL Team	Increased student attendance and reduced lateness, especially in priority students.
To build a 'fire for learning' and greater in home/school partnerships: · Develop a shared aspiration; · Develop an appreciation of the value and importance of study; · Develop a productive school/out of school balance; · Help students and their families to value education to its fullest. · Help students to develop study/life skills.	2015 ongoing	COL team, use all strategies, newsletters, social media, assemblies, meetings, reports, advertisements, celebrate achievement and good study habits.	Increased student engagement as measured through observation, reduction in lateness and absence.

Use Student voice to help inform decisions · Use effective Student survey and profiling to provide relevant information for programme decisions	2015 - ongoing	COL team to administer student survey and interviews. collect and collate information and share with COL. Analyse feedback.	More effective strategy for increasing student achievement.
To invest in professional development around vocational pathways and career education: · Engage with Career specialists to hold PD for teachers – Take Year 10 and 11 students to Tertiary education programme overnight stay at Otago Polytech. · All students will have an IEP linked to a Vocational Pathway · Share this plan with the whānau and the student and monitor and review regularly.	2016	All teachers led by COL team.	Increased discussion about careers by all teachers and a more consistent message. Students and their whānau have long term goals and increased understanding of career options.
To develop shared understandings and practice within and across schools: · With Ministry permission achieve greater collaboration through Jumbo days, one per term.	Each term	All COL schools	School issues are addressed and growth in student achievement can be quantified with more certainty giving the COL good evidential information upon which to make decisions and report findings. Reduce the *professional isolation* of distance.