

2017 HASS SA Conference Report

24.3.17

I was very lucky to have the opportunity to attend the HASS conference, under a professional learning scholarship opportunity provided by the TRB, as my original application was not successful. I was only offered an opportunity to attend after one of the original recipients was unable to go. How lucky was I! The conference itself was one of the most useful teacher conferences I have attended in a long time.

The conference was opened by Keynote presenter Malcolm McInerney, whom spoke of the place of HASS within the Australian curriculum and argued its case as a significant learning area within our National Curriculum opened the conference. It is hard to condense his case for HASS within a paragraph, so I have dot pointed the top five things that resonated with me;

- HASS is about questioning, of being human, how we fit within the environment, our futures, our responses and how and what we listen to and what lens we look through – its about being a global citizen
- It is not a stand alone subject but one in which we can make connections between other subjects
- The difficulties teachers face is how we need to cover the challenges facing the world at present, how we start talking about these challenges in a way that empowers students to look for powerful solutions (I worry about the negativity of the world and the impact it is having on my students and so to look at as challenges that we can solve sits well with me.)
- Humanities foster social justice and empathy, they encourage students to think creatively through conceptual thinking and build on their English and mathematical skills.
- Hass is not “value free” and is controversial in its nature

The wonderful Louise Mason ran the first workshop I attended. Louise introduced us to the theme of the UN International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development and helped us make the connections to the Principals of Sustainable Tourism by presenting us with a survival kit and a Quest! This workshop was a great start in looking at the way in which the theme fit within our chosen year level, the Australian curriculum and the opportunity to unpack what it looks like within the classroom context was extremely valuable. I enjoyed the opportunity to talk to other teachers from various schools and share ideas and different viewpoints as we planned a unit of work, which we could use back in the classroom. I also got the opportunity to work with Brian Gepp and it was interesting to listen and discuss my ideas with someone outside of the teaching profession and garnish his ideas to add to my program as it provided another layer to my unit of work.

From little things, big things grow...

Another highlight for me was Katie Silva's workshop "Visiting you, Visiting me". Katie's infectious enthusiasm soon rubbed off on us all. Katie shared many ideas on how teachers can help students develop a sense of place and how we can create a sustainable tourist experience within our own school. I loved Katie's sensory jars and will definitely be trying this with my class next term. It was great to see the links between this workshop and the first workshop and I was able to build onto my unit of work that I was developing previously.

Things can only get better...

My final workshop was very exciting and it was thrilling to see the work that Helen Lawry and Mandi Dimitradi's did with a group of year 4/5 students within their local community. I liked the idea of leaf observations and looking at different perspectives using explicit tools to improve students' observations whilst looking at history and will be incorporating some of these ideas into my lessons. Getting students to think like designers and going through the design process with them which lead them to the end product of their own 3d buildings is a fantastic way to engage students with history through technology.

The big bang...

I am so grateful for the opportunity to attend the 2017 HASS SA Conference and have come away very inspired to implement many of the things that I saw and heard throughout the conference. I really enjoyed the thread that interweaved through the workshops that I attended and it seemed each workshop was able to build on from the previous one. As a direct result of this conference, I have been able to develop a history and technology unit of work based on our local Shipwrecks through Sustainable Tourism ready for term 2 and was able to come back and share this with my colleagues. I am working with a year 1/2 class at our school to develop a unit of work for that class also.

I am excited to have booked a session for both of these classes to do a Makers Empire 3D printing workshop with my class and the year 1/2 class later in term 2, to support the HASS unit we have developed above. I have also invited community members into our school to help with this unit, as well as accessed community resources such as an excursion to the Victor Whale Centre and local landmarks to support the children's learning.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Teachers Registration Board for providing me with the opportunity to attend the conference.

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