

WHEN FOUR HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME REDESIGN ACROSS A FAMILY OF SCHOOLS

St. Felix, St. Ambrose,
Immaculate Heart of Mary, St. Mel's
The "FAIM" Group, Sydney
2013-2017

Four Sydney Headteachers were frustrated by the perception that the Australian curriculum limited teachers. So they invented a fresh and creative approach to learning, and with NoTosh's help transformed their schools into inspiring educational environments that celebrate the process of learning, and which improve academic outcomes as a result.

Teachers from all four schools were introduced to NoTosh Design Thinking and then, with regular coaching over three years, shaped it to create their own processes of inquiry for learning. They adopted new classroom strategies, and developed their own from activities NoTosh might normally have undertaken in different industries altogether.

With fresh horizons opening up in the classroom, some school leadership teams used similar strategies to shed a new light on curriculum planning. For example, using Hexagonal Thinking for whole-school planning allowed a whole staff to see their curriculum set out in front of them, so that they could then rebuild it in alternative ways. Duplication was eliminated, and opportunities for cross-curricular projects were spotted. While the planning process is clearly rigorous, the connected thinking between staff at different ages and stages enabled the school to adopt what it calls "Organic Learning".

With an emphasis on discovering and harnessing creative space in the curriculum, rather than focussing on the limitations, teachers began to explore new opportunities for learning. They prototyped, or tested, new ideas in the classroom, and noted the impact of their changes in practice as they went. Staff project nests began to appear, with groups of teachers teaming up, sharing the different skills they had developed with NoTosh, and putting them into practice.

The impact on teaching and learning is profound. For example, in one of the schools, St Mel's, there is a clear shift in learner agency over the first two years of the change programme, according to their student surveys:

- The percentage of students who had a high number of teachers taking time to explore why they are learning what they are learning increased from 23% to 73%



- High enjoyment of learning increased from 18% to 75%
- The number of students who feel they can change the world around them rose from 45% to 98%
- 71% of students have a strong understanding of how to go about learning something new, compared to 21% before the change programme.
- Where only 5% used to feel that there was a chance to have their work critiqued by fellow students, 93% see those opportunities today.
- Around a third of students used to feel they had some say over the way their learning space was created and how they wanted to learn. Over 90% have a sense of that voice and choice now.

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The school is just one of the four who have made NoTosh Design Thinking their own, adapting activities and creating their own “Organic Learning” framework. In 2017, it was named one of **The Educator’s** Top 40 Innovative Schools in Australia as a result of its work over four years.

Teachers are now working directly with students in an entirely new way, taking on board their ideas, tailor-making new opportunities for learning, calling on the experiences in students’ lives, and as such have created an empathy-driven educational experience.

Students are also embracing Design Thinking as their process of enquiry in everyday learning. Adopting this process gives them a new sense of freedom to voice opinions and ideas in class, giving them confidence to try out new, ‘silly’ ideas in practice, problem-find, prototype and work together.

The FAIM team wanted to work outside the norm, to challenge mindsets and preconceptions, and continue to ensure their solid relationship of sharing. The group have led from the front, encouraging all their teachers and students to get involved while reinforcing the mindset that failure is a key component of success and that a prototyping culture leads to better, stronger and more fulfilling results for all involved.



Let's start talking.
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