



Victorian Essential Learning Standards

Case Study

Implementing an Integrated Curriculum at Darley Primary School

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The VCAA would like to acknowledge the work of Kerry Murrell, Assistant Principal in writing this case study.



Introduction

The VCAA has worked with a number of schools to document how they used the whole school curriculum planning process to implement the VELs. Darley Primary School is one school that has participated in the project and the following case study describes their journey beginning in 2005 with a cluster team from nearby schools looking at the structure of the VELs and identifying possible key concepts that would inform an integrated curriculum to developing two year scope and sequence charts to monitor the curriculum and using common templates for developing integrated units of work. Examples of leadership structure, unit template and a unit of work are provided in the appendix.

School Context

Darley Primary School is a P to 6 school with 650 students. We currently have 29 grades and specialist subjects including: Art, Music, Physical Education, Environmental Studies, LOTE and Information and Communications Technology (ICT). All classrooms are well equipped with a variety of resources (including computers and software) to enhance student learning.

At Darley we pride ourselves on our attractive, stimulating environment, our high academic standards and our student welfare and leadership programs. There is a strong curriculum focus that links with all aspects of teaching and learning within our school community.

Our students have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of enrichment activities including extensive swimming programs, outdoor education activities, camps and excursions, instrumental music, school choir, a production, sports activities, maths talent quest, and student leadership initiatives.

Darley Primary School encourages all students to strive for excellence and to treat others with respect. Our community is committed to the agreed values of Respect, Excellence, Learning, Tolerance, Teamwork, Caring and Kindness.

Background

At Darley, we believe that schools need shared values, beliefs and understandings to inform their curriculum journey and clarity about their purpose.

Schools and teachers have to do their own thinking and learning about curriculum design within their own particular setting.

The introduction of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELs) meant that schools needed to shift their approach to the way in which students were taught identifying the knowledge and skills not only of discipline - based curriculum but those that went across all areas of curriculum.

As an innovative school, Darley staff aimed to embrace these changes and work to include the identified skills. This required a step forward in our thinking, planning and approach to teaching and learning to ensure the ongoing journey towards quality student centred curriculum is taken together.

What do we hope to achieve by understanding the VELs?

Through understanding and implementing the VELs, Darley Primary School hopes to be able to equip students with the capacities to:

- manage themselves as individuals and their relation to others
- understand the world they live
- to act effectively in that world.

(VELS Overview – pg 4 Building the future)

Implementing the VELs – the journey

The first step

In 2005, a cluster team (a group of interested staff from nearby schools) looked at the various aspects of the VELs such as the structure and possible concepts or themes that had the potential to be used for integrated topics. Darley used this information to begin discussions about the direction we wanted the school to take.

Four staff members (one from each team in the school) then undertook Intel: Teach to the Future training. They returned to school to train all teachers. A modified Intel planner was adapted to include VELs information/overviews and incorporate higher order thinking skills. This allowed all staff to explore curriculum with an ICT/Thinking focus and develop units of work that were and are consistent across the school.

A decision was made to *audit forward* (working towards what we would like our curriculum to be – rather than auditing what we already had). A new scope and sequence document was created.

In the reviewing and planning process we understood that:

- the curriculum needs to be specifically designed to be inclusive through careful and explicit planning to ensure it:
 - is flexible
 - builds on student interests
 - moves beyond the classroom. For example individual students (supported by their class teachers and class groups) enter the Maths Talent Quest, a national mathematics competition, which encourages investigative maths projects
 - is community orientated.
- all staff have a role in planning, implementing and evaluating the curriculum on an ongoing basis (this is not always an equal role)
- professional development to be available to all staff (this can be internal/external and individual/team based or whole school)
- a consistent approach was required across the school such as using Intel planners and incorporating the standards and higher order thinking in planning.

The school dedicated a term to the creation of the integrated units of study. This professional development for staff took place **instead** of staff meetings (approximately 3.30 - 5.30pm) and many of the units of work were completed in this time.

The four Intel trained staff ran the professional development and worked as a team to support all teachers across the school.

The importance of building quality units of work that are based on VELs and encompass elements of both the Physical, Personal & Social Learning and Interdisciplinary Learning strands was recognised. The expectations were that Information & Communication Technologies, the thinking curriculum and an inquiry based approach would be a key component in each unit.

The outline of the content of the integrated curriculum was designed with two distinct focal points in mind:

- Term 1 of each year to be dedicated to Social Competencies units of work for each year level
- Terms 2, 3 and 4 dedicated to investigating topics/themes based on various VELs domains.

The Social Competencies units of work were created by teachers who were members of the Welfare Team. They completed the same professional development and used the same planner as all other staff but with a different focus. Social competencies values and concepts are also built into other units throughout the year.

These units are documented in the school scope & sequence planner.

Structure

The staff at Darley Primary School are placed into teams based on the VELs levels:

- Prep team
- Level 1 team (Year 1 and 2)
- Level 3 team (Year 3 and 4)
- Level 4 team (Year 5 and 6).

The specialists form their own team and work together on non-curriculum issues and typically plan, implement and evaluate their own specialist subjects. Where possible they coordinate with the Level teams to work collaboratively on topics being investigated. For example Grade 5 and 6 students when investigating an Earth Sciences unit will create models such as volcanoes in the Art classes and will include their visual records of their presentations into their Digital Portfolios during ICT lessons.

The curriculum leadership supports all the teachers in planning, implementation and evaluation of the curriculum. A diagram of the leadership can be found in the Appendices.

Planning an integrated curriculum program

Our integrated curriculum is strategic well planned and soundly implemented.

All level teams have a planning day (usually held around week nine of the current term in preparation for the next term). This day is used to explore and plan the literacy, numeracy and integrated curriculum components of the coming term.

When planning any integrated unit of work, the relevant learning focus and standards associated with each relevant domain is read, explored and highlighted. These are then directly used within the planning document as learning and assessment tasks are linked to them. An overall map of all standards planned for, taught and assessed is available to all staff on our Intranet and is regularly updated and reviewed by the assistant principal in conjunction with our Education Committee and Level Teams.

Prior to Planning Week

The ICT/Curriculum Coordinator ensures that the unit planner template is available on the network.

The level team decides if a unit is to be modified or a new unit is to be developed. The team ensures a planner is ready with the basic details in place with a clear links to the VELs standards/outcomes.

The team informs the Curriculum Coordinator of changes to maintain the continuity of the programs and VELs coverage.

The teams gather any relevant resources (check library, ask teacher/s who have developed the unit, investigate science tubs).

Planning Week

The more ideas we generate...
The better the learning opportunities are for our students

Each team is to:

- review the planner – ensure all team members have a clear understanding of the ‘big picture’ concepts along with the different levels of questioning:
 - the essential question
 - unit question
 - content questions.
- work to familiarise themselves with learning tasks to be undertaken (plus links across curriculum for example, text types, maths) and any assessment to be completed
- prepare assessment tasks and criteria – keeping in mind the VELS requirements for reporting at the end of the year.
- add/modify any learning opportunities that cater for a broad range of learning styles
- share responsibility for designing new tasks & assessment
- check the *Virtual Bibliography* for Internet sites that are still relevant and add any new sites
- ensure that any new ideas/tasks/assessment tools are saved to the relevant folder on the network
- identify colleagues who will take on key roles, for example, planning/assessment/trailing.
- establish timelines for implementation.
- reflect upon the journey as it is progressing.
- take stock of where we have come from and keep in mind where we are going to.

It is important to note that although we have structured learning and assessment opportunities in place – these are guidelines only. Staff are free to pursue areas of interest and modify their program to allow for student generated content and curiosity.

Our planners include a procedural section titled the **Learning Library** where essential learning is linked to VELS requirements. Staff are encourage to borrow their favourite ideas, learning strategies and tasks and input new ones to build a growing resource that support both teaching and learning within our own school context.

Social competencies

At Darley Primary we believe social competence cannot simply be taught to students. Children learn by being actively involved in the world around them, in particular; how to relate to others, manage conflict and respect and value differences. To support the development of social competencies we provide a range of experiences and learnings about how to relate to a wider circle of people.

During their time at our school students develop a range of skills and abilities that assist them to work cooperatively, solve problems, share information and experience a sense of belonging, purpose and achievement. Senior primary school students are role models to their younger peers and their behaviour is generally a reflection of the Darley Primary School culture and ethos.

The outcome of our Social Competencies units of work is to develop a positive environment that promotes human growth and learning. The units of work establish a caring environment for cooperative learning and provide structure for positive interaction.

The units taught in Term One specifically teach aspects of our Social Competencies Program. An example of this is a Grade 3/4 unit titled ‘Survivor Darley’ based loosely on the reality TV show. This aims to explore the nature and concepts of teamwork and interpersonal skills. Students undertake many individual and team challenges that assess their strengths and weaknesses and then reflect on their efforts.

Social Competencies Term 1 Overview:

VELS LEVEL	YEARS	SUPPORTING RESOURCE/S	VELS DOMAIN	TITLE
1	All	STOP THINK DO	Interpersonal Development Civics & Citizenship	I like me, I like you!
2	Odd	Heart masters	Personal Learning	I’m Special, Your Special
	Even	Bounce Back Level 1	Interpersonal Development Civics & Citizenship	Me and my community
3	Odd	STOP THINK DO	Personal Learning	Communication
	Even	Survivor (TV Show)	Interpersonal Development	Survivor Darley
4	Odd	Heart Masters	Personal Learning	Leadership
	Even	Bounce Back	Interpersonal Development Design, Creativity & Technology	Combine & Conquer: Making the Best Choices

An example showing how Personal Learning and Interpersonal Development standards have been used in planning for a Social Competencies unit of work is attached as Appendix 3. A major focus of the unit is highlighted in green, a minor focus in yellow.

Implementing an integrated curriculum program

An integrated curriculum program at Darley Primary School aims to provide opportunities for students to explore not only the content of a subject or domain but how far they can take their learning, expand their capacity for critical thinking, encourage interaction with others and promote imagination and creativity. These opportunities are to be carefully scaffolded for every student to experience success.

For our teachers this means:

- using templates to guide planning and the development and implementation of teaching and learning activities
- catering for all students, to extend their abilities and to allow students to experience success - no matter what level they are currently at
- collaborating with colleagues to share ideas and resources

- a commitment to build individual professional knowledge
- attending regular forums, such as team, curriculum, staff meetings where successes and evaluation of student progress can be shared
- working in teams to ensure that both students and staff feel supported throughout the duration of the unit of study.

Extending our students

Our classrooms always aim to provide rich learning opportunities through:

- building extension activities into all aspects of the curriculum
- teaching at the student's point of need.
- subtle differences in teaching techniques such as:
 - using questioning to gain in-depth answers to questions/problems
 - having different levels of expectation both in quantity and quality of students
 - using prompts; for example; photographs, sound, video to begin discussions/student's thinking
 - using a range questions from lower order to higher order to gain different types of answers
 - different timing – some students may be given longer or shorter periods of time to complete a task or tasks may be introduced to different classes within the same year level to better meet their needs
 - providing support mechanisms which include peer tutoring, support from an Integration Aide, computer time or 'hands on' materials
 - open-ended tasks
- setting higher level tasks. This may include looking ahead to the next level of the VELs and setting specific tasks to match those standards or offering other tasks aimed at developing higher order thinking skills. Both of these techniques are used at different times to match students' needs.

How do we create integrated learning experiences linked with assessment?

The school plans for effective assessment throughout each unit, using a variety of techniques. Authentic assessment tasks are linked to the standards.

Teachers do their homework!

- All expected outcomes are made explicit before the task is begun.
- Learning experiences are carefully scaffolded in order to encourage students to explore higher order thinking skills
- Opportunities are created for all students to succeed and teachers cater for various learning styles.
- Rubrics are used to show possibilities for achievement.
- Formal/informal testing (including observations and anecdotal evidence) are used for data collection.
- Paper and digital portfolio evidence are provided to show student achievement.

Outcomes

Monitoring and evaluation

At Darley Primary School we continually evaluate our educational programs and look for ways to improve student outcomes. We seek feedback from both students and staff and, where practical, act upon recommendations from all parties.

We review our integrated curriculum program at the end of each two year cycle where team representatives and interested staff are welcome to participate by joining the Curriculum Committee (this group is formed for as long as it is needed). At each planning day teams also reflect on the unit that they have just taught – they assess the planner itself along with the students’ reaction to the unit and the results they have achieved with their own classes.

Where to from here?

Teachers at Darley continue to be passionate about the curriculum they are delivering and excited by the opportunities they are creating for students.

As we have completed two years of working within the current documentation (a full cycle of our scope & sequence) we have conducted a review of our integrated curriculum program. This review has involved a variety of stages and consolidation in many different formats including:

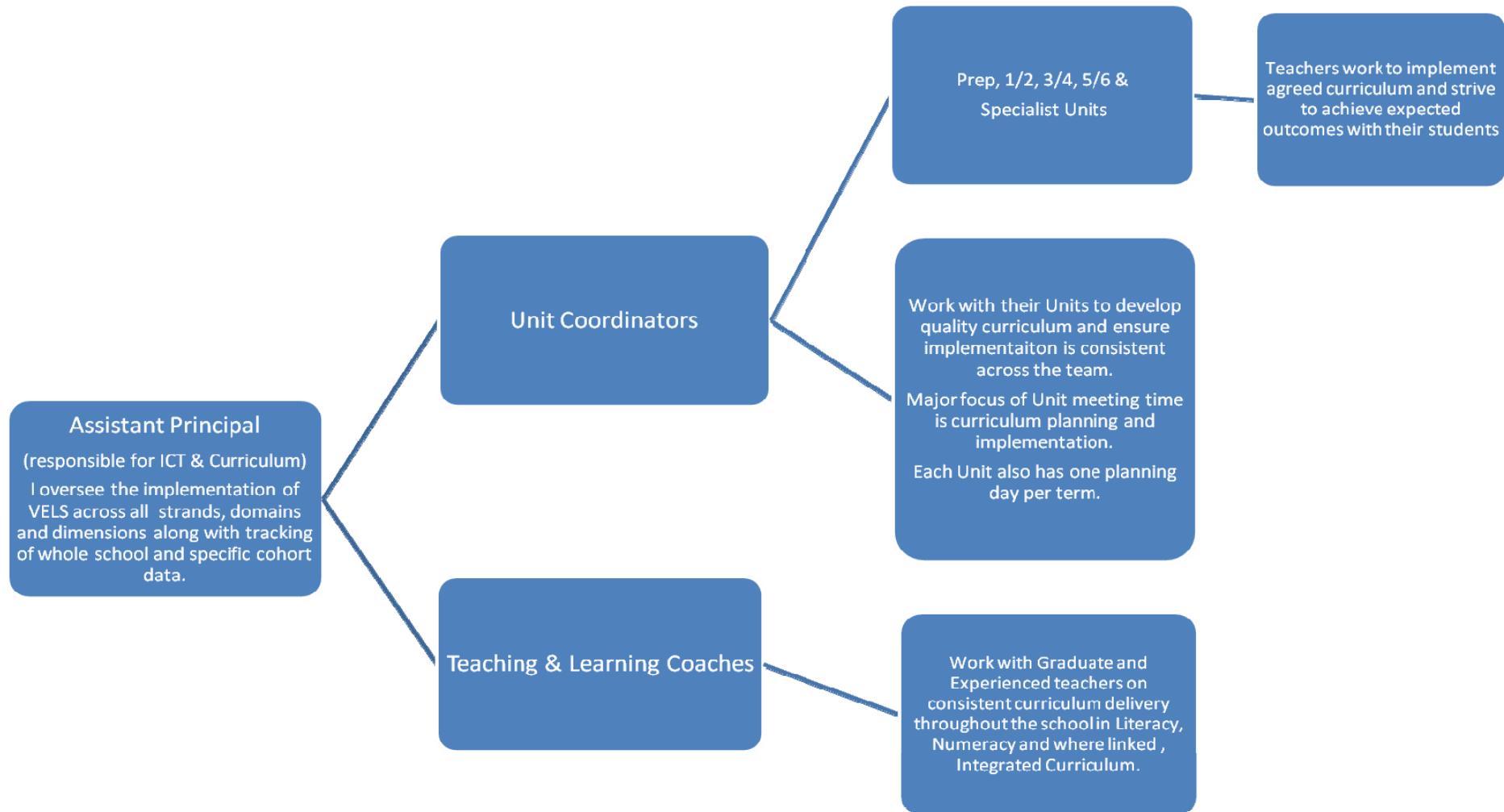
- staff surveyed to gather feedback on the current documentation
- both formal and informal discussions with team leaders and interested staff members over a period of six months (prior to any changes made)
- a curriculum committee formed to provide advice on both implementation and structure of the planners
- the planner modified from the original Intel based planners with the main change being in relation to the *procedural* section of the planner. in this section, links to the VELs are **explicitly** made including links to the physical, personal & social learning and interdisciplinary learning strands. Literacy connections are forged and assessment opportunities are identified. this section of the planner is now called the *Learning Library* to encourage staff to borrow ideas already there but also add their own expertise and knowledge through the creation and recording of new ideas as they are formed
- a move towards implementation of the new format in all areas of the school as planning and evaluation of these units continue
- the curriculum committee to continue to monitor the progress of our integrated curriculum program, develop new ideas and report to staff on our progress.

Quality Curriculum

Curriculum provides only the framework for learning...

It is the culture and community that is formed within the school and classroom environment that makes learning not only possible but... probable!

Appendix 1: Curriculum Leadership at Darley Primary School



Appendix 2: Scope & Sequence Summary Sample







LEVEL 1 INTEGRATED CURRICULUM							
Odd/Even Year	Term 1	Term 2		Term 3		Term 4	
Theme	Getting to know you, me & feelings. Stop, Think Do!	Healthy Living	People that help us	Animal habitats and food chains	Weather	Australian Cultures	Celebrations
Domain	Interpersonal Development Personal Learning	Health & Physical Education	Civics & Citizenship	The Humanities	Science	The Humanities	The Humanities
LEVEL 2 INTEGRATED CURRICULUM							
Even Year	Term 1	Term 2		Term 3		Term 4	
Theme	Friends Bounce Back: Level One	Now & Then	Locations	Olympics & Sports	Weather Phenomenon	Plants	Festivals
Domain	Interpersonal Development Personal Learning	The Humanities	The Humanities	Health & Physical Education	Science	Science & The Humanities	The Humanities
Odd Year	Term 1	Term 2		Term 3		Term 4	
Theme	I'm Special, you're special Heart Masters	Child Safety & Drug Education	Healthy Living	Transport, Materials & Movement	Science Rotations	Lifecycles & Mini-beasts	Communication
Domain	Interpersonal Development Personal Learning	Health and Physical Education	Health and Physical Education	Design, Creativity & Technology	Science	Science	The Humanities
LEVEL 3 INTEGRATED CURRICULUM							
Even Year	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4			
<i>Theme</i>	Survivor Darley	Botany	Liquids, Solids & Gasses	Where Are We? The Humanities- Geography, History			
<i>Domain</i>	Health and Physical Education Interpersonal Learning	Science	Science	The Humanities			
<i>Odd Year</i>	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4			
<i>Theme</i>	How are you smart? Multiple Intelligences	Celebrating Our Identity	Simple Machines	Animals & Their Habitats			
<i>Domain</i>	Personal Learning	Civics & Citizenship The Humanities	Science Design, Creativity & Technology	Science The Humanities			
LEVEL 4 INTEGRATED CURRICULUM							
Even Year	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4			
Theme	Making Choices Bounce Back: Level Three	Asian Studies	The Human Body (encompassing: Sex ed, drug ed and food hygiene)	Food chains and lifecycles			
Domain	Civics and Citizenship Interpersonal Learning Health and Physical Education	The Humanities - History The Humanities - Geography	Science Health and Physical Education	Science			
Odd Year	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4			
Theme	Leadership Heart Masters	Australian History (including Gold Rush & cultural aspects)	Earth & It's Atmosphere	Government, Federation and democracy			
Domain	Interpersonal Development Personal Learning	Civics & Citizenship The Humanities - History The Humanities - Geography	Science	Civics and Citizenship The Humanities – History The Humanities - Economics			

Appendix 3: Integrated Curriculum Planner Sample

DARLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Level : Integrated Curriculum Planner




Title:		
Curriculum-Framing Questions		
Essential Question:		
Unit Questions:		
Content Questions:		
Unit Overview: Curriculum Delivery E⁵ – <i>a framework for purposeful teaching</i>		
<p>POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS</p> <p>ENGAGE</p> <p>EXPLORE</p> <p>EXPLAIN</p> <p>ELABORATE</p> <p>EVALUATE</p> <p>CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT</p>	<p>Engage students by:</p> <p>Explore the Essential Question by:</p> <p>Explain new knowledge by:</p> <p>Elaborate on new knowledge:</p> <p>Evaluate new knowledge:</p>	<p> THINKING SKILLS OVERVIEW</p> <p>Hyperlinks...</p> <p>Websites...</p>
VELS Links:		
 ENGLISH	 MATHS	 PHYSICAL PERSONAL & SOCIAL
	 DISCIPLINE BASED LEARNING	 INTERDISCIPLINARY LEARNING
<u>VELS OVERVIEWS – ALL LEVELS</u>		MAJOR FOCUS MINOR FOCUS
Professional Learning:		
(Professional Development, form a Professional Learning Team, professional reading)		
Key Words:		
(Key words, common phrases, terms & vocabulary)		

Remember to
'Insert Object' or
'Hyperlink' activities.

Learning Library:		Essential learning linked to VELS requirements Borrow favourite ideas/learning strategies and input new ones!			
LEARNING SEQUENCE - WEEKS	VELS <i>Physical, Personal & Social Learning:</i> <i>Discipline-based Learning:</i> <i>Interdisciplinary Learning:</i>		LITERACY FOCUS	TEACHING & LEARNING <i>Rich teaching and learning opportunities scaffolded to assist students to answer the Essential Question. (This should encourage student centred acquisition of deep understanding)</i>	ASSESSMENT: <i>The context and specific procedures for evaluating student learning.</i>
	Engage	1			
2					
Explore, Explain, Elaborate.	3				
	4				
	5				
	6				
	7				
	8				
Evaluate	9				
	10				



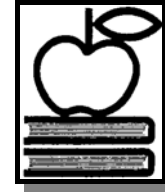
Ways to represent
learning


Linked Numeracy Tasks:		
Students with Special Needs: modified requirements, differentiated instruction/assessment, extended time, templates, support structures, and personnel.		
Gifted Student: more challenging tasks, extended investigation in related topics of the learner's choice, open-ended tasks or projects that allow for deeper analysis and evaluation of issues.		
Materials and Resources		
Hardware		
<input type="checkbox"/> Digital camera	<input type="checkbox"/> Printer	<input type="checkbox"/> Digital Video Camera
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Datashow Projector	<input type="checkbox"/> Video Conferencing equipment
<input type="checkbox"/> Internet connection	<input type="checkbox"/> Scanner	<input type="checkbox"/> VCR/ DVD player
Software		
<input type="checkbox"/> Office (Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Publisher etc)	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual Representation (Photo Story, Movie Maker, Producer etc)	<input type="checkbox"/> Web page development
<input type="checkbox"/> Internet	<input type="checkbox"/> Email software	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Specific software relevant to Darley – KidPix/Kahootz/Crossword Maker/Wordsearch Maker etc		
Printed Materials: textbooks, story books, manuals, reference materials etc.		
Supplies: Things that have to be ordered or gathered to implement your Unit		
Internet Resources: web addresses (URLs) that support the implementation of your Unit		
 <p>Virtual Bibliography</p>		
Others: Guest speakers, mentors, excursions/incursions		






Appendix 4: Integrated Unit Sample

DARLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Level 3: Integrated Curriculum Planner



Title: Survivor Darley							
Curriculum-Framing Questions							
Essential Question: <i>What is needed to make a successful team?</i>							
Unit Questions: What is a successful team? How can we identify skills, concepts, values, attitudes, roles that help make a successful team?							
Content Questions: What is a team? What makes a good leader? (Look at leadership models/structures) How do teams work well together? How do teams work safely together? How can teams improve teamwork? How can teams work effectively to achieve goals? How can we encourage people to be part of our team? What does an effective team look like? Why do we evaluate team work? How can we play safe? What do individuals bring to teams?							
survivortheme.mp3 SURVIVORAMAZON.MP3							
Unit Overview: Curriculum Delivery E⁵ – a framework for purposeful teaching							
<p>POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">ENGAGE</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: orange;">EXPLORE</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: yellow;">EXPLAIN</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: lightblue;">ELABORATE</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: purple;">EVALUATE</td></tr> </table> <p>CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT</p>	ENGAGE	EXPLORE	EXPLAIN	ELABORATE	EVALUATE	<p>Engage students by: Who are we? Establishing class rules. What makes you feel happy & safe at school?</p> <p>Explore the Essential Question by: Survivor challenges. Students are encouraged to challenge themselves broaden their experiences and question the outcomes.</p> <p>Explain new knowledge by: Tribal Council will facilitate discussion of new knowledge, student’s application of skills, understanding of new concepts, values & attitudes and the undertaking of new roles.</p> <p>Elaborate on new knowledge: Application of new knowledge through class challenges.</p> <p>Evaluate new knowledge: Sleep Over – opportunity to demonstrate their range of learning. Self selected Photo Spread to analyse their progress.</p>	 THINKING SKILLS OVERVIEW Hyperlinks... Websites...
ENGAGE							
EXPLORE							
EXPLAIN							
ELABORATE							
EVALUATE							

VELS Links				
 ENGLISH	 MATHS	 PHYSICAL PERSONAL & SOCIAL	 DISCIPLINE BASED LEARNING	 INTERDISCIPLINARY LEARNING
<u>VELS OVERVIEWS – ALL LEVELS</u>				
MAJOR FOCUS				
MINOR FOCUS				
Professional Development:				
(Professional Development, form a Professional Learning Team, Professional Reading) Watch Survivor! Share ideas Research challenges				
Key Words:				
Sport, games, teamwork, resolution, strategies, strategic, feedback, suggestions, improvement, roles, responsibilities, differences, self evaluate, reflections, health, physical education, cooperation, competitive, respect, decisions, safety, tactics, collaboration, skills, concepts, attitude, values, individual, strength, weakness, challenges, tribes, tribal council, survivor, persistence, resilience...				