



We Strive For Excellence

“Operation Goldilocks”

Our Professional Learning Journey with the itc Publications Thinking Skills Framework

Kimberley Park State School, based in South East Queensland, has an enrolment of more than 900 students structured as multi-age double teaching spaces from Prep to Year 7 and with over 40 classroom teachers.

The school’s improvement agenda is driven and monitored by the **Committee for School Improvement (CSI)** which consists of the Principal, 2 x Deputy Principals, the Head of Special Education Services, the Head of Curriculum and 2 x Support Teachers: Literacy and Numeracy.

Explicit teaching of a Thinking Skills Framework is expected as part of the school’s culture and is identified in the school’s Pedagogical Framework.



PROJECT RATIONALE – Deliberate Success

Early in 2014 **CSI** planning processes, during a discussion about the different levels of support provided by the coaching team for classroom teachers, a group of high-performing teachers were identified. Discussion centred around the smaller amount of time, support and recognition given to this group in relation to the levels of support given by the CSI Coaching Team to teachers not yet demonstrating full mastery of the pedagogical framework. The “bottom of the diamond” (the basics in teacher skills) had unintentionally, and perhaps environmentally, become the CSI Coaching Team’s predominant focus with a specific focus on planning, organisation and behaviour management. The committee decided that a renewed focus on the school’s pedagogical framework was required with the explicit and specific intent of “making good better; making better best”. From here, it became apparent that a professional learning opportunity that recognised, rewarded and invigorated the exceptional practices these teachers demonstrated would be worthwhile exploring so that teachers would continue to progress their mastery of practice to embedded intensity, higher-order thinking and a sense of urgency in the pursuit of deliberate success.

Many of our teachers use the *itc Innovative Teachers’ Companion* planning diary. Several of our teachers had also engaged in a half day professional learning opportunity the previous year with *itc Publications* author and founding co-director, Eric Frangenheim, when he modelled “*The Reconciliation of Goldilocks and the Three Bears*” with a class of Year 4/5 students.

Teacher feedback of this experience along with a review of the pedagogical framework and consideration to resources already available within the school (the *itc Thinking Skills framework* including the *itc Thinkdrive* electronic collection on the school’s computer network) led to the explicit teaching of Thinking Skills being designated as a priority.

Discussions with *itc Publications* commenced.



Specific guidelines for the project were developed by the **Committee for School Improvement**:

- teachers were to be shortlisted and then invited into the project, they were not required to apply
- teachers were to be released from class and not expected to participate in their own time or outside school hours
- we had a specific budget that we needed to adhere to but had flexibility around staffing to be able to provide internal release
- teachers would be encouraged to apply their learning to their practice and to share it with colleagues but there was no expectation that they then facilitate professional learning activities – this was to be a stand-alone professional development and enrichment opportunity
- the project would be a trial; the Committee for School Improvement would monitor its implementation and effect; the value of the program would be assessed with and the value of repeating the program the subsequent year would be considered
- we would begin the project with an introductory 2 hour session on Critical Thinking for ALL teaching staff as a “taster” followed by the series of workshops where teachers worked directly with *itc Publications* author and founding co-director, Eric Frangenheim
- the workshop program would be staggered so that teachers had time to review and refine their practice and apply their learning between sessions

- the Head of Curriculum would participate in the program to ensure consistency of key messages being driven through whole school and year level planning
- the program would be touted as an elite opportunity for a select group of teaching staff and one that all teaching staff could aspire to

The proposed “Operation Goldilocks” program consisted of a series of workshops that took the next step from our whole staff Twilight Professional Development session “Critical Thinking Part 1” with Eric:

- Workshop 1- Critical Thinking Part 2
- Workshop 2 - Critical and Co-op PCQ Extension & Judge & Jury
- Workshop 3 - Creative - Y Chart & 1.4 Publish Circulate and Refine
- Workshop 4 –Explicit Instruction and Australian Curriculum - 6 questions and design 6 questions.
- Workshop 5 - (modelling in class) Goldilocks
- Workshop 6 - 40 min planning sessions - lesson planning using Thinkdrive
- Workshop 7 - Classroom Walkthrough and Lesson Observations

Invitations to the identified teachers were distributed. All accepted enthusiastically. The program was scheduled to run from the initial whole school session in March through to end of Term 3/early Term 4. At the conclusion of the program, participants were asked to provide structured feedback about the management & logistical implementation aspects, the structure of the program, the immediate and long-term impact on their pedagogical approaches and recommendations for future similar programs.

OUTCOMES OF THE PROGRAM



Immediately following Eric’s introductory whole staff session on **Critical Thinking** there was excitement and enthusiasm expressed by staff regarding the strategies and how they intended to plan for and implement them in their teaching or how they had immediately applied some of the example strategies. Teachers stated that even though the strategies were often “not new”, Eric had shown them how to apply them across multiple contexts, learning areas and age-groups.

Staff keen to learn more were directed to the itc Thinking Skills Framework and posters of the framework were made available for every classroom. Strategies and videos from ThinkDrive were used during staff meetings. Teachers began to reference the framework and strategies in unit and cohort planning meetings as well as in their teaching and discussions with students.

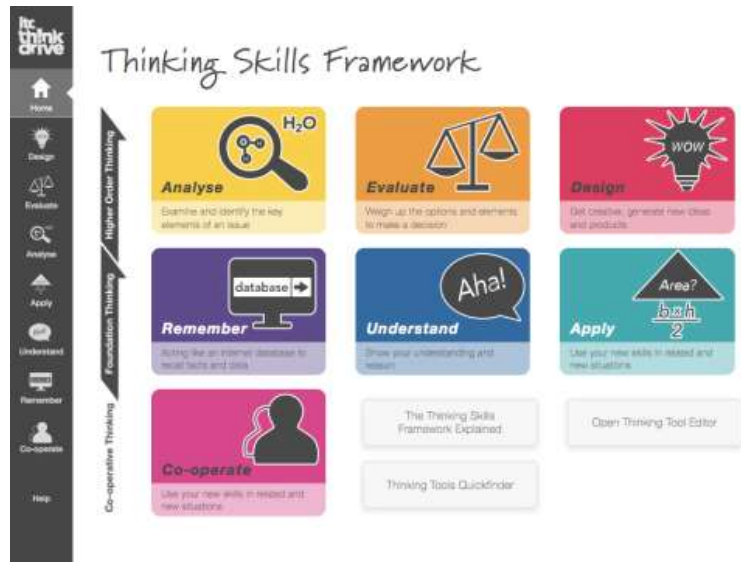


Copies of the itc Innovative Student Companion were purchased for all project participants and teachers of Year 5 to 7 classes. This document was used as a reference in cohort assessment planning meetings.

Long term outcomes of the program include participants embedding aspects of the framework into their unit planning and their everyday teaching practice. Unit plans are shared across cohorts so framework and strategy dissemination continued across all teaching staff through shared practice.

Staff Meetings and Planned Professional Development includes the use of the tools and resources associated with the Thinking Skills Framework and ThinkDrive.

A school subscription to the new online **ThinkDrive** resource was purchased with immediate uptake by participants in the Operation Goldilocks project. This resource will be further elaborated on through 2015 planning, professional development and processes.



The Thinking Skills Framework was incorporated into the development of the school's revised curriculum framework.

TEACHER FEEDBACK

“Eric's PD is one of the most valuable I've ever done. He delivers in an engaging manner, listens well and interacts with teachers in a friendly way. Although he is so knowledgeable, he is approachable and humble. There is a lot of teacher participation in his sessions - modelling lessons and discussing outcomes. Back in the classroom, I have had the HOT skills in the forefront of my mind when planning lessons and find that the engagement level of the students is high when these skills are incorporated into the lessons. Students are becoming more creative with their ideas; they are showing tolerance and respect when listening to others and are more confident about justifying their opinions.

Our class thoroughly enjoyed Eric's time in our room. We saw a high level of engagement amongst the students with a couple of very quiet and usually withdrawn children, joining in with ideas and showing excitement in their learning.

I feel that when planning units next year, we should be looking at getting the assessment pieces and rubrics in place and then concentrating on using the HOT skills as a major component in how to get where we want to go.

When introducing the program to another lot of staff members, it would be good to pick partnerships to go together as I know how beneficial it was for my teacher partner and myself when planning, because we were both on the same page.”

Year 7 teacher

“I missed several of these earlier workshops (2 & 3) when I was on leave. I came back in at Workshop 4. The ones I did attend I really enjoyed.

- ✓ I loved the opportunity to talk to the other staff members involved during sessions.
- ✓ Working with Eric on the 6 questions was fascinating. In our case we looked at the Disaster unit planning & how we could make it more relevant to our kids using HOT and resources in the school i.e. evacuation plan
- ✓ Sharing how staff used the HOT in their classrooms after being introduced by Eric at the previous session was valuable.

- ✓ The practicality of the sessions worked straight away back in the classroom
- ✓ The timetabling & release worked fine– at the moment I can't think of a better way.
- ✓ I used the alpha ladder in our Disaster unit immediately and the kids really responded to this.
- ✓ Operation Goldilocks has made me look at my practice and how I can incorporate the HOT into my classroom programme more effectively. I am still gaining confidence & building familiarity with using the different strategies.

I'd tell any new staff members being introduced to the program to go in with an open mind and not be afraid to try the HOT in their rooms. Be courageous!"

Year 5/6 teacher

"The whole program was so good. It made you think about your current practice and implement different questioning techniques into every lesson.

I think it was very beneficial that both teachers of the one class (a Double Teaching Space) went to the in-service as we could then use it in team teaching in the classroom.

I think it would be good for the team who did the in-service this year to meet next year and share how they are using the new skills so we can each do more."

Year 7 teacher

"Definitely worthwhile. Through Goldilocks my teaching confidence was boosted and I was able to improve my teaching. It made me look at and think about the tasks I give to students more and make sure they were worthwhile. I find myself checking what level of Bloom's I am asking the kids to work in. I do think that having both teacher's in a teaching partnership attend the PD together is a better investment than only one teacher as teaching partners in the program were able to complete activities together based on what they were doing in their classrooms and plan for future lessons. Kathryn and I, being on the same year level, were able to do this to an extent. The lesson planning workshop was the most worthwhile.

Running the Goldilocks program at the beginning of the year or the end of Semester 1 would be better as the teachers participating could use Eric's expertise to plan their new units not just a lesson in an already established unit. Knowing all of the dates in advance was very helpful in classroom planning and scheduling. An idea of how this could be done better would be to try to have the same relief teacher release each time but this something not completely in our control I know.

From the first PD I was reminded of all of the really great HOT activities and resources I know about but haven't used in a while.

I think we should consider having Eric for one of the planning days. He mentioned them in the session and it may be really helpful for all year levels to do some planning with Eric. Maybe a GRG budget allocation for the future?"

Year 3/4 teacher

"These are the things I found really worthwhile:

- ◆ *Step- by- step of each level of the thinking skills framework and practise of activities with Eric*
- ◆ *Seeing the whole thing in action in the classroom - it was fast paced and the kids engagement was amazing. I came away from that session thinking 'I can do this'.*

I told my teaching partner everything I had learnt and we have done a number of sessions with our class since the program. We started with picture books as our stimulus and planned an activity from each of the Thinking Skills. The children are now familiar with each level and are used to the fast pace. I also love how it

has motivated some of our 'lazier' children, in that we can say in other areas of the curriculum (e.g times tables) "This is the bottom of the Thinking Skills Framework, where you are working like a computer", and because they now refer to the framework, they can see that their brain is capable of so much more.

It was a fantastic PD and I was so grateful to be a part of it."

Year 3/4 Teacher

"The whole program was worthwhile. Loved how we were put on the spot and had to be an "Active" part of the workshop.

It would help if the TRS could come in 8:15 that you can hand over and then be there when Eric started (Maybe only my TRS came late each time?)

Timetabling was perfect worked really well. Great that it was first session and it is over and done for the day.

It took my teaching to a different level. It opened my eyes that even the younger grades were able to use Think Drive and have a clear understanding in what phase we were working. I just loved seeing that the younger kids understood it and were able to work with it and it just helped me so much with my planning. Eric helped us to think about our planning and that really impacted me.

My advice to new teachers: Do not let this opportunity pass you by!!!! This is the most valuable tool you might ever get in your hand so jump for this opportunity."

Year 1/2 teacher

1. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole program from beginning to end and felt engaged the whole time. Eric is an amazing presenter and he also valued our contributions.

2. I believe my teaching has changed because of this opportunity. I always try to move from the Knowledge and Remembering section of Bloom's Taxonomy to the Applying, Analysing and Designing section whenever I am able to.

3. I loved the fact that I didn't have to report back to anyone except those in the group . It made my learning journey become very personal and the lack of pressure gave me freedom to experiment in my classroom the way I wanted to.

4. I have a new philosophy about assessment because of this PD and now believe that I can create an assessment using thinking skills, rather than copious pages of written assessments.

5. I have seen how children respond to using thinking skills and become so excited about their learning.

Year 1/2 teacher

STUDENT FEEDBACK

What we enjoyed:

- ◆ everyone had different opinions and we could even disagree with the teacher's opinion and argue to our own point of view
- ◆ we got to make our own decisions and opinions and had to think for ourselves. The fact that the answer on the board was not necessarily the correct answer and was open to debate was something really enjoyable. It was interesting to hear everybody else's opinions and arguments
- ◆ it was very interactive
- ◆ we were free to speak out minds without being disheartened. I enjoyed that the learning had no right or wrong answers
- ◆ these were different lessons from normal lessons and I enjoyed that. I liked that we didn't have to do too much writing
- ◆ I found out many ways to think and how to improve my skills
- ◆ I enjoyed how the teacher listened to our opinions and what we had to say instead of interrupting and trying to prove a point
- ◆ the lessons are more interesting than normal lessons

What we learned:

- ◆ different ways of thinking
- ◆ to stick to an argument I believe is true but be humble at the same time
- ◆ I can be free-minded but should also take time to listen to what others wanted to say
- ◆ using the Thinking Skills Framework taught me how to argue my point without being aggressive
- ◆ that a choice always has an effect (cause and effect) on what happens afterwards
- ◆ to listen to other people's opinions and to not say that you are always right
- ◆ the difference between facts and opinions and that will help me be a better thinker
- ◆ to be creative and design things
- ◆ there is more than one right answer to a question
- ◆ evaluating is an important skill in everyday life
- ◆ you can understand things that happen in life and make better choices if you think more about cause and effect
- ◆ making and evaluating choices affects your thinking and helps you problem-solve
- ◆ if your thinking is different to everybody else's but you have used logical and acceptable reasoning behind your thinking that doesn't mean you are wrong
- ◆ remember to question and think
- ◆ listen to what other people's opinions are and consider them with your own

How my learning will help me in High School:

- ◆ It will help me debate and argue
- ◆ I will be able to complete my assignments with better thinking
- ◆ I will respect the opinions of others even if they are different to my own
- ◆ I will understand things better and will be more confident in saying what I believe in
- ◆ My imagination will be helpful in all types of lessons like woodwork or construction
- ◆ I will be able to break down difficult questions into different categories

- ◆ I can apply my thinking skills in tests, in group work, conversations and schoolwork
- ◆ I am able to think outside the box by using my thinking skills
- ◆ Using analysing and evaluation will help me understand my assignments more easily as well as work better in groups to listen and judge ideas
- ◆ It will make problem-solving easier
- ◆ The Thinking Skills Framework could help me get my ideas for everything together faster and with greater efficiency
- ◆ I'll remember to listen to other people before saying I've always got the right answer
- ◆ I will be able to break questions down so that they make more sense to me

PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTATION

With such a successful uptake of the professional learning by teachers as well as the impact on students learning, CSI has decided to continue the Operation Goldilocks program in 2015 to continue to recognise high-performing teachers and to embed the teaching of higher order thinking skills as part of KP culture and everyday teaching practice.

This will occur through:

- a whole school review of the KPSS Pedagogical Framework
- whole school implementation of the subscription to the online *itc ThinkDrive* resource
- "Operation Goldilocks" – the core program delivered to a new group of high-performing teachers
- "Operation Goldilocks – A Second Helping" – a revision and refresher program for 2014 participants
- embedding the Thinking Skills Framework (and supporting resources) into our everyday practice and professional conversations through planning and coaching conversations

Kimberley Park State School

URGENCY ◆ INTENSITY ◆ HIGHER ORDER THINKING