

The Matrix

In the early 90's, Ralph Pirozzo whilst teaching in Brisbane, became very concerned about the level of disengagement and low achievement within his mixed ability classrooms. This concern led Ralph to search for a planning framework that would enable teachers to provide simultaneously for their students' thinking skills and learning styles.

Having looked at ten taxonomies and 53 theories of learning, in 1997 he devised his

42-grid matrix which integrates Bloom's Taxonomy and Multiple Intelligences. Then, in 2004 the grid also known as the Pirozzo Matrix, was updated to a 48-grid in order to provide for the needs of the naturalist learner.

Today, hundreds of primary and secondary schools throughout Australia and New Zealand use the matrix as their "planning foundation" on which to layer their Learning Outcomes, Real Assessment Tasks, Activities, Thinking Tools, Cooperative Learning

Activities and to align this with their Department's curriculum framework.

In addition, many teachers have used the matrix to create specific programs for gifted children, others have provided for the learning needs of their boys through learning contracts, whilst Support Teachers have adapted the matrix to devise IEPs, cards and learning centres for children with learning difficulties.

These are their stories:

My teachers are using it increasingly. Some have implemented personally and found it really useful. I have been pushing staff to cover all aspects and cater for all learners and the matrix certainly helps this thinking. Recently we had a shared

programming session using the matrix to plan a unit for "Fun Week" (just a silly idea) and teachers found this excellent – both in the format and the shared nature of the exercise. It is certainly not easy to program using the matrix – it challenges

teachers to consider all aspects of teaching and learning but does give the support and the framework to do so.

Lissa Tardiani

Principal – Macksville Primary school

I teach from a constructivist viewpoint and I explicitly teach metacognition and the use of thinking and learning tools to my students.

I use the Bloom and Gardiner overview as advocated by Ralph to provide richness, depth, intellectual rigour, flexibility and relevance to the students' learning. After I have modelled the use of this tool I teach students how to construct their own. In this way they decide what aspects they wish to explore and what learning styles they wish to employ. From there they are also taught to use assessment rubrics. This combination engages students and allows me to introduce the South Australian outcomes to the students in a more meaningful way. Once the students realise they have the power and decision making capability to construct their own

learning, determine their own assessment strategies and share this with their classmates in group or individualised work efforts then the curriculum becomes inclusive and attainable by all.

The cooperative learning activities assist those students who are at risk in their learning or have social justice issues causing them to devalue their schooling. By working together students are able to model to each other and the use of peer mentors and learning experts in the class becomes acceptable even to teenagers. The techniques that Ralph teaches and advocates in his workshops have a profound impact on the classroom and outcomes for students. This is because he packages good pedagogy with tried and proven teaching methods and provides support books and emailed units of work that have been developed by teachers in

the field. What he does is not theoretical, ivory tower idealism but rather a practical method that makes teaching and planning easier so that teachers can get on with the job of guiding students along their development continua.

I would recommend that every teacher in Australia attend one of Ralph's workshops at least once and have an update in the use of these tools once every ten years. Ralph is helping to build an educational community and my teaching and student learning in my classroom has benefited enormously from my association with Ralph and his workshops. I share his work and the developed units with other teachers as much as I can.

Allan Greenbank

Stuart High School SA

I am from St Bernadette's Castle Hill and over the last two years we have been investigating and researching ways we can best meet the needs of students in the 21st century as we believe what we are presently doing can be improved.

I have attended many conferences and visited numerous schools both in the ACT and Victoria to try and find the answers. From what I saw in Victoria they are where we want to head and some of the schools have used Ralph's Matrix and his expertise to assist them on their journey.

So the next step for us was to attend his workshop as I had previously used his grids

in the classroom but was ignorant as to the complexity of the grid. After attending the workshop I was energised because for the first time I could see how valuable the matrix is as it incorporates all the important components we as a school believe to be essential in teaching children today. The components are catering for individual differences and abilities; embedding technology; utilizing the thinking tools; including the quality teaching aspects; using rubrics and rich assessment tasks to drive the learning. All these are included in the matrix through cleverly layering them into the grid. I would call that value adding.

As I said before the grid is very complex but the beauty is it is simple to write and implement. It has certainly provided us with the necessary skills we needed to implement the necessary changes our school was wanting to make. Ralph also explained that the grids are never stagnant they are changing all the time as practitioners work with them and make suggestions. We realise the process will take time and change brings about its own problems but we are excited about embarking on the journey.

Jenny Bellenger

St Bernadette's Primary School NSW

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My school worked with Ralph over a week in 2002. My class in particular worked extensively with him on a range of activities. After his extremely motivating workshops, and enthusiasm for education, the whole school has

since used his 42-grid planner which utilises Bloom's Taxonomy & Gardner's Multiple Intelligences. The effect it has had on our teaching and the students learning has been astounding. The major differences we

have seen come in the form of student engagement and improved learning outcomes for all learners. He is such an inspiring professional.

Jodie Clark
Canley Vale Public School NSW

I am Assistant Principal at Mullaway Public School on the Mid-North Coast of N.S.W.

Last month, Ralph came to this area and did a Seminar/Workshop on using his strategies with the staff of five other primary schools in our district. He also spent a day demonstrating his ideals in front of the classroom with the teachers seeing first hand his strategies in action,

The matrix he uses interweaving Bloom's Taxonomy and Multiple

Intelligences certainly engages all learners.

Each learning style is catered for and the students learn in an exciting way, both individually and as group members.

Units of work using the matrix challenge the children at each child's level of ability. Children who are hard to motivate learn skills and knowledge while understanding takes place.

Using Ralph's learning techniques, like the Rake and Wince, organises children's thinking and helps analyse and evaluate

their learning process.

Our staff have embraced Ralph's strategies and have been invigorated in their teaching due to the success and the power these techniques provide both teachers and students.

I hope this gives you a brief insight into my school's successes so far, with many more to come.

Trevor Acaon
Mullaway Public School NSW

He trained staff at Guyra Central School last term over three days and his work was very positively received by staff. We are in the early days of implementation, but so far staff are finding the planning grid to be a very useful teaching and organisational tool. A year

five program has been created for implementation in term four and the English faculty are part way through programming units for next year. I personally believe that if you want staff to really take the work on board you need Ralph in the school for three days, so that

staff can gain confidence and understanding. I hope this information has been of help.

Leisa Conroy (Relieving Principal)
Guyra Central School NSW

My name is Andrew Grant and I teach Year 6/7 at Amberley State School in SE Qld. I have been planning with the matrix system for three years now and I have found them to be an excellent system for inclusive planning. I have created my own units and the resources Ralph supplies assist greatly in developing some

truly great activities. The students love the matrix, as they are full of varied activities that they have a choice in. The more I use the matrix in my classroom, the more I discover about them and the wonderful impact they can have on planning and the interest level of the children.

I found them so groundbreaking, that I organised a Seminar run by Ralph at our school on a Student Free Day. Many of the teachers were so impressed that they too now use the system.

Andrew Grant
Amberley State School QLD

Readers should go to www.pli.com.au "hit" 42-grid units on the menu and that will take them to CAP. Here teachers will find a total of 43 units already done and they are FREE. WOW! However, many of these units are based on the old matrix, thus they need a good deal of updating.

Workshops titled "Creating the most Engaging and Challenging Thinking Classroom," where all your children will be engaged through multiple learning pathways will be offered at the following cities:

Monday, November 7, 2005 - Christchurch

Wednesday, November 9, 2005 - Wellington

Friday, November 11, 2005 - Auckland

Monday, November 14, 2005 - Adelaide

Wednesday, November 16, 2005 - Perth

Friday, November 18, 2005 - Darwin

Monday, November 21, 2005 - Hobart

Wednesday, November 23, 2005 - Box Hill (Melbourne)

Friday, November 25, 2005 - Essendon (Melbourne)

Monday, November 28, 2005 - Ballina (NSW)

Wednesday, November 30, 2005 - Brisbane

Tuesday, December 6, 2005 - Sydney

Wednesday, December 7, 2005 - Orange (NSW)

Friday, December 9, 2005 - Albury (NSW)

In the event that teachers would like to receive additional information regarding these workshops, then they should go to www.pli.com.au under "Professional Tour 05" and/or they should contact Ralph at ralph@pli.com.au ■