

# Discovering a new way

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Alphington Primary School situated in the riverside pocket of Alphington, has a cohort of 380 students that includes high achievers, mixed ability and special needs students.

## At a Glance

- Integration of Art and Language
- Use of a flexible learning space
- Fluid student movement



With the support and encouragement of Principal, Cheryl McCashney, the opportunity arose to develop an integrated Art and Language program utilising the expertise of specialist staff. Known affectionately as 'L'Arte' or 'Artalian' by students and staff, the program has been developed in such a way that Art is a driver for the delivery of the target language. Italian, and Italian culture and art is a driver for the Visual Arts program.

Key movements in art and culture including the Roman era, the Renaissance, Italian Modernism and Italian Melbourne are key themes that are taught over a two year cycle. In the first year, students explore 'Roma e i Romani' and 'il Rinascimento' and in the second we explore 'Modernismo Italiano; L'Arte e Cultura', and 'Gli Italiani a Melbourne; Adesso, l'infusione culturale e la migrazione'.

Visual stimuli displayed in the learning space includes a large timeline noting key events, artworks and cultural elements from the Roman Era to the Renaissance. It is a resource constantly embellished with information by students as the learning evolved. Male and female shop mannequins were clothed and accessorised by students to represent Minerva, Marcus Antonius, Catherine de Medici and Michelangelo. These figures were subsequently used for observational drawing exercises. A series of clocks depict the different time zones in Italy and Australia to encourage discussion about time, seasons and distance. A large map depicts world colonisation of the Roman Empire through the reign of different Emperors. This inspired discussion of power, invasion and geographical regions. A three metre cardboard cylinder, transformed into Trajan's Column by the year three students, further enriched the 'Italian' environment.

## Utilising a flexible learning space

A grant from the previous state government in 2010 allowed the school to build a Junior Library facility with open and flexible learning spaces. The new learning space provided an ideal location for a new and different way of delivering these two specialist disciplines.

Group rotation and fluid student transition is supported by a visual task board. Students know where and when to move at a glance. Trolleys with base supplies, labelled in Italian, are located in each space; our students share a workbook 'quaderno' across subjects so that documented information is always linked, Italian/Culture/Art. Nothing is lost in transition (or translation) across the three areas. Students have autonomy to move between spaces and make choices about their learning.

Children are greeted in Italian by all three team members, and given instructions in both languages; the area is filled with signage in the target language. Verbal Italian instruction has become an enjoyable language process, including charades and gestures, enabling the students to use prior knowledge, analysis and prediction to deconstruct instruction. Real connections are made between the Language and the Art activities leading to purposeful learning.

## Targetting Language

Work in the target language complements and reflects the activity in Art. Senior students write procedural texts annotating the artwork they create, such as 'Roman sandals' (i sandali Romani) and jewellery or Roman accessories (la gioielleria e gli accessori Romani). Students present the procedural text in digital form using a program of their choice; (audacity or movie

maker). This forms an assessment of the oral component. Younger year levels annotate their work, for example year one and two worked on Arcimboldo creating a collage of 'La mia faccia fatta della frutta e delle verdure' (my face made from fruit and vegetables). Students are supported, with flash cards and visual aids, to make simple requests in the target language, for example 'May I use the bathroom?' and 'May I get a drink?'

## Visual Arts

To promote and inspire creativity, collaborative projects run in conjunction with individual tasks. The scale, complexity and materials made available are varied. Contemporary techniques and materials are used as well as those more era specific, depending on

the planned learning intention. Pace and perseverance is student driven and fostered with the flexibility of our tailored program.

## Looking further

Learning is visible! This is a wonderful thing; students see, observe others working across the areas and spring into action. Our learners have confidence to share ideas with staff and their peers across subject areas, learning is celebrated and feedback, immediate.

Wider opportunities to use the target language within the school are being promoted. During the annual Art Show senior students officiated in Italian; the traditional Welcome to Country is said in both Italian and in English at weekly school assemblies, the annual concert included Italian themes and singing. Italian

Day is yet another occasion for students to show case what they learn in Italian.

L'Arte at Alphington has been an exciting and energising program to lead. There were challenges and discoveries in both content and pedagogy but working with colleagues on a shared vision is professionally rewarding. In step with our students, we have learned and explored together with laughter and enthusiasm. Our work has been shared at the 2012 Gifted Education Symposium – Differentiation Does Make a Difference, CEOM Gifted Think Tank and will be presented at the VATI Conference 2013.

The three key players in developing this program were Deborah Luciani, Italian teacher, Virginia Harding, Visual Arts teacher and Diane Danscuk, library and culture. With thanks to Briley Duncan (AEU).

## For Discussion

In our school where are we succeeding with integration of learning areas? Where are the opportunities to build collaboration to create a richer learning environment for our students?

