Our Story so Far

Chipping Norton Public School

Context

Chipping Norton Public School is a very special public school with 345 unique young people. The school services a very diverse school community, with 64% of students from a language background other than English. Our largest cultural groups are Arabic, Vietnamese and Greek. The teaching staff are dedicated, passionate professionals who genuinely care for every student.

Where Were We?

In the years prior to 2017, teams of teachers worked together at the end of each term to plan, design and write units of work for the following term based on the needs of students. Grade meetings were held four times each term. Each meeting had very little professional learning focus, with more administrative business evident throughout. Professional Learning opportunities were very limited for all staff and other than a planning day at the end of the term, there was little team collaboration taking place.

What were three things we were trying to achieve by engaging in Spirals of Inquiry?

1. Implementing a collective efficacy approach to quality professional learning for all staff.
2. Inquiry is about being open to new learning and taking informed action based on the specific needs of students.
3. Teams of teachers working collaboratively in developing strategies for shifting thinking and practice.

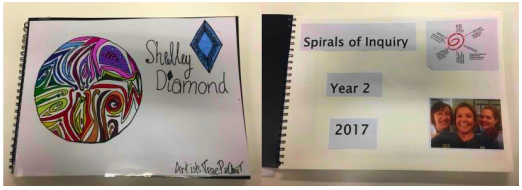
Why was Spirals important for our school?

We have made it important. From the beginning of our Spirals of Inquiry journey in 2017, we have made it happen as an integral part of our support timetable. Spirals occurs every Thursday on our timetable and is a whole school priority. Teams of teachers have time once per fortnight (for 3 hours) to engage in an inquiry-oriented approach to teaching and learning based on the needs of our learners. It allows teachers to be curious about what is happening for our students and provides them with valuable time to spend on inquiring how to increase their success.

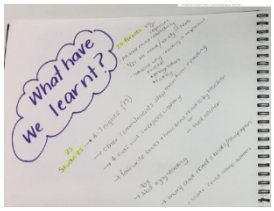
Spirals of Inquiry is a crucial element of our school's approach to high level professional learning. Spirals of Inquiry promotes new learning through discovery, dialogue, professional readings and learning, and embeds new learning and quality teaching strategies into all classrooms. It is a process that has enriched the collegial conversations that teachers are having around student learning, curriculum, innovation and pedagogy. Spirals of Inquiry has allowed time for teachers to collaborate and share their professional learning journey in authentic ways, matched specifically to the needs of their cohort of students, thereby promoting a culture of continuous professional growth and improvement, as well as building a culture of collective efficacy and shared responsibility for the learning needs of all students.

What are we most proud of?

Our Spiral of Inquiry Learning Journals



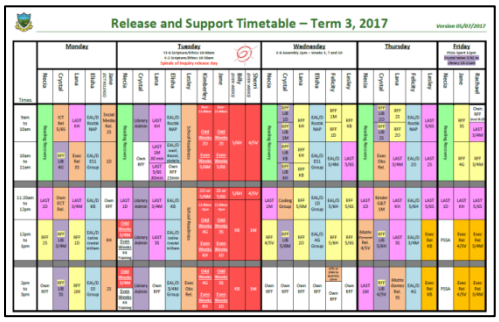
A Spiral of Inquiry learning journal is used by each team leader to record ideas and evidence as they go through the six phases of the Spiral of Inquiry process, namely:



scanning, *focusing*, *developing a hunch*, *professional learning*, *taking action* and *checking*. The learning journal includes a proforma for each phase of the spiral, including guiding questions and spaces to record discussion and evidence. Team leaders also include survey results, photographic evidence and professional readings in their journals. The journal acts as an evidence tool when sharing with the executive team or the Principal at regular supervision review meetings.

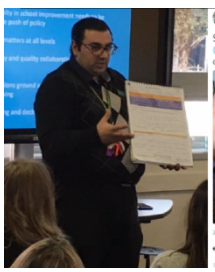
It's SACRED time

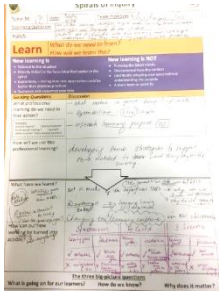
Teachers are provided with 3 hours each fortnight to work on their Spiral, however, teachers are also able to collaborate for their Spiral at any other time, including team meetings or informal situations. This dedicated professional learning time is ***sacred*** and all staff have agreed to not interrupt teams during their Spiral sessions. The three hours is included on our school's release and support timetable, with consistent casual teachers used to cover classes during this time in order for learning programs to continue for students while teachers are released for Spirals. As a team of professionals dedicated to making a difference, teachers have commented that spending quality time together allows them to make a difference to their learners. They utilise a variety of formative, summative and continuous assessment data in order to determine their Spiral scanning question and develop a hunch that they will collaboratively work on as a team. Throughout Spirals time, all teams of teachers follow a set of beliefs so that there is success for all; these beliefs are: *Be prepared to learn*, *Stay curious*, *Commit to collaborate*, *Have a growth mindset*, *Don't be afraid to fail* and *Do your homework*.



Sharing our Success with Others

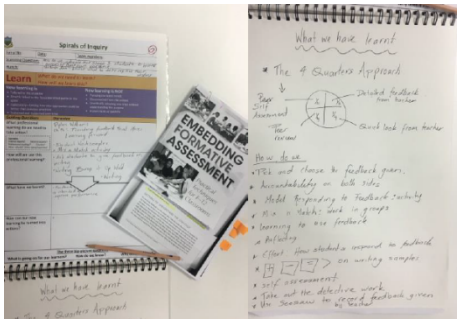
It is always exciting to share our adventure with others. A member of our leadership team presented our school's Spirals of Inquiry journey at the Networks of Innovation and Inquiry (NOII) community of schools workshop. At the conclusion of the session, schools were then asked to share their journey so far, commenting on what has worked, what challenges schools have faced, and what their future direction was in regards to Spirals of Inquiry. Assistant Principal, Sarokhan Malla presented to the large audience the proformas we had developed for our Spirals journals, based on the six phases. He also outlined our school's approach to implementing Spirals, including our model for teacher release to facilitate the Spirals, as well as how his team have grown





professionally during their first Spiral. Since that time, we have had the lead Principals of NOII visit our school to observe a spiral in action and provide us with feedback. We are always growing and evolving and wanting to do better from Spiral to Spiral.

What has been the most significant change?



Our teachers are continually engaged in new learning based on the specific needs of our students. This truly is the most powerful form of teacher professional learning – teachers are seeking out new learning based on their students' learning needs, which is a shift in mindset from old professional learning habits (i.e. going on a course or workshop for one day and then putting those notes on a shelf, with little impact on student learning).

Some of the successes that the teams of teachers at our school have achieved through their Spirals of Inquiry include:

- Stage 2 students better understanding their learning goals and learning journeys, hence improving student engagement (2017);
- Year 2 students improvements in reading (2017);
- Stage 3 students improving their understanding of the writing process through Bump It Up walls (2017);
- Stage 2 students increasing their understanding of fluency strategies, thereby improving their oral reading (2018);
- Stage 1 students improving their ability to infer and make deeper connections with the texts that they are reading (2018);

Where to next for us?

Spirals of Inquiry will continue as an integral component of our provision of professional learning program at Chipping Norton Public School. Some future directions or goals for our implementation of Spirals include:

- Involving support staff such as EAL/D and Teacher Librarian;
- Spirals across K-6 having a common theme, based on identified school needs, such as reading comprehension or numeracy (based on triangulation of whole school data);
- Targeting focus students as part of the Spirals process and including monitoring and video evidence as an essential aspect of each spirals session.