Transcript of teacher reflection interview

Beth Claydon with Sonja Craven of Mossman State School, QLD

Beth Claydon: Okay, this is a reflective podcast with Sonja Craven from Mossman State School as part of the Digital Technologies in focus project.

Sonja Craven: The main aim for us at Mossman State School was to bring a strong STEAM culture into our classroom, school and community, with the support of having a specialist, so our ACARA curriculum leader and all the other people on that team, to help guide us, help us create things along the way, to make our units of work better and to improve how we teach Digital Technologies in our classroom. For our school, myself, I get to work with a class in a technology lesson and an arts lesson, so I get to cover two curriculums with them, twice a week. And I have a dedicated teacher aide this year, which was put in by our principal to help support the teachers, because I have very limited time after teaching two lessons. But also, there's lots of people who are wanting to improve their STEAM and their technology approaches in their classroom, but we've got David now and he is there as that person to take the weight off me, pretty much. We've got lots of hands-on activities and we're trying to improve our computational teamwork skills every term. These are really big, key factors that we're working with. And we've also been working with peer staff in other schools within our cluster, so that's been a positive approach as well, to support each other and not just be a standalone.

Timing is always a challenge, as is funding and resourcing, especially a small school up in the north. However, the grant money from the project thus far is really helpful and helps for us to purchase experiences for our students, as well as resources for our students to use at school.

Our biggest challenge, I do notice within our students, is teamwork and how we're lacking the ability to work in whole groups and teams and then building on our computational thinking. The kids have been learning in a very direct explicit teaching manner and it's not necessarily transferable across to Technology and solving problems in that area.

There've been small surprises along the way, across the different lessons and units of work. Particularly with how the approaches are across the year levels, and how we can actually craft for the same level and one will be extremely different to the other, yet they're all the same age group. It's been interesting to see how other people approach and cater for the Technologies curriculum, within my school and my staff, as well as staff at PDs when you're having chats and catching up.

STEAM education isn’t really a new thing and I've been trying to convince my staff they know what they’re doing and help them to make the connection with what they already know and what they have to do. So that’s been interesting to see, how everyone handles the wording, the curriculum, and what they perceive it to be or they have to do with it.

So all my teachers who have asked for support from my TA, David, have worked with him, accepted his ideas, and come up with their own. They’ve coordinated together to create really great learning experiences, plugged and unplugged, and managed to connect them back to their learning areas. Some of those teachers now aren’t asking for us much support and are running with their own projects and ideas, on their own, which is fantastic. Their confidence has definitely grown since the beginning.

Our students who also have participated in lunchtime STEAM team and things like the coding challenges along the way, seem to be the ones that are a lot more confident and willing to take a risk, even seek further skills as they go along and are very supportive of their other peers and can pass on their knowledge.

I don’t know if it’s changed as such, however, I have discovered a lot of new ways and new ideas, which has been great, that we can adapt and adopt. That's been nice. We have – it is a shame though that Design and Technologies doesn't get the same amount of love as Digital Technologies does at this stage. But I think, like all curriculums, the Digital Technologies one is one that has time to evolve and it will continue to grow over the next few years to be a very valuable one. We can keep going with that.