

## **Class of 2009 Classroom Practitioner - Sue Brown**

I enjoy providing authentic opportunities for learning and allowing students to showcase both their skills and knowledge in response to a task or opportunity. When you enter my class you are unlikely to see children on the same piece of software. Children work to a given criteria, though achieve their results through a different range of sources.

The Inquiry approach is part of an integrated curriculum and links with the key competencies:

- Encouraging students to become creative, innovative learners and thinkers
- Developing rich questions, thinking and encouraging students to generate their own solutions
- The use of Higher Order Thinking, problem solving and research skills are encouraged, allowing students to obtain relevant information, make sense of it and use it to present their findings.

### **Inquiry approach**

As part of a team Inquiry into 'Survival of the Planet' and looking at factors such as carbon footprint, global warming, green house gases and environmental issues, the opportunity arose for an investigation into a problem related to our school. Tahatai Coast School has undertaken rapid growth in the last few years.

This growth has resulted in considerably more traffic and cars around the school. The vehicles and their drivers were becoming a big issue with speeding, illegal parking, lack of parking and the occasional road rage. I saw this as an opportunity to conduct an authentic inquiry into what we could be do to reduce Tahatai Coast School's traffic congestion and carbon footprint.

### **The approach**

A slideshow was prepared on iPhoto showing the traffic congestion and resultant issues outside the school. From the slideshow students identified the issues and developed rich questions for investigation.

Outside experts were emailed and invited in to the class to discuss the matters further. These experts included the Police, Road Safety Coordinator for Tauranga and the School Principal. Students looked at other peoples' points of view - focusing on possible reasons why the congestion was happening i.e. parents - children getting up late, children watching T.V, causing them to be running late for work. They then interviewed the experts to discuss forming partnerships to develop solutions.

As a class, the students decided to survey every pupil in the school and asked how each student got to school (bike, car, walk, bus). Students then used the internet (wises.co.nz) and the school database to measure the exact distances travelled by every pupil at Tahatai Coast School.

This information was first recorded in class lots and then as the whole school. Students were amazed by some of the results i.e. the shortest distance traveled by car was 365m and the longest distance was 7km. Both of these were one way.

This information was then graphed in Numbers and put into a Keynote presentation for use later in a School Assembly with simple mathematical conclusions. The findings were also reported back to the experts. From this information and the rich questions, the focus for the class was to inform the school community of other ways that pupils could

come to school i.e. walking or walking as part of a walking school bus supervised by parents, biking train (supervised riding of bikes), bus and car pooling.

- How will we educate the parents and community to drive and park safely around Tahatai?
- How can we educate the parents to improve the traffic outside Tahatai?

The class studied television commercials and developed a criteria for a commercial (30 seconds long, clear message, at least 6 different angle shots). Students wrote scripts using Pages, created storyboards and then filmed or made their commercials using iMovie, Flash or i Can Animate. These commercials were then played at Assembly along with the Keynote presentation on facts we had found, and entered into the MADE Awards ([madeawards.com](http://madeawards.com)- see examples).

In addition, to the class activities, students were involved in and promoted the issues. They worked with Jenny Griggs (Deputy Principal) on promoting a Kiss'n'Go drop off zone for morning use. The students promoted the Kiss'n'Go rewarding parents with Hershey chocolate kisses and worked with Karen from Road Sense to get the second pedestrian crossing back on the Council's agenda - and in use beginning 2009 school year. The supervised biking trains have now started with parents taking an active role in biking to school with students of all ages.

Students during class reading - focused on research using the internet for alternative ways of transporting and fuels that would save the planet, this lead to a technology unit creating a environmentally friendly car using Google Sketch Up and the eventual trial of miniature models built by students and trialed in the car park.

This Inquiry study celebrated the small things that students can achieve, which make a difference to the world around them - with the integration of technology, outside experts and an ability to see that they can make a difference in some way to both the environment and school.

