Shadowers of History
Commonwealth History Project
Host Report
Girton Grammar
Goulburn Valley Grammar School
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Background

Here is an account of our 'Shadowers of History' experience so far. This is my interpretation of the initiative and I hope it reflects Goulburn Valley's experience.

Mary Bayly contacted me very shortly after the initiative was announced to both schools. We shared ideas about the challenges and rewards of leading the Humanities and SOSE faculties due to the complexity and variety of subjects that are included under this banner.

Schools are including a variety of subjects, such as:

- Business Management
- Geography
- Economics
- Legal Studies
- History
- Classical Studies
- Philosophy
- Accounting, and more.

Leading a faculty when there is such a range of subjects is difficult, because we can't know all subjects and cater for all teachers in the way we would like to. History, itself a huge commitment for any teacher and Head of Department, is now placed among many other demanding subjects.

So, the initiative was welcomed to help both the subject teachers and the Head of Departments. Mary is trained in Business and I am trained in History.

I contacted teachers at my school and we discussed the best way to give the teachers the opportunity to observe a variety of lessons in Humanities with a variety of pedagogy.

Our Thursday timetable allowed us to offer them the following classes:

- Year 12 VCE History of Revolutions (Mrs Mac Culloch: 25 years experienced history teacher and Deputy Headmistress)
- Year 11 VCE 20th Century History (Ms Hoysted: 30 years experience and many life experiences in education and politics)
- Year 11 VCE Philosophy (Ms Conwell: 5 year teacher, Head of Department and worked in a VCE school and a variety of low socio-economic schools)
- Year 8 Renaissance History (optional).
About the experience
Two teachers from Goulburn Valley Grammar School arrived at around 9am on Thursday 20th April, which is quite an effort considering the trip takes one and a half hours.

Darius is a new mature age teacher who teaches VCE History of Revolutions. Kathryn is a more experienced teacher, but not specifically trained in history, who teaches 20th Century History. This highlights the dedication and lengths that teachers commit to on any given day.

Both teachers enjoyed seeing the different teaching strategies used in the philosophy class. This was an example of a class which was dealing with a variety of students and subject matter that was both complex and difficult.

We were able to have a lovely discussion over lunch with all the teachers involved. Darius has amazing experiences across the world and shared his stories with us. Although he has had exceptional life experiences, he is new to formal secondary education.

Mrs Mac Culloch affirmed student and parent concerns and responsibilities with him and assured him that he was using appropriate practices for teaching history. Affirmation was the key to Darius’ experience.

Kathryn was new to the discipline. She found teaching history difficult, especially the knowledge base. We were able to give her some teaching strategies and discuss way of achieving confidence in the classroom.

It was a positive experience for us all. Darius and Kathryn enjoyed seeing unconventional teaching strategies and I enjoyed their positive feedback. The teachers at Girton gained reciprocal advice and strategies to use in our classrooms.

Darius and Kathryn had to leave at 2pm to make the trek home (another one and a half hours) before they both attended parent-teacher interviews that night.

All in all, it was a wonderful experience for all involved, albeit a demanding and exhausting day. We are all looking forward to the next visit. In the meantime, Darius and Kathryn are implementing some to the strategies they observed.

I organised a file for each teacher containing a variety of teaching plans and activities with corresponding student responses for their information.

Thanks for the great opportunity.