

SPARKLAB FOR OAKLEIGH SS IN JAN, 2019

The start of a new school year is always an exciting and important time for school teams. It's a time to revisit the 'where we've been' and a time to raise expectations for teaching and learning for the coming year. It's a time to reset the sails and to make the vision clear for the work that is to come. Taking advantage of the renewed energy within teachers returned from a well deserved rest is just so crucial for leadership teams and much work and planning goes into preparing for these free day sessions before the students return.

Our STEAM agenda played an important role in this preparation for us at Oakleigh State School for our pupil free days in 2019. We knew that we needed to continue to evolve our work and to decide on the next few steps for our community of learners over the course of the following year. Our work has been quite strategic and also quite exciting in terms of the process and outcomes. We knew however that there was still much work to do and that the vision for the work needed to be positioned clearly in our teacher's heads from the beginning.

The SPARK Lab at the QLD Museum was created around a vision of curiosity. In 2018, the team at the QLD Museum reinvented the exhibits to align more closely with the work being done as part of STEM priorities. For us, 2019 at Oakleigh State School was going to be a year when Scientific Inquiry was a focus for our evolving work. After some chats with Rebekah Collins, Manager of SparkLab, it was clear that there would be some fantastic opportunities at the SparkLab for a professional learning session that would support this work. We were also tremendously excited that this activity would align with one of our themes for 2019 which was to see learning through the eyes of our students.

There are resources for educators at this page within the SparkLab site. There are documents which showcase the learning associated with each of the exhibits on site. These are presented as content descriptors from the Australian Curriculum. As a school we have been prioritising the making of connections across the curriculum to design STEAM units and so it was incredibly beneficial to see that these documents highlighted not only Science outcomes but also Design Technologies outcomes and Mathematics outcomes.

Rebekah was incredibly flexible and accommodating to work with as we planned and implemented the session. Meeting us early and taking us in before the general public meant that we had the opportunity to hear from Rebekah about the centre's vision. Our teachers benefitted from hearing about this and as the leader of this work at our school, I was immensely gratified that she made so many connections with our Department's agenda in terms of implementing STEM and with our own school's efforts to bring inquiry alive through the platform of STEAM.

Our teachers then worked in teams to complete a dual challenge. The first part was to complete a scavenger hunt in which they identified the exhibits which supported their year level's Science curriculum for the year ahead. This required of them that they browse, interact with exhibits, converse with their colleagues and take photographs to add to their Book Creator digital book on their iPads. The second part was to collaboratively create a digital artefact based on just one of these exhibits. They could choose the app but we highly recommended the use of iMovie or Clips to do this. The aim for this digital artefact was that it could be used to introduce the concept to the class in such a way as to stimulate their curiosity and to get them excited about the upcoming unit of work.

To allow each group to share their creations, we then utilised the Theatre on site at the SparkLab. This was an amazing space with professional projection equipment and comfortable seating. This allowed us to talk through the work done and to showcase the creations by each year level team. It allowed us to thank our teachers for their engagement and work, to continue to reinforce key understandings and to further make this visible through the sharing of the digital artefacts.

The whole experience at SparkLab was a brilliant opportunity for us as a school to support one of our priorities and to provide an experience which was interactive, engaging and powerful. It was also wonderful to see that a partnership with an external organisation could bring so much to our work - enlivening, consolidating and extending our ongoing work, assisting us to set the course for the following year.

More information and media is included within this blog post:
<http://osstechenablinglearning.edublogs.org/2019/01/25/sparklab-off-to-a-splendid-start-for-2019/>