EPIC: Engaging Parents/Carers in Student Learning Using Inquiry Curriculum and Social Media
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Acknowledgement of Country
We would like to show our respect and acknowledge the Bindal and Wulgurukaba Peoples, the Traditional Owners of the Land, of Elders past, present and emerging on which this meeting takes place.
# The EPIC Research Team

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- Parent & grandparent
- Primary teacher & lecturer/researcher
- Curriculum & pedagogy – English/literacy
- Parent-teacher engagement – PhD

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- Curriculum & pedagogy – English/literacy
- Communities of learners
- Chief Investigator ARC Linkage Grant
- Lead Investigator AEL Grant
Today’s Presentation

- Today we present some findings from our 2015-2016 EPIC collaborative inquiry research of parent/carer/community engagement in school curriculum using social media.

- This research was funded by Brisbane Catholic Education Office and conducted in partnership with QLD Parents and Friends Association.
Background

- Rise of online digital technologies especially social media
- Students’ out-of-school experiences infused with digital technologies
- Schools have embraced digital technologies as teaching tools
- Digital technologies widely used to communicate with parents
- New ways to connect home and school to benefit student learning and wellbeing
Research Question

What are the pros and cons of engaging parents in student learning using social media?
Methodology

- Case study research
- One school; three early years teachers (Prep, Year 1, Year 3) and their classes
- Planning day – parent engagement, inquiry curriculum, social media
- Researchers ‘met’ teachers weekly for 15 minutes by Skype/phone
- One hour end-of-study interviews (teachers)
- Class data collected from Seesaw site
Seesaw

- Icon driven digital portfolio and social media platform
- Blog posts, learning artefacts: written, spoken, imaged, videoed, emoji
- Parents signed into account by teacher
- Blog posts and learning artefacts can be ‘private’ (between child, parent & teacher) or ‘public’ (between all who are approved, including whole class & whole parent group)
- Incoming media needs teacher approval before release
- Approval process creates extra step for teacher but children become independent with archiving learning artefacts and blog posts
- ‘Pings’ to parent’s phone when learning artefacts and blog posts are uploaded by child or shared with whole class
- Parents communicate to repository and, once approved by teacher, can be shared with child or whole class
Social Media Contract

- The school asked for help with their school social media contract
- Written in student friendly terms, plus written for adult participants
- Written in conjunction with the Brisbane Catholic Education Email, Internet and Intranet Acceptable Use Statement for students and teachers
- All users agree to school’s code of conduct for social media use
- Parents/carers and teachers share duty of care to protect students from harm that reasonably ought to have been foreseen
  - For example, students should be taught explicitly by teachers how to adopt protective online behaviours and these behaviours should be regularly reinforced by parents/carers.
Seesaw Data – Preps (Geography: Place)
As part of our Geography unit, I'd like the children to share photos and descriptions of their favourite holiday destinations. If each child could bring in a photo of a holiday they have had, to share on this blog. We will then post their photos and experiences on the blog to share with everyone. This will allow all parents to engage with our class through the blog. This is a photo from my recent holiday to New York which I will share with everyone.

Oct 21, 2016

(From blog) What innovative learning and teaching Angela!
I was feeding the elephant some pineapple.
This is [insert name] and her family at Somerset Dam. This is a special place because there is a lot of water and they get to go jet ski riding!

Nov 17, 2016

I think it’s good
I projected it for them and I said we’d had a submission to our blog: ‘Jane’s mum has sent in a photo. Let’s all have a look and Jane you might talk us through what’s happening in this picture, where are you, and why this is a special place’.

(Erin, Prep Teacher)
I see the tomato.
The school garden.
Erin (Prep Teacher) also tasked them with photographing their favourite places in the school as part of the inquiry.

To her surprise, she uttered: “So, but some of the photos they captured! They’re better photographers than me! Some of them went into the garden and got up-close shots of beautiful plants in flower or vegetables growing on a bush.”

She added, “Well, I mean we hadn’t even gone into that yet, but they experimented with focus to take up-close or panoramic shots or videos”.

Seesaw Data – Preps (Geography: Place)
Seesaw Data – Year 2 (History: Local Creek)
Seesaw Data – Year 2 (History: Local Creek)
Seesaw Item

Our Questions about Burpengary Creek in the Past
- Was the water clean?
- Has anyone had a fire in there?
- Were the trees smaller?
- Were there any traffic lights?
- Who was the first person to go there?
- Were there more plants?
- Was the oil tank there?
- Could the animals survive with the floods?
- Was it longer?
- Did people camp there?
- Was the creek flat?
- Were there ducks in the creek?
- I wonder about the oval being used for training horses and the sheds.
- Was the water higher?
- Was the water oily?
- Was there more than one way for the water to go?
- Was it sandy?
- Were there tyres and metal there?
- Were there more animals and fish living there?
- Was there less dirt in the creek?
Soon after, Gloria (Year 2 Teacher) invited the parents’ participation using a series of student questions about a memorial she and the class were visiting as part of their investigation.

This invitation attracted six responses from three different parents. One response connected the inquiry to the parents’ knowledge of their child’s family: “Yes, there were ladies in the war. Jake’s great Grandmother used to nurse the men who were injured and she became a doctor.”
Kaley’s Project (Parent Responses)

Nov 2, 2016
I want a cuddly teddy!!!
Kaley’s Project (Parent Responses)
Kaley’s Project (Parent Responses)

I want a cuddly teddy!!!
Data Analysis

Three interrelated planes:
- Personal
- Interpersonal
- Community
Findings – Personal

- Teachers taught each other about Seesaw
- Year 2 students apprenticed Prep students in Seesaw use
- Teachers taught students about different aspects of Seesaw (e.g., production & uploading of videos, voice overs, taking & uploading photos, commenting on other students’ work, sending items for teacher approval)
- Evidence that students taught parents at home about Seesaw

- Time and timing impacted opportunities for teachers to apprentice parents on:
  - Use of Seesaw
  - Inquiry curriculum
Findings – Interpersonal

- Students taught one another in small group and whole class sessions as they learnt side-by-side about different topics and ways to present information, and experimented with Seesaw’s capabilities.

- Opportunities for teachers and parents to learn together either in their own groups or mixed groups were limited.
Findings – Community

- Sharing of information encouraged a classroom community of learners more able and open to:
  - Discussing ideas
  - Evaluating each other’s texts
  - Providing positive and useful feedback
Findings – Community

- Students became more self-evaluative about quality of their work

So we airplay it up onto the big screen and that’s how we can share it, and the kids can give feedback and go: ‘Oh, I really like the way she spoke because I could hear her voice clearly’. Or, ‘I really like the way they created that image using the camera on the iPad’. (Erin, Prep Teacher)
Findings – Community

- Buy-in of parents to student learning was powerfully felt
- Encouraged mastery over work and skills by students

It’s (Seesaw’s) also engaging for the children which helps and I think the fact that the parents are going to see it straight away that makes a difference, so really across the board in every subject that I tried it in, the fact that they knew the parents were going to see it, the children wanted to do it and they wanted to do their best work. (Gloria, Year 2 Teacher)
Findings – Seesaw App

- Speedy, secure communication between classroom and home
- User-friendly, age-appropriate tool
- Student development visible to parents: easy, effective, useful, continuous
- Increased capacity to share information and ideas not only in classroom but also with parents, other family members
- Encouraged learning through increased opportunities to experiment with a range of different texts in ways that were natural and comfortable for students (multiliteracies)
- Heightened student engagement in learning – enthusiasm and motivation

- Not enough ipads in classroom
- More hands-on teacher professional development needed
- Time for teachers to experiment and teach one another about learnings and potential of platform
- Not integrated into original teaching plans
Findings – Parent Engagement

- Increased shared experiences of learning for teachers, students, parents
- More open than closed conversations about school learning at home
- Learnings from these discussions flowed back to classroom
- Introduced new resources for teaching and learning e.g., geography (world locations) and history (local creek); more entry points for focused learning
- Enabled greater representation and evidence of student learning potential (e.g., speaking – to express what they know; verbal explanations, rather than only reading & writing)
- Advocacy in more formal ways for value of teachers’ work by parents
- Parents happy to comment
- Did not always contribute to more formal curriculum
- Teaching potentially more open to parent scrutiny
- Regulating flow of information between classroom and home (sometimes immediate; but lapses in time meant resources for student learning were sometimes not forthcoming or considered too late to be useful)
Future Research

- More lead-in time to strengthen and improve planning
- Early apprenticeship of teachers, parents and students:
  - Knowledge of parent engagement and benefits for all stakeholders
  - Social media platform
  - Inquiry curriculum
  - Learning communities
- Development of new pedagogies for teachers and parents
- Larger project built on 2015-2016 case study
- Engaging parents in inquiry curriculum using social media (EPIC) (2018-2019)
- Upcoming EPIC research funded by UQ in partnership with Griffith University, Brisbane Catholic Education Office, Townsville Catholic Education Office, and QLD Parents and Friends Association
References


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