

## **Avondale Community College**



**Avondale Community College, Rathdrum is one of ten Co. Wicklow VEC schools to embark on the Instructional Leadership (IL) Programme supported by IVEA and facilitated by Canadian Educationalist, Professor Barrie Bennett. Four staff members, teachers of English, Religious Education and Geography, have been immersed in the programme which began in 2008. From the outset our approach to learning was collaborative. We were encouraged to set personal and school based goals. We brought samples of our students' work to the seminars. We had a unique opportunity to share class materials and best classroom practice with teachers.**

**The process of implementing IL in Avondale Community College has been two tiered and interdependent. It is achieved by the intuitive and informal processes by which teachers plan, coupled with the formal School Development Planning process. Dissemination of information began initially as a trickle effect, through conversations over morning break and at subject planning meetings, where participating teachers enthused about the hands-on aspect of our training. Curiosity about Placemats, Fishbone Diagrams, Concept Attainment, Lesson Design and Teams Games Tournament drew staff to the programme. All held the promise of something fresh and innovative.**

**Formal in-school sessions were highly participative. The use of placemat to teach poetry and concept attainment to teach alliteration and assonance was our first whole staff engagement with IL. Other whole staff sessions have included working with a Value Line, an Academic Controversy and of course the Teams Games Tournament (with lunch in the Canteen for the winning team).**

**At this stage of the process all staff members have had a taste of some tactics, skills and strategies from the IL repertoire. We use Place Mat to conduct Senior Leadership Team meetings. We have taken the opportunity during our annual Interactive Open Days for Fifth and Sixth classes to welcome teachers in our feeder primary schools into our classrooms to share our progress to date.**

**The impact on student learning is obvious. Student engagement in their own learning has been enhanced. Group work is more structured with individual accountability keeping students active and on task. Energy is focussed on supporting team effort rather than individual success. Students' response to the safe learning environment has had a positive impact on their self esteem. No one is singled out to give answers. Conclusions are reached in pairs or groups.**

**Support for IL from Co. Wicklow VEC is encouraging but more importantly it is practical as we move forward to further enhance the learning environment in our schools.**



***Extracts from MLL Inspection Avondale Community College relevant to Instructional Leadership***

***The most recently introduced initiative, that of Instructional Leadership, is supported by Co. Wicklow VEC and focuses on leading learning. There is much evidence of its implementation in the subject plans and in classroom practice, particularly in lesson design, mind mapping and cooperative learning.***

***A wide range of teaching methodologies was observed... the varied teaching strategies facilitated good opportunities for active learning by students. Well planned lessons resulted in a range of tasks for student collaboration and engagement. Pair or group work activities were observed in a majority of lessons. Of particular note were the lessons where activities devised were interactive in nature and the students were used to working together and voicing their opinions.***