

# Language Teaching Consolidation

by Hayley Johns, Villa Maria College, 2016



My name is Hayley Johns. I currently teach German to Y9&10 at Villa Maria College in Christchurch but the majority of my teaching has been at Primary schools. I learnt French and German at high school. When I was 16 I spent a year living in Germany with AFS. This year ultimately changed my life. When I returned to NZ I studied German at university and then went to Teacher's College. I started my teaching career in the junior school and loved it. When the government legislated that a second language be taught at Y7&8 I jumped at the chance to be involved. I won a teaching scholarship with the Goethe Institut and travelled to Munich in 2001. I met with 30 other German teachers from around the world and we discussed pedagogy and visited schools. After a break to have our children I returned to teaching German at St Thomas's Primary in Auckland and was there for 6 years before we moved to Christchurch. Villa is a Catholic girls' high school, with a strong Languages faculty. French, German, Japanese and Maori are the language options. All girls must take a language in Y9&10.



I chose to be a part of the Consolidation programme to back up what I learnt in TPDL in 2008 and to make sure I was still on track now that I'm in the secondary system. For me, language learning is about interaction; speaking and listening as much as writing and reading. But I feel that so often that this component is overlooked and under-valued. For this reason I have chosen interaction as my focus for the Consolidation project.

I've been a teacher now since 1994 and have never stopped learning. I think it's crucial to keep up with PD. There is always something new to learn from someone who knows more than me. I believe everyone, regardless of their profession should be involved in PD whenever they feel a gap or are offered an opportunity.

The Consolidation stage is making me think about my teaching methods again. What works? What doesn't? Why/why not? So I am constantly evaluating my lessons and what I have achieved or not achieved. I have found the teaching in Secondary school very different to Primary. The pressure to cover the syllabus for NCEA is immense. Luckily at Y9&10 there is greater flexibility. It took me a few weeks to realise I should just teach the way I know how and feel comfortable with rather than try to fit a mould that didn't feel right. The reflection meeting after my observation as part of Consolidation stage has reinforced this too.

After my reflection and chat with Karen (the course facilitator) I felt rejuvenated and she reinforced my gut instinct and I therefore applied some of our discussion points into my teaching: teaching to smaller groups, continuing to use formulaic expressions rather than giving vocab lists to rote learn for tests each week, allowing for plenty of oral interaction and making mistakes.

If I didn't believe my participation in the Consolidation stage was going to benefit my students or my teaching I would not have applied to be part of the course. Meeting other language teachers and being able to share ideas, take what I think will work for me and my students and then applying it in class will benefit my students. Discussing issues that arise with other language teachers is very helpful. This for me is a very big component of the course.

I would definitely recommend the Consolidation stage to other teachers. It doesn't really impact your life in the way a university paper would. You are teaching anyway and always wanting to improve, this course focuses you and keeps you focused on your goals. Instead of evaluating in your head you write it down and keep it as part of the course requirements. My advice is if you're thinking about it; do it.

A highlight for me is always sharing ideas with other teachers. Seeing what others around the city do is like a 'shot in the arm' and motivates you. An offshoot is that you have someone sit in and observe to see whether what you think you're doing and what you're really doing match up. Once you're registered this doesn't really happen (in a non-threatening way).

I love teaching German and want to keep doing it as long as I can. I'm in a long term relief position but am already thinking to next year. If the incumbent returns I plan to approach the department and explore the possibility of teaching German to Y7&8 in this school. I'd also happily teach Y9&10 again if the incumbent is happy to share the role. My dream is to take my family to Germany and have them experience the culture, language, food, landscapes and history that it offers.