

Opening the door to collaboration!

By Kaye Hunter

Writing and compiling the multimedia publication for SLAV, *'Open the door to inquiry: A planning tool for teacher-librarians and teachers in primary schools'* was very challenging. Although my name appears on the cover, I did not develop this resource in isolation. I collaborated with others and relied heavily on their skills and knowledge in determining some of the content, as well as shaping the final format of the publication.

There were times when I felt unable to move forward with the project and timely intervention was necessary! I am grateful for the valuable input and encouragement that Mary Manning, Chief Executive Officer of SLAV, and Chris Ferreter, SLAV Office Manager, maintained throughout the entire project. They were also able to draw in the talented people who had the right skills to ensure that the project could develop in the format I had envisaged.

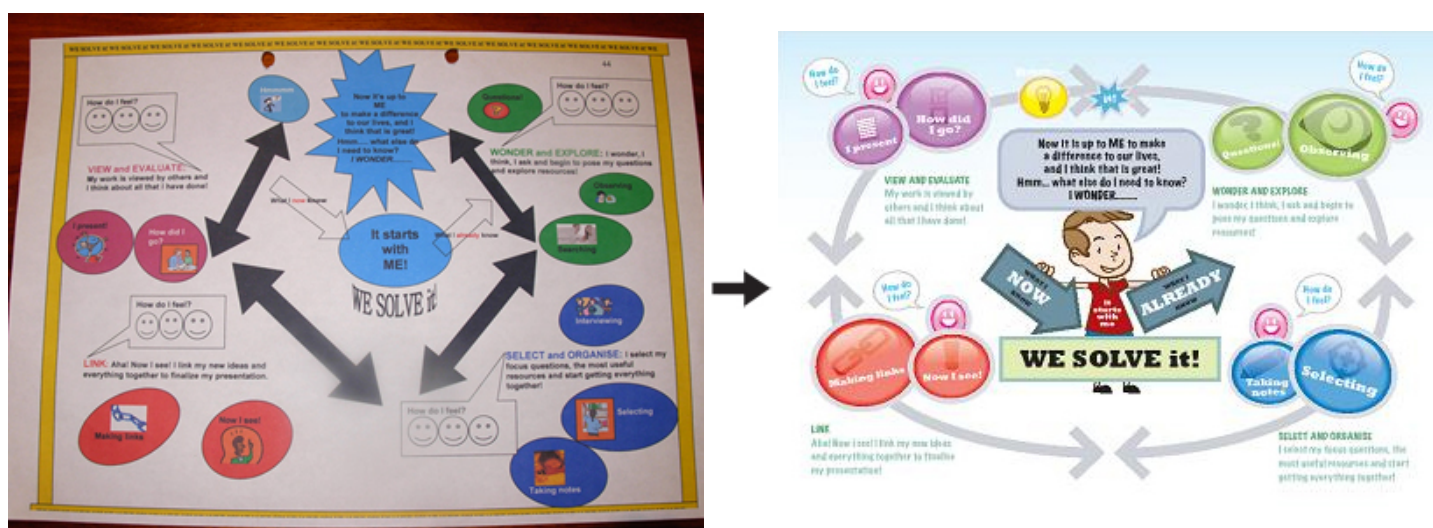
As a starting point, I developed a concept map and an outline of the publication which from the outset was to have a primary school focus. I presented this to Mary and from there we resolved that I would expand the document and present it to a group of primary school teacher-librarians who became 'The Inquiry Group'. The members of this group gave valuable feedback about the content and direction of the publication. I was also fortunate to have the opportunity to work within schools to trial and explore some of the strategies and elements of inquiry-based learning. These schools included Greenhills Primary School, with teacher-librarian Val Lewis, and Greythorn Primary School with teacher-librarian Cheryl Williams.

One of the elements I had hoped to include was a song as part of the publication. I had a few thoughts, but producing a song was not in my skill set, so Mary set up a meeting with teacher, author and musician, Mark Carthew. We tossed around a few ideas and discussed the WE SOLVE it! cycle of inquiry. Mark, in collaboration with Rob Fairburn, created the WE SOLVE it! song. They forwarded a demo for our feedback and then it was performed by the wonderful 2007 choir of Livingstone Primary School for inclusion on the CD-ROM.

My initial 'vision' of the publication was that it would be filled with photos to 'show' what inquiry-based learning looked like. Although many photos were taken, as time passed I went in a new direction inspired by the illustrations that Jin Wang had already completed for SLAV. Again, Mary set up the first of many meetings with Jin. I had some 'mock-ups' (created in Word) and a host of ideas I had collated, but clearly I lacked the necessary skills to go beyond that!

Jin fortunately had these skills! He embraced the project enthusiastically and was responsible for the layout, design and all of the illustrations for the publication. It was wonderful to see the ideas evolve into graphics, bringing the publication to life.

Jin was able to create images and diagrams from my mock-ups!



Jin could interpret in visual terms the descriptions we discussed for the cover poster, for example. He initially presented a range of individual character sketches, then an outline of the page. Jin was always open to feedback and prepared to refine and add details. As a result, I feel that through this collaboration, all of the illustrations including the final colour cover poster capture the active engagement of both the students and staff in inquiry-based learning perfectly!

**Open the door to inquiry:
a planning tool for
teacher-librarians and
teachers in primary
schools**



Target – largely primary school staff

Cover/poster

The book is 60 pages and square

Cover is a section of the poster

Poster – wrap around to become the
dust jacket

Poster reflects a library of active
engagement of both students and
staff in inquiry learning.

- Bird's eye view?
- Cartoon style



We like the numbered reference to
images with explanatory text
around the poster.

1. WE SOLVE it! display on wall
2. Unit of focus display on wall (plus
resources under display)
3. Inquiry on the move trolley

Having a document published was a new experience for me. We met often with desktop publisher Barry White. When Jin provided the design for the book the document was set up into that format. There were still many drafts to follow, decisions to be made, areas that required refinement, as well as the inevitable editing! Barry's expertise, advice, attention to detail and patience were all crucial. He collaborated with us all to ensure the completion of the document, and with the printers to ensure the quality of the publication.

Interaction throughout the project included many phone calls and emails, but it was at the numerous planning meetings that we collaborated, where through sharing and discussion, significant decisions were made.

The journey from ideas to a final copy ready for publication was a long one, but I am fortunate that those I was closest to throughout the project, Mary, Chris, Jin and Barry, were collaborative, talented and able to sustain their commitment as well as their sense of humour!

Kaye Hunter has had a long career as a teacher and teacher-librarian in primary schools where inquiry-based learning is central to the programs. Kaye has contributed to several SLAV publications and presented at SLAV conferences and teacher-librarian network meetings. Her multi-media publication Open the Door to Inquiry: A Planning Tool for Teacher-Librarians and Teachers in Primary Schools was published by SLAV in 2009.