Dear Conference Organisers
Here are the synopses for the three workshops my colleague, Kerri Zaccar and I are offering to run at the 13th International Conference on Thinking in Sweden in June 2007.
Cheers
Sherry and Kerri

Workshop 1:
Whole School Approach to Quality Teaching and Thinking Skills
Blakebrook P.S.’s Learning Journey

In this world of information overload students need the skills to acquire knowledge and be critical thinkers when interacting with new knowledge, thereby empowering them to make informed choices that ultimately allows them to achieve their life goals. This workshop shares the journey five teachers within a small school took to shift the focus towards using content within the curriculum to teach thinking skills, cognitive organisers and Habits of Mind to all students from Kindergarten to Year 6, all under the umbrella of the Quality Teaching Model. As a result of this students’ higher order thinking, critical, creative, problem solving, philosophical and reflective skills are continuing to improve which is transferring into their everyday lives thereby providing them with a wholistic skills approach to education. The journey has only just begun…….

Workshop 2:
Teaching Key Learning Areas Through Drama

What is drama?
Drama in the classroom environment is a process which allows the child to be an active participant in their knowledge acquisition by experiencing the curriculum content through mind, body and soul as opposed to being an inactive participant who is expected to absorb the content through mind alone.

Fletchere and Zaccar 2005

In this workshop we focus on the drama process, not the content and cover all aspects of the Quality Teaching Model. We use literacy strategies such as a Hot Seat, creating a graphic lifeline, a group poem, a tableaux, a soundscape and the element of performance. We reflect on the process using a Philosophy Circle and Mrs. Potter’s Questions and touch on the theory of Multiple Intelligences by Howard Gardner, Whole Brain Thinking and the Integral Learning Model by Julia Atkin and VAK (Visual/Auditory/Kinesthetic) Learning. We look at the elements of integration and transfer, flag units of work and look at the use of rubrics as an assessment tool all the while playing drama games and having fun.

Workshop 3:
Gifted Education In Mainstream Classrooms
Gross (2004) suggests that up to 10% of a schools population could be identified as being
gifted and/or gifted and talented. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to suggest that
throughout your teaching career you may have a gifted child sit in your classroom.

How would you plan your program for a child in Grade 2 who could complete Grade 6
maths?

What are the educational, social and emotional considerations when implementing
accelerated placement for a gifted child in a mainstream classroom?

This workshop shares the journey two teachers and one child travelled while designing an
Individual Educational Plan for him which included accelerated placement. Issues such
as: identification procedures, quantifying the child’s preferred learning style, pinpointing
preferred key learning areas and activities for learning content are showcased and
discussed. The workshop will also examine the steps the teachers implemented which
addressed the social and emotional concerns surrounding the child. Thereby, ensuring
both his personal and academic growth. While at the same time highlighting how
important the success of such an IEP depends on the co-operation and support of all
teaching staff, the child’s family and the child himself. You will come away from this
workshop with resources, strategies and new knowledge which you can utilise and
implement in your own classroom and/or school environment