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Reflection on the Action Research Journey

When I applied to be part of the IBSC Action Research team at the beginning of 2014, I realised there was going to be a lot of work ahead. However, I also hoped that there was going to be a great deal of growth and development on my part. At the Montgomery Bell Academy in Nashville, USA, we were introduced to the intricacies and processes of action research for a few days before the main 2014 IBSC Conference. It proved to be a thoroughly enjoyable conference with interesting speakers and workshops on a number of topics affecting boys' schools worldwide.

Coming back to South Africa, there was no time to lose as I prepared the boys to take part in my action research project. I wanted to see if by making a deliberate change to the way we worked through the design process in D&T, and by giving the boys more freedom to choose their own solution to an open-ended problem, there would be a better end product and an enhanced learning experience.

I asked the boys to solve the problem of being able to perform a task in the dark, where they needed to be able to use both of their hands, by creating an artefact that could create enough light. The boys come up with many solutions, and we then discussed their ideas. They researched their favourite three ideas and were divided into large similar interest groups enabling them to have discussions, and finally to form small groups to set about 'making' the solution.

The boys designed and experimented with different solutions, each time making progressive iterations until they had a satisfactory final product.

My learning has led to a few changes in the way we are designing projects in Design & Technology at St John's. Where it is practically possible, projects encourage open-ended solutions, confidence and creativity.

At the end of this project, I know that have been stretched and developed positively, and in ways I could never have imagined when I started out last year. It has been exciting to learn new technologies, and to prepare to share what I have learnt, not only at the conference, but also at St John's.

Thank you to Di Laycock, Margot Long and the IBSC for this wonderful opportunity. Also to St John's College for the support throughout the action research cycle. I have really enjoyed the interaction with my research teammates from all over the world. I have learnt so much from all of them.

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