2006 Bob and Margaret Frater Scholarship

David Austin, shown here with Dr Bob Frater and Mrs Margaret Frater, was awarded a scholarship to attend the International Conference on Information Communication Technology in Education (ICICTE) in Rhodes, Greece in early July 2006. The conference was preceded by visits to schools in England considered to be centres of excellence in the use of interactive whiteboards in the classroom.

David's Report
Participating in an international conference and visiting schools in another part of the world was an amazing and unforgettable experience. I was honoured and privileged to represent Australian Catholic University (ACU National) and to be the 2006 Bob and Margaret Frater Scholarship recipient.

In June/July 2006, I embarked on my first overseas trip to England and Greece. My first ten days were spent in England where I worked with four schools. My final leg was spent in Athens and in Rhodes where I attended the ICICTE (International Conference on Information Communication Technology in Education).

In 2006, St Michael's Primary School, Kaleen ACT, installed Promethean Interactive Whiteboards (IWBs) or ‘ActivBoards’ into all classrooms. As Principal of St Michael’s and also having just completed my Masters of Education (ICT) through Australian Catholic University, I was very interested to see how ICT and in particular whiteboard technology is integrated into classroom practice in other schools. An IWB is a touch-sensitive whiteboard which allows teachers and students to participate interactively in activities projected onto it from a data projector connected to a computer.

The schools I visited were Nunsthorpe Community School, Grimsby (in North East England), Barrow Hill Junior School (at St John’s Wood in central London), Bedegbury School (Sussex) and Marlborough House School (Kent). Two of these schools were identified as Schools of Excellence in using and incorporating Interactive Whiteboards. All four schools have had IWB’s for many years and have seen real benefits in using this technology. While working with these schools, I was interested to see how IWB’s do make a real difference to student engagement and the achievement of teaching and learning outcomes. IWB’s were first implemented in many English schools in the early 1990s. I was pleased to see that when used effectively they do offer more opportunities for interaction and student engagement.
While in England I also took on the role of tourist. I really enjoyed London (and its warm, sunny weather) and spent a few days visiting important historical landmarks such as the Tower of London, Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace and St Paul’s Cathedral. I also spent two days in Paris, France, via the Eurostar.

After England I travelled to the Greek Islands to attend the International Conference on ICT in Rhodes. The conference was excellent and it was great meeting so many people from all over the world who are also passionate about education. Again, the weather was magnificent. The conference looked at addressing the new directions presented by technological innovations in schools and allowed me to meet and work with experienced practitioners and researchers on Information Communication and Technology issues in education.

Rhodes has an amazing ancient history and while there I was able to visit the Old Town of Rhodes and the town of Lindos. The Conference dinner was held in the Old Town and we experienced fine Greek hospitality. After Rhodes, I spent a few days in Athens before heading home to my very excited family.

On my return I presented a report to the ACT Catholic Primary Principals’ Association. I shared with my colleagues and Ms Bea Brickhill from ACU National the wisdom I gained from attending the ICICTE 2006 in Greece. I also shared the great experience of working with schools and learning about scholastic life in England. This presentation and report to my colleagues gave them an insight into the Frater Scholarship and into Interactive Whiteboard Technology implemented in English schools and how this can be integrated into schools back home here in Australia.

I am extremely grateful to Bob and Margaret Frater who have funded this scholarship, to Australian Catholic University (ACU National) and to the Catholic Education Office of Canberra and Goulburn for their support. It was an amazing experience and one that will stay with me for the rest of my life.

David Austin
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