Teacher and member of the EOWA committee Kim Stutchbury surveyed some teachers who were involved in job sharing at St Joseph’s Catholic High School, Albion Park. Their survey responses are provided below and give a valuable insight to job sharing in practice.

1.) **What systems did you put into place to ensure effective communication between the two partners?**

*(Interviewees 1 & 2 jointly responded)*

- Employed the use of a ‘Communication Book’ which was to be used daily.
- Offer contact phone numbers including both home and mobile numbers.
- Be prepared to be on call in case the need arises for other partner to come into work eg. in the instance of carnivals.
- Employ flexibility within the role.
- Reiterate that we have a positive working and personal relationship.

*(Interviewee 3)*

- An exercise book detailing what had been done with each class. This book was written in by both teachers and then passed between them.
- Phone calls to each other at home.
- Regular meetings with job sharing partners.
- Letting job sharing partners know of my availability/schedule.
- There was never a lack of communication.

*(Interviewee 4)*

- Regular phone calls; leave notes.
- Have dinner together one night a fortnight to prepare and plan work.

*(Interviewee 5)*

- Have dinner together often and meet (weekly) to discuss student work and units of work.

*(Interviewee 6)*

- Internet (email), telephone, personal contact.
- Class organisation: Folder per class with ongoing contact progress report sheet. These work well. (I consider their use as essential to smooth, efficient class organisation.)

2.) **What problems did you face and how did you solve them?**

*(Interviewees 1 & 2 jointly responded)*

- Set tasks being incomplete – needed a great deal of communication to other partner ensuring that all information was given for students to complete the task. This made the arrangement time consuming.
- Sometimes not being able to give a direct answer to some enquiries without first checking with other partner.
- Getting used to the position and situation. This improved over time.

*(Interviewee 3)*

- Any concerns I had could be addressed almost immediately because I had access to both teachers everyday. Work and concerns were discussed with individual students.
(Interviewee 4)
- No problems a great partnership!

(Interviewee 5)
- The major problem was that I did not know the students very well. Years 7 and 8 Design and Technology would be moving on when I started getting to know them. A photo of the students in each bay helped.

(Interviewee 6)
- The usual teaching issues arose and intensive communication overcame all issues. We exchanged the “2 day, 3 day” share arrangement about halfway through the time. This shared the “3 day more contact advantage” and contributed a lot to our job share.

3.) **How did you allocate tasks between yourselves, eg: marking, programming, reporting, etc?**

(Interviewees 1 & 2 jointly responded)
- Tried to work out tasks evenly. If this didn’t work out we could discuss between ourselves what an even allocation was. We didn’t encounter any problems.
- Shared programming equally and worked on them together.

(Interviewee 3)
- Each teacher was responsible for preparing and teaching their own unit of work. In English a unit of work (eg Poetry) will run for five weeks (i.e. 2 units per term). My partner and I would complete a unit each over ten weeks. The students would work in one end of their workbook, for example on poetry with my partner and with me they might study the ‘news’ and keep there work organised in the other end of their book.

(Interviewee 4)
- My partner took on extra marking because we had uneven loading on the time table. We had a very flexible co-operative arrangement.

(Interviewee 5)
- As I did not have a full load I marked all Year 10 assessment tasks and the units of work that I completed with Year 11.

(Interviewee 6)
- Evenly divided! No problems at all. I think that in total the classes received more intense scrutiny, feedback and support than in the normal one teacher arrangement. My partner and I agreed that book marking, guidance, etc is a key component of classroom management.

4.) **What supports did the school put in place to assist you and your partner? Were they effective?**

(Interviewees 1 & 2 jointly responded)
- Allowing us to job share
- Allowing us to hold a promotion position
- Autonomy for us to work out our roles and how they were split
- Playground duties were split evenly
(Interviewee 3)

- The school KLA co-ordinator has been a wonderful support - schedules meetings to oversee that things are working well.

(Interviewee 4)

- School timetabled so my partner would work Wednesday – this fitted in with the other school she taught at.

(Interviewee 5)

- The timetable allowed me to have a period each week of Year 10 and each Year 11 class so I was able to do a complete unit of work for these classes if necessary or decided.

(Interviewee 6)

- Remember this was a requested arrangement so it would be unreasonable to expect large changes to the timetable. However the workload was fairly even and in the final evaluations all the ‘executive’ seemed pleased with the results.

### 5.) What were the advantages in job sharing, both professionally and personally?

(Interviewees 1 & 2 jointly responded)

**Professionally**

- Greater preparation time (i.e. days off)
- Two people spring ideas off one another
- Benefit to students - fresh, energetic, keen teachers, access to two teachers knowledge and experience *not just one.*

**Personally**

- Personally I get to work in a position both my job share partner and I enjoy. Greater time spent with family and the opportunity to have more of a life out of school.

(Interviewee 3)

**Professionally**

- I have more time to prepare work both at home and at school. I often spend time on my days off on school things.

**Personally**

- Less stress, more time for family and house duties.

(Interviewee 4)

- It is an advantage to me as I have suffered Chronic Fatigue Syndrome for many years. I have more energy to prepare work for classes and more time to keep up to date with marking.
- More time to enjoy family life. There is less stress.

(Interviewee 5)

- Sharing ideas and different approaches to topics is always an advantage. Resources to share are also an advantage and to know that there is always someone to ask about things is reassuring.

(Interviewee 6)

- In my view teaching is a ‘good job’ there is just too much of it! Job-sharing maintains vitality and enthusiasm. Provides time to prepare better lessons, enables reflection, releases frustrations, etc. I could write a whole page on this.
6.) What were the disadvantages in job sharing?

(Interviewees 1 & 2 jointly responded)

Professionally
• Other staff and students getting used to having to deal with two people

Personally
• Financial restraints

(Interviewee 3)
• For me, I can’t put my finger on any disadvantages

(Interviewee 4)
• None

(Interviewee 5)
• Nil

(Interviewee 6)
• Near zero, I did find however that extra activity (eg team building) required more planning.

7.) What advice would you offer to other staffs that are entering into a flexible workplace structure?

(Interviewees 1 & 2 jointly responded)
• Make sure you have a good relationship with the other person
• Equal input and voice i.e. NOT ONE BOSS
• Respect differences of other person
• Fair vision/outlook of whole context
• Similar age and level of experience

(Interviewee 3)
• Be flexible yourself; keep the communication up between teachers and students.

(Interviewee 4)
• Choose to work with someone that you get along with and respect. Also someone that has a similar teaching style.

(Interviewee 5)
• Allocate tasks clearly
• Communicate regularly

(Interviewee 6)
• View ‘job sharing’ as an opportunity for enhanced quality teaching and learning
• Don’t see it as an ‘easier life’, it’s just a better one (if you make it so)
• Work harder to know your pupils in each class
• Communicate / Communicate / Communicate

Many thanks to Kim Stutchbury and the teachers who so willingly responded to the survey and shared their experience.