

Drillham State School on the cutting edge of education

In 1962, Drillham State School was the very first school in Queensland to use 'Cuisenaire' blocks, introduced by teacher Mr Colin Crane as a tool to help teach mathematical theory.

'Cuisenaire' was a method developed by respected International Educator and Mathematician Dr Caleb Gattegno during the 1950's, which teachers could use to have children develop an understanding and knowledge of basic mathematical concepts. Mr Des James, Principal of the Drillham State School 1964 to 1968, attended a lecture given by Dr Gattegno in Brisbane in about 1961.



"Dr Gattegno's method name 'Cuisenaire' involved the use of ten Cuisenaire Rods. A box of Cuisenaire Rods contained about five sets of ten rods – these rods were wooden sticks one centimetre square and of various lengths and colour", said Mr James.

"Each rod had a certain colour according to its length. Dr Gattegno showed us how children and teachers could use these rods to facilitate the development of mathematical understanding. We were amazed at what Dr Gattegno could do with these rods to help children", said Mr James.

"A good friend, Mr Colin Crane, also attended that lecture and he took the method back to Drillham State School in 1962. The fame that Drillham was 'the' Cuisenaire school in the State of Queensland spread far and wide", said Mr James.

Mr Crane travelled the State, attending many educational seminars and gatherings discussing the advantages of the method. "Many teachers and educators visited Drillham to observe our methods and went away to use Cuisenaire at their own schools", said Mr James.

"A few years later the Department of Education introduced a new Programme in Mathematics. Many teachers used Cuisenaire Rods in conjunction with their Programme; however as methods employed were not exactly as Dr Gattegno intended, success was not outstanding."

"Many pupils of these years will remember with affection that 'red plus tan is equivalent in length to orange!' – "Cuisenaire language for two plus eight equals ten!", said Mr James.

More information about the Drillham State School's upcoming 125th anniversary celebrations and regular updates can be found on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Drillham125years> or Instagram @drillham125anniversary or the Drillham State School website <https://drillhamss.eq.edu.au/> Alternatively, you can contact Shelley Logan 0427 582 890, Madonna Moore on 0417 775 494 or the school on 07 4627 6289.