

Newsletter, Term 1 2010

From the Editor

Dear Colleagues

I hope your term is progressing well. Thank you to those educators who have contributed to this edition of the Newsletter. I welcome articles at anytime throughout the year. As we enter the Australian Curriculum consultation and final drafting, the Newsletter will be an excellent vehicle to share the developments that impact on the middle years of schooling.

Chris French

President's Report

While MYSA continues to provide support for schools and teachers via the Newsletter, Journal, email discussion list and website, a number of new opportunities for advocacy are being explored.

Leader Membership

Having worked with teachers for over a decade in the development of middle years programs, MYSA has sought to develop a new range of services aimed specifically at teachers who lead middle schooling programs. Catering for current and aspiring leaders, the MYSA Leader Membership provides unique professional development opportunities, a network for leaders in the field, a regular Leaders Communique discussing relevant topics and opportunities to build a profile in the middle schooling community.

Travelling Scholar Program

This year sees the inaugural Travelling Scholar Program which provides significant professional learning opportunities across Australia and New Zealand. MYSA is fortunate to be working with Professor Bob Lingard who will focus on effective approaches to school accountability; the alignment of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment and the development of schools as learning communities. Dates for these workshops can be found on the MYSA website.

International Conference – MYSA11

Planning has commenced for our International

Conference to be held in May 2011 on the Gold Coast. With the working title 'Changing Curriculum – Challenging Times', conference themes under consideration include 'National Curricula' in both Australia and New Zealand, 'Whole Child' approaches to schooling and 'Information and Communication Technologies'.

NZAIMS

MYSA is currently working with the New Zealand Association for Intermediate and Middle Schooling to explore avenues of cooperation that will strengthen the advocacy work of both Associations. Early negotiations include reciprocal participation in association management meetings as well as possible collaborations in professional development offerings.

Development of Northern Territory Connections

MYSA has been pleased to open a dialogue with educators in the Northern Territory who are seeking to establish a regional network of the Association in 'the top end'. Plans are currently underway to support a launch and the formation of a support network of schools and teachers committed to middle schooling philosophies.

Preparation of response to draft Australian Curriculum

With the release of the draft Australian Curriculum comes an opportunity to provide important feedback to ensure that the priorities of effective teaching and learning take into account not only subject-specific concerns, but also student developmental needs. MYSA will work with its members to provide a comprehensive submission as part of the process.

Regional Coordinator Workshop

In order to strengthen our regional networks, a day of training will be conducted for Regional Coordinators from across Australia. Focusing on building the unique skills required to build teacher professional networks, the day will be an opportunity for the Management Committee of MYSA to provide practical support to frontline advocates.

With the year now upon us, I trust that you will continue to find the joy and satisfaction that is the just reward for all those who work with young adolescents in their middle years of schooling.

Junn Kato

Australian Journal of Middle Schooling

Article and Photo Request

The next edition of the *Australian Journal of Middle Schooling* is due for publication in May 2010. Contributions can be in the form of:

- refereed articles,
- non-refereed articles
- focus on schools articles
- book reviews
- photos of middle years students and activities

We know there are many wonderful things happening in universities, schools and classrooms around the country and internationally. We would love you to share these with other middle years educators through the Journal. If you would like to contribute, please forward your articles and photos to office@mysa.org.au as soon as possible. An email with attachments for contributors of articles and photos has been circulated. If you require another copy, please contact the MYSA office.

Judy Barbe (Journal Editor)
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Reducing Our Carbon Footprint

Everyone is talking about climate change but how much does anyone understand about the range of low-emission electricity generation technologies under trial or development that are meant to dramatically reduce our carbon footprint? What we do know is:

- Global electricity demand is forecast to double by 2030
- Around 1.6 billion people still do not have access to electricity
- Increased energy consumption goes hand in hand with improved living standards.

A constantly expanding array of renewable and non-renewable energy technologies will be required to meet future needs if we are serious about addressing climate change. With this in mind, a new middle schooling resource, *A Low Emission Energy Future* is now

available to view and download. The 3D animated movie explains technologies such as carbon capture and storage and places their potential into context with renewable energies and energy efficiency.

To assist middle years teachers across Science, Social Science and Geography, the movie is supported by fact sheets, a PowerPoint and interactive activities. It is available for viewing and downloading free of charge from the Queensland Resources Council's minerals and energy education website www.oresomeresources.com

Katrina-Lee Jones
 Manager Education Strategies and Services
 Queensland Resources Council

New MYSA Regional Networks

Moreton Bay Region met for the first time on Thursday, 11th March. Teachers from a number of schools met at Southern Cross Catholic College, Scarborough, to share ideas, practices and experiences.

The next meeting will be held at Northpine Christian College, Dakabin, on 20th May.



Photo (from left): Robyn Killoran (Southern Cross Catholic College), Jane Blackburn (EREA FLC & Bridge Program), Malcolm Carter (Grace Lutheran College), Deb Akers (Southern Cross Catholic College), Clayton Richardson (Northpine Christian College)

Northern Territory Region will be launched at the 'Testing Times' Workshop with Prof Bob Lingard in Darwin on 26th March.

SCHOOL FOCUS

Coomera Anglican College

Sustainability - A practical, hands-on approach!

We have all noticed our students' increasing awareness and curiosity about the world around them, especially global warming and eco-friendly living. Our Year 7 team

at Coomera Anglican College developed a sustainability unit that would culminate with students each producing a model of a fully sustainable school.

The concept was introduced to students via a fictional letter from our local council, asking students for ideas about the types of schools they should build in the future. Students were immediately interested and decided the best way to explain their ideas to the Council would be by building a model of the ideal sustainable future school.



We explored critical sustainability concepts such as the water crisis, drought, deforestation, pollution, loss of animal habitats and global warming. Students were encouraged to consider the environmental and economic considerations of making our Earth more sustainable for future generations. Combining this new knowledge with their own interpretations of sustainable practice, students enthusiastically planned their models and began building them. Staff were astounded by the project quality and detail of the models. It was evident that students spent countless hours building tiny water tanks, worm farms, compost bins, solar panels, hydroelectricity plants and native gardens. One student even presented an underground view showing how waste water would be recycled to irrigate the oval and gardens! Another student was selected as a finalist in the University of New South Wales Sustainable Living Challenge.

What struck us most was the students' desire to make sure absolutely everything in their school was sustainably managed, from growing organic vegies for the tuckshop, to classroom chairs made from recycled plastic. Additional motivation and authenticity came from a Gold Coast City Council guest speaker who visited

and viewed the projects. At the completion of the unit, students presented a persuasive slideshow which outlined why their school was the most sustainable.

Overall the project was hugely successful due to the enthusiasm of staff, support of the wider community and the motivation of the young learners who had such extraordinary visions for a brighter future.

Kellie Ayton
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Huntingtower School

Integrated Studies

Year 8 at Huntingtower has been studying Integrated Studies units which ask the question, 'Who am I in my community and environment?' The units connect students to the people and places around them and engage rich independent learning involving real world tasks. Students have examined local environmental issues and looked at how they contribute to a sustainable environment. They gained a deeper understanding of the school community by interviewing past students and presenting ideas to the School Board on how the grounds and classrooms could be improved in order to aid their learning experience.

Currently, students are studying Religions of the World with the main goals being;

- What are the differences and similarities between the major religions of the world?
- Do religions make responsible choices for the greater good of society?
- What is your role in creating a just world?

Students have spoken to representatives of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim Associations of Australia, visited a cathedral and synagogue and interviewed representatives of various faiths who are related to the school, and created a media presentation. Students are being challenged about outward appearance perceptions and are realising that love and compassion bind us all. The next task involves running short focus groups with students from other schools of various faiths. This will provide an opportunity for students to gain a greater understanding of what it is like to 'live in their shoes'. Debating topics such as 'Although based on compassion,

religions support conflict' and 'Religions make choices for the greater good of society', will enable students to analyse the knowledge they have gained and apply it in a different setting. They will also analyse the links between the core values of religion and the Australian Values Statement.

As a staff team, we are taking risks with the planning of these tasks as they have not been undertaken previously and can be logistically challenging. There are certainly changes we will make in the future but we have taken the first step in creating challenging and engaging learning experiences for our students.

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Year 6 at Stromlo High School!

Canberra's Stromlo High School caters for students in Years 6 to 10. Year 6 was included in 2007 as part of reforms to government schooling in the ACT and the grade became an integral part of the middle schooling program. The Middle School features a scaffolded approach to curriculum, a range of common programs and activities, a structured transition program and involvement in whole school activities. Specific areas such as Drama, IT, Art, Languages, Science, Woodwork and Dance, utilise specialist facilities, resources and teachers available in the High School. With four teachers in any one term, the Year 6 program provides many opportunities to develop positive relationships between student and teacher. Stromlo is extremely proud of the Year 6 students and their achievements. They have become valued members our school, contributing to the richness of our community. When entering Year 7, they have a stronger learning capacity and willingness to be involved in school programs than newly enrolled students.

The following Middle School projects have been initiated due to the number of ACT P-10 schools with operating middle schools:

Middle School Inter-school Sport

The aim of this project is to involve students in activities that they might not ordinarily have the opportunity to do. Each term, students compete in different sports. The competition has been promoted by the schools as 'The

Friendly Games'. All games are played at various schools and the older students coach and umpire. The sense of pride in students representing their schools has been most evident.

Middle School Dance Spectacular

Students spend all day at a theatre rehearsing their performances ready for an evening show. Last year, Year 6 students from Stromlo High performed their Wakakirri item 'Cinderella' and Year 7 and 8 students performed group and solo items. Students from other schools performed a range of dance styles. Year 8 students from Stromlo were responsible for the logo design of the tickets and programs and students in Years 8 and 9 hosted the evening. It was an enjoyable night for all involved and a true celebration of the wide range of talent in ACT middle schools.

Airline Online

The Pastoral Care program at Stromlo High School endeavours to create a supportive and responsible student community through a program called TEAM (Together Everyone Achieves More). In the Year 6 TEAM program, we identified a need for an activity that fostered the development of our students' teamwork and communication skills. The program chosen, 'Airline Online', was discovered at the 2009 MYSA Conference. It is a simulation program and was presented by Scott Wyatt from Camberwell Grammar School. The program provides an innovative approach to team building experiences. Students are required to work in small teams to build an airline company using the Airline Online software. The airline companies then compete against one another in an online simulation. Teachers of Year 6 have noted a heightened sense of community in lessons outside the TEAM program.

The introduction of Year 6 into the school has provided a greater impetus in addressing middle schooling. Comments from parents, student learning outcomes and engagement levels indicate that this initiative has been successful and reinforces that a traditional high school can adapt to change and provide a quality education for every child.

Cecily Blake
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St Margaret's College Christchurch, New Zealand

Living and Leading with Technology - One on One Laptops

A special feature of our Middle School is the Laptop Program. In 2007, we realised our school was significantly absent in the digital world of students. The majority of them spent a lot of time online in social network sites, collaborating and communicating. Parents did not feel part of this world and we realised our school was not part of this world either!

All girls in Year 9 use their own laptop for learning. Specific software programs are taught and used to encourage connectedness and collaboration. One of the goals is to teach girls how to be administrators to their own machines. For example, many girls download 'Limewire' or other music sharing applications illegally. Rather than make a rule that no-one is allowed to download, we explain what a peer to peer network is and how it works. As they gain understanding of the implications of downloading, we talk about critical thinking and making good decisions. As a result, the girls feel empowered and want to keep other work on their laptops safe. It is through this empowerment strategy that we believe our school has the greatest effect in IT. As teachers, we can never hope to imagine that we can 'teach' our students about digital learning. They are far more proficient than most of us! But we can hope to provide appropriate guidance, critical thinking strategies, ethical decision making and awareness of how digital applications can enhance learning. Laptops in the Middle School are a step in the direction for providing a 'learn anywhere' environment.

While laptops are an integral part of the classroom, they are not the only tools used for learning. Girls use other resources such as books, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, discussion forums and interviews. The laptops simply enhance this learning. They have provided our girls with a fantastic opportunity to share learning and resources with classmates and the local and global community. Wiki spaces have become very popular with teachers who set them up as a collaborative tool for their classes. They are easy to create and monitor and provide a 'learning story' which documents learning visually. Parents and students can access wikis from home and the feedback we received is has been very positive.

St Margaret's College has chosen to be present in the digital world of our students and face the challenges this

presents. Through this shared learning process, we have moved from having one laptop class in 2007 to now having ten! Our school now has a legitimate place in the digital world!

Angela White
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Summary of Items Discussed at the last Management Committee Meeting

To keep members informed, an overview of the main agenda items covered at each Management Committee is provided below. Please feel free to contact Nanette Murphy if you require further information about matters raised.

At the last meeting, held on Friday, 12th February, the Committee addressed the following:

- Strategic Plan (close examination of current plan and related actions)
- NZAIMS Affiliation (close examination of the NZAIMS MoU—modification suggested)
- Change in the Rules of the Association to include 'Leader Membership' finalised
- MYSA Regions and Co-ordinators (review of RC Guidelines and planning for the 2010 RC meeting)
- 2010 Travelling Scholar Program—Bob Lingard and Judith Baenan (associated planning)
- MYSA Leader Membership sub-committee actions
- 2011 International Conference
- Committee member reports (proposed Study Tour, Journal needs, Newsletter update, website update and statement of accounts)
- Membership (approvals and numbers)
- Correspondence (inward, outward and business arising)
- Other business—NEF representative, Australian Curriculum (preparation for Green Paper feedback).

The next meeting of the Management Committee will be held on **Friday, 21st May**, (followed by our AGM and Regional Co-ordinator meeting on Saturday, 22nd May).

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