Warrandyte High School
Principal’s Report to the Community 2009

In addition to the Annual Report to the Community required by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, we believe that it is important to describe the many achievements of Warrandyte High School in 2009. As well, this gives us an opportunity to make explicit our direction in 2010 and beyond.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Innovative Years 7&8 Active Learning Projects

As a school community, we invested enormous time and energy into the development of interdisciplinary Active Learning Projects at Years 7&8. These units of work which ran once a term for a fortnight were the result of a year long review of the Years 7&8 curriculum in 2008. This review was in turn, the school’s response to the annual student Attitudes to School survey. Students indicated that they wanted their learning to be more active and sustained.

The teachers of Warrandyte High School were incredibly creative in exploring new ways of working together across subject areas in order to enhance the learning outcomes of individual students. These projects meant that teachers were expected to work in different ways and the professional discussion that they provoked was rich and stimulating.

The projects challenged students as well, in that students who are good at ‘school tasks’ were asked to learn in different ways and more active learners had a chance to shine. Deadlines for public performances were fixed and students across the year level were able to witness each other’s work.

Professional Learning

Demands and expectations of teachers are rapidly changing and teachers need to have opportunities to engage in professional learning in order to meet the needs of their students. In 2009, the range of professional learning changed for teachers and education support staff at Warrandyte High School. As well as professional dialogue in traditional subject areas, all teachers were involved in cross curricula discussions in Professional Learning Teams. Groups of teachers participated in formal learning both inside and outside of the school which increased the likelihood of long term support and change in significant practice.
Examples of this included:

- 10 teachers undertaking an Intel course to incorporate ICT more in their teaching;
- a team of teachers volunteering to be responsible for leading discussion about the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development’s model, E⁵, which explores elements of best teacher practice. The development of the Active Learning Projects was supported by three teachers being granted study leave to systematically support and evaluate this innovation.

At the end of the year, the school successfully applied to be part of two programs: having a Teaching and Learning Coach and the Collaborative Learning and Teaching Project. Both of these bring sustained professional learning into the classroom – where it matters the most. There is an increasing expectation that teachers can explicitly talk about their practice with others in order to develop consistent high quality learning and teaching for students.

Under the leadership of Clare Rayner, the PE & Health department developed their own teacher reference and student workbook on Health in order to meet the particular learning needs of Junior School students. Again the professional discussion which accompanied this meant that there was greater consistency in terms of approach and expectations in this subject area.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development also invested in developing the school’s new Leadership team by resourcing a six day program. I participated in a national program for principals and two aspirant leaders were supported in their development through involvement in the Leaders in the Making and Preparing for Leadership program.

New networks of teachers from across the Manningham area have formed in order to improve student learning outcomes. Throughout 2010, VCE teachers from across the four secondary schools in the Manningham local government area will meet once a term.

These programs are already paying dividends in that the base of teachers presenting work to each other has significantly grown and teachers are more able to visit each other’s classrooms.

As well, Education Support staff have taken the initiative and have successfully run professional learning for other support staff across other networks.

**The Doig Learning Centre**

There is a significant need within the school to provide learning spaces which support new ways of learning. There have to be places where different groupings can occur beyond 25 students and 1 teacher in a room. A flexible learning space was created with the Federal Government’s National Schools Pride funding. The $200,000 was used to extend a two room portable so that up to three classes and their teachers could work together in different ways. Two teachers may decide to team teach an introduction to their VCE classes so that all students hear the same instructions and then use the remaining time to group students in a particular way to meet their learning needs.
Leadership Team

The new Leadership team has worked to clarify the school’s mission and values. In consultation with staff, parents and students, they developed the following mission statement:

**Challenging Every Learner**

**in a safe and supportive environment**

This is based on the core values of: *Excellence, Integrity and Respect.*

The review of the Student Engagement Policy which includes Codes of Conduct for students, staff and parents reflect these values and this mission. The challenge of course, is now for this to be understood and enacted by all members of the school community.

Student Wellbeing

Another improvement within the school has been the development of a more systematic whole school approach to student wellbeing. Student focus groups were established to allow more opportunities for student input into ways of meeting their needs. Year 11 Peer Support Leaders ran a much more intensive lunchtime activities program for Year 7 students. These programs for entire year levels often relied on obtaining funding from external agencies and Student Wellbeing Leader, Natalie Manser, did a wonderful job of creating these applications.

Careers

The excellent Careers program was maintained and there were more opportunities for students to be involved in ‘Taster’ programs – a hands-on activity in order to research their career options. Forty students from Years 10-12 participated in 2009. The school also provided more opportunities for parents to become involved in the complex process of deciding future pathways. Parents enthusiastically embraced these chances to become more informed partners.

As well, Warrandyte High School was congratulated for its outstanding knowledge of the pathway of every student who exited. This occurs not simply because we are a medium sized school but because this follow up is seen as a high priority.

VCE results

Whilst the mean VCE study score for aggregated studies was down on previous years, this is the first time that it has decreased for four years. Students in Studio Arts and Design and Technology performed exceptionally well in 2009. Kathleen Kopietz was the dux of the school and as well, her folio for Studio Arts was accepted into *Top Arts,* which is hardly surprising, given that she received a perfect study score of 50 for this subject. Jordan James-Iddles, who completed a Year 12 subject while he was in Year 11, also had an animation and website design accepted into Top Designs.
At the end of 2009, all Year 11 students commenced their year 12 studies for a week after their Year 11 exams and this will hopefully pay dividends for them in their final Year 12 exams.

**Extra Curricula Activities**

Warrandyte High School continues to provide an incredible range of extra curricula activities for a school of its size. The Instrumental Music program is vibrant with a range of bands and ensembles. 2009 saw the return of the Stage Band. The production of Honk was enjoyed by many people and it was wonderful to see so many ex-students volunteer their time and expertise to the school. It makes an important statement about school spirit.

As well there are many camps and excursions for entire year levels and special interest groups such as The Great Victorian Bike Ride. A huge number of students participate in sport and the Student Representative Council did an amazing job of running activities for students such as the Talent Quest and organizing a generous response to teenagers who had been affected by the bushfires.

**AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT**

**Retention of students**

We need to continue to build a challenge culture throughout the school. In particular, we want to keep our high achievers particularly at the end of Year 10. Whilst some students exit because of family relocation or acceptance into alternative programs, we want to maintain the enrolments of students who go to another educational setting to undertake subjects that they could do at Warrandyte High School. It appears that Federal changes to VET funding have meant that students chose to go to another school in order to complete a subject, whereas in the past they would have remained at Warrandyte High School and done an external VET subject.

**Year 9 2009 NAPLAN results**

Analysis of the Year 9 NAPLAN results led to a focus on the data of individual students by all Year 10 teachers in 2010. Teachers will continue to work strategically in order to meet the particular learning needs of this cohort of students.

**Attendance**

As well, an improvement in attendance remains a priority. Warrandyte High School’s data follows statewide trends for each year level but it requires improvement given that we can not develop a culture of performance and rigour if students are not at school.

**LOOKING AHEAD TO 2010**

2010 is a huge year for Warrandyte High School. Already, a pilot program for Netbook computers has commenced for a year level. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will
implement the Ultranet this year which will mean that students and their parents will be able to access the school’s ICT network when they are offsite.

The Ultranet will also have important implications in terms of differentiating the curriculum for all students so that we do meet our mission of *Challenging Every Learner*. This will be enhanced by a range of programs which are all designed to personalize learning for individual students.

2010 is our School Evaluation year and so the first six months will be spent inviting opinions about our performance as a school over the last four years and then together, we will develop a new Strategic Plan for 2011-2014. We welcome your input.

Glennis Pitches