Welcome to this week’s newsletter.

Focus School Next Steps Initiative

Last week Aboriginal Education Teacher Warwick Norman, Deputy Principal Lynton Hall and myself attended a Principal and Community Workshop in Adelaide as part of the Focus School Next Steps Initiative. Dr Chris Sarra from the Stronger Smarter Institute based in Queensland facilitated this workshop.

Education Minister Peter Garrett formally announced the Focus School Next Steps Initiative on 8 September 2011 as part of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations $30 million strategy to improve educational outcomes for indigenous students, focusing on attendance, literacy/numeracy and engagement strategies. A key element of the initiative is the connection between the school and the school’s local indigenous community. There are 102 primary and secondary schools involved across Australia. Nine of these schools are from South Australia.

Murray Bridge High School has been selected as one of the focus schools based on our large indigenous student enrolment and the challenges the school faces in terms of transitioning Aboriginal students into high school, retention of Aboriginal students to Year 12 and improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for Aboriginal students.

The Next Steps Initiative is funded for 2 years. The school is expected to receive approximately $300,000 over this period.

Planning for the implementation of the Next Steps Initiative is well underway and it is envisaged that all of the strategies proposed will be in place in readiness for the beginning of 2012 school year.

This is an exciting phase for Aboriginal Education at Murray Bridge High School. We have already seen the tremendous success of the South Australia Aboriginal Sports Training Academy and the impact this has had on student engagement. Further to this we saw again strong student participation and recognition at the recent Deadly Awards. Embedding the philosophy of the Stronger Smarter Institute within the culture at the High School, which is to honour a positive sense of cultural identity, acknowledge and embrace positive community leadership enabling innovative approaches that are anchored by high expectations relationships, is the challenge before us at Murray Bridge High School.
Remembrance Day
By Helen Peake

At 11 am on the 11th day of the 11th month, 1918 World War I came to an end. The defeated nations signed an Armistice (an agreement to stop fighting) and agreed to lay down their weapons. The day was originally known as Armistice Day until the end of World War II when the governments of Australia and Great Britain agreed to change the name to Remembrance Day to commemorate all who died in wars. The tradition continues with many people and places stopping at the 11th hour in order to remember those who were killed. During Pastoral Care in the weeks leading up to Remembrance Day the students of Murray Bridge High School learnt a little about the wars, who fought whom, where the fighting took place and the reasons and traditions surrounding Remembrance Day.

On 11 November, 2011 a new tradition started at Murray Bridge High School. After months of planning, including working with the Rural City of Murray Bridge to close off Lohmann Street, the crowd gathered in front of the schools flag poles in order to acknowledge the horrors of war and to remember those not only who were killed but others who suffered from war time conflicts through injury or loss of loved ones. Joined by invited guests, students from the Year 5 and 6 classes at Tailem Bend Primary School and by members of the public approximately 800 people fell silent and “remembered”.

The students and staff were seated on Lohmann Street itself, facing the school’s flag poles. In front of the flagpoles were 31 small white crosses planted in memory of staff and students of Murray Bridge High School who died during war time. These crosses were placed by the seven students who will journey to the Western Front for Anzac Day, 2012. The service commenced with Year 12 student Shardonnai Karpany, a Ngarrindjeri woman welcoming people to the country. The assembled group were then addressed by ex-Vietnam veteran, Mr Bruce Partridge who recounted a little of his experiences and the toll that war had, on not only him, but all those who fought with him. Mr Jeff McCormack, a veteran spoke of the unity as black and white fought side by side before reading “The Ode”. The Year 12 School Captains then placed a specially made wreath in front of the crosses. At the start of the service the flags sat at half mast, only to be raised to full mast as the Rouse was played. Music teacher Sean Hickey played The Last Post before the minute’s silence and then the Rouse followed. The school band accompanied Maddie Binney and Molly Kneebone singing the National Anthem, joined by all those in attendance. At the end of the service students were invited to “plant” their red poppies in with the crosses and many continued to do this as the day progressed.

The invited guests including Deputy Mayor, Barry Laubsch, Bruce and Julie Partridge, Jeff McCormack, ex Principal Hermann Frank and Mandy Frank, members of the High School Governing Council and local historian Ken Wells joined the staff for a special morning tea.

On the Thursday before Remembrance Day the Year 11 History class and teachers Jeff Lines, Helen Partridge, Isaac McEvoy and Helen Peake attended both cemeteries to plant Australian flags on the war graves. For many in attendance this was a very moving time, knowing these people fought to give Australians the freedom we enjoy today.

The school would like to especially thank the Rural City of Murray Bridge for agreeing to close off Lohmann Street, to Mr Barry Laubsch for representing the Council at our special service, our invited guests and our guest speakers. Remembrance Day 2011 was special and hopefully the tradition will continue for many years to come. “We will remember them”.
A Cheque to Support Legacy
By Helen Peake

As a follow-up to the Remembrance Day service held by the school, Mr Ray Duthie, President of the RSL Club in Murray Bridge was invited to a school assembly to receive a cheque for $340.00. This money was raised by the students of Murray Bridge High School from the sale of poppies and wrist bands in the lead up to Remembrance Day. The proceeds of the sale will go to Legacy.

Visit by teachers from West Java
By Helen Peake

On Friday, 18 November 40 Indonesian teachers visited Murray Bridge High School. Their mission was to find out information about South Australian schools and the teaching that happens in the schools. Friday’s visit allowed the teachers to see a large regional school in operation and to investigate the types of courses that are delivered in the school.

The teachers were given the opportunity to visit a number of classes including English, Maths, Science and IT classes. They were addressed by Ann Ruckert (Maths Coordinator), Brendan Watts (Science Coordinator) and Barb Quast (English Coordinator). Time was made available allowing the teachers the opportunity to ask a large number of questions ranging from issues surrounding attendance, to specific questions regarding the delivery of the courses and the IBMYP programme.

A visit to the Disability Unit was an opportunity for the teachers to meet Miss Fawn, the therapy dog and to view a presentation on the various initiatives provided to students of the Unit. Special thanks go to the staff and students in the Unit who managed to send the visitors away with homemade honey icecream - a very special treat.

The Indonesian teachers were also interested to hear Roxanne Rowland speak about the Trade Training Centre and the variety of VET courses available to students. Warwick Norman spoke about the types of programs offered to Aboriginal students and some of the challenges and rewards of teaching these students. In particular it was acknowledged that the SSASTA program has given more Aboriginal students the incentive to remain at school in order to complete Year 12.

Even though the weather on the day was not kind to the visitors, all had the opportunity to view the school and to learn more about what Murray Bridge High School has to offer to our local students. The staff and students were all extremely supportive by welcoming the teachers into their classrooms and sharing their stories, courses and views with them. Without this support these experiences which are valuable learning opportunities for all concerned would not be possible.
Year 8 and 9 Aquatics Excursion
By Hayley Nielsen

Last week, as part of the Year 8 and 9 Physical Education curriculum, students attended the Aquatics excursions, held at the Murraylands Aquatic Centre. The excursions were designed as a reward for students who had upheld the schools values of excellence, respect and working together.

Each Year 8 and 9 home class attended the excursion for two days, where they were able to undertake many exciting and adventurous activities, such as rowing, kayaking, canoeing, sailing, wind surfing and fishing.

One of the harder activities was sailing, which involved tricky turns and fighting the wind to stay in control. Most students were able to pick up the skill quickly and enjoy a relaxing time on the water. Students said they found the activity challenging to begin with, yet very satisfying once they got the hang of it.

Some students were lucky enough to embark on an adventure paddle through a swamp like section of the river. The paddle involved ducking under very low bridges, paddling through spider infested reeds and trees and battling through very low sections of water. Although difficult at times, students found the experience generally exciting and worthwhile.

Students were also lucky enough to participate in knee boarding, skiing and wakeboarding, which was most definitely the highlight for most. Although there were many stacks, collisions and tumbles it was fantastic to see everyone having a laugh and enjoying themselves.

Many of the students had never participated in water sports before, so it was an excellent opportunity to try some new activities, as well as learn some valuable skills. All students said they had a fantastic time and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

We would like to thank all of the PE staff who attended the event at various stages throughout the week for their time and assistance. Staff from Murraylands Aquatics Centre also deserves thanks for their patience, as well as their excellent knowledge and skill in each of the water sports.
“Why do we have to write in Art, Miss? This is a practical subject, isn’t it?”

Students sometimes come to this school thinking that practical subjects do not have a literacy content. In some primary schools this may be so, but in an IBMYP High School the reality is very different. Each Visual Arts course at Murray Bridge High School has an inbuilt literacy component. Students learn Art processes, Art practice and subject specific language through a variety of activities, such as brainstorming, Mind Mapping, vocab work sheets and word games.

Students are given course overviews and unit plans to read. They are expected to plan, reflect on and evaluate their work in a developmental workbook as the term progresses.

Many Art practical lessons incorporate a knowledge and use of the language: negotiating room rules and Room Rule posters, creating wall charts and posters, creative Calligraphy, Graffiti Art styles, collage and decoupage using words. Students are required to listen and respond to instructions, analyse works of Art, read about and discuss artists and art work. This begins in Year 8 and continues through to Year 12, increasing in depth and complexity.

“So – yes students, there is reading, writing, speaking and listening in Art, but you will enjoy most of it and learn some interesting things!”

Students in Drama use their literacy skills in situations that demand their participation. The activities students participate in Drama are particularly useful for those who have difficulty with reading and writing skills or who struggle academically, thus these activities can sometimes expose an unhidden talent or ability.

Drama is especially effective in promoting critical thinking in literacy, as students are encouraged to apply their understandings of their own social contexts and to detect how the writer manipulates them towards a particular position. From this connection critical literacy helps students become motivated and is crucial for success in learning of how to read and write.

Students are given the opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding of drama terminology and read a wide range of literary works and create their own poetry, prose and drama texts and reflect and evaluate regularly.

In the IBMYP students are expected to use literacy through their developmental workbook where ideas, thoughts, processes and reflections are documented. Here students are given the opportunity to reflect on their practical feedback and therefore enhance their literacy skills.

“Joy” collage, Year 8  
Creative Calligraphy, Year 10

Catch phrase tonal exercise, Year 9

Literacy in Music  By Sean Hickey

Literacy in the Arts  By Sue Lord

Literacy in Drama  By Cassie Gravelle

Literacy in Music encompasses the same concepts and skills as literacy in the mainstream, such as reading and writing. However, when we apply these skills to music education they take on a different form.

As students develop their musical skills of reading and writing music they in turn discover that their ability to play their instrument also increases.

When I teach music I emphasize both practical and theoretical skills as you can’t have one without the other.
Year 11 Report
By Laurice Braithwaite, Year 11 Coordinator

Working with the Year 11 students over the past 6 months in my role as Year Level Coordinator has been a rewarding experience as I got to know so many of the interesting and talented young people we have in this school. Talking with them around their hopes, dreams and aspirations has enabled me to support them in a variety of ways.

Earlier this Semester we held the Year 11 Best Band Challenge which was won by the (only) band ‘Drowned by the Traitor’. The guys put on a great performance before an enthusiastic cohort of Year 11’s and received their trophy (see photo below).

Recently Pastoral Care groups participated in the UNO Championships which was eventually won by 11H – Mr James’ Pastoral Care group. Class representatives were presented with their trophy at a school assembly on Monday, 21 November.

Congratulations also go to Dwayne Wilson who is on his way to an aspiring career in the AFL.

The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe showcased the acting talent of many Year 11’s, while Mr Tumnus, the Faun, was played brilliantly by exchange student Teppo Lindenberg.

To those students who have successfully completed VET courses this year, congratulations. The skills you have learned will assist you to obtain employment in your area of choice and/or lead to further education in the future.

Exams for many Year 11’s will be held in Week 7 and I wish them all success. If students have not yet completed their Research Project they can continue this over the holidays and liaise with their teachers at any time re expectations in this subject.

Year 11 Band ‘Drowned by the Traitor’

Labs n’ Life Awards Ceremony
By Laurice Braithwaite

On Thursday, 17 November an Awards Ceremony for Murray Bridge High School students participating in the 10 week Labs n’ Life program was held at Johnstone Park.

This program enabled the students to participate in activities that ultimately benefit the wider community by developing the skills to effectively train Labradors to be placed to work as autism assistance dogs.

The students each received a personal report and a Certificate of Participation, presented by Mari Lobbestael watched by family and invited guests. The ceremony was followed by a morning tea.

Jake Brooks and Cameron Russell were also each presented with a Personal Achievement Award – in recognition of accomplishments far exceeding Labs ‘n Life expectations.

Successful students (L-R) James Stevens, Bryan Florean, Ethan Hines, Cameron Russell, Jake Brooks and Cali-Ann Mounce with their canine charges.

Jake Brooks with ‘Nelson’ receives his award from Mari Lobbestael (left)
Young Leaders Day  By Roslyn Gunn and Nidhi Bawa, Year 11 students and Ms Johns, Year 10 Coordinator

The Young Leaders day was held on Tuesday, 15 November at the Adelaide Convention Centre in Adelaide. The four newly appointed School Captains for 2012; Roslyn Gunn, Flynn Watson, Nidhi Bawa, Hannah Kluske and Ms Johns made their way to Adelaide to attend.

There were some special guest speakers for the day who, through using the stories of their lives and their own roles in the community, explained the importance of leadership and how we can make a difference in the world.

The speakers on the day were –
- Amy Gascoigne: SA finalist for the Young Australian of the Year and Social worker
- Mike Martin: Executive Director of the Halogen Foundation
- Mark Aiston: Sports Presenter for Channel 10
- Jeremy Rolleston: Two time World Olympian
- Poh Ling Yeow: 2009 MasterChef runner up, Poh’s Kitchen ABC

Flynn and Roslyn were lucky enough to be given the honour of thanking Ms Gascoigne for her participation and Nidhi took part in the 10,000 Ideas Program and was filmed explaining her idea. We were also entertained by the Flave Dance Studio and the One 50 Dance Crew.

We all agreed that we thought Mark Aiston was the best speaker on the day. He told us about his life as an insecure and lonely child and teenager until one day he “began taking responsibility for his life” and started on the path he is on today of a Sports Presenter for Channel 10. He told us that if you are given an opportunity, take it and get as much as you can out of it. It was a very inspiring speech that gave us motivation and ideas to bring back to school and is going to continue to motivate us and give us ideas for years to come.

The Leaders Day program was helpful in showing us how to be more confident and we learnt that if you have a dream, don’t let anyone stop you. There may be people who come along and try to turn you away from your dream but you have to KEEP GOING with confidence to make your dream come true. The day also taught us that to be a leader, the first step is to decide to be one and then to persevere.

After the program we got the opportunity to meet Mark Aiston personally and share our views about the program. We made our way back from Adelaide, having heaps of notes, lots of ideas and a whole lot of motivation for the New Year.

So you want to be a doctor?
If you’ve got the dream, we’ll help get you there.
Rural Doctors Workforce Agency (RDWA) helps country high school students with practical and financial assistance through our medSPACE Ready and Set programs.

Dates for the 2012 programs are confirmed.
medSPACE Ready: What you need to know about medical school (3 – 5 July)
medSPACE Set: UMAT Preparation Workshops Online registrations are now open for the medSPACE Set workshops. Adelaide (19 May), Mt Gambier (2 June), Whyalla (16 June)

For more information about these programs visit www.ruraldoc.com.au, or email us at studentservices@ruraldoc.com.au, or phone 08 8234 8277.