

## Term 1 2006 Newsletter

### From the President

On behalf of MYSA, welcome to all our new and ongoing members as 2006 promises to be a great and exciting year for middle schooling. As I listen to reports from our regional networks it is very clear that there is plenty planned, and indeed happening, in the area of middle schooling. This is especially pleasing because it reaches across all sectors and benefits all young adolescents which are key objectives of MYSA.

Schools have become diverse settings that offer students not only academic learning experiences, but also social and emotional support. In today's society, genuine family and community involvement are key components of successful schools for young adolescents. History has shown us that parents mistakenly become less involved in their children's schooling during the middle years. The reality is that parental involvement is as important as ever, therefore schools must take the initiative to develop strong and positive home-school bonds.

Schools seeking to provide the best learning experiences for their students can develop appropriate partnerships with businesses, social service agencies and other organisations whose purposes are consistent with the school's mission. Community partnerships are important ingredients in a school's curriculum and can provide considerable assistance and expertise in the school's instructional program.

As with all partnerships, it is important all parties benefit and share mutually understood roles and

expectations. Schools should expect families and communities to take advantage of opportunities provided to support student learning.

I encourage you to look for and create opportunities to involve families and the wider community in your school as it will benefit your students and your school. The MYSA Management Committee looks forward to supporting you in your endeavours and hearing your stories.

*Geoff Sippel*

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## Executive Officer's Report

Susan Hearfield

The Association has certainly 'hit the ground running' for 2006. Being our year for regional conferences we have been planning as many professional learning activities as is manageable in a range of areas.

The Rockhampton Region is already celebrating the success of their conference — a very professional and stimulating experience at Rydges Resort, Yeppoon, 15–17 March (see regional report). Hearty congratulations to the local committee for their energy and dedication.

The Toowoomba Committee is in the final organisational stages for *Spotlight on Success in the Middle Years*, 4–5 May. Information has been distributed about this conference, but if you missed it, go to our website. Early-bird registration closes on 12 April.

Two workshops in Bundaberg on 21 March were supported by a large group from all education systems and Central Queensland University.

Debra Bolam from Shalom College is working to re-establish the regional network there. She would like to hear from interested people in the area — see her details later in the newsletter.

The Hunter Region is holding two days of workshops, 5-6 June, in Newcastle — see the Hunter Regional Report.

Other conferences and professional development activities are being prepared for North Queensland and Melbourne — watch the listserv.

Thank you to all those who responded to my request for contributions to this edition of the newsletter — we had so many we have had to hold some over to next time! It is a great avenue for sharing those smaller stories and snippets that can provide ideas for others to use or build on. Of course, we are always keen to receive for articles for the *Australian Journal of Middle Schooling* as well.

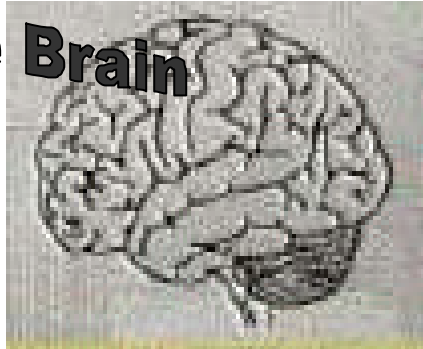
## MYSA Management Committee

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# Feed the Brain

Dr Michael Nagel

## Adolescents - High on Emotion!



**You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes.**

**You can steer yourself any direction you choose.**

**Dr. Seuss (from *Oh, The Places You'll Go!*)**

Many years ago when I decided to become an educator I also decided that working with adolescents would be one of the most challenging and yet rewarding areas to work. That time in my professional career was guided by interest in what motivates young people to learn and do the things they do. Now, some 20 years later, I have grown even more intrigued by the workings of the adolescent mind. Moreover, like many parents and teachers I find the complex set of emotions displayed by all children as one of the most beguiling and challenging aspects of educating young minds. For those truly interested in enhancing the educational environments of middle school students I would like to suggest that tapping into, and working proactively with, the emotional milieu surrounding adolescence offers a distinct advantage over those who continue to operate under an umbrella of learning focused on cognition and devoid of any emotional foresight. Learning is a process in which cognition and emotion are inextricably intertwined; contemporary neuro-scientific research has identified what many of us have intuitively known — thinking and feeling do not exist without each other.

In some ways, education has always offered various theoretical frameworks acknowledging the 'affective domain' of learning. All too often however, these positions have focused on motivation and behaviour modification as some measure of pre-cognitive activity; the mantra of

'do this and you will get that' still permeates much of our practice. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, much of what we know about the human brain and the neurological changes that occur during adolescence suggests that there is indeed much to learn about emotion before we embark on designing positive and fruitful learning experiences. One of the most prolific findings in recent research focuses on making sense of the nexus between adolescent emotion and decision making. Two regions of the brain help us to understand why this is so important.

Regardless of age, the region of the brain responsible for basic survival needs (hunger, thirst, fight-or-flight) is a structure known as the hypothalamus, which is powerful, influential and ready to function right from birth. If not, then biologically speaking we wouldn't survive for long. One of the frustrations in working with adolescents is due to the fact that hormonal changes, relationships, the environment and learning make this survival region a 'hot area' in adolescent brains. In addition, the basic survival drives of the hypothalamus don't always agree with the social structure, morals and safety of society. For more 'civilised' behaviours we need to involve higher regions of the brain including the cerebral cortex and cerebrum, which can over-ride the hypothalamus.

The cerebrum consists of regions comprising the 'logical' parts of the brain. These areas are responsible for deciding when basic hypothalamus drives may not be in our best long-term interest. Perhaps the most important region in this area of the brain is the pre-frontal cortex which quickly sizes up a situation and makes a determination which then drives our behaviour. It is the pre-frontal cortex that tells us when to act on our anger, or curtail it, have a second helping of dessert or go without it, seek immediate gratification or hold off for the long term. This area of the brain undergoes incredible restructuring during adolescence making it very difficult for young people to predict the outcomes of their decisions, act in ways we might describe as logically and make the types of decisions we would assume are easily made. The more primitive regions of their brains are strong and

tend to drive behaviours while the immature region responsible for the logic of long-term benefits does not always supersede the impulsive, survival-oriented hypothalamus. Quite simply stated, the logical part of the brain will not completely mature until adulthood and appears to go 'missing in action' during adolescence.

If, however, there is a silver lining for the middle years in this adolescent cloud it lies in the fact that educators can enhance learning and motivate adolescents by ensuring that all learning experiences are developed along frameworks of relevancy and relationship building. A gold star, systemic ranking or some ambiguous notion of one's role in the future is not going to drive many adolescents, but learning experiences that genuinely value the learner and sincerely attempt to tap into their lifeworlds will. Genuine middle schools attempt to do this and those that have developed safe, supportive and adolescent centred environments with a great deal of experiential and active learning are seeing the results. Quite simply, the more relevant, intense and interesting a learning experience, the more likely it will be attended to by adolescents and the greater the chance of it being embedded in memory.

Therefore, although adolescents appear to find a wall in front of them when it comes to using logic to make everyday types of decisions or to weigh up the consequences of their actions, educators can still influence and contribute to their learning in a beneficial way. The biology of the brain shows that adolescents still need strong adult guidance and help with decision making throughout their school years. As such we must constantly remind ourselves that the adolescent brain is in a state of transition and adolescents are not just a smaller version of adults. Therefore we must also always remember that:

- Adolescents' frontal lobes are under construction and as a result they are short on forethought, planning, consideration, impulse control and more likely to engage in 'risky business'. Educators and parents alike would do well to act as the prefrontal lobes of the young people around them by tempering an adolescent need for independency with consistent boundaries and

guidelines. Moreover, schools should look to establish pro-social risk-taking activities to entice and invigorate their curricular and co-curricular programs.

- Adolescents need to be guided and motivated by their emotions. If you want them to learn, if you want to communicate with them, if you want to enhance their school experiences and simultaneously diminish behaviour problems make sure what you say and teach is emotionally relevant to them. Do **your** homework and find out what makes your students tick.
- Never underestimate your influence. Adolescents may be stubborn and oppose those adults around them but they also need mentors around who they will often imitate and emulate. Boundaries and the guidelines adults can offer from experience will often act as a beacon for many adolescents. Perhaps the most influential determinant in building an adolescent's success in school and in life parallels the relationships that are built with the adults around them. Positive relationships equal positive outcomes, empathy equals respect while recognising that adolescents are often 'high on emotion' equals better opportunities for educators and parents to be proactive and positive.

**Dr Michael C Nagel**  
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## Learning through Service

Sarah Hay  
Primary teacher, New South Wales

Recently I trialed service learning with a Stage 3 class (New South Wales) and they loved it.

Students thought about **needs** of students, teachers and parents in their school community, then they **surveyed** each group to find out what the real issues were.

After designing a survey, deciding how we would go about sending it out and getting it back, a sample of surveys from each representative group was received in the class. Written comments were collated and numerical data entered in Excel so we could produce graphs to see what the main issues were. As it turned out, the **main issue** was the toilets at school.

Students then **defined** what the problem was and brainstormed what they could realistically do about it.

To save time, we split the class into six groups and each took responsibility for one of the following:

1. Writing to the cleaner to remove the spider webs and delivering the letter.
2. Writing a proposal to the P&C about the possible purchase of hand cleanser dispensers. Students attended the P&C meeting and presented their case. (The P&C supported them.)
3. Writing a letter to parents (via the school newsletter) asking parents to talk with their younger children about appropriate behaviour in the toilets.
4. Creating signs about 'Toilet Rules'.
5. Conducting an investigation into the best value toilet paper that could be bought and then making a recommendation to the Principal on the basis of the findings.
6. Creating a mural for the boys' and girls' toilets. This involved surveying students to find out their preference for themes, then designing and painting the mural on large sheets of MDF, which were formally presented to the school.

Throughout the sessions, students reflected continuously on what they were doing and why. They kept written journals and also met as a group to discuss ideas at the end of each session.

At the end, I asked students if they liked service learning as a way of learning. Students were overwhelmingly positive about the experience. In their written reflections, students showed that it took a few

weeks to realise that they were doing something "really real". They were proud that they could do something to improve the toilets and they "weren't even the professionals!"

Service learning makes learning **REAL** and **RELEVANT** to students. Service learning is authentic learning. As a result of students analysing their survey data and then choosing the focus for themselves, they were passionate about the service activity.

There are so many opportunities to make explicit links to curriculum. Students are having so much fun they do not even know they are engaging with content and skills that would perhaps be covered in a more traditional fashion at school.



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## Some Riveting Reads for Middle Years Readers

Jane Connolly  
Brisbane Catholic Education

From time to time we shall include in the newsletter some suggestions of good literature to share with or suggest to your middle years readers. This term's suggestions come from the Australian Readers' Challenge list for 12–15 year olds.

The Australian Readers' Challenge <http://www.readerschallenge.com.au> is an initiative of the Australian Booksellers and Publishers organisations in conjunction with the Fred Hollows Foundation and the Ian Thorpe Fountain for Youth Trust, to address the alarming rate of illiteracy in remote indigenous communities. Readers pay a \$5 registration fee and are challenged to read ten books in a designated period. All money raised is used to purchase reading resources for targeted communities in the Northern territory. Visit the website for all the details and be challenged! The booklists cater for all - newborns to adults of all ages.

Some recommendations from the list:

### ***A Gathering Light*** by Jennifer Donnelly

This is a story of murder and intrigue, of privilege and hardship, of promises made and broken, of the power of the written word. Set in 1906 in the Adirondacks Mountains, the story is Mattie's. Struggling to take her mother's place following her death, Mattie's is a life of drudgery. As she cares for the younger children and supports her father's efforts around the farm, she is sustained by her love of words and writing. In the summer, her area is a popular summer escape and Mattie finds a part time job in the local hotel. It is here that she meets a young girl who is later found drowned in the lake. It is this girl's letters, entrusted to Mattie, that unlock a number of secrets one of which finally allows Mattie to break free from the unrelenting cycle of hopelessness which confronts her.

*A Gathering Light* was the very deserving winner of the Carnegie Medal in 2004. (12–adult)

### ***A Place Like This*** by Steven Herrick

Steven Herrick is an accomplished performance poet who writes evocative verse. This verse novel is a companion to an earlier title *Love Ghosts and Nose Hair* but stands well on its own. Jack and

Annabel are two young lovers who choose to leave university to travel around Australia. After only three days and a car break down they find themselves jobs on an apple orchard, picking fruit by day and using the barn to live in at night. The story revolves around the weeks they spend there and about the family of the orchardist, particularly Emma, the 16 year old pregnant daughter. Written in easily accessible connected verse, one of the strengths of this story is the authenticity of characterisation. A book with wide appeal. (14–adult)

### ***Lost Property*** by James Moloney

Josh Tambling is working in the Lost Property office of Sydney's Central railway station during a Christmas holiday break. Here he works with Clive who has worked with the lost and forgotten for many years and who cares for the items with a special understanding. During the summer period, Josh comes to learn much about life and himself through Clive's ministrations. Josh's family is in quiet turmoil. His brother is lost to them, his mother heartbroken and his father intractable. Josh gets a lead to his brother's whereabouts and taking on board the lessons learned from Clive, seeks to reunite the lost in his family. This is a thoroughly thought provoking story with well drawn characters and dialogue and situations that young teenagers will relate to. (12–17)

### ***Keys to the Kingdom series*** by Garth Nix

***Mister Monday, Grim Tuesday, Drowned Wednesday, Sir Thursday*** all feature Arthur, an ordinary boy with a few problems on his hands. These are fast moving popular fantasies. Not surprisingly, there will be seven in the series. The stories are set in a world in danger and involve quests, high adventure and humour. In the first book, Arthur suffers an asthmatic attack during a cross country run. Near death, he becomes caught up in an ancient battle and becomes the trustee of a strange key. As his world deteriorates, the key allows him into other worlds where he searches for a way of undoing the harm that has come to his world. Compelling reading for 11–16 year olds.

## Snapshots

### Middle School 'Melange' at Newcastle Grammar

At Newcastle Grammar School, each year since our inception as a Middle School in 2001, we have presented what we call Middle School Melange. It is an evening session for parents (absolutely no children allowed!) wherein we place the parents into a pseudo classroom for a couple of hours. They experience life as a middle school student first hand and we include such things as a cooperative group session, a round robin, a drama lesson, some spelling and maths lessons, and a lesson using the interactive whiteboard. We graph all the parents' multiple intelligences and attack a classic story such as Cinderella using the Six Thinking Hats.

Each year the parents have a lot of fun and many parents return each year for more! When they leave the session they are often most enlightened, realising that life in the class room has changed a great deal since their school days. We have found it a beneficial enterprise that can also act as a professional development experience for teachers who are new to middle schooling.

**Lesley Harrison**  
Head of Middle School

### Next regional conference

#### Spotlight on Success in the Middle Years

University of Southern Queensland  
Toowoomba  
4—5 May 2006

#### Keynote Speakers

Graham Hyman  
(Youth Specialities Australia)

Anne Hampshire  
(National Youth Survey, Mission Australia)

#### Showcases

#### Panel

All details on [www.mysa.org.au/conferences](http://www.mysa.org.au/conferences)

### Three, Two, One...

Being a drama teacher in the middle school is an exciting challenge that I have been working on for over a year. We have opportunities to explore many themes and issues through the conventions of Drama. Providing positive challenges for students to push themselves to achieve their greatest potential in a safe environment is a major goal that can be achieved in this setting.

A supportive classroom for students is essential for effective drama lessons and middle school. Within the Moving At Your Own Pace (MAYOP) philosophy of Calamvale students are able and encouraged to demonstrate drama skills to other students. As a general rule in my classroom, for every constructive item of feedback a positive word for every individual and group presentation is a must. The use of positive affirmations motivates the students to participate and respond in drama lessons creating continued participation by more students.

Students are given responsibility within the middle school drama room to take ownership of their learning, of their drama processes and product. A group of Middle School students presented a forum theatre style performance to junior students at the end of last year. This beautiful group of students ran the whole 45 minute show from producing ideas for the script, to organising teachers, classes and themselves. After the four afternoons and eight shows their work had still not yet been done. The theme of the show was "Bullying" and these students have become mature mediators of conflict between friends and peers, as well as a few other students from the Junior School they didn't even know.

It is exciting to think that Drama can engage young people and motivate them to rise to the challenges set in the classroom, to take the skills learnt out into the real world and to apply them and make a difference!

**Tatijana Lam**  
Calamvale Community College

## Middle School at Lourdes Hill College, Brisbane

Lourdes Hill College (LHC) is a Catholic girls' school founded upon the order of the Good Samaritan Sisters. Lourdes Hill College has embraced the concept of middle schooling by focusing on the transition from Year 7 to 8, ensuring a smoother and more enriching transition for our students. We have achieved this through the reduction of subjects as students now study their various electives on a semester basis rather than having those subjects for the whole year. This has also allowed the elective subjects to become more meaningful for students as they have more face-to-face time with the teacher and the material covered. This increases the retention of process skills developed through these particular subjects. We are also exploring the potential for trans-disciplinary assessment throughout our Year 8 curriculum by having some of our core subjects and elective subjects combine their assessment and material covered in class. There are many positive aspects to trans-disciplinary subjects, one of which is the potential for the students to think laterally across all key learning areas.

We have also included a new subject called *Minds, Our Business*, based upon the Dimensions of Learning, fostering healthy Habits of Mind within our young learners. This encourages a love of life-long learning. We want our students to become engaged in their learning, taking on all opportunities that are presented to them. The material presented is based upon the Dimensions 1-5 including our overriding Dimension 6 (unique to LHC), a holistic approach to our everyday lives.

We look forward to the many more changes and challenges which lie ahead for the College to bring about a successful and fruitful middle years of schooling for the future.

**Sissi Tedim**  
Head of Middle School

## Student Reflections on Negotiated Curriculum (NC)

**Drew:** *We get to choose what we want to learn for the term which means we also have a say in the activities we do.*

**Alex:** *I like NC because we get to discuss as a class what we want to do for the term which means we choose what curriculum we do so we have the power the teachers don't!!!*

**Cam:** *I like to do NC because at the end of last year we did movies and got to decide what we do it about and how we go about doing it. It's a great learning experience.*

**Alyce B:** *I love NC because we all get a say in what we learn for the next term. I also enjoy working in groups. The best activities for working with groups are doing movies and plays.*

**Taryn:** *I like NC because the students decided on the topics for the term but we are still learning but in a different way.*

**Michelle:** *I really like NC because we get to choose what we want to do it on for the term.*

**Zak:** *I like NC because we learn a lot of stuff and we don't work individually we work in a group and have lots of fun.*

**Aidan:** *I enjoy NC because we are able to negotiate our topic for the term and every one gets to have a say. We get to work in groups and individually.*

**Alyce:** *Though I am new to NC this year I think it is great and from a student's point of view recommend it to all Year 6/7 teachers. I like NC because it is a fun and exciting subject that the students decide on and do different things but learn at the same time.*

**Bernie Woulfe**  
Our Lady of the Rosary Primary School, Caloundra

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## Students as teachers – A strategy for learning

Unity College in Caloundra West is an ecumenical college that opened its doors in January 2006 with Pre-school, Years 1—4, and Year 8. The middle years curriculum is based on an interdisciplinary approach that provides opportunities for students to engage through a range of thinking and learning strategies. One such strategy is allowing the Year 8 students to be the teachers in the junior school, as suggested by one of our middle years teachers, Kristin Dawson.

The Year 8B Food Technology students invited the Year 3 and 4 students to participate in a 'Food sharing morning'. Making links with the Junior Years Healthy Eating programs and the Year 8 introduction Unit on Healthy Living, the Year 8 students took on the role of celebrity chefs, showcasing their cooking skills, handing out some recipes and speaking about the importance of having a healthy diet to a captivated junior audience. This unique sharing opportunity was appreciated by all students as Year 8 were excited to present and share their knowledge with the junior years.

**Kristin Dawson**, Teacher, and **Karen Harrison** Assistant Principal Administration (Middle Schooling)

*Note to contributors: It is the right of the editor to make minor editorial amendments, without consultation.*



## Critical Question (CQ)

At Bishop Druitt College (Coffs Harbour, New South Wales) in 2006, Year 7 are involved in a new program that we have called CQ.

The basis of the *Critical Question* has been developed from several theories that have become the underpinnings of the project. Dewey argued that optimal learning occurs when real life problems are solved within in a social setting. This is achieved by integrating aspects of curriculum through task work. Vygotsky believed that people learn best within their zone of proximal development that is, students are scaffolded by (more knowledgeable) mentors to learn through interacting in a social setting.

We believe that, through the CQ, students will learn best when they are engaged in problem solving projects that are relevant to their world.

Although the focus is on pedagogy and curriculum, the important part of the development of the projects will be the demonstration and exhibition of these projects.

The projects that we are developing will encourage students to analyse and resolve problems that are connected to the community and the world outside the classroom. The projects will also be integrated across the curriculum, incorporating relevant educational outcomes.

As a team of five teachers we have selected the first critical question to 'start the ball rolling', with the

intention that the students will eventually develop their own critical questions after they have worked through this first example.

The critical question we have decided on is: "How do we interact with our environment?"

Although the 'big picture' end product of our first CQ will be an improvement to an area of our playground, the foundations of the project needed to be developed first. Teamwork and leadership skills were slowly developed through a variety of activities and games. A vision statement has been developed to include all aspects of the CQ. For the current CQ it is: "To enhance our chosen area by including environmentally friendly, functional ideas that acknowledge the history of the area".

We meet for three hours every fortnight in a block of time. After only two sessions the students have formed teams around a specific mini-project, and coordinators have been chosen by each group. A public relations group has been formed to report to all stakeholders (students, teachers, parents) and to lift the profile of CQ to the school community.

A design folio which shows areas students have chosen for of improvement is now being developed. Students are developing designs to share.

Feedback from students indicates that they enjoy the chance to meet students from other classes (we have 135 students in Year 7) and they are also enjoying the challenge of developing a 'real' project.

**Karin Lisle**

## Middle Years Students as Workshop Leaders

Redcliffe State High School middle school students deliver workshops to state school (primary) students.

At the end of last year a feeder primary school approached Redcliffe State High School about having some of our students work with their school to deliver workshops. Our students were itching to work with their previous teachers and students from their old school and jumped at the idea. We had students from Year 8 design and present their own workshops in Visual Arts, Drama, Basketball, Soccer and Touch Football. The primary school students loved the activities and our students got a huge buzz from taking on this leadership role. The idea was so positive for both schools that we are going to run with it each term. Last year's workshop coordinators are now in Year 9 and will work with students in Year 8 to train them to run workshops. It could be huge!

**Danielle Priday**  
Head of Department, Innovations

## Keppel Coast Regional Share Network

Andrew Willis and  
Penn Lanson

What an exciting year 2005 was for Keppel Coast and middle schooling! The establishment of our Regional Share Network in May has led to an increased awareness of current middle schooling issues, opportunities for educators to share and celebrate initiatives and 'success stories', and the acknowledgement of our capacity to move forward in order to improve outcomes for students in the middle years.

On Friday 14 October 2005, Share Network Coordinators Andrew Willis and Penn Lanson led administrators from the Keppel Coast Cluster of State Schools through a review process of their first response to the *Middle Phase of Learning State School Action Plan*, formulated in October 2003. Held at the cluster's annual retreat at North Keppel Island Environmental Education Centre, administrators reflected on current research relating to young adolescent growth and development and heightened their understanding of Education Queensland's on-line professional development tool, *Taking Action in the Middle Phase of Learning*. Available through The Learning Place from April 2006, this tool will provide middle phase educators with the opportunity to engage in core learnings and electives from four modules: *Reform in the Middle Phase of Learning*, *The Adolescent Learner*, *Engaging Students* and *Relevant Curriculum*. The local CD production entitled *What's All The Fuss About The Middle?*, written and compiled by members of the MYSA Rockhampton Regional Share Network and Sue Davidson, Rockhampton State High School, was also presented for review and feedback.

Administrators celebrated the many successful strategies implemented in their local responses to the *Middle Phase of Learning State School Action Plan*, reflected on their main challenges for further implementation of the action plan throughout the cluster, and focused on priorities for inclusion in the next phase of implementation. Powerful conversations emerged from this session and the ideas shared have set the foundation for the formulation of future specific cluster actions.

On Tuesday 18 October 2005 some Keppel Coast educators attended a Facilitated Leadership Workshop supported by MYSA and facilitated by Mark Creyton. Participants had the opportunity to investigate various types of leadership and discuss qualities and strategies for leading and managing change in school contexts. An insightful, reflective day was enjoyed by all – many thanks to The Rockhampton Grammar School for providing us with a comfortable venue and generous hospitality.

Our final Share Network Meeting for 2005 was held in November. Members of the MYSA Rockhampton Regional Share Network were invited to join us for this session to discuss future directions of middle schooling and continue strengthening middle schooling capacity across the two networks.

If you would like any further information regarding the MYSA Keppel Coast Regional Share Network, please contact the coordinators (see contact details on page 12).

## Rockhampton Regional Share Network

Nanette Murphy

As the conference — *From Action to Excellence in the Middle Years* — was held just a few days prior to this newsletter going to print, a full report is not yet available. We would, however, like to summarise the conference in the words of some of the delegates:

*High standard, great ideas, great presenters*

*WOW – the inspirational speakers*

*Absolutely fabulous, worthwhile, invigorating, informative, relevant*

*Discussion forums in most sessions were excellent*

*Great trade displays*

*Thank you for well organised conference program, with variety*

Asked what the highlight of the conference was for them, the general consensus was:

*The keynote speakers — Barbara Holborow (former children's court magistrate, Sydney) and Andrew Martin (University of Western Sydney)*

*Many of the other speakers in concurrent workshops*

*School showcases*

*Opportunity to share professionally*

*Student entertainment*

*Everything!*

We thank the major conference sponsors for their support and generosity:

- Catholic Education, Diocese of Rockhampton
- ACER
- Expo Education



From left: Jann Howley, conference photographer; Barbara Holborow (keynote and dinner speaker); Nanette Murphy (Regional Coordinator); Andrew Martin (keynote and workshop presenter)

## Hunter Region

Graeme Evans

The Hunter Region, with the support of the national MYSA office and Lesley Harrison from Newcastle Grammar, is planning professional development days for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of June. Initially, these days were planned for early April, but had to be postponed due to unforeseen circumstances. They will feature presentations from Susan Hearfield, "Pathways in the middle years: learning, succeeding, sustaining", and Deb Olive, "Facilitative Leadership". These workshops come highly recommended and we are eagerly looking forward to them. Registration forms are available from the MYSA Office, or by emailing [harl@ngs.nsw.edu.au](mailto:harl@ngs.nsw.edu.au) or [graeme.evans@spcc.nsw.edu.au](mailto:graeme.evans@spcc.nsw.edu.au)

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