

Term 1 2007 Newsletter

From the Editor

The MYSA Management Committee, on behalf of all members, thanks Tony Cartmel for his enormous contributions as Publications Coordinator for the last year. This role included Newsletter Editor.

In this edition's **Talking Point**, I have focused on seeking feedback on how the Newsletter can further serve the needs of our members. I wish all colleagues a professionally rewarding 2007.

Chris French

From the President

Welcome to the first MYSA newsletter for 2007. I trust that you have had a satisfying start, amidst the often very hectic schedule that occurs in schools at the commencement of any new year. The Association looks forward to continuing to provide quality support to our members and to maintaining our commitment to our members and actively promoting reform in middle years of schooling. Our focus is to assist schools and individuals to better understand the issues and challenges that confront our young people during these critical years.

The year promises to be an exciting one for MYSA, particularly with our 5th International Conference coming up in May, boasting a great range of international and national speakers. Please be sure to mark this on your calendar and plan to be there.

Another very exciting project for MYSA, which has been in preparation for some time, is the production of a MYSA Position Paper. Our Management Committee is looking forward to the development and publication of this document and the impact it will have on middle schooling, particularly here in Australia.

At a recent facilitated planning day, we were able to gather a wealth of expertise from around Australia and from across the different educational sectors to discuss

what our Position Paper might include. This proved a great opportunity for us to reflect on our beliefs and aspirations. Thank you especially to Leonie Shaw for facilitating the day, Donna Pendergast (writer), Steve Solomonson, Brian Blaney, Marissa Dann, Mary Lincoln, Debra Evans and the MYSA Management Committee who gave of their time to be a part of this event. We look forward to sharing more of this project with you and receiving your feedback over the coming months.

Finally, can I encourage you to remain focused on what I believe are the keys to successful middle schooling: developing positive relationships and delivering holistic learning experiences that cater for the diversity of young people in the middle years. Given the current political environment and the pressures for a national curriculum and standards, it is important for us as middle years educators not to focus solely on academic results at the expense of meeting the needs of our young people.

Geoff Sippel



Some members of the Working Party—L to R:
Back: Geoff Sippel (MYSA President), Leonie Shaw (Facilitator), Steve Solomonson (MYSA Western Victorian Regional Coordinator)
Front: Eleanor Nicholson (MYSA Vice President), Donna Pendergast (Writer)

NOTICE BOARD

MYSA website: mysa.org.au

The site contains valuable information for everyone and is regularly updated. The *Australian Journal of Middle Schooling* is featured and article requests for past editions is included.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MYSA Victorian Region, Western Division—professional learning activity 'Interactive Whiteboards' (Come along and have some fun with them!) — (8/03/2007) [View details](#)

MYSA Sydney, professional learning activity — Andrew Fuller 'Turbo Charging Adolescent Thinking' — (14/03/2007) [View details](#)

MYSA Sunshine Coast Region — Middle Years Forum — (21/03/07)

MYSA Rockhampton Region — 'Teaching the Y-Generation' — (22/03/07)

MYSA ACT Region — Network Meeting and Showcase — (28/03/07)

International Conference Middle Schooling 'Reaching New Heights Building. Our Future' — (17/05/2007) [View details](#)

Let's Be Sure to Sleep On It!

There is a time for many words, and there is also a time for sleep.

Homer from *The Odyssey* (800 BC - 700 BC)

How many of you remember a time when your parents became cross or yelled at you for mucking around the house, studying, or being active instead of going to sleep? Do you ever wonder if our children are provided enough opportunities to rest or nap? In an information packed society thriving on technological wizardry, these are very important questions. Neurological research shows that morning sleep and afternoon naps aid learning. Research in child and adolescent development suggests that children in the 21st century are not getting enough sleep. Furthermore, resting the brain may be more important during adolescence than at any other time in one's life.

So how do we make sense of all of this? Well, the key is understanding what happens in the brain during times of rest. Deep, slow-wave sleep that occurs even in short

naps allows recently learned information to be processed and readies the mind for new knowledge. An intensity of learning new skills and information often seen in the curious minds of children may also drive the brain's hunger for large amounts of sleep. In order for children to learn new things they may require a good night's sleep before the maximum benefit of time they spend in school is realised. Moreover, we cannot underestimate the importance of opportunities to close our eyes and rest. There have been a number of studies that have demonstrated that sleep actually helps memory retention and aids learning. In particular, it seems to secure procedural memories that are very important in terms of helping people learn skills. Thanks to procedural memories, students are able to master the types of skills necessary for playing a video game, performing a gymnastics or football move or for playing an instrumental melody. Research has shown that naps in the middle of the day for all ages are cognitively beneficial.

During adolescence, sleep is even more crucial. Adolescents who are lacking sleep do less well at school and are more prone to feelings of sadness and hopelessness. In short, they feel fairly terrible and they need sleep. Most researchers recommend that adolescents get between nine and twelve hours of sleep each night, with one or two extra hours on the weekends. One of the barriers to actually getting enough sleep lies at the intersection of neurological needs and social interactions. In the 21st century, there are more than a number of sleep detractors—many young people who have televisions, video games or mobile phones in their rooms will spend countless hours engaged with these gadgets. Unfortunately, modern technology can actually act to stimulate the brain and keep it from engaging in sleep. This comes at a time in adolescent development when circadian rhythms appear to shift and be set later than those of children or adults. Melatonin, a neurotransmitter important for sleep, flows into adolescent brains later and stays longer. Most teenagers' brains are not ready to wake up until 8 or 9 in the morning and if they are kept awake with technology then they can be very sluggish when they need to be engaged in learning activities.

The key to all of this, for parents and teachers alike, is to look at the young people around us and, if they are tired all the time, we need to start asking ourselves why and what we can do about it.

Dr Michael C Nagel
Senior Lecturer
The University of the Sunshine Coast
mnagel@usc.edu.au

Executive Officer's Report

Susan Hearfield

Three weeks in the USA ...

This is a very brief summary of some impressions that returned with me. In future Newsletters I will include some details of particular programs that may be of interest. So ...

Where did I go? What did I do? Who did I work with?

- National Middle School Association's 33rd National Conference, Nashville, Tennessee, with 10 530 (yes—that's right!) other delegates. Eleanor Nicholson and I presented a paper—'Middle Schooling Down Under: Some Australian Stories'. (Geoff Sippel also presented a paper.)
- NMSA Headquarters in Columbus, Ohio, with Jack Berckmeyer, Pam Kuntz and many others – the office has 35 staff to support their 30 000 members. I also spent one day at Orange Middle School.
- University of Hawai'i with Paul Deering—M. Ed program in middle schooling. I also had time in three middle schools, which were more like ours than those on the mainland. One young middle grader asked me what was different—not a lot!

What were some impressions/ideas/possibilities?

- The structure of NMSA as a professional organisation and the range of support they offer to teachers—so much more is possible in an organisation of that size!
- A highlight was the extended session at the Conference for Executive Directors of the

Affiliates (MYSA being one of over 50 from USA, Canada, New Zealand, Britain, Europe). The sharing gave many insights into the operation of associations.

- Awards to individual educators and teacher teams were presented at the Conference.
- The Conference closing presentation by Ron Clark, Disney Teacher of the Year: '*You have to dream bigger for your kids than they can dream for themselves*'.
- The approach to writing taken by a teacher at Orange Middle School (details later).
- The journals published and conferences conducted by Washington Middle School in Hawai'i (watch our journal).
- Paul Deering's M.Ed program modelled middle years practices.

A learning ... we need to hold on to what we believe about learning in the middle years of schooling. The 'No Child Left Behind' policy in USA has crippled many approaches to effective teaching and learning – testing drives the curriculum. It becomes the curriculum in many instances. Middle years teachers are continually endeavouring to find ways to meet political requirements, but to provide what they believe are best learning opportunities for their young adolescents.

What they like about us ...

- ✓ our philosophy, practices and models for the middle years
- ✓ the connections we have across P—12; networking
- ✓ our journal
... and our life style.



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



MYSA STUDY TOUR VISITS USA

Judy Wintour

On 25th October 2006, seven middle schooling enthusiasts departed Brisbane for Atlanta, Georgia, the state in the USA that spends 53% of its budget on education. Its Lighthouse Schools program designates the best middle schools and we visited four, each with student numbers between 1,000 and 1,600: **Rising Star Middle School, Upton-Lee Middle School, River Trail Middle School** and **Crabapple Middle School**.

We also attended the National Middle Schools Association Conference in Nashville, Tennessee (10 500 delegates), where some of our group presented papers that were well received.

Impressions of the trip include the engagement and mature behaviour of students, the huge size of the facilities and the student numbers—and the yellow school buses! However, schools are driven by state requirements and their curriculum and pedagogy are narrowly focused on the state tests. Funding is attached to results, so many teachers feel very constrained. The learning focus is on content rather than on processes and assessment is via pen and paper. We saw little emphasis on pastoral care. Australian teachers use a much broader range of pedagogical strategies and assessment instruments and make much greater use of computers and other technology.

While the study tour increased my understanding of how these Lighthouse Schools operate, I also feel affirmed that Aussie schools are doing a great job and that our teachers can make a valuable contribution to international education conversations.

Tour Participants

Geoff Sippell (Education Queensland)
 Eleanor Nicholson (Independent Sector)
 Judy Barbe (Catholic Sector)
 Belinda Everett (Education Queensland)
 Susan Stevens (Catholic Sector/Education Queensland)
 Jane Satchwell (Education Vic)
 Judy Wintour (Lutheran Schools Sector)



NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Members are advised that the Annual General Meeting of the Middle Years of Schooling Association will be held on:

Saturday 19 May 2007

at

**Conrad Jupiters, Gold Coast, Queensland
 (at the International Conference)**

commencing at 12:45 pm

The following business will be transacted at this meeting:

- (a) receipt of the statement of income and expenditure, assets and liabilities and of mortgages, charges and securities affecting the property of the Association for the last financial year
- (b) receipt of the auditor's report on the financial affairs of the Association for the last financial year
- (d) presentation of the audited statement to the meeting for adoption
- (e) election of members of the Management Committee
- (f) appointment of an auditor.

All positions on the Management Committee shall become vacant at this meeting.

The call for nominations for positions on the Management Committee, together with the appropriate forms, will be posted on the MYSA website and the listserv at the end of March 2007.

Maybe MYSA's **first** newsletter of the year could be your **last**! Why? For either of the following reasons:

1. You have changed your address during the year and our mail is not reaching you. The renewal notice was posted in October 2006 and the reminder notice was mailed on 13th February; or
2. You have not renewed your 2007 MYSA membership.

If you do not renew your membership by 31st March, you will no longer have access to the listserv and will not receive the next *Australian Journal of Middle Schooling*, Newsletter, discounts on activities, conferences, etc. So, if you want to keep in touch, please renew before 31st March.



Talking Point

During the past 12 months, the MYSA Newsletter has been changed to an electronic version and the response from members appears very positive. I would like ideas from members on ways to further improve the Newsletter to ensure it is meeting the expectations of our middle years colleagues throughout Australia and overseas. Ideas could include responses to the following questions:

- Is the Newsletter content relevant?
- What other information could we include to further enrich your professional learning?
- Is the size/frequency of publication appropriate?
- Is it user-friendly?

Please respond to the above and put forward your own ideas and solutions to any area that should be addressed.

Thank you.

Chris French
MYSA Management Committee
cfrench@was.qld.edu.au

Teaching Excellence Award to Edith Cowan University

In 2006, four Edith Cowan University (ECU) teaching staff in their graduate Diploma in Education (Middle Years) were honoured by the receipt of a Carrick Award for Teaching Excellence. This award was shared by Dr Bill Leadbetter (Course Co-ordinator), A/Prof. Rod Chadbourne, Dr Terry de Jong and Dr Lesley Newhouse-Maiden. This national award was one of only 22 awarded annually to university academics across Australia. The awards recognise teaching excellence and, in this case, the implementation of the key principles of this course. These principles can be summarised by the phrase 'practise what we preach' and, in particular, refer to the development of a professional community amongst the students, team teaching, constructivist teaching and inquiry-based learning, collaborative and cooperative processes.

The Middle Years course at ECU was designed by a team coordinated by Rod Chadbourne. Its first intake was in 2002 and has, since that time, graduated over

250 teachers prepared specifically to teach young adolescents. For much of that time, the course was directed by Terry de Jong. The four Carrick honourands formed the core team of the course until late last year when Lesley Newhouse-Maiden retired. In 2004, the course won the Vice-Chancellor's Award for teaching Excellence at Edith Cowan University.

Dr Bill Leadbetter
Course Coordinator

Transition from middle to senior years of schooling

Reflections from Imogen Hentschel (Stanthorpe State High School)—2004 Student of the Year, Middle Years Category

As a student now staring down at her last year of school I can certainly say I have made the transition from middle years into senior schooling. The middle years of schooling were an insight to the years to come in senior but nothing really prepares you for the workload. I went through Years 9 and 10 in a daze. I had fun, did some amount of study and threw the odd adolescent tantrum. In school I had learnt the basics to help me into senior but what the teachers don't talk about much is study habits. In the past year, I was in Year 11, first year of senior schooling and my study habits were my most important asset. I had to learn how to cope with bigger workloads and how to organise my time so that there was time for everything in my busy schedule. The difference between senior and middle school is that there is less spoon feeding; I found that I had to pick up habits and work a lot harder to get information than I did in previous years. As we grow older there is a lot more responsibility placed on us and teachers use that in school. As a senior you are responsible for setting the benchmark for the younger students in the school; you no longer have excuses for late assignments or not completing your homework. If it's not done you pay the price ... or at least your report card does. From what I have experienced of senior school, if you work hard and use what time you have wisely there won't be any problems.

Editor's Note: For nominations in the Teen Challenge Student of the Year Award (Qld), go to:
www.soty.com.au



Regional Coordinators

ACT

Scott Anderson
Burgmann Anglican School
PO Box 456
MITCHELL 2911
(02) 6255 7700
sanderson@burgmann.act.edu.au

NEW SOUTH WALES

Hunter

Vacant at present

Northern NSW

Karin Lisle
Bishop Druitt College
PO Box 8004
Coffs Harbour 2450
(02) 6651 5644
klisle@bdc.nsw.edu.au

Sydney

Pamela Matters
Australian Centre for Educational
Studies
Macquarie University
Sydney 2113
(02) 9850 8683
pamela.matters@mq.edu.au

QUEENSLAND

Cairns

Monica Halbert
Cairns West State School
PO Box 97M
Manunda, Cairns 4870
mhalb1@eq.edu.au

Gold Coast

Wendy Wise
Palm Beach Currumbin State High
School
Locked Mail Bag
Currumbin 4223
(07) 5525 9333
wwise1@eq.edu.au

Ipswich

Anthony Vandermolen
Ipswich Grammar School
Darling Street
Ipswich 4305
(07) 3280 1300
avandermolen@igs.qld.edu.au

Keppel Coast

Penn Lanson
42 Evelyn Street
Lammermor Qld 4703
(07) 4933 7704
plans1@eq.edu.au

Mackay

Lindley Kynaston
Mackay North State High School
PO Box 8333
Mt Pleasant 4740
(07) 4944 3254
lkyna1@eq.edu.au

Rockhampton

Nanette Murphy
The Rockhampton Grammar School
Archer Street
Rockhampton Qld 4700
(07) 4936 0607
nmurphy@rgs.qld.edu.au

South West Queensland

Judith Barbe
Education Officer - Curriculum
Toowoomba Catholic Education Office
PO Box 756
Toowoomba 4350
(07) 46874339
Fax: (07) 46874399
Judy.Barbe@twb.catholic.edu.au

Sunshine Coast

David Elley
St Andrew's Anglican College
40 Peregian Springs Drive
Peregian Springs Qld 4573
(07) 5471 5555
delley@saac.qld.edu.au

and

Jan Simpson

Nambour Christian College
PO Box 500
Nambour Qld 4560
(07) 5442 1866
jans@ncc.qld.edu.au

Townsville

Norena Mendiola
St Margaret Mary's College
PO Box 1806
AITKENVALE 4614
(07) 4726 4900
n.mendiola@smmc.qld.edu.au

VICTORIA

Ruth Shulman
Middle School Learning Specialist
Beaconhills College,
Pakenham 3810
(03) 5941 2655
RSU@beaconhills.vic.edu.au

Victoria — Western Division

Steven Solomonson
Belmont-Highton MY Cluster
Brighton High School
90 Outer Crescent
Brighton 3216
(03) 5243 2420
solomonson.steven.p@edumail.vic.
gov.au