

Newsletter, Term 1 2009

From the Editor

Dear Colleagues

I hope this first newsletter for 2009 finds you healthy and well. The National Curriculum is a major focus for us all at the moment as we go through the consultative phases of its development. Articles in this newsletter focus on the National Curriculum and make for excellent reading in terms of middle years challenges. Also, I encourage all colleagues and students to continue submitting articles to me that celebrate school life and special whole school curricular events so we can all professionally learn and be inspired by work occurring in the middle years throughout Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Africa.

Chris French

Executive Officer's Report

The trail of communication and initiatives that has flowed through the MYSA office already this year is an indication of the activity, interest and priorities for middle years educators. I am sure that this is indicative of just a fraction of life in schools and universities. There are a few items I would like to bring to your attention:

- 1. The MYSA Position Paper - Middle Schooling: People, Practices and Places**, which was published with a Supporting Document.

These were sent with your last edition of the *Australian Journal of Middle Schooling*, Volume 8, No 2 in November 2008. Many thanks go to Dr Donna Pendergast as writer and the Working Party who provided so much critique and feedback during the writing process. The Position Paper is also available on the MYSA website. An electronic version can be sent to you from the MYSA office, if you wish.

2. National Curriculum Board Forum: Stages of Schooling

Recently I represented MYSA at this Forum when the views and perspectives related to stages of schooling were discussed. At present, there are Stages 1, 2, 3, 4 for P-12 schooling. We will need to 'wait and see' what the final decision will be as to how the stages will be grouped. It is hoped that this will be based on a developmentally responsive curriculum framework.

3. MCEETYA Action Plan

A *Consultation Draft Action Plan* has been developed to accompany the *Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians*. Members of the MYSA Management Committee have provided a response to the section: *Enhancing middle years development*. This response was emailed to members via the listserv.

4. Team Award

I remind you that entries for this award must be received at the MYSA office by 20 March 2009. Open to MYSA members, the winning team will be honoured at the International Conference in May, to which the team members receive complimentary registration and a prize from Hawker Brownlow Education. Details are on the conference page of the MYSA website.

5. Regional Networks

We do welcome three new Regional Coordinators this year – on the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and SW Queensland. Please see the full list and contacts later in this Newsletter.

Last, but my no means least – if you have not yet registered for the 6th International Conference, go to www.mysa.org.au

See you there!

Susan Hearfield



The 6th International Conference of the Middle Years of Schooling Association Inc

Connecting in the middle years

Switch on!

Jump in!

Take off!

Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, Queensland, Australia, 21 – 23 May 2009

www.mysa.org.au

Middle Years of Schooling Association Inc

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From the President

I trust the start of 2009 has been positive for both you and your students. While school holidays are often a time for us to relax and switch off our 'school brain', developments towards the end of last year and the beginning of Term 1 have kept us busy as an Association.

Australian Education Minister's Biennial Forum

I was pleased to represent MYSA at this inaugural forum held at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. The centrepiece of the event was the launch of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians. The intent of this document is to set the national tone and direction for education over the coming years. A copy can be downloaded from the MCEETYA website (www.mceetya.edu.au). In what proved to be a controversial move, the middle years are for the first time recognised as a distinct priority alongside the early and senior years. This was questioned by some attending the forum. In response, Professor Peter Dawkins, the chair of the committee responsible for drafting the paper, made it clear that research clearly shows the middle years to be a period of significant disengagement from schooling and the ministers from each of the states had insisted that they be included as a distinct priority in the Declaration. By the time you receive this Newsletter, an Action Plan will be close to publication and will outline specific strategies to meet the declaration's goals. This is an unprecedented opportunity for middle years practitioners. I encourage you to read through the Declaration and the Action Plan when it becomes available.

February Management Meeting

Our first meeting for the year saw the addition of two new members on the Management Committee. Andrea Pugh and Sandra Hawken have agreed to assist us until our next Annual General Meeting as Ordinary Members. As a Committee, we thank them for their time and efforts. In terms of Committee business, the national emphasis on the middle years means our support and advocacy will shift from the margins and closer to the centre of federal and state policy debates. We spent most of the day working through our strategic direction for the coming years (a copy of the strategic plan will be made available on the website for you to read), defining roles within the Association, and working in teams to develop submissions for the National Curriculum Board regarding the subject framework papers feedback. Many thanks must go to committee members for their time and efforts during the day.

YouTube Advocacy and Professional Development

I have been working on new ways for MYSA to achieve its goals. The success of Barack Obama's presidential campaign is proof that the networking opportunities provided by the internet are an effective way to connect people with ideas. Spurred on by this idea, I have worked on some 'micro-professional development' videos which have been hosted in *YouTube* as a way of promoting our conference this year, the Association and effective middle years practice in general. To find them, enter the terms 'MYSA' and 'middle school' into a *YouTube* search. I believe that this is rapidly emerging as one of the most effective ways to quickly share teaching ideas. As an Association of professionals, I am convinced that there is vast potential for our membership to make a real difference in each other's teaching.

Thank you to our regional members for your efforts in assisting in our regional meetings. Your work goes a long way to making a significant difference in the learning and lives of young adolescents in their middle years of schooling.

See you in May!

Junn Kato

MYSA Advocacy and the National Curriculum Board

In the last MYSA Newsletter we called for responses from MYSA members to the propositions posed by the National Curriculum Board (NCB). Since this time there has been much activity both at MYSA and the NCB.

In October last year, the NCB published five documents for public consultation via their website. Consultation around *The Shape of the National Curriculum: A Proposal for Discussion* closed in December, however consultation on the four framing papers (for English, Mathematics, Sciences and History) closed more recently at the end of February.

At the last MYSA management meeting, we spent some time unpacking these papers and looking at what they would mean to us as middle years educators. Following this meeting, the team had online conversations to tighten up the response and it has now been submitted to NCB.

In framing our response from a MYSA perspective, there were some general but key issues which the team felt should be strongly articulated. Additionally, members of

SCHOOL FOCUS

Northern Beaches Christian School, NSW

Students taking the lead!

the Management Committee broke into groups to look at each of the framing papers individually and prepare a learning area specific response. You may have already seen the response which our President, Junn, sent out on the listserv.

Now the curriculum scoping phase is drawing to a close, you may have seen through your networks an 'Expression of Interest' that was sent around to recruit writers and advisory panellists to the curriculum development phase. Writing is to commence late April and MYSA will stay involved in the process and continue to provide advice to the NCB as requested.

Finally, following analysis of all the feedback received during the consultation period, revised versions of the five papers will be uploaded onto the NCB website in April. If you have not registered already, the NCB's online consultation and feedback system is an opportunity to receive up-to-date information about the progress of NCB. Through this system of alerts, you receive updates about curriculum development, publication of consultation feedback and opportunities for further participation. You can register at www.ncb.org.au/get_involved/subscribe/subscribe.htm.

Emily Sangster
MYSA Treasurer



MYSA
Management
Committee working
on responses to the
NCB Framework
Papers

Leadership at Northern Beaches Christian School is not limited to students or staff who have been assigned official leadership positions. To lead is defined as *to take the initiative in an action*. In the last few weeks, students from across the school have demonstrated inspiring leadership through actions that they have taken.

In the wake of the tragic Victorian fires, a large number of our students have earnestly wanted to help. We have seen some heartfelt, innovative and successful activities stem from students with a passion for making a difference. Students initiated and ran a Crazy Sock Day where students and teachers were encouraged to wear crazy socks and donate a gold coin. A group of Year 4 students organised to sell apple slinkies. A Wet Sponge Throw was planned by some enthusiastic boys and students brought in treats for a Cake Day. We also had a Jelly Bean Guessing Competition run by a group of Year 5 boys. Throughout the school, we have seen the compassion of students initiating positive action in the midst of a national tragedy.

At Northern Beaches, our mission statement is to provide Excellence in Education and to encourage Christianity in Action, which our students have clearly demonstrated to us. They have shown that the heart of leadership is following God's desire for us to love, bless and serve others. The students are positive role models to us all.

At times, many of us feel incapable of being able to make a difference. However, as these students have demonstrated, it is simply taking what we have and being proactive. At the end of last year, one student organised a highly successful event through her part time job at a local cinema. By using what she had in her hand she singly raised enough money for Mission Cambodia which equated to a month's rice for 25 families. This year, our textiles teacher and a team of helpers are sewing cushions from donated fabric to sell for Mission Cambodia. Last year, a student and staff member were baking fresh cakes, cookies and slices daily to support Hannah's House in Cambodia. These are a few examples of ways in which our students and staff have given of themselves. These contributions will transform lives and



have stirred the hearts of others in our community.

All these acts of service demonstrated to us the varied and diverse ways in which we can make a difference and one cannot help but be moved to consider what is in our hands. Each of us has gifts we could use to serve others. As a community of students, parents and staff, we are challenged to follow the lead of the young people, to take the initiative and make a difference and perhaps even change the world!

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