




## Term 3 2006 Newsletter

### Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of the MYSA Newsletter that is being distributed electronically to members. The Management Committee is currently considering revisions to the Newsletter, including the possibility of moving to shorter newsletters that are distributed more frequently. We hope to eventually move to a fully electronic format with links to articles, ideas etc, possibly on the MYSA website. Whilst this will take some time to develop, we would be keen to receive feedback and further suggestions from members on ideas for the newsletter.

In this edition, we introduce *Talking Point*, a new section that will focus on a topic relating to the middle years of schooling. We will invite feedback from members and share the feedback in the following edition. In this edition, the focus is on MYSA Membership.

**Tony Cartmel**  
 Publications Coordinator  
 tcartmel@wmac.com.au



**'Middle Years Showcase - Brisbane'**  
 Schools share practical ideas about 'what works for them' in the middle years

**Presenting Schools**

**Browns Plains State High School**  
 Engaging through technology

**West Moreton Anglican College**  
 Year 8 Orientation Program

**Villanova College**  
 Middle Schooling - the first year

**Southside Education**  
 Building relationships through inclusive schooling

*Wednesday, 6 September 2006, 7.00 - 9.00pm*  
 Villanova College (The Augustine Centre)  
 24 Sixth Avenue, Coorparoo

(Enter the front gates from Dowar Street. - the Augustine Centre is on the right.)

**Cost:** \$11.00 - MYSA members; \$16.50 - non-members

### From the President

Contemporary society presents very different challenges to those faced by educators just a few decades ago. While many of the traditional functions of schools remain valid, there is also the need to meet new responsibilities that require varied and engaging teaching strategies and relevant curriculum. The task of educating a child is not one that can be achieved by a single person. It is a team effort!

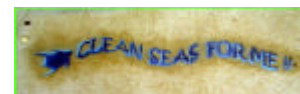
There are many kinds of teams in our lives – sporting teams, musical groups, working committees, religious groups, youth groups and special interest groups. These groups all share the following characteristics: a shared purpose or common goal; people having to work together; and a payoff for everyone on the team.

Have you stopped to consider the teams of which you are a member? In your school or learning community, which team or teams do you belong to and what is your role? There are many teams in schools. Some are long term – as in the case of team teaching and interdisciplinary teams. Others are short term – such as working parties. In all these teams, the one non-negotiable component is that people must work together. Without common goals and the motivation to head in the same direction, no matter how hard the individual works, the team will be less than productive.

Teamwork is an essential ingredient for successful middle schooling. You have an important role to play in your teams. Help each other to win, take pride in each other's victories and speak positively about each other and about your organisation at every opportunity. The slogan 'Together Everyone Achieves More', or TEAM, rings true for all teachers and is a motivation for positive involvement in teams.

**Geoff Sippel**  
 President  
 gsipp1@eq.edu.au

# Wondai State School P-10 Action Science Program



## How is the program innovative?

Action Science is a lead Middle Phase of Learning strategy at Wondai P-10 State School. It is an environmental science elective that runs in Semester 1 each year and investigates local issues using the Action Research model. Teachers involved in Action Science are modelling pathways to 'getting it right' in the middle years. This is being achieved through the delivery of a practical, real life learning model for students. Our approach embraces our young people's initial abstract thinking about global issues linking it to every day local environmental problems.

Key features of Action Science are the development of:

- enterprising, lifelong learners, who are regularly participating in an active manner in our local catchment issues and therefore the global environment
- our learners as investigators of local area sustainability issues, through the adoption of an action research model
- partnerships with local landholders, private businesses, government departments (including Department of Natural Resources, Kingaroy), Burnett Mary Regional Group (BMRG), and the Burnett branch of the Queensland Rural Women's Network.

Action Science is an integral component of our sustainable school ethos and supports the school's vision of "Grow together – produce the best", in relation to environmental sustainability. It is a key strategy in meeting the performance indicators within our Wondai P-10 State School Sustainability Action Plan. Students use the Action Research model to meet the goals for:

- curriculum (sociology)
- site and grounds (ecology)
- school resources (technology).



## Inclusiveness and participation

The Action Science elective is available to all students in Years 8 - 10 in Semester 1 each year. The program format allows students to choose a work team to join based on their interests and skills. This ensures inclusiveness and maximum participation of all students regardless of their academic or behavioural history. For example, in 2006, the students have brainstormed and then formed four teams – Stormwater, Litter, Water Use and Energy – to address the issue of resource

management within our school.

Examples of activities carried out by the Stormwater team include:

- liaising with the school groundsman to map out the stormwater drains within the school and taking photos to be used in a display
- cleaning a number of school drains that were full of leaf litter from the building gutters
- designing and painting "Clean Seas for Me" signs next to the stormwater drains to emphasis the school's Reef Guardian status and encourage students not to litter
- liaising with the school Principal and Head of Department about painting signs
- writing thank you letters to the Wondai Shire Council for assisting with guest speakers
- writing an action plan
- publishing the action plan.

We have found that by encouraging students to develop plans and carrying out activities that they feel they can achieve and that use the skills they have to offer, the engagement level is extremely high, particularly with students who do not engage with the curriculum in other areas.

Comments from students endorse this observation:

*Action Science is mad! It's really good fun!* (Yr 8 boy)

*This is going to be so good!*

(Two Yr 9 boys very keen to start on their action plan.)

*Can you make Action Science go all year instead of one semester. We want to keep going on our projects and see what effect they have over the whole year.*

(Two Yr 9 boys)

Further evidence of the success of the program to engage students is the fact that students work independently around the school on various projects with minimal supervision and there have been no reports of misbehaviour of our students being off task. A recent survey of 20 past and present Action Science students yielded the following results:

- 90% of students enjoyed Action Science
- 90% of students would recommend Action Science to other students
- 95% of students felt they learnt more about science by doing the elective
- 100% of students enjoyed the hands on nature of the elective.

**Sue Gibson (Action Science Teacher)**  
Wondai State School - Queensland



## Snapshots

### The Monthly Newsletter

The monthly newsletter has been one of the main forms of communication in the Middle School at Shalom College, Bundaberg. 'Inside Year Eight' and 'The Year Nine Files' were started as a means of telling our parents, and the remainder of the staff, what we were doing in those year levels. Each class in Years 8 and 9 is allocated a month in the school calendar. The Core Studies teachers then work with their students to write, design and construct the newsletter. We try to get every student to make a contribution to the newsletter for their class. All aspects of the students' academic, sporting, cultural and extra curricular life are covered. The class is then presented with a laminated colour edition as evidence of their efforts.

We have found this to be a great way to tell the rest of the school what we are doing and the students feel proud of what they have achieved.

**Debbie Bolam**

Middle Schooling Coordinator - Shalom College, Bundaberg

### Kids' Congress Report

Our Lady of Dolours Middle School students are well underway in organising Brisbane's first Kids' Congress to be held on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of September at the Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre, Nathan.

Kids' Congress is a two-day technology and learning conference organised by kids, for kids in Years 6 - 8. Students will become experts in their selected breakout topics, choosing from Claymation, Robo Challenge, Garageband, IWeb, Photoshop and many more.

As we are a highly motivated group of students, we have decided to take firm action against childhood obesity focusing on *Healthy and Active Lifestyles* as our theme running through the technology breakouts. After hearing so much publicity on the subject, we have jumped into action.

We have had so much interest from schools around Brisbane that we have had to close registrations early!!

If your school was one of the lucky ones to register, we can't wait to have you attend. There will be fun activities during break times, all focusing around having an active lifestyle.

**Media Liaison Committee - Brisbane Kids' Congress**

Bianca, Chelsea, Jennifer and Shawnee

### Middle School on the Front Foot

Each year at St Philip's Christian College, Newcastle, a theme is set that serves as a focal point for the College community. This year, the College theme is 'On the Front Foot'. To help students understand what this means, and how it can be applied in day to day life, the

Middle School organised a Front Foot Expo. Prior to the Expo, students had lessons and discussion in class where we explored the concept that:

Front Foot Thinking + Front Foot Talking + Front Foot Actions = Front Foot Rewards

At the Expo, all middle school students displayed some representation of their understanding of the College theme through a variety of means such as art work, computer based displays, posters, models, fund raising efforts, stories, movies and drama. The Expo attracted a large crowd of parents, staff members and students from other sections of the College. The depth of thought and creativity that the students' work reflected was exceptional and indicated that many have a solid understanding of what it means for young Christian men and women to really be on the front foot.

An obvious and tangible benefit of the Expo was that all Middle School students across all year levels were working on the same task at the same time. This generated conversations amongst students across the years and gave them a greater appreciation of the talents and ideas of one another.

**Graeme Evans**

Head of Middle School - St Philip's Christian College, Newcastle

## Talking Point 1

### How can we make individual membership more attractive for MYSA?

Colleagues, at present, I'm brainstorming ideas on how we can encourage more individuals to join MYSA. Currently the benefits include copies of the MYSA journals (2), newsletters and discounts to attend MYSA professional learning activities. Over half of our current membership base is categorised as Institutional Membership which represents one membership for an entire Institution. Some ideas brought to my attention in recent days for discussion include the following:

- discounts on Regional/National Business chains
- access to MYSA Website secured links for lessons/units of work and other professional related information
- increased discounts on MYSA professional learning activities
- funding assistance opportunities for conferences – state/National/International.

If you have any other ideas I would be delighted to hear from you. Please send your ideas to:

cfrench@was.qld.edu.au

**Chris French**

MYSA Management Committee

## Regional Reports

### Victoria - Western Division

Over 40 teachers from Catholic, independent and government schools met at Geelong Grammar School on August 17<sup>th</sup> for the inaugural meeting of a new MYSA Regional Group. Heather Thompson, Years 7/8 Academic Coordinator at GGS, and Steve Solomonson, Cluster Educator (Belmont-Highton), coordinated this first meeting.

Stephen Palmer, the ICT Manager at Essendon North Primary School, presented a twilight seminar on "Digital Learning Portfolios". He captured the attention of his audience with exceptional examples of students' portfolios, speaking passionately about their educational value.



Steve workshopped three articles on the topic of improved teaching and learning through digital portfolios. He then demonstrated the potential use of software such as "EdCube" that he has developed with the teachers and students at Essendon North.

Information regarding the next meeting will be circulated throughout the Western Division.

### Steve Solomonson - Regional Coordinator

### Sydney

Sydney schools have wanted to form a MYSA Regional Group for some time and on Monday August 14<sup>th</sup> 2006 it happened! Sixteen teachers from government, Catholic, independent schools and universities banded together at Macquarie University, School of Education for the first formal meeting. Monthly meetings will be held February – November inclusive for 2006-2007 with guest speakers chosen to meet group interests and needs.

At our initial get together, it was fascinating to hear from a group member, Michael Costello, Manager, DET NSW Strategic Initiatives Division, about the impending

release (October 2006) of the NSW State government policy concerning Middle Schooling. Group consensus dictated that it would have been good to hear what is in the policy but unfortunately any prior information is embargoed until the release date.

An informal guessing competition has begun, however, concerning what it might contain and how it may be received by teacher colleagues, parents and adolescent students. We're having fun already! All offers of advice and support from other regions are welcome during this complex but exciting startup phase. Please email:

pamela.matters@mq.edu.au,  
sarah.hay@det.nsw.edu.au  
richard.starr@sacs.nsw.edu.au.

### Dr Pam Matters - Regional Coordinator

### ACT

The ACT Regional Network held its inaugural meeting on 24 August 2006 at St Francis Xavier College, Florey ACT. Members of the Steering Committee were delighted to have 31 people from across the sectors in attendance.

Regional Network Coordinator, Scott Anderson, gave a welcome and a brief introduction to MYSA, its aims and functions and forms of membership. Many of the schools represented are not currently institutional members of MYSA and we expect to see this change quickly as the result of our meeting.

Colleen Rowe, Middle School Coordinator at St Francis Xavier, discussed the Middle Years Program at St Francis and the development and design of the new middle school building that has recently opened. We were given a tour of this excellent new facility and had the opportunity to ask questions.

Finally, Leah Leggett and Kathy Talbot from St Francis and Fay Chisholm from Burgmann Anglican gave some brief reflections on the recent SAPMEA International Middle Schooling Conference in Adelaide.

Our plan is to have a meeting at one of our member schools each term, one larger event such as a half day or full day conference each year and a social event each year. We were all very encouraged by the great attendance at our first meeting and look forward to the rich professional sharing to come.

### Scott Anderson - Regional Coordinator