Hello Staff, Parents, Carers and friends

The first two weeks of Term 4 have been very hectic with several exciting events taking place, however before I explain them in this newsletter I want to firstly, provide a short report on the AASE conference held on 30th September and the 1st October.

Reflections on the AASE conference – ‘The Door is Open’: Repertoires of Practice

The weather was wild and windy in Adelaide when our small contingent of staff members, Joanne Corvinus, Michelle Williams, Bronwyn West and I attended the 2 day AASE conference. Approximately 320 conference delegates met together from overseas as well as all states of Australia. I must congratulate Jo on her confident delivery of a very well planned presentation on ‘4 Blocks: The Next Step Planning Collaboratively to integrate Literacy Learning through the Curriculum for Students with Diverse Needs and Literacy Levels’. Jo’s presentation was very authentic for every member of the audience because she was able to relate her teaching practice directly to the individual students she teaches on a day to day basis. She explained how the teaching staff this year is responsible for planning and delivering the literacy teaching and learning segments into other areas of the curriculum, including Numeracy, Life Skills, Science and The Arts, by utilising a common theme across the whole school. Jo provided details of learner’s achievements including their reactions to the texts that are focused on during self-directed and guided reading. Her workshop included a collection of video clips depicting classroom practices and teacher collaboration and reflection about this new initiative.

Two keynote speakers at the conference, Professor Barry Carpenter from Worcester University UK and Mr Barry Coughlan, University of Limerick, Ireland discussed the newly emerging landscapes in childhood disability. In today’s 21st century, there are many societal factors that require teachers to identify a new group of children with complex learning needs – Fragile X Syndrome, Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (which affects 30% of our indigenous population), survivors of accidents, children born prematurely who survive at 22 weeks + and a growing...
number of children diagnosed with mental health needs. Both speakers explained that this group of children has emerged rapidly in the first decade of the 21st century and that educators will be required to reflect on cognitive neuroscience which is the study of biological processes and interactions underlying cognition. Effective teachers will need a sound knowledge of the following to positively support this new group of students with complex needs:

- Memory – long and short term
- Working memory – mental ability to hold and manipulate information ‘in mind’
- Flexibility and adjusting to change
- Devising and modifying strategies for problem-solving
- Motivation
- Self-regulation – prioritising and modifying priorities

The conference also provided opportunities for us to share ideas, reflect and discuss our own experiences with fellow delegates particularly in relation to the current impacts on special education and classroom practices.

**Visitors from Singapore**

It was a great pleasure to welcome Ms Fauziah Ahmad, Principal of the Rainbow Centre and two family members Ramuna Abdul Rahman and Rahimah Abdul Rahman to both campuses of SOSE NW during the first week of Term 4. This was a reciprocal visit after I visited the Rainbow Centre in July this year. Fauziah wished to gain an understanding of the 4 Blocks Literacy program and she also wanted to observe our safe lifting practices for assisting students with physical disabilities when toileting and using the spa. Ramuna was responsible for observing and videoing teaching practices in several classrooms whilst Fauziah wrote notes and later asked teachers questions. Rahimah, who has a working background in engineering observed and photographed the layouts of the disabled toilet facilities at both campuses with a particular focus on the overhead tracking, hoisting and use of slings to support students from a wheelchair to height adjustable change table.

Mr Bruce Cameron, General Manager of the LSNW, officially welcomed the visitors on behalf of Mr Colin Pettit, Secretary, Department of Education along with Mrs Sandra French, President of the Burnie Campus School Association on Tuesday, 15th October.

Our visitors also fitted in some sightseeing – Cataract Gorge, Launceston and Cradle Mountain. They were particularly impressed with the scenery along the highway between Devonport and Burnie.

This visit was one of friendship, goodwill and a respectful exchange of best practice centred on support of students and their families. SOSE NW has initiated an Asian educational connection!

**RBF Principal of the Year Awards**

It was with great pride that I represented SOSE NW as a finalist at a ceremony at Wrest Point Casino on Friday evening, 18th October. I was nominated by Mr Bruce Cameron and felt most honoured to receive accolades for the vision to establish our school as a support to other schools in the Learning Service NW through sharing specialist knowledge, professional learning and technology support. This is a ‘shared’ award through the ongoing commitment by all staff members and therapy professionals who positively support our team approach to develop and share expertise to implement high quality programming to all students with severe disabilities. Congratulations to everyone!

Kind regards

Grace
Donated harp strikes right chord

STUDENTS at the School of Special Education North West were given the opportunity to play the harp last week after Forth harpist Geoff Linder donated one of his handmade instruments to the school.

Mr Linder donated the harp in preparation for the school’s Camp Clayton arts camp in November.

The harp took Mr Linder about 120 hours to make, and was built from an old piano.

“It is probably the most rewarding thing that I have ever done in my life,” Mr Linder said. “It is indescribable really, what the harp does, and the kids can be proactive in playing it.” Mr Linder will join other musician volunteers and artists at Camp Clayton on November 13, 14, and 15.

School of Special Education North West principal Grace Brown said up to 70 kids would be attending the camp.

Mrs Brown said Ability Employment, community donations, school fundraising and volunteers made the camp possible.

“The students are totally immersed in the arts, and it is also an opportunity for them to stay overnight and have the experience of being away from their home, learning how to be independent,” she said.

“They will all have an opportunity to play the harp and develop sensitivity to music and other mediums.”

Mrs Brown said the students would produce a silk painting “camp masterpiece”. “Last year we produced a paper maché sculpture,” she said.