2009 Annual School Report
Richmond River High School

NSW Public Schools – Leading the way
Messages

Principal's message

It is with great pride and satisfaction that I present the 2009 Richmond River High School Annual Report to the families of each of our students, and to our wider community. As always, this report presents a transparent and detailed analysis not only of our students' excellent results in public examinations, but also of the diverse and dynamic context within our school from which these, and an enormous variety of other results, both curricular and extra-curricular, emerge. While examination results on their own are certainly important for the future plans of young people, they are by no means the only "measure" by which a school's "success" or "effectiveness" can be judged. This report presents a balanced and comprehensive reflection on the many ways in which Richmond River High School contributes to the growth and development of its students.

Our school consciously identifies as a "Caring School of Excellence" in that we are a public high school, open to all students in our drawing area, bringing with them a huge diversity in background and ability level. This report details the ways in which we care for and embrace our diverse student population, providing every student with every opportunity to achieve the excellence of which they are all capable.

Through the ongoing commitment and professionalism of our experienced and compassionate staff, an enormous variety of new and existing innovative programs has enhanced student learning. These programs, ranging from the "Keeping Kool" program, launched in partnership with Youth Connections North Coast for Stage 4 boys at risk of disengaging from learning, to the cross curricular Personal Interest Projects completed by all Year 8 students, to the refinement of our "Reach High" differentiated curricula using the Quality Teaching framework, have all contributed to the dynamic and inclusive nature of learning in our school.

Our students have benefitted from the excellent opportunities that have been provided in the fields of leadership, sport, regional, state and national competitions, and the list goes on. The outstanding levels of student success detailed in this report are a clear consequence of our ongoing focus on capacity building, not only of students as well rounded young men and women, but also of our staff as teachers, mentors and role models. The dynamic of positive relationships among students, and between students and staff within our school is a cornerstone of our success.

The commitment of our staff to Quality Teaching over many years is clearly in evidence, for example, in our outstanding public examination results and the implicit value added to levels of student achievement which these results reflect as groups of students progress through NAPLAN, School Certificate and Higher School Certificate testing. While our core business is certainly curriculum delivery, the academic results we achieve cannot be seen in isolation to the capacity building programs which surround them.

Richmond River High School remains the public high school of choice for the Lismore community. This is certainly a mantle of which we are very proud, but one which we do not take lightly, nor do we take it as granted. Through the ongoing support and hard work of our entire school learning community, we will continue to ensure the dynamism and vitality which makes our school a "caring school of excellence". Many thanks are extended to our hard working teaching, support and administrative staff, partner agencies in youth support and counselling, volunteer readers, canteen workers and local business personnel who have supported our school in 2009. As always, the ongoing support of our P&C, parents and carers is greatly appreciated.

I certify that the information in this report is the result of a rigorous school self-evaluation process and is a balanced and genuine account of the school's achievements and areas for development.

Di Williamson

Relieving Principal

P&C message

The Richmond River High School Parents and Citizens’ Association has a well established relationship with the school executive and its staff. The parent body is encouraged to be involved in every aspect of school life. The P&C plays an active role in all policy development and review, interview panels for school appointments and allocation of funds. We work in conjunction with the school's management team to resolve issues associated with maintenance, air conditioning, grant applications and school improvements.

The P&C supports a praise scheme to improve student progress and behaviour as well as a merit scheme for excellent student achievement via canteen vouchers. The P&C provides financial support for all Key Learning Areas (KLAs), hire of an air conditioned venue for the HSC and recognition of outstanding achievements of Year 12 students through scholarships which are presented at their formal graduation. In 2009 the P&C also committed funds to the Community Partnership Program which supported the position of Community Liaison Officer.
Our parents and carers are clearly connected to our school in many ways. Parents participated in a number of school routines such as classroom, canteen and library assistance, excursions, socials, tutoring students experiencing difficulties in reading and mathematics, acting as scribes in exams, assisting at sports carnivals, open nights and student orientations, transporting students to out of school activities, as well as assisting with drama and musical performances. Parents have also been panel members for the Year 10 Oral Portfolios, the Year 8 Personal Interest Projects and the School Management Committee Action Groups. Parent support has improved in 2009 with increasing numbers of new parents. This is a very positive sign for the future.

Linda Kelly

Student representative’s message

The Student Representative Council (SRC) continually demonstrates a commitment to the promotion of visual student leadership. We provide practical and financial support for the core values of student success (SRC sponsorship of student school representatives), excellent opportunities (funding of improvements to the school physical environment), innovative programs (provides student voice in the development of school policies) and quality teaching (purchase of teaching resources).

The co-presidents, Sam Stead and Ashleigh Pringle, chaired formal assemblies and the remaining council members rotated to chair weekly whole school assemblies. The SRC constantly strives to act as positive role models for all students.

The SRC embraces the excellent opportunities provided through interschool meetings. Five students attended the Regional SRC Camp at Mebbin Springs where they participated in diverse outdoor activities and were motivated by visiting leadership specialists.

Alex Jones (Year 11) held the executive position of vice-president and also attended Youth Parliament. She was the 2009 Lions Youth of the Year.

The SRC organises a school social each term and this is the primary source of income. These funds enable the SRC to sponsor a diversity of opportunities for student success in representative sport, debating, Tournament of the Minds, music camps, CAPA excursions and the Global Leadership Convention.

The SRC continued to provide ushers for the Year 12 Formal, Open Night Expo and representatives to visit Year 6 and discuss secondary school life.

The SRC leads the student body in maintaining a very strong community participation through the Anzac Day march, the Cancer Council, the Salvation Army Red Shield Appeal, the Rescue Helicopter Appeal and Remembrance Day.

The SRC enjoyed a productive relationship with the senior executive regarding the school environment, assemblies and school representation within the community.

2010 promises to be an even busier year and we look forward to the achievement and enjoyment.

Sheryl Williamson

Student Representative Council Executive 2009

Student information

It is a requirement that the reporting of information for all students must be consistent with privacy and personal information policies.

Student enrolment profile

Our student enrolments have grown consistently since 2005. In particular, there was an increase between 2008 and 2009 of 50 students, contributed to again, in no small part, by a substantial Year 7 intake of 176. The larger numbers of students we now have in our Years 7, 8 (153) and 9 (166) cohorts continue to reflect a pleasing degree of community confidence in the core values of quality teaching, innovative programs, excellent opportunities and student success which are reflected across our school.
For the first time in several years, our student numbers reflect gender parity which, in turn, is a reflection of our school’s provision of effective education programs for boys and girls. This has certainly contributed to our proudly comprehensive and inclusive school ethos.

### Student attendance profile

A careful examination of the student attendance figures for Richmond River High School reveals overall, a pleasing outcome for the ongoing commitment of our staff in the delivery of quality teaching and innovative programs that lead to excellent opportunities which, in turn, ensure student success. While our overall attendance rate for 2009 falls marginally below that of the North Coast Region and the state, the 2009 attendance figure nonetheless maintains a consistent pattern in recent years of improved attendance rates in this school, by 1% since 2006.

On closer analysis, each of our year groups exceed the average attendance of their cohort across our region, and fall only marginally short of the state average for each cohort group. This trend, however, is not the case for Year 11, whose attendance differs from all other Richmond River High School year groups in falling marginally below the regional average and well below the state average. These figures, in turn, have impacted on our overall school average compared to the region and state figures. Our 2009 Year 11 cohort was atypical of overall attendance patterns for our school in that some 23 students did not complete the year at school, with a characteristically marked decline in attendance rates as they sought opportunities elsewhere.

Given the above caveat, our staff are, justifiably, well pleased with the supportive and dynamic learning environment provided by Richmond River High School with a significant proportion of students drawn from identified low socio economic backgrounds which, effectively, continues to keep our attendance rates above regional averages and only marginally below state averages.

### Management of non-attendance

Richmond River High School continues to ensure student success through the management and early intervention of partial and whole day truancy. The effective use of our swipe card attendance system ensures a list of student absences is distributed to all staff within 30 minutes of roll call allowing for partial truancy to be reported quickly and whole day absences to be followed up. A head teacher closely monitors attendance rates and fractional truancy through timely and personal contact with parents and carers. Regular contact with students whose attendance is below 85% is maintained through a daily attendance monitoring sheet and an attendance plan as part of PBL is established with parents or carers. An intensive attendance program involving district office HSLO staff, parents and school staff targeting students with chronic non-attendance was trialled. This involved interviews, personalised attendance plans, mentoring and a special roll call where student attendance is rewarded through our rewards and recognition program.

### Retention to Year 12

Since 2006 the percentage of Richmond River High School students who have progressed from completing their School Certificate year to attaining their Higher School Certificate has remained relatively static, as have regional and state figures. Conversely, while there may appear to be a disappointing pattern of gradual decline in our retention rates since 2007, the reality in 2009 was quite positive.
Of the 107 students who began the Preliminary Course in 2008, 62 remained for the final HSC examinations in 2009, leaving us with a 61% retention rate. Of the 45 students who left – the majority during 2008 – 5 students transferred to different schools while most went on to complete apprenticeships or full time TAFE courses, or gained full time employment. Hence, very positive outcomes were provided for these young people.

With these figures in mind, our staff have been working through a range of strategies to lift our retention rates, including differentiated curriculum for Stages 4 and 5 ‘Reach High’ classes, improved links with Southern Cross University through the Outreach program and the expansion of student involvement in Vocational Education Training courses both at school and TAFE for Stage 6 students.

### Retention to Year 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School SEG</th>
<th>SC03- HSC05</th>
<th>SC04- HSC06</th>
<th>SC05- HSC07</th>
<th>SC06- HSC08</th>
<th>SC07- HSC09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>55.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEG</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>61.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Post-school destinations

Of our 62 Year 12 students in 2009, 55 responded to the survey on which the above data is based. It has been extremely pleasing to note that 42% of these students intended enrolling at a university, a huge increase on previous years, and 33 points above the state average. It was equally pleasing to note that 68% of respondents were able to describe clear career goals which they had set for themselves over the next two years.

### Year 12 students undertaking vocational or trade training

Of the 62 students who sat for the HSC at Richmond River High School in 2009, 31 completed at least one Vocational Education Training (VET) course, representing exactly 50% of the cohort. Thirteen of these students, or 21% of the cohort, completed a VET course at TAFE (known as a TVET course). Further, 15 students (24% of the cohort) completed two or more VET courses as part of their HSC pattern of study, while 6 of these (10%) completed three or more courses. Pleasingly, 4 students (6% of the cohort) completed a school based traineeship as part of their HSC pattern of study.

Overall, these figures reflect the expanding patterns of study available to students at our school, expanding opportunities for all students from our diverse community to achieve success through their studies. This level of success in turn provided the meaningful platform from which post school opportunities can be accessed.

### Year 12 students attaining HSC or equivalent vocational educational qualification

All 62 of our 2009 HSC cohort (i.e. 100%) successfully attained their HSC at Richmond River High School. As has already been noted, 31 of these students (i.e. 50%) included in their pattern of study one or more Vocational Education Training courses. Of these 31 students, 15 completed two VET courses and 6 completed three VET courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University (attending/accepted)</td>
<td>8 (13%)</td>
<td>26 (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE (attending fulltime)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>13 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working fulltime (including apprenticeships, traineeships)</td>
<td>9 (14%)</td>
<td>12 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking work fulltime (including applications for apprenticeships)</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
<td>4 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown (including undecided)</td>
<td>38 (60%)</td>
<td>7 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (including overseas, deferred university)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage currently engaged in fulltime study and or education</strong></td>
<td><strong>18%</strong></td>
<td><strong>72%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vocational Education Training courses are an increasingly popular choice for students at our school. Students who choose these courses are career oriented, or may be planning for casual employment while completing tertiary studies. Regardless, students can attain various levels of training that can assist when seeking employment, or as accreditation for further study.

We are beginning to see excellent results from our students sitting VET courses as part of their HSC pattern of study. This success will certainly be expanded given this school’s selection for development as a Trade Training Centre as part of the Lismore Community of Secondary Schools (LCoSS). This development will see approximately $3 million spent on the refurbishment of our metals and wood workshops, hospitality rooms and agriculture department to current industry standards. These facilities will then be available to all Stage 6 students from LCoSS schools.

We certainly look forward to seeing increasing numbers of students attaining HSC equivalent vocational education qualifications through our refurbished LCoSS facilities.
Staff information

It is a requirement that the reporting of information for all staff must be consistent with privacy and personal information policies.

Staff establishment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Principal(s)</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Teachers</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Teachers</td>
<td>50.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher of Emotional Disabilities</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Teacher Learning Assistance</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Librarian</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>65.8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of our total of 78 teachers and support staff, three members of staff identify as having an indigenous background, giving us a percentage figure of 4% in our overall staffing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position – Support Staff</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Administrative Manager</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Administrative Officers</td>
<td>8.082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Assistant</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Education Officer</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Assistance</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers Aide Special (ED)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12.682</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher qualifications

All teaching staff meet the professional requirements for teaching in NSW public schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>% of staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree or Diploma</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Financial summary

This summary covers funds for operating costs and does not involve expenditure areas such as permanent salaries, building and major maintenance.

**Income**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balance brought forward</td>
<td>546,751.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global funds</td>
<td>499,375.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tied funds</td>
<td>205,712.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School &amp; community sources</td>
<td>292,354.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>19,767.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust receipts</td>
<td>33,264.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canteen</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total income</strong></td>
<td>1,597,226.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expenditure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching &amp; learning</td>
<td>138,411.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key learning areas</td>
<td>93,397.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excursions</td>
<td>64,271.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular dissections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>13,305.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training &amp; development</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tied funds</td>
<td>341,464.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual relief teachers</td>
<td>142,317.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration &amp; office</td>
<td>153,203.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-operated canteen</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>90,404.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>58,558.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust accounts</td>
<td>26,669.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital programs</td>
<td>74,907.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total expenditure</strong></td>
<td>1,196,910.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balance carried forward</strong></td>
<td>400,315.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our canteen is operated by the P&C and this accounts for the zero income and expenditure on the school accounts.

Likewise training and expenditure is paid from Professional Learning tied funding program.

A full copy of the school’s 2009 financial statement is tabled at the annual general meetings of the School Council and/or the parent body. Further details concerning the statement can be obtained by contacting the school.

School performance 2009

Our school takes great pride in its mission statement as a caring school of excellence. This is certainly reflected in the quality and diversity of our achievements.
Achievements

Arts

Our school has a long history of quality student work in the Creative Arts which in 2009 continued to be recognised at a regional, state and national level. Student success and innovative programs continue to be showcased by the achievements of our students across the Creative Arts.

The past three years has seen drama stage a renaissance. The elective has become increasingly popular with students and once again Richmond River High School is recognised in the community for its quality drama program. The school has developed a close relationship with several local and Sydney based theatre companies. NORPA engaged our Year 10 students to participate in its publicity, while The Bell Shakespeare Company selected our school to run free workshops, as well as audition four of our talented Year 10 students for their regional scholarship. Belvoir St Theatre organised for our students to meet some of their actors. Talented Year 9 students Ishkoodah Schofield-Jones and Emerald Moon were selected to design the publicity for the North Coast Region’s DramaWorks. Year 12 students Emma Hofstetter, Tasara Dewhurst, Bianca Batten and Flionn Walsh were selected to perform their HSC work The Island in DramaWorks. Students attended a variety of theatrical excursions and workshops. Year 9 staged an entertaining Greek Theatre performance, while Year 10 led junior students in a series of Shakespeare workshops. The River Theatre Company (Year 11) ran a successful TheatreSports competition. The 2009 HSC drama class entertained the community with their group and individual performances in Fin du Voyage. Students in the HSC class went on to achieve excellent HSC results, with two students placed in Band 6.

Music continued to set the tone as a key means of celebrating student success. 2009 saw a variety of successful and highly entertaining Performance Nights led by Year 7 Reach High, as well as elective music classes. The quality work of our music students and teachers continues to be widely recognised with our students being selected to sing on the Our Kids Christmas CD, while Year 11 student, Hayley Larsen was chosen to sing in the Schools’ Spectacular. The dedication and work of our music students and their teachers was showcased at the seven formal assemblies throughout the year where the school community was entertained by Years 7-12. Students attended a variety of workshops, including the HSC enrichment day at Southern Cross University. The University recognises the quality teaching in music at our school by encouraging its student teachers to undertake their internships here.

HSC students studying the Arts enjoyed the annual HSC ‘Cultural Excursion’ to Sydney. This year the students experienced a variety of theatrical productions and workshops alongside visiting the Art Gallery of NSW to see the Art Express exhibition. Students were given the opportunity to meet a variety of actors and directors.

Visual art had a colourful year. Phase two of the development of the River Gallery has been completed and student work is now being displayed, with the aim of a grand opening in 2010. The RRHS Visual Arts Club was launched and continues to gain interested members. Students participated in a variety of competitions, including the Water Poster Competition won by Sappho Rose of Year 7. Elective visual art students undertook regular visits to the Regional Gallery to experience the latest contemporary exhibitions. Our HSC students displayed their work in the Amplified Exhibition with a stand out film created by Ariel Cameron. We gained a new visual arts teaching space, room 38, providing us with a total of three art rooms.

The success of photography at our school is highly recognised at local, regional, state and national levels. In 2009 we continued to develop this tradition with students gaining awards in a variety of competitions. Some highlights included Bianca Houtzager winning first place in the Coraki Tea Tree Art Competition, as well as nine students gaining Merits of Achievement in the National Ilford Competition. The photography room continues to showcase the quality work of students past and present, while in 2009 Mr Blanch continued to develop the digital imaging lab with the addition of more technology.
Award winning photo by Bianca Houtzager

Sport

Richmond River High School takes pride in providing our students with many opportunities in school sport. We have a strong belief at Richmond River High School that sport is to be enjoyed by all and that winning is not the most important thing. Staff encourage students to be humble in winning and gracious in defeat. Our teaching staff volunteer for roles as coaches, managers, trainers and provide classroom support when teams travel away to venues. In 2009 we provided zone and regional managers in volleyball, touch football, beach volleyball, soccer, softball, baseball, hockey, basketball and cross country. Without this unique characteristic our school would not produce the many marvellous results and provide the opportunity for students of all socio-economic backgrounds to experience sport at a higher level.

Our Annual Sport Awards Ceremony is a very popular part of the school calendar. The format of the awards includes performances by our talented students, a prominent guest speaker, Mr Phillip Newton, North Coast Region Athletics Coach and a slideshow of the year’s achievements. Over 160 students received recognition for their efforts in sport.

In 2009 Tegan Clarke was awarded the Pierre De Courbetin Olympic Award for Sporting Excellence. Tegan travelled to the Olympic Stadium in Homebush to receive her certificate. Tegan also won the Senior Female Sportsperson with participation in zone and regional volleyball, beach volleyball and basketball. It was in cricket that Tegan displayed exceptional skill being named in the New South Wales Combined High School Second Eleven.

Tegan Clarke - Pierre De Courbetin Olympic Award for Sporting Excellence

Senior Male Sportsperson of the Year went to Cameron Clarke with participation in open boys volleyball, open and zone basketball, open touch football, open cricket and athletics age champion.

Ruby Morris was awarded the Junior Female Sportsperson performing in swimming, open basketball, open volleyball, zone, regional and state athletics.

Elliott Black and Daniel Bow were named joint Junior Sportsperson trophy winners for participation in open boys soccer, athletics, volleyball and beach volleyball.

Brendan Gillespie was selected in the New South Wales Combined High School Softball team.

Along with these major achievements we handed out 32 Sporting Excellence Medallions for students who represented in numerous sports throughout the year.

In the sport of beach volleyball we became the North Coast champions for the senior boys and also runner ups for North Coast indoor volleyball finishing ninth at the state finals.

Senior boys volleyball

We also had students represent North Coast teams in athletics, Australian rules, girls cricket, baseball, boys soccer, touch football, softball and volleyball.
Year 7 took part in a range of sports at the Gala Day at Evans River K-12. Our three school carnivals of swimming, cross country and athletics were very well supported with over 75% student attendance and participation.

**Student Success at Regional, State and National Levels**

**Excellent Opportunities for Student Success**

Once again, there was much to celebrate in 2009 in terms of our students taking up an enormous range of excellent opportunities in order to maintain our school’s fine tradition of student success in so many different fields. The scope and quality of these achievements is, in turn, a reflection of the innovative programs which our school offers, demonstrating the obvious link not only between curricular and extra-curricular learning experiences, but also our core values and what we are able to achieve within and beyond our school.

**Major Awards and Achievements**

Our senior students in particular were extremely successful and were accordingly recognised in 2009. Seven of our students, namely Johanna Qualman, Juliette Maher, Adam Keys, Sam Stead, Ariel Cameron, Hayley Larsen and Alex Jones gained the North Coast Region Award for all round academic, leadership and citizenship achievements. Additionally, Sam Stead was also named Lismore Young Australian of the Year.

Our school enjoys a tradition of success with a number of prestigious awards, and this continued in 2009. Johanna Qualman and Juliette Maher of Year 12 were finalists in the Regional Zonta Young Women in Public Affairs competition, while Alex Jones of Year 11 won her zone final to be awarded Lions Youth of the Year. Well done to all of these students.

![Lions Youth of the Year](image)

**Our Teachers Acknowledged**

The Australian Awards for Teaching Excellence recognise outstanding teachers, principals, support staff and schools. These prestigious awards celebrate the work of our best and brightest teachers and recognise the crucial role they play in improving educational outcomes. Richmond River High School had a double celebration with Gae Masters, Head Teacher Teaching and Learning and Christopher Mills, Head Teacher Mathematics being two of only three classroom teachers in NSW awarded the Excellence by a Teacher (Highly Commended). The awards were presented in Canberra by the Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard.

![Australian Award for Teaching Excellence: Gae Masters and Chris Mills](image)

**Creating Opportunities for Students**

2009 will certainly prove a ‘benchmark’ year for Richmond River High School and its surrounding schools with the creation of the Lismore Community of Secondary Schools (LCoSS), which will complement and enhance curriculum developments already in place.

Our school is already well placed in providing excellent opportunities for student success. This begins with our strong tradition of Enrichment Days. In 2009 over 200 Year 6 students from surrounding primary schools took part in our English Enrichment Day.

An overall theme of supporting our broad range of ability levels continued with our Peer Tutoring program in 2009, which saw 15 Year 7 and 15 Year 10 students successfully complete this program, entailing 20 minutes each day, leading to a minimum requirement of 30 hours for the entire year. The program continued to provide improved outcomes in terms of academic, attendance and social skills outcomes for all involved. Further, some 30 Year 8 students, identified through NAPLAN testing results,
participated in the externally funded LAPS tuition program, improving writing, spelling and reading outcomes.

Elsewhere, students in our Years 7, 8 and 9 Reach High classes completed their enrichment research tasks which parents and community members were able to see during our highly successful Showcase Nights. Students in Year 9 also participated in our annual “Hip Pocket” Financial Literacy seminars.

Further, several students certainly took one of our school’s core values, excellent opportunities to heart, creating for themselves further pathways to success. Students in Year 9 were selected to attend the University of Newcastle Maths and Science Summer School, while students from Years 11 and 12 attended the National Youth Science Forum in Canberra, the International Youth Science Forum in Russia (Adam Keys) appointed as Australian Youth Ambassador and the National USB Finance Academy in Sydney (Mary Jamieson).

Our commitment to our students as a caring school of excellence also carried through in our student well being initiatives in 2009. Two of our students, Johanna Qualmann and Ashleigh Pringle, along with our Community Liaison Officer Julian King Salter, won categories in the ‘Kids in the Community’ awards. Meanwhile at school our students benefitted from a range of programs including our ongoing ‘Rock and Water’ program, promoting confidence, self esteem and interpersonal skills among Year 7 students, the ‘Love Bites’ responsible relationships program for Year 10 students and a First Aid course for Year 11 students. These were complemented by a camp for hearing impaired students at Lennox Head and the ‘Taking Action’ workshops for Stage 4 boys who had engaged in bullying behaviour, or who had been the victims of bullying.

In 2009 our school continued to provide pathways to excellent post school opportunities. Students from Years 9 to 11 participated in Work Experience, while students in Years 11 and 12 took part in Work Placement. This resulted in full time TAFE enrolment, apprenticeships and traineeships for school leavers benefitting from the above opportunities to present their work related skills to local employers. Further, Lilith Lowry Yates and Millie Edwards received the Lismore Mayor’s and Southern Cross University Vice Chancellor’s scholarships to the University, along with fifteen Year 12 students gaining offers of early enrolment at Southern Cross University. Ella Ireland was awarded a scholarship to the University of New South Wales.

Our students have also benefitted from a range of culturally enriching activities. All Year 8 students participated in a French Enrichment Day which involved crepe making. A number of senior students were also involved in the ‘G’Day USA’ cultural exchange program, involving a three week visit to the United States.

**Millie Edwards – SCU Scholarship**

Our students have also benefitted from a range of culturally enriching activities. All Year 8 students participated in a French Enrichment Day which involved crepe making. A number of senior students were also involved in the ‘G’Day USA’ cultural exchange program, involving a three week visit to the United States.

**Local and Regional Success**

Once again, our debaters achieved tremendous success in 2009. Our senior debating team were area champions and very creditable regional runners up. Our Years 9 and 10 debating team, made up of Twoey Jones, Emerald Moon, Alice Fleetwood, Ishkoodah Schofield Jones and Lauren Bryant was crowned zone champions and competed well for the divisional title.

Additionally, our Tournament of the Minds teams performed well, being regional runners up in both the Social Sciences and the Language and Literature categories. A team of Year 11 students also competed well in the Regional Model United Nations Assembly.

In other fields a Year 10 student competed successfully at the Regional Interschool Gymkhana, one of our steers was acknowledged as the top priced steer at the Lismore Steer Classic and our school was named Champion Textiles school at the North Coast National Show, Lismore.

**State and National Success**

Our English faculty facilitated a range of opportunities for our students to achieve success in state wide and national competitions. In International Competition and Assessment for Schools (ICAS) in English, spelling and writing, our students gained a total of three distinctions, seven credits and twenty one acknowledgements of participation. Further, in the Newspapers in Education competition, one of our student’s entries was awarded best story. Additionally, our tradition of successful participation in the
Premier’s Reading Challenge continued with 79 students being awarded Certificates of Completion. One Year 8 student received a Gold Award for four years of participation.

The involvement of our students in broader learning opportunities extended also to the National Computer Science Summer School at the University of Sydney, attended by Matthew Linsley-Noakes of Year 11. Our students were also able to achieve scientific success in the Rio Tinto Big Science Competition with four distinctions and eight credits. Our students also participated in the Australian Mathematics Competition, gaining a total of one distinction, thirteen credits and seven acknowledgements of proficiency. Similarly, in the ICAS Mathematics Competition, our students achieved three distinctions and five credits, while in the Australian Mathematics Challenge our students gained three distinctions and five credits.

In other fields of interest, our students participated in the Australian Geography Competition, gaining a commendable three high distinctions, three distinctions and four credits. Finally, our Year 9 Elective French class participated in the “Frogfest” French Film Competition, and their film “Jamie Oliver Croissant Magique” screened in the Premier’s Auditorium, Sydney.

Leadership

One of our strongest traditions at Richmond River High School in terms of providing excellent opportunities for student success is our multi levelled student leadership program. This has certainly proven to be the case in 2009. Aside from our Student Representative Council (see separate report), a growing number of students have benefitted through their participation in our other student leadership groups, namely the Leo Club, the Student Equity Group and the Global Citizenship Action Group.

Our Leo Club had a very busy year, raising money on behalf of the Red Cross Victorian Bushfire Appeal ($388), the Cancer Council ‘Daffodil Day’ ($250) and a “Spider Day” which enabled the donation of over $200 worth of goods to the Women’s Refuge. Students in the group also made small gifts and bookmarks for residents of the Caroona Aged Care Home.

Our Student Equity Group, an open and inclusive group promoting diversity, student voice and acceptance, continued its work in improving equity across the school. Two students, Daisy Axxel Morris and Evanna Kelly, attended the Equity in Education Symposia at the Southern Cross University and in Sydney, along with approximately 100 other students from schools with priority funding from across New South Wales. These events addressed community relationships, student leadership and technology in education. The Equity Group sent representatives to regional student voice meetings, sharing experiences of student leadership with students from schools across the North Coast Region, and also to a human rights forum chaired by Geoffrey Robertson. At school, the Equity Group raised funds for the Southern Cross LADS Foundation, contributed to Lismore City Council’s “Lismore Alive” program and organised our Rainbow Day assembly to promote acceptance and diversity. The group’s hard work was acknowledged through their nomination for an award as part of the annual ‘Kids in the Community’ evening.

2009 saw the emergence of another important student leadership group in the form of the Global Citizenship Action Group, which attended the World Vision Global Youth Convention on the Gold Coast. The group organised a number of school assembly presentations to raise student awareness of issues such as global poverty and environmental degradation. Further, Aliyah Shanti Kenny was a finalist in the nominations for the Queensland Ambassador for World Vision.

Beyond these groups, although in no small part due to the culture of student leadership which they have entrenched at our school, there has been a huge variety of leadership opportunities which our students have taken up. Alex Jones of Year 11 was voted the best opposition speaker at the State Youth Parliament in Sydney and Crystal Evans of Year 12 attended the State Constitutional Convention. Further, three Year 9 students participated in the Youth Environment Society Conference, two Year 9 students attended the Powershift Youth Climate Summit and students in Years 7 and 9 contributed submissions to the Federal Working Party on Human Rights.
Elsewhere, several Year 11 students facilitated sessions at the RRISK safe driving seminar at Southern Cross University and Year 9 students were trained at SCU as Peer Mentors for our incoming Year 7 students. In addition, two students completed the Paddle for Life canoe fundraiser from Lismore to Ballina and fifteen of our students participated in Jump Rope for Heart, raising over $600.

Richmond River High School and its surrounding community will certainly continue to benefit from the tremendous skills in leadership and sense of responsible citizenship which our wide ranging leadership program engenders in our students.

**Academic**

In the National Assessment Program, the results across the Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 literacy and numeracy assessments are reported on a scale from Band 1 to Band 10.

The achievement scale represents increasing levels of skills and understandings demonstrated in the assessments.

**Year 7:** from Band 4 (lowest) to Band 9 (highest for Year 7)

**Year 9:** from Band 5 (lowest) to Band 10 (highest for Year 9)

In the School Certificate the performance of students is reported in performance bands ranging from Performance Band 1 (lowest) to Performance Band 6 (highest).

**Literacy – NAPLAN Year 7**

The lowest measurement for levels of achievement in Year 7 is Band 4, while the highest level of achievement for Year 7 is Band 9. Richmond River High School continues to draw students into its Year 7 intake with a strong grounding in overall literacy, with 51% of students placed in the top three achievement bands, a figure which has been maintained since 2007. This is well above the comparative figure for our Like Schools Group (LSG) at 44% and our Region at 45%.

**Year 7 NAPLAN Reading**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Band Distribution</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>LSG</th>
<th>State</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Band 4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Band 5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>Band 6</td>
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<td>Band 7</td>
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<td>Band 8</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Band 9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
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A closer examination of results achieved across the four elements of literacy testing reflects the priorities which have been identified by our Literacy Action Group, and which are being addressed through our Literacy Improvement Plan (2009 – 2011). Our students’ results in reading were outstanding, with an average of 10.3 points above the state average. Our average results in grammar and punctuation were also above the state average by 1 point. However, as reflected in the targets set by our Literacy Action Group, we need to work with our student intake in relation to writing and spelling. Our students’ results in both of these areas fell below both the state and the LSG averages.

**Year 7 NAPLAN Writing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Band Distribution</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>LSG</th>
<th>State</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Band 4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Band 5</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Band 6</td>
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<td>31</td>
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<td>Band 7</td>
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<td>Band 9</td>
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<td>14</td>
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Our challenge as a school is to recognise the enormous potential of our incoming Year 7 students, demonstrated by pleasing overall levels of achievement in literacy, and build on this by targeting areas that the above results indicate reflect a need for improvement (see reports on the progress and targets of the Literacy Action Group).

**Numeracy – NAPLAN Year 7**

Our intake of Year 7 students each year traditionally demonstrates high levels of achievement in numeracy. In 2009, while our students’ results were sound, with 47.6% achieving in the top three bands, this is below our average corresponding figure for the past three years (54.5%) and slightly below the LSG figure (48.4%). A broader perspective nonetheless provides some reassurance for the group, in that students achieving in the lowest two bands (22.3%) is on par with our LSG and below the state average (23.7%).

**Year 7 NAPLAN Numeracy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Band Distribution</th>
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One of our school’s great successes over recent years has been the innovative programs put in place by our Numeracy Action Group, including the “Hot Maths” program and the “Numeracy in the Middle School” (NIMS) individual tuition program. These programs are regularly revised and updated based on our Numeracy Action Group’s annual analysis of data from NAPLAN and other sources (see separate reports).
Literacy – NAPLAN Year 9

The lowest measurement for levels of achievement in Year 9 is Band 5, while the highest level of achievement for Year 9 is Band 10. Within these parameters, overall literacy results for our 2009 Year 9 students are extremely pleasing. 19% of our students achieved within the top two bands, compared with an average of 12% over recent years – this obviously corresponds with a decline in the lowest two bands (20% in 2009 compared to 22% in recent years) and the middle two bands (60% in 2009 compared to 65% in recent years). Consequently, the data demonstrates a clear upward trend as students who have benefitted from nearly two and a half years of quality teaching and innovative programs at Richmond River High School are promoted into higher achievement bands. Further, the average result in overall literacy for our Year 9 students is a dramatic 20.8 points above our LSG average, and is even .3 points above the state average. This is a remarkable achievement for a school whose drawing area is officially classified as being “low socio economic status”.

Year 9 NAPLAN Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average mark, 2009</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>LSG</th>
<th>State</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>586.1</td>
<td>574.5</td>
<td>577.4</td>
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<tr>
<th>Skill Band Distribution</th>
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<tr>
<td>Band</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number in band 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage in band 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSG average 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State average 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.7</td>
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</table>

On closer analysis, breaking the literacy results into more specific components, these results are even more reassuring for our school community. The clear strengths which have been consistently evident in our annual Year 7 intake (i.e. reading, grammar and punctuation) have been sustained and developed, with our average reading results 22.7 points above the state average, and 23.8 points above our LSG average, while the corresponding figures for grammar and punctuation are similarly pleasing. It is, however, particularly rewarding to note the improvement in our writing results. In recent years, 18.1 % of students achieved within the top two bands for writing, while 38.2% remained in the bottom two bands. In 2009, 27% (up by 8.9%) of students achieved results in the top two bands, while those in the lowest two bands dropped to 32.9% (down by 5.3%). Similarly, our average results for writing exceed both the state and LSG averages by 9 points and 12.6 points respectively.

Year 9 NAPLAN Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average mark, 2009</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>LSG</th>
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<td>574.5</td>
<td>577.4</td>
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<td>8.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>State average 2009</td>
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Within this overall success, our one area of concern remains spelling, where our results – while an improvement on recent years, remain below both LSG and state averages. As indicated earlier, this reinforces the planning and strategies put in place by our Literacy Action Group, which explicitly target spelling across all Key Learning Areas (KLAs) – see separate report.

Year 9 NAPLAN Spelling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average mark, 2009</th>
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<th>LSG</th>
<th>State</th>
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<td>586.4</td>
<td>577.2</td>
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<th>Skill Band Distribution</th>
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<td>Number in band 2009</td>
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<td>Percentage in band 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSG average 2009</td>
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<td>10.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>State average 2009</td>
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Numeracy – NAPLAN Year 9

Our results in numeracy testing for Year 9 were consistent with previous years in terms of highlighting the capacity of our school to raise the standards of an entire cohort of students, rather than an elite group. Some 52.4 percent of our Year 9 students achieved results in the top three bands, compared with 47.3% for our LSG and an average figure of 48.6% across the state. This has placed our overall average mark nearly 7 points above our LSG average and only two points below the state average. Equally, it was extremely pleasing to note that only 2% of our students achieved in the lowest measurable band, compared with an average figure of 4.6% for both our LSG and across the state.

Year 9 NAPLAN Numeracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average mark, 2009</th>
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<tr>
<td>Number in band 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage in band 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSG average 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>State average 2009</td>
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<td>4.6</td>
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</table>

Clearly though, we need to continue to reinforce the innovative programs which feature in our improvement planning for numeracy if we are to lift more students into Band 10 in coming years.

Progress in literacy

Students in our 2009 Year 7 intake, on average, demonstrated substantial improvement on their Year 5 NAPLAN testing results for literacy, with an average improvement in results by 55 points, compared to 55.2 points across the state and 53.2 points in our LSG. In more detail, students achieving in the top bands improved their results by an average 26.1 points, in the middle bands by 44.2 points and in the lower bands by 29.7 points.

The results for our Year 9 students in 2009 were even more encouraging. After nearly two and a half years at Richmond River High School, our students demonstrated an average rate of improvement on Year 7 NAPLAN results (38.5...
points) which was five points above the LSG average (33.6 points) and three points above the state average (35.5 points). Further, programs in place at Richmond River High School were clearly able to extend our top students by an average of 29.1 points, our middle band students by 47.9 points and our lower achieving students by 23.1 points.

The obvious conclusion to be drawn from the above data is that literacy programs in place at Richmond River High School provide excellent opportunities for all students to realise their potential.

Progress in numeracy
As previously indicated, our Year 7 intake in 2009 demonstrated clear strengths in their NAPLAN numeracy testing. This carried over into average levels of improvement since Year 5 testing by a rate of 55 points, comparing positively with the LSG figure of 53.7 points and the state figure of 55.2 points. Equally, there is a balanced spread of rates by which students were able to improve their results across the different levels of achievement – by 25.7 points in the top bands, 51.4 points in the middle bands and 25.7 points in the lower bands.

Levels of improvement in Year 9 results compared to their Year 7 testing reflect the relevance of strategies put in place by our Numeracy Action Group. The average rate of improvement (32.3 points) while sound, fell below the comparative state and LSG figures. On closer analysis, while rates of improvement in Year 9 students achieving in the lower and middle bands remain comparable with the positive rates of improvement among their Year 7 counterparts, the improvement rates among our students who characteristically achieve in the top bands does drop away to an average of 15.2 points.

Consequently, our numeracy improvement planning across the school features strategies which clearly target our higher achieving students, and the ways in which they can continue to add value to their learning in numeracy.

Essential Secondary Science Assessment (ESSA)
ESSA testing was carried out for Year 8 students at the end of Stage 4 science in November. The categories tested were:

- Working scientifically
- Knowing and understanding
- Communicating scientifically
- Extended response questions.

The overall average achieved by our students was higher than the regional average and exactly on state average. The science department targeted 'Knowing and Understanding' which was previously the weakest category and this year it was our strongest. Given the disruptions to our learning facilities, these are very sound results for our students.

School Certificate

English Literacy
Our 2009 School Certificate cohort achieved commendable results in their final examination, with average results (76.4%) exceeding both the state average (75.9%) and the LSG average (75.8%). This was contributed to by 33.1% of our students achieving results in the top two bands, compared with 32.8% for our LSG and 34.4% across the state. Further, 47% of our students achieved results in Band 4, exceeding the corresponding LSG figure by 1.3% and the state figure by 3.9%. Overall, this placed over 80% of our students in the top three bands, with no students being placed in the lowest band.

Mathematics
The results for 2009 fit with the patterns developed at the school over the past few years. There were three students who achieved Band 6 while the results across all bands were 1.3 percent below the LSG and 2 percent below the state averages.

It is pleasing that the school has maintained a solid core of students who gain results in the top 2 bands. This could be directly attributed to the Reach High concept at Richmond River High School which has encouraged those students who not only have a liking for mathematics but also display great skills in this difficult subject to be placed together in one group.

A disappointing aspect of these results was that the relative growth in academic achievement within this group fell 1.7% below the corresponding LSG figure. This indicator shows that students need extra support, similar to the NIMS program (see separate report), leading up to the School Certificate tests. Gaining funding to run such programs in the future needs to be a focus of the mathematics faculty.
Science

2009 was a year of change for the science faculty. All of our laboratories were upgraded to current design standards, including new technology infrastructure such as interactive whiteboards and computer access.

Unfortunately for our students this meant that all the laboratories were gutted to bare concrete, leaving science teachers and their students with very restricted access to both science rooms and equipment for nearly two terms. It is extremely pleasing, therefore, to note the high standards of our 2009 School Certificate results. 30.9% of our students gained results in the top two achievement bands, some 5 percentage points above our school’s comparative average over the past five years and over two points above our LSG average.

Overall, this high level of achievement has resulted in our students’ average mark (73.8) being above both the LSG average (73.3) and state average (73.3) marks. This must be seen as a huge compliment not only to our students, but also to their teachers, given the difficult circumstances under which the course was completed.

Australian History, Civics and Citizenship

It is pleasing to note that our students’ average in history was less than one percent below the comparative LSG figure. However, it was disappointing that no student received a Band 6 – although it should be noted that less than two percent of students in our LSG receive a Band 6.

A positive outcome was the small number of students who achieved a Band 2. The percentage was less than both the state and LSG average.

Australian Geography, Civics and Citizenship

Our geography students performed very well, as has traditionally been the case for some years. The school average of 71.1 was above both the LSG and the state averages. Our percentage of Band 6 students exceeded the LSG figure. Another pleasing aspect was the relatively lower number of students in Band 2.

Computer Skills

As evidenced in our expenditure on teacher professional learning in Information Communication Technology (see separate report), and in line with national priorities in terms of “Laptops for Learning”, teaching programs which enhance the ICT skills of our students across the curricula have been given a high priority.

In this context it is extremely pleasing that our average mark (81.6%) exceeds both our LSG average (79.7%) and the state average (80%).

The result also reflects an improvement on our school’s 2008 figure by nearly 2%. Further, 68% of our students achieved at a “Highly Competent” level, comparing very favourably with the respective figures for our LSG (55.4%) and across the state (55.8%). Our students are clearly benefitting from our programs which deliver this cross curricular competency.

Technical and Applied Studies

Stage 5 students participated in a wide range of subjects and a significant number of students achieved Grade B or higher. The subjects selected by the students included agriculture, food technology, wood technology, textiles and information and software technology.

School Certificate relative performance comparison from Year 5 (value-adding)

It is very encouraging to note the value added to levels of achievement demonstrated by this cohort since their Basic Skills Testing in 2004. Our traditionally strong areas of English, Science, Australian Geography, Civics and Citizenship and Computing continued to demonstrate improvements in levels of student achievement by an average of 1 point above the state average. It was, however, disappointing to note that value added to levels of student achievement in Mathematics and Australian History, Civics and Citizenship fell below comparative levels achieved in 2008, and indeed below comparative figures from our LSG (by 1.7 points and 1.2 points respectively).

Nonetheless, across the majority of subjects examined for the 2009 School Certificate, students experienced a characteristic improvement in levels of value added to academic
achievement, well above that experienced across our LSG.

**Higher School Certificate**

In 2009 Richmond River High School continued its strong tradition of supporting and encouraging diverse patterns of study for a broad spectrum of ability levels. 62 students from our school sat for the HSC across 26 examinable subjects. 13 of our students studied subjects through TAFE, while 20 students were enrolled in Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses which were delivered at our school. Of the latter group, 11 opted to sit for examinations in these subjects, making them a ‘Category B’ subject and hence contributing to an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).

![Graph showing HSC results](image)

**English**

Four English courses were offered in 2009, with thirty students completing the standard English course, twenty eight students completing the advanced English course along with five students sitting for the extension 1 course, of which three also completed the extension 2 course.

Overall, our results were pleasing, with marks in standard English improving on our comparative figures in recent years to fall within one percentage point of both state and LSG averages. In fact, our results in Bands 3 and 4 mirrored state trends. This was also the case for results achieved by our students in the advanced course, keeping our average results in a very demanding course in touch with average results across the state and our LSG.

The results achieved by students in both of the extension courses, however, were nothing short of outstanding. Results in extension 1 were 11 points above the average for recent years and a huge 7 points above the state average. Further, our extension 2 results in 2009 exceeded those of previous years by nearly 20 points and the 2009 state average by 16.2 points. These students and their teacher should be justifiably proud of their achievements.

**Mathematics**

All levels of mathematics were offered to Richmond River High School students for the 2009 HSC. Course numbers reflect the difficulty of the courses offered with twenty nine students doing mathematics general, seventeen doing mathematics advanced, five in extension 1 and one in extension 2. Some highlights from these exams were the scores achieved by Adam Keys. Adam was placed in the top band for both mathematics extension 1 and mathematics extension 2. His marks were the best achieved in HSC mathematics for many years at Richmond River High School. Juliette Maher also achieved excellent results in mathematics advanced (Band 6) and mathematics extension 1 (Band 3 – the second highest band).

The overall results for students studying mathematics courses showed that achievements were consistent with staff expectations and assessments sent to the Board of Studies.

**Science**

All students sitting for biology, chemistry, physics and senior science experienced the same disadvantages in terms of laboratory upgrades as outlined in the Science School Certificate report. Despite this, students in physics and senior science in particular performed remarkably well. The average result for physics in 2009 (75%) was 4 points above the average for recent years and also above the averages for our LSG (72.6%) and the state (74.1%). This was also the case in senior science, where our average result (75.7%) exceeded the school’s average over recent years, the LSG average and the state average by 2 to 3 percentage points.

Alternatively, biology and chemistry proved more challenging for our 2009 candidature, with their respective average results falling marginally below the respective averages of recent years, and indeed the respective average figures recorded across our LSG and the state. These results will certainly be addressed in our annual programming and assessment review.
Human Society and Its Environment

The students studying within the HSIE faculty had a very successful 2009 HSC. All four category A HSC subjects; Legal Studies, Business Studies, Ancient History, Society and Culture scored an average mark above the state average.

Additionally the results in Legal Studies, Business Studies and Society and Culture were above the LSG average and exceeded the school average for the past five years.

The best performed course was Society and Culture. The average class mark was 82 compared with the state average of 74.5.

The students in Work Studies developed a wide range of skills, the highlight being their compilation of the Year 12 yearbook.

Creative Arts

The HSC in the Creative Arts is particularly rigorous, with students being assessed on both their theoretical understanding of the course as well as a significant project or performance. The HSC marking experience of the CAPA staff continues to enhance student performance at our school.

This year’s highlight in the arts was drama. Drama results have continued to significantly improve over the past three years. This year the class average was 76.8, above state average and LSG. Out of a small class of 12, two students scored in the 90s, receiving the school’s first Band 6 results in drama.

In 2009 music continued the tradition of achieving substantial HSC results. The class average of 78.4 was on par with the state average. Impressively, most students in the class achieved a Band 5 result.

Visual arts has traditionally seen strong results and 2009 was no exception. The class average was 78.6, coming in above state average. One student achieved marks in the 90’s, scoring a Band 6 result.

Technical and Applied Studies

A diverse range of subjects was offered in the TAS faculty this year and the results of the Higher School Certificate were above the state average in textiles and design, hospitality, and information technology. Individual students in industrial technology, food technology and metal and engineering gained good results.

Stage 6 students were also involved in a number of Vocational Education subjects including, hospitality, primary industries, information technology, metal and engineering and construction. The majority of students achieved the designated AQF Certification.

Personal Development, Health and Physical Education

The number of students completing personal development, health and physical education has doubled in recent years. This is due in no small part to the dynamic nature of the course delivery which has included using technology and participation in a blog site. Consequently, the average result achieved by our 2009 cohort (78.7%) was 7.4 points above the average result for our school since 2005, and was over 8 points above both our LSG and state averages. The value our school places in positive relationships between teachers and students is clearly in evidence here.

Higher School Certificate relative performance comparison to School Certificate (value-adding)

The value added to levels of achievement demonstrated in the 2007 School Certificate by our 2009 Higher School Certificate cohort was very encouraging. It was pleasing to note that students achieving results in all bands for the 2009 HSC were able to improve the average by which relative performance levels increased, by .6 in lower bands, 1.8 in the middle bands and .9 in the higher bands, when compared with average growth in relative performances since 2005.

While our figures remain below respective LSG average figures, the trend towards growth in value added to levels of learning for our HSC candidates is most encouraging. This is particularly the case given the priorities which we
have identified in our planning for school improvement. Our school is currently in its second year of a three year cycle of school improvement in which we have prioritised strategies for Student Engagement and Retention, including Personal Interest Projects, structured around Art Costa’s ‘Habits of the Mind’ for each successive Year 8 cohort, along with the presentation of Oral Portfolios by each successive Year 10 cohort, both of which provide excellent opportunities for students to develop their skills in, and valuing of, learning.

Similarly, and with more direct impact on Stage 6 students, through our identified priority area of Quality Teaching, our students are now being provided with rich and authentic assessment tasks which, through backward mapping of teaching programs, will promote a deeper engagement of student learning. Further, our development of scope and sequence charts across all stages of learning will ensure a conscious and explicit build up of knowledge and skills from Year 7 through to Year 12.

Minimum standards
The Commonwealth Government sets minimum standards for reading, writing, grammar and punctuation, spelling and numeracy for Years 7 and 9.

The performance of the students in our school in the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy is compared to these minimum standards. The percentages of our students achieving at or above these standards are reported below.

| Percentage of Year 7 students achieving at or above the minimum standard in 2009 |
|---------------------------------|---|
| **Percentage**                   | **92.6** |
| **Reading**                     | **95.9** |
| **Writing**                     | **88.3** |
| **Spelling**                    | **91.8** |
| **Punctuation and grammar**     | **92.4** |
| **Numeracy**                    | **95.8** |

While it is pleasing to note the overall high calibre of our Year 7 intake in 2009, these figures again reflect areas which the school has already identified and prioritised in its planning. While our students’ results in reading and numeracy remain consistently high when compared to previous years, there is a decline in writing and spelling, and a less marked decline in grammar and punctuation. As has already been noted, these specific aspects of literacy have been identified and targeted in our planning for literacy as a priority area for school improvement (see separate report).

**Percentage of Year 9 students in our school achieving at or above the minimum standard in 2009**

| **Percentage of Year 9 students achieving at and above minimum standard** |
|---------------------------------|---|
| **Reading**                     | **92.6** |
| **Writing**                     | **90.6** |
| **Spelling**                    | **94.0** |
| **Punctuation and grammar**     | **94.0** |
| **Numeracy**                    | **98.0** |

It is extremely pleasing to note the overall improvement in the capacity of our 2009 Year 9 cohort, compared to previous years, in terms of achieving at or above the national minimum standard. Results across all categories of measurement fall within the top percentile band, with a particularly outstanding result having been achieved in numeracy.

The overall message for our school community, in terms of students being measured against the national benchmark for minimum achievement, is that our students certainly “measure up”. Our challenge as a school is to improve the capacity of our lower achieving students, giving them rewards not only in terms of national testing, but more importantly in their holistic experience as learners.

**Significant programs and initiatives**

**Aboriginal education**

Our school continues to demonstrate our commitment to Aboriginal education through incorporating Aboriginal perspectives in all KLA programs, inservicing staff on the new Aboriginal Education Policy, commencing each school and formal assembly with an Acknowledgement of Country and the introduction of a compulsory unit of work for Year 8 called ‘Cultural Studies’. The aim of Cultural Studies is for students to develop an understanding of Australian Aboriginal peoples, and other cultures within Australia to enable them to be active and informed advocates for a just and inclusive society.

Through this course all students are able to develop an appreciation of the unique value of Aboriginal people and their cultures to Australian identity.

Richmond River High School continued with the successful in class tutoring targeting Years 7 and 8 students who were achieving below national benchmarks in literacy and numeracy. Each student received a combination of withdrawal and classroom assistance from a trained teacher, providing excellent opportunities for students to improve their learning outcomes.
All Aboriginal students attended ‘Deadly Days’, an initiative by North Coast TAFE and held this year at Kingscliff. Richmond River High School on behalf of LCoSS schools successfully applied for funding through DEEYA for travel enabling all students to attend. Sponsored by the Australian Government, the purpose of the festival is to encourage increased participation of young Aboriginal people in education, training and employment through workshops, hands on activities and guest performance by Jessica Mauboy.

Students continue to experience TAFE taster courses through V-Tracks which are designed especially for Aboriginal students. Courses students enrolled in included hairdressing, automotive and barista.

Staff at Richmond River High School facilitated an art competition across local high schools for NAIDOC Week. Students submitted high quality art work which was judged by AECG president Dianne Harrington and our local SED John Lynch.

Multicultural education

Excellent Opportunities

The school’s approach to discipline and student wellbeing ensures the values of tolerance and acceptance of diversity are reinforced which, in turn, underpin our capacity to provide all students with excellent opportunities for student success across all school settings.

This approach contains detailed measures to address bullying behaviour. The school formally presents this policy to each year group at the start of the year.

Obviously, as a public school, inclusivity for all members of our school community is vital. This is consistently and visibly reinforced by the ongoing efforts of our Student Equity Group’s work to promote tolerance and acceptance in our school.

Our approach to the values embedded in the DET Multicultural Education Policy positively contributes to the implementation of our core values. Accordingly, the school has a trained Anti Racism Counselling Officer and has employed an Aboriginal Education Assistant who fulfil their mandatory requirements in line with our core values.

Quality Teaching

Our staff have continued their dynamic engagement with the Quality Teaching (QT) framework. Our understanding of cultural knowledge as a key element in the QT framework has led to a range of innovative programs which promote the values of multiculturalism.

Specifically, junior history and geography courses develop our students’ knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and indigenous cultures as well as the multicultural nature of Australian society. The Cultural Studies teaching program delivered to Year 8 students in 2009 further promoted multicultural awareness and values.

Extra-Curricular Activities and Student Initiatives

Each year, students take part in the Model United Nations Assembly (MUNA) hosted by Rotary and held at Tweed Heads Civic Centre.

Respect and responsibility

Positive Behaviour for Learning

For the past three years, our staff and students have worked positively with the Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) innovative program. This program comprises a broad range of systemic and individualised strategies for

Naidoc Week celebrations

Representatives from LCoSS schools attended the Dare to Lead National Conference where Richmond River High School staff ran a highly regarded workshop on practical ways of integrating Aboriginal perspective into whole school programs. This was followed up with a whole school snapshot conducted by Dare to Lead staff where an audit was conducted on school practice relating to Aboriginal education. This school was congratulated on the introduction of Cultural Studies, the school Aboriginal Education Plan, student attendance and the introduction of Personalised Learning Plans which will continue to be established in 2010.
achieving important social and learning expectations for our students while preventing problem behaviours.

During 2009 our staff continued to work with students to establish a broad understanding of, and commitment to, expected positive behaviours implied in our school’s initials (RRHS), these being Respectful, Responsible, Honest and Safe behaviours in all areas of the school. The Positive Behaviour Support Team coordinated a review of our behaviour reporting system (RISC) so that we could access accurate data around the types of problem behaviours occurring, where they were occurring and what consequences had been issued. This behaviour data proved essential in identifying the main problem behaviours and students involved. A special roll call for students identified with problem behaviours through RISC data continued to operate so that students could be continually reminded of the expected behaviours and taught strategies to avoid repeated misbehaviour. Students were also placed on Behaviour Monitoring where staff are asked to give a numerical value of 1-3 in relation to students’ respectful, responsible, honest and safe behaviour in each class. This monitoring was coordinated by a team member who met with the students each morning and discussed the previous day’s performance. Regular contact with parents was maintained to support the process.

Students who continue to demonstrate our school’s expectation to behave respectfully, responsibly, honestly and safely are recognised and rewarded through our praise and merit scheme along with those students who showed improvement in their behaviour or achieved their personal best in learning outcomes.

2009 continued to see the implementation of PBL with ‘Pre-Correct’ lessons taught explicitly in roll call, more opportunity for the Learning Support Team to analyse data from RISC, signage around the school showing the positive behaviours expected in each school setting and explicit work undertaken with students identified through RISC data.

Other programs

Student Welfare

The welfare team at Richmond River High School is a dynamic and experienced group of teachers made up of year advisors, our girls’ advisor, our school chaplain, one of our deputy principals and other interested members of staff. Along with the ongoing work of managing individual student welfare issues, the team worked collaboratively to rationalise the proactive nature of our work.

Year meetings for each year group were reinforced as a vital means of communication to students in regard to issues specific to their year group, let alone as a means for year advisors to build that vital rapport with their charges and to also develop a sense of community and identity among the students themselves. Year meeting time has been regularly set aside on the school calendar, allowing year advisors time to prepare for their meetings in a meaningful way.

Our Year 7 advisor initiated a program of individual learning improvement plans for students at risk of disengaging from learning. He worked closely with the deputy principal in following up students experiencing difficulties across subjects. Where necessary, parental interviews were organised. Overall, the initiative saw a marked improvement in these students’ engagement with learning.

Our Year 7 advisor also worked with our girls’ advisor to initiate a program for Year 7 girls in particular who were demonstrating poor attitudes to learning and negative peer and teacher relationships. The girls participated in a term long series of weekly workshops focussing on self esteem and positive relationships. The girls responded in a very positive way, and constructive relationships were established with respective parents and carers.

Boys’ and Girls’ Education: “Keeping Kool”

The research into boys’ education outlined in the Boys’ and Girls’ Education Strategy support document indicates that boys at risk of not completing school believe that the adult world, substantively represented by the structured school environment, does not acknowledge them and has no relevance to them. A range of strategies is advocated to address this including mentoring, role modelling, the building of positive relationships and an overall broadening of boys’ understandings of "success".

To this effect, Richmond River High School has developed a partnership with the Lismore Men and Family Centre, a government funded body whose primary role is to work with and support families in crisis. Together, we have developed an
ongoing program where boys from Years 7 and 8, identified as at risk of not completing school, are withdrawn from class for one afternoon each week and, in the company of a teacher from our welfare team, spend time with facilitators at the Men and Family Centre. Time is devoted to discussing what is going well and what isn’t, strategies to cope with anger and frustration, motivational and team building workshops and some basics in life skills, for example healthy eating and personal hygiene. The program is funded entirely by the Men and Family Centre.

Groups are kept to between eight and ten boys and each program lasted for a school term, culminating in a team building day at the Mebbin Springs outdoor education centre. Following this, the boys are formally acknowledged as having completed the course and receive a certificate. Two such groups were taken through the program in 2009.

**Mebbin Springs**

A number of clear benefits became evident. All of the boys involved thoroughly enjoyed the experience and were able to reflect constructively and positively on what they had learnt about themselves and their place in school and society. For many of the boys, this translated into a marked decline in behavioural issues. Further, substantial and lasting positive relationships were established between participating staff from both the school and the centre, and the boys involved – this has also contributed to the noted decline in behavioural issues. Finally, regular and increasingly positive contact with respective parents and carers has improved the ways in which the boys relate to both home and school.

**Personal Interest Projects**

A fundamental dimension of the *Quality Teaching* framework is that of *Significance* which stipulates that learning must “draw clear connections with students’ prior knowledge and identities, with contexts outside the classroom, and with multiple perspectives.” To this effect, our school implemented a program requiring all students in Year 8 to present a substantial project showcasing an area of interest which they felt passionate about.

The program involved, initially, a team of teachers from all KLAS working with Year 8 students over a series of afternoons to introduce the concept of the Personal Interest Project, or “PIP”, and the structured program, lasting for ten school weeks, in which they participated as a support process while they completed their projects. Both the introductory afternoons and the term long program of weekly withdrawal lessons were based substantially on Art Costa’s ‘Habits of the Mind’, encouraging students to think about their work, their processes of enquiry and their learning.

Coordinated by our librarian and one of our deputy principals, the program relied on the willingness of teachers to give up one of their lessons for the delivery of the structured “PIP” program, culminating in the students’ presentation of their completed PIP during Education Week before a panel made up of their year advisor, one of the senior executive and a representative of the Parents and Citizens Association. Our School Education Director was also able to attend several of these sessions.

The program rendered tremendous benefits in a number of ways. All Year 8 students were able to achieve success commensurate with their abilities as learners, the majority, indeed, learnt a lot about their abilities as learners, and developed an enhanced degree of confidence in what they felt they could actually achieve. Further, a culture of valuing each other as learners and as individuals was promoted among the students themselves. Ultimately, however, for many students, a pathway was found which allowed them to connect the “world of school” to their own worlds of personal significance.

**Numeracy in the Middle School (NIMS)**

Numeracy in the Middle School (NIMS) has become a cornerstone in raising achievement levels among students struggling with the numeracy component present across the curricula. The loss of Priority School Funding, impacting for the first time in 2009, meant that the program could only be run on a restricted basis. The aim of NIMS was to work with student in Years 7, 8 and 9.

We were fortunate to gain the services of a qualified casual teacher who worked two days per week in block periods. This gave students that extra boost which is needed before major tests. Willing students were withdrawn from their classes to work in small groups of three on improving their numeracy skills. A variety of teaching strategies were used to target particular weaknesses in each student’s knowledge and skill level.
NAPLAN and School Certificate results for these students were tracked and there was evidence of significant value adding to their level of numeracy achievement by an average of 3.6 points.

Funding for the program will be an issue for 2010 and the school will be looking for various avenues to provide extra support for students in numeracy.

**Progress on 2009 targets**

**Target 1: Movement of 9% of Year 9 students’ literacy achievement levels from Bands 7 & 8 (65% in 2008) to Bands 9 & 10 (12% in 2008).**

*Our achievements include:*

- An increase in the number of Year 9 students achieving in Bands 9 and 10 for literacy to 19% of students, an increase by 7% on the corresponding figure for 2008. The increase was drawn from Bands 7 and 8, which declined by 5%, contributed to by the “domino effect” of upward movement by 3% from Bands 5 and 6 compared to 2008 results.
- All members of the Literacy Action Group, representing all faculties in our school, have been trained in the use of NAPLAN data and attached resources when programming for the teaching of literacy within their KLAS to broad year groups and to more specific “custom” groups.
- Based on close analysis of 2008 NAPLAN results, and anecdotal evidence drawn from across all KLAS, the Literacy Action Group has determined that spelling needs to be targeted for all students. This has been reflected in our revised planning for 2010.
- All Year 8 students participated in weekly literacy lessons, either in semester one or semester two. The program targeted the necessary grammar, structure and organisation necessary to produce a piece of extended writing in the form of procedural writing. All students completed a piece of procedure writing which drew on their learning in science.
- Literacy Action Group members have worked with a regional literacy consultant on an ongoing basis on ways to integrate literacy teaching strategies and resources into existing teaching and learning programs within their faculties.

**Target 2: Improve numeracy results in Year 9 NAPLAN testing (2009) by increasing the Band 7 and 9 results by 10% whilst maintaining Band 8 results compared to Year 9 2008.**

*Our achievements include:*

- An increase in the number of students achieving results in Band 7 (by 4% to 28%), Band 8 (by 7% to 31%) and Band 9 (by 6% to 17%). It is pleasing to note that a total of 76% of our students are now achieving in these targeted high bands. An overall total of 80% of our students achieved within Band 7 or above in the 2009 NAPLAN testing.
- Numeracy Action Group members, from across all KLAS, determined elements of NAPLAN and School Certificate testing which could be applied to teaching within their respective KLAS. Appropriate teaching strategies were then pioneered in these teachers' classrooms.
- Numeracy Action Group members have led other teachers in their respective faculties in familiarising themselves with the SMART data analysis package, with the intended outcome of identifying teaching strategies and resources which will lead to improved levels of numeracy achievement.
- Funding for the Numeracy in the Middle School (NIMS) individual tuition program was retained. A qualified casual teacher was employed to work with students in small groups from Years 7, 8 and 9, using Newman’s Analysis to determine areas needing improvement. Over the period 2007 – 2009, the average improvement to levels of numeracy achievement, measured in NAPLAN and School Certificate testing for these students was an outstanding 11.3%.

**Target 3: Ongoing Professional Learning in Quality Teaching. All teachers implement quality assessments and backward mapped programs for Stage 6. Quality scope and sequence introduced across the school.**

*Our achievements include:*

- Staff were inserviced on developing quality scope and sequence at our 2009 Staff Development Day. The day was led by consultant Judi Ann Abdini. Significant ‘faculty time’ was provided allowing each KLA to work through strategies and models with the aim of developing quality scope and sequence by the end of the year.
- The Quality Teaching Action Group reviewed faculty submissions of scope and sequence and assessment tasks, providing feedback. A marked improvement in the quality of assessment tasks was noted.
By the end of 2009 it was evident that the majority of KLAS had developed quality assessments and had developed quality scope and sequence for some stages. Faculties had developed implementation plans and by the very nature of this work staff continued to build upon, revise and evaluate their work.

Anecdotal evidence points to an increased incidence of staff embracing the Quality Teaching framework into their daily work, particularly the emphasis on Intellectual Quality.

**Target 4: Student engagement and retention** – 3% improvement in attendance, 10% increase in participation in HSC tutorials and increased retention by 3% above the state average from Year 10 to Year 12.

*Our achievements include:*

- Greater correspondence between teachers and parents/carers during designated “Academic Concerns Week” and “Good News Week”.
- Improved liaison between senior executive, head teacher responsible for attendance monitoring and classroom teachers. Clear and consistent consequences assigned to students not complying with attendance monitoring procedures.
- Distributed leadership in disseminating subject selection information and personal learning plans for Aboriginal students and students identified as being at risk of not completing school. Involvement of deputy principal, year advisors and designated staff members.
- Successful completion by all Year 8 students of a Personal Interest Project. A wide range of staff supported this activity through lesson delivery and student support. External agencies (e.g. Connect Careers Advice) provided support for students from low socio economic backgrounds.
- Successful implementation of Global Citizenship Action Group, with six Year 10 students attending the World Vision Global Youth Convention at the Gold Coast. Successful implementation of the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, with 23 students participating.

**Key evaluations**

It is a requirement for all NSW public schools to conduct at least two annual evaluations – one related to educational and management practice and the other related to curriculum. In 2009 our school carried out evaluations of our leadership and management practices under the model of distributed leadership and our pedagogical approach to the teaching of Gifted and Talented students in our Reach High classes.

**Educational and management practice**

**Distributed leadership and school planning**

**Background**

Over the past two years, our school’s executive has worked collaboratively to consolidate and enhance the ways in which we can consider ourselves a true ‘learning community’ in which the work of all staff is valued and celebrated as contributing to our core values of Quality Teaching, Innovative Programs, Excellent Opportunities and Student Success. We have drawn not only on our engagement with Marzano’s “what works in schools” model but also the priorities set out in the State and North Coast Region Plans for 2009 – 2011.

During 2008 we were, through our planning of programs which help sustain our school, able to articulate the ways in which teachers’ work across the school reinforces our four core values. The intention was to promote staff willingness to take on and value those vital whole school roles without which our school would not function.

Further, we sought to promote a sense of identity between whole school programs and priorities, and the work being done by teachers in individual faculties. In turn, it was anticipated that staff would be able to engage with a “map” demonstrating the ways in which all work done within our school is inevitably linked by our core values, and never conducted in isolation.

**Findings and conclusions**

In Term 3 of 2009, our senior executive, head teachers and interested faculty members began work on the ways in which faculty planning could be linked with whole school planning. To this effect, it was decided that faculty plans would be organised in terms of how they supported and promoted our four priority areas for school improvement:

- Quality Teaching
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Student Engagement and Retention.

Further, faculties would need to show how they were able to support and ensure compliance with all of the necessary programs which sustain our school.
During Term 4 all staff participated in two extended planning conferences. The first of these sought to review and rationalise our planning for programs to sustain our school, initiated in 2008. All staff took the opportunity to contribute to our planning for whole school programs in the following areas:

- Staff and Student Success
- Student Wellbeing and Support
- Aboriginal and Low Socio Economic Status Students
- Home, School and Community Partnerships
- Leadership and Management.

The second of our extended planning conferences saw our existing Action Groups, which involve all staff and parent representatives, and directly target our four priority areas for improvement, involved in the review and modification of our planning for ongoing whole school improvement.

Effectively then, we have developed a three tiered planning structure which engages all staff in working together to move the school forward as it continues to deliver on its core values:

Faculty Planning: Links work within classrooms and faculties to whole school improvement priorities, programs which sustain our whole school and our four core values.

Sustainability Planning: Links vital whole school roles and programs with our core values, which in turn underpin all of our curricular and extracurricular activities.

Improvement Planning: Takes our school forward in a meaningful way by linking identified improvement priority areas, our core values and what is happening in our classrooms and across our school.

**Future directions**

Our task is now one of “culture building”, where staff anticipate and actively engage in our planning processes, in turn valuing their own work as an integral part of this. In the face of inevitable generational change in our teaching workforce, the credibility and clarity with which teachers view all the elements of their work is vital if we are to sustain and continue to develop all that we have already achieved.

**Curriculum**

**Differentiated curriculum and Quality Teaching**

**Background**

In 2004, our school implemented a program for students who ‘self selected’ as wanting to extend themselves and advance their learning beyond the curriculum being taught in mainstream classrooms. This program, “Reach High” has, in the ensuing years, seen two classes formed in each of our junior years (Years 7 to 10) which have been taught the existing syllabus in ways which have challenged and extended their capacities as learners. Their work has been annually celebrated through our “Showcase” evenings in which all students present a substantial project on addressing a common theme.

By 2009, staff teaching these classes felt the need to re assess the ways in which differentiated curricula were being delivered. Were we confident that there was a common sense of direction across the KLAs that were teaching Reach High classes? Were our showcase evenings still a meaningful reflection of the learning of Reach High students?

**Findings and conclusions**

“Reach High” teachers were surveyed and responses indicated that a redefined sense of direction in programming for differentiated curriculum and in working towards showcase evenings was needed. Accordingly, our school executive felt that this could be most effectively achieved by drawing on the *Intellectual Depth* dimension of the *Quality Teaching* framework, with which all of our staff have substantially engaged in recent years.

Our Quality Teaching Action Group, containing representatives from all KLAs, worked collaboratively to identify common elements of the *Intellectual Depth* dimension which could be consistently used by Reach High teachers across all KLAs in programming for, and preparing the delivery of differentiated curriculum.

Four task force groups were then formed for Reach High teachers of Years 7 to 10. Representatives of each of the four core KLAs (English, Maths, Science and HSIE) worked collaboratively to articulate a degree of consistency in the programming and delivery of each of their identified elements of *Intellectual Depth*. The work of each of these task force groups was then presented to all staff during our final school development day for 2009 at the end of Term 4.

**Future directions**

In 2010, it is anticipated that task force groups may need further time to clarify and articulate what *Intellectual Depth* elements will look like in both programming documents and in the classroom. This will involve professional learning time for teachers appointed to Reach High classes for the first time, or for experienced Reach...
High teachers who wish to clarify their understanding of our redefined approach to the consistent delivery of differentiated curriculum.

**Reach High Showcase Evening**

**Other evaluations**

**Parent, student, and teacher satisfaction**

In 2009 the school sought the opinions of parents, students and teachers about the school. Their responses are presented below.

Our school relies on the principles of distributed leadership in building a culture of improvement within a sustainable framework. As such, our school leadership regularly seeks the opinions of staff, students and parents to determine whether or not we are “getting it right”. In 2009 staff were consulted through our regular staff meetings, action group meetings and through the implementation of annual whole school planning conferences. Our parents’ views were sought through our regular Parents and Citizens meetings along with surveys conducted through our weekly newsletter “River Views”. Further, our students were consulted through regular year meetings, while our Year 12 students were able to give detailed feedback through our annual exit survey.

In 2009 our staff faced the challenge of continuing to provide our students with an enormous range of innovative programs and excellent opportunities, after the withdrawal of Richmond River High School from Priority Schools funding. A range of changes to the functioning of the school was required, including a restructuring of our timetable and bell times, reallocation of teaching period allowances and rescheduling of regular whole staff and faculty meeting times. This substantial and ongoing roll out of whole school change could not have taken place without the input of all key stakeholders. Particular areas of concern which were addressed included equitable allocation of supervision duties and ensuring that regular faculty meeting time should not impact on teaching time.

Our school’s commitment to our four identified priority areas for improvement – Quality Teaching, literacy, numeracy and student engagement and retention – were linked to explicit targets, strategies and indicators of success through the input of our staff. Further, the sustainability of all of our ongoing whole school programs was ensured through the input of our staff in a collaborative planning process which clarified and entrenched understandings of the significance of whole school roles in the work of teachers.

Our parents’ views were sought and maintained on a range of issues. Not only were parents actively involved in each of our four action groups and their work on our four identified priority areas for improvement, but also parents’ views informed changes to our uniform policy and to the structuring of our school development days, where we benefitted from conducting two consecutive school development days at the start of Term 2, addressing ICT in the classroom, rather than having two separate days at the start of Term 2 and again at the start of Term 3. Overall, parents overwhelmingly indicated their support for the school’s improvement priorities, as well as our strong policies in areas such as uniform and positive behaviour expectations set out for our students.

Our Year 12 students provided a tremendous amount of detailed and meaningful feedback through our annual exit survey. Our students overall enjoyed their time at Richmond River High School, recognising a strong sense of safety and community. It was extremely pleasing to note that our teachers were seen as caring, passionate about their subjects and willing to take an individual interest in students. Students felt they had been given sound advice in subject selection for their HSC pattern of study, had been well prepared for their examinations in terms of both curriculum delivery and study techniques and that, overall, senior school had been a worthwhile experience. Finally, the vast majority of our students strongly believed that Richmond River High School had prepared them well for their chosen post school pathway, leaving them with a strong belief that they would be positive members of society. The following view of one student was representative of the group: “The diversity of students and acceptance of everyone, the teachers are friendly, everyone is given opportunities”.

**Professional learning**

Our total expenditure of professional learning funds in 2009 was $60,913.58. As per our School Improvement Planning, this spending focussed on
our identified priority areas for improvement. Specifically, 31% of our spending focussed on Quality Teaching, 14% was spent on literacy, numeracy and syllabus implementation, and 15% was spent on student engagement and retention professional learning opportunities.

Significantly, our professional learning activities targeted other priorities which feature in DET planning. A total of 12% of our professional learning funds were spent on Information Communication Technologies (ICT) and the “Laptops for Learning” program. Further, 18% of our expenditure was on career development and 8% was spent on Beginning Teachers.

Within the above spending pattern, each faculty is allocated $300 per person in terms of professional learning funds to assist in achieving goals set out in faculty planning, and to support individual teacher professional learning goals.

At state level, our staff were represented at the Quality Teaching Conference at Coffs Harbour, while our senior executive were able to attend their respective annual state conferences. Further, our staff were able to attend a broad range of professional learning activities at regional and state level, addressing specific aspects of our identified priority areas for school improvement. Our school development days were used to build and consolidate understandings and practices in the use of ICT in the classroom. Workshops addressed the wide range of ability and experience among our staff, from both broad pedagogical and curriculum specific perspectives.

The specific areas of professional learning funding expenditure were:

- Beginning Teachers: $5 011.23
- Use of ICT: $5 474.52
- Literacy and Numeracy: $610.17
- Quality Teaching: $19 175.63
- Syllabus implementation: $8 096.73
- Career development: $11 147.73
- Welfare and Equity: $4 925.94
- School identified priorities: $4 533.26
- DER Laptops for Learning: $1 938.21

School development 2009 – 2011

Targets for 2010

Target 1: Improve the impact of the average spelling score on overall literacy results in NAPLAN testing for Year 9 from -30.7 points below the state average (2009) to within 15 points of the state average.

Strategies to achieve this target include:

- STLA works with Literacy Action Group members on cyclical implementation of ongoing spelling activities designed specifically for each year group, accompanied by pre – program and post program testing.
- Literacy Action Group members lead their faculties in regular facilitation of faculty specific spelling activities to accompany each unit of work.
- Year 8 students will continue to participate in weekly literacy lessons, addressing extended writing and the accompanying skills in grammar and spelling, in the context of cross curricular learning. All students will complete a literacy assessment task at the end of each semester.
- Literacy Action Group members and their faculties will continue to work with regional literacy consultants in developing and programming literacy teaching strategies specific to their respective KLAs.
- Literacy Action Group members will lead their faculties in using the EDOD data analysis package to identify specific classes as “custom groups” using NAPLAN data. This will guide teachers in identifying areas of need in terms of literacy which are specific to their classes.

Our success will be measured by:

- Teachers being able to work on clearly identified weaknesses in spelling, relevant to each year group, using strategies developed and recommended by the STLA.
- Improved competence in student spelling, across Years 7 to 10, of subject specific terminology and metalanguage, demonstrated through faculty assessment tasks.
- Year 8 literacy assessment task marking indicates improved student competence in spelling and grammar in the context of extended writing which draws on prior learning in terms of content.
- Literacy teaching strategies, including accessible resources, are clearly identifiable in teaching programs across all KLAs.
- All staff have made a “custom group” based on at least one of their classes as a means of identifying literacy strategies, particularly spelling and grammar, which meet the specific needs of their class.
Target 2: Embed strategies into faculty programs to move 20% of Year 7 Band 7 (2008) results to Bands 8, 9 and 10 in Year 9 (2010).

Strategies to achieve this target include:

- Numeracy Action Group members to be inserviced on the analysis of NAPLAN data and the ways in which strategies and resources from the SMART data analysis package can be used in classrooms across all KLAS.
- Numeracy Action Group members investigate Quality Teaching resources and strategies which are applicable across KLAS in promoting numeracy learning outcomes.
- Teaching strategies based on Newman’s Analysis which were developed during the facilitation of the NIMS project since 2007 to be shared across all KLAS and implemented into teaching programs where appropriate.
- Individual faculties to target specific numeracy elements in their teaching programs. Specific assessment tasks with clear numeracy based outcomes to be implemented.

Our success will be measured by:

Teachers are able to confidently use NAPLAN data to identify the learning needs of students in their classes. Teachers are able to modify their teaching to specifically address numeracy outcomes based on their engagement with the SMART data analysis package.

- Improved teacher confidence in the use of ICT teaching strategies and resources. Teachers are able to identify links between two identified school improvement priorities (i.e. numeracy and Quality Teaching).
- Teaching strategies which have led to the successful implementation of the NIMS project since 2007 are implemented by teachers across all KLAS.
- Classroom lessons across all KLAS clearly demonstrate the connection between different curricula and numeracy learning outcomes.

Target 3: A focus on the development of quality assessments and programs for Stages 4 and 5 with the continued focus in intellectual quality. Increase by 10% in the completion of all Stage 4 and 5 assessment tasks. Increased student engagement.

Strategies to achieve this target include:

- Ongoing professional learning for staff. Sessions at the Staff Development Days, as well as at staff meetings. Funds available for staff to attend relevant professional learning.
- Submission of Stage 4 and 5 assessments and scope and sequence for the QT Action Group to review and provide ongoing feedback.
- Faculty time structured into the Action Group timeslot throughout the year providing faculties the time to continue meaningful and focused work on developing Quality Teaching.

Our success will be measured by:

- Improved quality of assessment tasks for Stage 4 and 5 students. Reduction by 10% in the number of N-warnings issued to School Certificate students
- An improvement in student engagement, demonstrated by a 10% reduction in reported classroom incidents
- Improved Reach High program with greater levels of staff contentment and student enrichment
- Development of quality scope and sequence for all stages in each KLA.

Target 4: Increase by 10% of student involvement and participation in leadership. Increase by 5% in retention rates into Years 11 and 12 for Aboriginal students.

Strategies to achieve this target include:

- Targeted students in Stage 4 (including Aboriginal students) participate in leadership and self esteem programs facilitated by teachers and community youth workers in partnership with the school.
- Support for ongoing leadership programs such as Student Representative Council, Leo Club and Student Equity Group.
- Mapping of key transition points during school years. STLA involvement in transition programs into Years 10, 11 and 12, including simplification of information presented at subject selection evenings, smaller meetings for parents and carers of Aboriginal students.
- Use School Certificate and Oral Portfolio data to identify and assist non academic students at school through Stage 6 pathways, in school traineeships and apprenticeships.
• Personal Learning Plans for all Stage 6 Aboriginal students. Overt cross curricular celebration of NAIDOC week.

Our success will be measured by:

• Greater self esteem among “at risk” students in Stages 4 and 5 leading to more positive engagement with learning and willingness to work with the school to identify appropriate options at key transition points leading to Stage 6.

• Existing student leadership structures within the school continue to provide opportunities for students. Other initiatives appeal to students with specific interests (e.g. the environment, women’s issues) in promoting student leadership and citizenship.

• Non academic and Aboriginal students, and their families, are able to negotiate key transition points across the stages with confidence that appropriate choices have been made.

• Non academic students are able to have meaningful discussions with their teachers and year advisors in selecting Stage 6 patterns of study.

• A greater proportion of Aboriginal students complete Year 12.

About this report

In preparing this report, the self-evaluation committee has gathered information from evaluations conducted during the year and analysed other information about the school’s practices and student learning outcomes. The self-evaluation committee and school planning committee have determined targets for the school’s future development.

N Ryan  Principal  D Williamson  D Principal
M Hensley  D Principal  D Hanley  HT English
C Mills  HT Maths  R Gill  HT Science
S Dawson  HT HSIE  S Clayton  HT TAS
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Parents can find out more information about Annual School Reports, how to interpret information in the reports and have the opportunity to provide feedback about these reports at: