2010 Annual School Report
Richmond River High School

NSW Public Schools – Leading the way

Excellent opportunities  Quality teaching
Innovative programs  Student success
Messages

Principal’s message

It is with pleasure that I present the 2010 Richmond River High School Annual Report to each of our families and to the wider community. This report will present a clear and concise evaluation of our student’s results and achievements across the full range and depth of educational programs on offer at our school.

Richmond River High School offers a broad curriculum, a wide range of sporting and cultural pursuits and a caring environment where the phrase “everybody has a place here” is proudly followed.

The success our students have had with the Richmond River High School programs provides evidence of the rich and caring environment established with the enthusiasm of staff and a supportive community leading the way.

Success is experienced by individuals and teams alike. These successes are too many to mention here but special mention for 2010 must go to Alex Jones of Year 12 who through her commitment and enthusiasm has achieved the highest accolades possible of a student at the school, local, state and national levels, truly remarkable and excellent achievements which indicate that with application almost anything is possible. Alex and her predecessors provide strong role models for younger students.

Richmond River High School continues to be a school of choice with our community of which the school is very proud. This excellent position within our community is highly regarded and not taken for granted by staff and students alike. The school is continually looking to what it can offer and how can we improve further to enhance the motto “A Caring School of Excellence”

The core business of the Richmond River High School is to provide a quality, rich, varied and full curriculum that allows students to reach their potential in a supportive and caring environment. Through data evaluation and revision the school is continually assessing its programs to ensure they are of high quality, relevant, rigorous and engaging. Success of the Richmond River High School programs is measured by student participation and their resultant success.

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.

Mr Chris Watkins
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.

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 2010 with increasing numbers of new parents. This is a very positive sign for the future.

Loretta Prowse

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, Alex Jones and Stuart Thienpont, 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. Throughout the year delegates attended regional meetings where students discussed the effectiveness of the SRC in the school and planned for future initiatives to be implemented. Co-president, Alex Jones, was again named the 2010 Regional Lions Youth of the Year as well as receiving the runner up award in the 2010 National Training awards. She was the 2010 young citizen of the year in Lismore.

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 Year 12 graduation formal.

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.

2011 promises to be an even busier year and we look forward to the achievement and enjoyment.

Carly Van Beers

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

Richmond River High School continues to remain the secondary school of choice for the broader Lismore community. We again experienced a significant increase in numbers, with the departure of a relatively small Year 12 cohort of 62 in 2009 being replaced by an intake of 142 Year 7 students in 2010. It is certainly satisfying that parents of students in our partner primary schools, both in Lismore and our surrounding “Big Scrub” schools, which combined create quite a diverse school community, continue to recognise our school’s commitment to student success through the provision of innovative programs and the provision of excellent opportunities, all of which are underpinned by quality teaching.

![School Enrolments](image)

Student Attendance profile

In comparative terms, our attendance profile is a pleasing one. Out total attendance figure for 2010 (88.6%) reflects a rise of 0.2% on the previous year, and places our school a full percentage point above the regional figure. In particular, attendance rates in Years 7, 8 and 9 outstrip regional figures and compare well with the respective average figures across the state. Given the diverse nature of our student population, many of whom contend with lengthy bus trips on a daily basis, these figures reflect well on the excellent opportunities and innovative programs which encourage attendance at Richmond River High School.

![School Attendance Yr 7-12](image)

Clearly, however, there remains work to be done. Our school’s attendance figures for students in Years 10 and 12 do not compare favourably with respective figures across the North Coast region and across the state. This, in some ways, is reflective of our identified target of improving the value added to levels of student achievement between Years 10 and 12. Accordingly, in this final year of our current school improvement planning cycle, our Student Engagement and Retention Action Group has been working with our staff on the re invigoration of curricular and extra
curricular programs for Year 10, while considering strategies to support Year 12 students struggling with the rigours of senior study.

Management of non-attendance

2010 saw a substantial review process of the ways in which low levels of school attendance, along with whole day and fractional truancy have been dealt with. Our year advisors, in seeking the means with which to adopt a more pro active role in supporting students at risk of disengaging from learning, have taken on the role of monitoring students who demonstrate low levels of whole day school attendance. The rationale was that year advisor contact with students and their parents from a pastoral care, rather than policy driven perspective, would yield more positive outcomes in terms of encouraging all young people to come to school, and allow more successful implementation of attendance plans and other strategies to keep students coming to school.

Our deputy principals took on the role of closely monitoring reports of whole day and fractional truancy within the broader structural framework of addressing the range of choices which reflect disengagement from learning. Students who have truanted classes are interviewed within 24 hours of their truancy, with a clear set of consequences enforced where appropriate. This empirical approach to interviews and consequences, excluding uncertainty or emotion, encourages a more positive focus on the advantages of engaging positively in learning activities.

Retention to Year 12

Our rate of retention to Year 12 has remained relatively consistent over the past five years. It does, however, fall marginally below the “like schools” average figure and significantly below the state figure. Of the 101 students who began studies for the Preliminary Course in 2009, 59 completed the Higher School Certificate in 2010. Of the 33 students who left, 7 gained traineeships or apprenticeships, 12 moved to other schools, 5 commenced studies at TAFE, 10 found employment and 3 went interstate or overseas. An overall conclusion can therefore be drawn that a relatively low retention rate is not necessarily a bad thing for those students concerned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retention to Year 12</th>
<th>SC04-HSC06</th>
<th>SC05-HSC07</th>
<th>SC06-HSC08</th>
<th>SC07-HSC09</th>
<th>SC08-HSC10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>53.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEG</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>56.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>62.7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Post-school destinations

Of the 59 students who completed their studies for Year 12 in 2010, 59 completed the exit survey on which our data is based. In a very positive result, 50% of students indicated their intention to pursue tertiary studies, which is an increase on last year's figure, and well above the state average. Overall, it is extremely pleasing that 87% of students were able to describe clear educational and career goals which they had set themselves over the next two years.

Year 12 students undertaking vocational or trade training

Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses continued to be a popular option for our students in 2010, with 37 students participating in the following five courses delivered at Richmond River High School: Construction, Information Technology, Metal and Engineering, Primary Industries and Hospitality. Three students completed three of these courses, two students completed two courses, while the remaining 32 students all completed one course each. Fourteen students completed TAFE delivered VET courses, with three students completing school based traineeships.

Year 12 students attaining HSC or equivalent vocational educational qualification

59 Year 12 students completed their studies for the HSC in 2010 at Richmond River High School. Of these, 37 students completed Vocational Education courses as part of their pattern of study (see above).

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 Principals</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Teachers</td>
<td>8.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Classroom Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher of Emotional Disabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher Librarian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counsellor</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Administrative &amp; Support Staff</td>
<td>9.482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>71.582</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of our total of 71.582 teachers and support staff, three members of staff identify as having an indigenous background, giving us a percentage figure of 3% in our overall staffing.

Staff retention

At the end of 2010 our tradition of staff stability was interrupted by significant staff movement. This came in the form of two promotions to senior executive and executive positions at other schools, one transfer and six retirements.

The above has created a unique challenge in our school in 2011 as we work to overcome this significant loss in corporate knowledge.

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>
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<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Financial summary

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

Date of financial summary: 30/11/2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>$</th>
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<tr>
<td>Balance brought forward</td>
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<tr>
<td>Global funds</td>
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<td>Tied funds</td>
<td>308094.49</td>
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<tr>
<td>School &amp; community sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trust receipts</td>
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<td>Canteen</td>
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<td><strong>Total income</strong></td>
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Expenditure

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<th>Key learning areas</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Excursions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extracurricular dissections</td>
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<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>14233.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training &amp; development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tied funds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Casual relief teachers</td>
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<td>Administration &amp; office</td>
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<tr>
<td>School-operated canteen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trust accounts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capital programs</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total expenditure</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balance carried forward</strong></td>
<td><strong>553278.54</strong></td>
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</table>

A full copy of the school's 2010 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 2010

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

The Arts

The arts at Richmond River continue to hold a strong reputation in the wider community. Students achievements in visual arts, drama, photography and music were 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.

2010 saw the introduction of a Year 8 film & video elective which proved to be successful. There has been much student interest in the course. Student

Alex Jones receiving the Minister's Award
works were entered into a variety of competitions and screened at school assemblies. Two students undertook extension film workshop, filming music video at SCU.

Visual arts continued to achieve in 2010 with the program providing students with diverse experiences and challenge. Excursion highlights included the Asia Pacific Trienniel and HSC student attendance at Artspan lectures. Student work was regularly exhibited in the River Gallery, and a number of students entered competitions.

Year 12 student, Breanna Nobbs produced an outstanding body of work under the guidance of Miss Glenn Bland and Miss Dess. Students in all years enjoyed excursions to a variety of galleries. The Art Club run by Miss Bouveret continued to provide students with enrichment.

The drama program continues to attract students as reflected by growth in the number and size of classes. Our connection with NORPA led to four of our talented Year 11 students being cast in Engine where they worked alongside professional actors. Again, we were represented at the State Drama Camp, this year by Rennie Mitchell. Year 10 drama staged an excellent production of The Musicians, whilst our talented Year 9 students starred in the North Coast Drama Festival. We managed a coup by securing the international Aida Foundation, a theatre company from Verona, Italy to undertake a short residency in our River Theatre. Students from our school hosted LCoSS drama students and together enjoyed authentic Commedia del Arte performances and workshops. Drama students also gained first-hand experience of staging a professional production with a two residency visit from Sydney based Taurus Theatre Company who staged “Ruby Moon”. HSC students Emma Newman and Hayley Larsen had their work featured in DramaWorks at the Star Court Theatre.

HSC students studying the arts enjoyed the annual HSC ‘Cultural Excursion’ to Sydney. This year the CAPA students joined with the HSIE students for a combined excursion. The CAPA 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.

The success of photography at our school is highly recognised at local, regional, state and national levels. RRHS was ranked number three in Australia in the Annual Ilford Awards which are judged on student work each term in the Silver halide-Traditional Black and White category. Our highly talented students and their teachers, Mr Stephen Blanch and Miss Liz Bouveret, continued the tradition of gaining accolades in a variety of competitions including the Coraki Art Competition where our students achieved 1st, 2nd and 3rd place in their categories. Our students also performed well at Nimbin and Lismore shows. Year 11 student, Shanti Kenny, had her photograph published as a part of the “Write for Fun” competition. The elective continues to grow in popularity with almost all classes at maximum capacity.

Sport

RRHS participated in almost all boys and girls NSW knockout competitions. This is a tribute to our teaching staff who were busy contributing as zone and regional managers in volleyball, touch, beach volleyball, soccer, hockey, basketball and
cross country and who were ably supported by staff at school who volunteered to cover classes when the teams were competing. Without this unique characteristic our school would not produce the many marvelous results and provide opportunity for students of all socio-economic backgrounds to experience sport at a high level.

Over 150 students received sporting participation awards of various levels at our Annual Sport Awards Ceremony. This awards ceremony recognises both outstanding achievement in sport and also participation of students in sporting teams. Participation was a major focus of the staff who were involved in sport, encouraging students to be active and enjoy the benefits they receive from being involved in sport.

Carly Walker was awarded the Pierre De Courbetin Olympic Award for sporting excellence and Sportsperson of the Year also went to Carly, along with Jarryd Atkinson for Male Sportsperson. Sam Nilon and Mallory Dobner both competed at the Combined High Schools Swimming Carnival. Sophie Beucker, Claudia Beucker and Tiarna Martin Durrington competed in the Aeroskools National Competition for Sports Aerobics, achieving outstanding individual and pairs results. Jarryd Atkinson and Torren Lamont were selected by Volleyball Queensland talent scouts to attend a “future stars” development camp in Brisbane.

Ruby Morris achieved a Sporting Blue for athletics, became the State Champion for 17 years and over girls shot put and represented at national level. Some of the sports that Richmond River High School took part in for both open and junior categories were swimming, cross country, athletics, hockey, baseball, softball, rugby league, touch football, soccer, basketball, netball, table tennis, chess, volleyball and beach volleyball. Year 7 took part in a range of sports at the Gala Day at Evans River K-12 School.

Our house competitions encouraged popular support for the three school carnivals featuring excellent student attendance with over 75% attendance for both Athletics and Swimming Carnivals.

Student success at regional, state and national levels

During 2010, our students continued a longstanding Richmond River High School tradition of acknowledgement through substantial community awards.

Alex Jones of Year 12 had a very busy and successful year. She received the Minister’s Award for Student Achievement, one of 38 students across the state to receive this prestigious award, which is the highest form of recognition in public education. Alex was awarded the Zone Lions Youth of the Year, then going on to achieve success at the Regional finals. Alex was also runner up in the National Awards for Vocational Education, having won the regional and state levels, and was a finalist in the Zonta Young Women in Public Affairs competition.

Twoey Jones of Year 11 was the winner of the Public Speaking section of the Lions Youth Awards. Twoey spoke at the NSW Youth Parliament in Sydney during April and July, and was selected to attend the NSW Schools Constitutional Convention at Parliament House in Sydney in November. Further, Twoey was then selected by his peers as one of 30 delegates to represent NSW at the National Constitutional Convention in Canberra in March 2011.

Twoey, Kurtis Wyatt and Luke Rosten, all of Year 11 were further acknowledged with regional awards for student excellence along with Alex Jones and Hayley Larsen of Year 12, and Year 10 students Alice Fleetwood and Lauren Bryant. Keyarrah Delauney of Year 12 was the successful recipient of the Housing NSW Youth Scholarship.

In the local community, some 37 students from Years 9 and 10 were acknowledged in the Premier’s Volunteering Awards, with 15 students at bronze level, 7 at silver level, 4 at gold level and 11 at diamond level. Further, at the annual Kids in the Community awards night, Connor Anderson of Year 9 won an award for his work with Lismore City Council in developing the Nimbin Skate Park. Kellie Mitchell of Year 12 won the section “Against All Odds” for her resilience and ‘never give up’ attitude. Twoey Jones was awarded a $3,000.00 scholarship, while Daniel Bow and Aiden Zelandonii, both of Year 11 also received awards.

Our students also participated with distinction across a range of competitions. Our debaters once again enjoyed considerable success, with our Year 10 team becoming North Coast champions, and Emerald Moon from that team was selected for the NSW debating team. In a similar vein, Richmond River High School was the only public school to participate in the Tournament of the Minds for 2010, with our Language & Literature, and Social Science teams receiving honours.

Our students participated in an impressive variety of competitions, including the Ilford Photography Competition, in which our school was ranked third nationally, the Bentley Art and Photography and Aged Photography Competitions, in which our students also received awards. Two students, Marni Tavener of Year 10 and Abby Kelly of Year...
8, were also selected for the North Coast Dance Ensemble.

Further, some 31 Year 7 students successfully completed the Premier’s Reading Challenge, while students also participated in the Rio Tinto Big Science Competition, Computing Competitions hosted by the Universities of Sydney and NSW - receiving a number of distinctions and credits - and the Chefs on Show competition. During the North Coast National Show, our students won prizes in cooking and textiles and led dairy and beef cattle from various studs in the Lismore area. One of our school’s steers received the highest price paid at the show, while our school scored well in the Hoof and Hook Competition.

Many of our students were able to further their learning opportunities in a variety of ways. Year 12 students began their tertiary studies via scholarships offered by Southern Cross University, the Australian National University and Griffith University. Students were also able to gain early placement at these universities and the University of New England through principal’s recommendations.

Students were also able to extend their learning through specific programs. Our Years 9 and 10 debaters attended the Regional Debate Camp at Yarrawarra Cultural Centre in Corindi. Jordan Maher of Year 10 was awarded a scholarship to participate in the Department of Defence trade tour for indigenous students. Fiona Rourke of Year 11 attended the Honeywell Engineering Summer School, the only student present not from a private or selective school. Aiden Zelandonii progressed to the final round of the National Youth Science forum while Hayley Larsen of Year 12 and Josie Wivell of Year 11 were accepted into the Talent Identification Program Workshops for Singers held on the last weekend of April in Port Macquarie.

Our music students were able to share their talents with the surrounding community through performances at the North Coast National Show and at Tonefest, a Lismore Community of Secondary Schools performance night, involving nine schools. Years 8, 9 and 11 students also participated in public performances at school. Students also performed at Wollongbar TAFE open day.

A number of extra curricular programs provided further opportunities for our students. The Duke of Edinburgh Scheme, coordinated by Ms Bouveret, saw 22 students complete their Bronze Award and 23 students complete their Silver Awards. Ms Bouveret also took 18 students on a cultural exchange tour of the west coast of the United States as part of the “G’Day USA” program. Ms Bouveret has also coordinated the Art Club, which has run for the past three years, in 2010 comprising some 20 students.

**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 2010. 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, and the Student Equity Group.

Our Leo Club, which continues to enjoy growing numbers, has a focus on community service and fundraising. The money raised was used to help students at Richmond River High School as well as supporting a variety of local, state and national charities. Students took part in Daffodil Day, Red Nose Day, and supported Legacy and Guide Dogs for the Blind. The Leo Club provides students with the chance to develop leadership and teamwork skills to help others in the community.

Our Student Equity Group, an open and inclusive group promoting diversity, student voice and acceptance, continued its work in improving equity across the school. Under the guidance of Mr John Ryan, the group organised the Human Rights Forum in partnership with Southern Cross University. The forum involved over 400 students from both public and private schools and was held over three days on the University campus in Lismore. Students benefitted from listening to an amazing array of humanitarian keynote speakers from across Australia. The Equity Group also ran its annual Harmony Day in support of tolerance and diversity.

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 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 these assessments. Year 7: from Band 4 (lowest) to Band 9 (highest). Year 9: from Band 5 (lowest) to Band 10 (highest).
Literacy – NAPLAN Year 7

With consistent growth in the numbers of our Year 7 intake since 2005 comes a varying pattern in literacy results. While our average result in the reading component of literacy testing was above both the state and “like schools” average, the numbers of our Year 7 students achieving at the highest level (Band 9) declined relative to previous Year 7 cohorts at our school, and to the corresponding state and “like schools” figures. However, students achieving reading results in Bands 7 and 8 rose in relation to all of these comparative figures.

The implications of our results in the writing and grammar and punctuation components of testing are more complex. More students achieved results in the top band (9) than in previous years, bettering the “like schools” average but still falling behind the state average. However, this appears to be at the expense of Band 8 results, which declined, with more students “dropping” to Band 7 than “rose” to Band 9.

Spelling appeared to be the weak point of our Year 7 intake in 2010, with 31.6% of students achieving in the bottom two bands – well above the state average – and 23.1% of students performing in the top two bands – well below the state average. Clearly, there is work to be done not only with spelling, but also in our capacity to develop the talent of our higher performing writers.

Numeracy – NAPLAN Year 7

Similarly with our literacy results, our numeracy results in NAPLAN testing reflect the changing nature of our student intake as a result of our growing numbers. While the numbers of our students achieving in the lower two bands remained static compared to recent years, numbers of students achieving in the middle two bands have risen to figures above both “like schools” and state average figures. Unfortunately, this appears to have been at the expense of the numbers of students achieving results in the top two bands. Figures here have declined in relation not only to previous Year 7 cohorts at our school, but also “like schools” and state averages.

Our challenge as a school is to implement teaching strategies which will develop the skills of all of our students, although particularly those with the potential to achieve in the higher bands in Years 9 and 10.

Literacy – NAPLAN Year 9

Year 9 literacy results in 2010 were, overall, most pleasing. Our average reading result rose to ten points above the state average, with relatively higher proportions of our students achieving in the top two bands compared to “like school” and state averages. A slight drift of students from the middle to lower bands suggests that students outside our “Reach High” classes need more exposure to reading activities.
Our tradition of performing well in the writing component of literacy testing continued, with higher proportions of students achieving in the top two bands (17.7%) compared not only to previous cohorts (15%), but also to state (16.9%) and “like school” (16.4%) average figures, while the numbers of students performing in the lower two bands declined. This positive trend can be traced in more detail through our grammar and punctuation results, where the numbers of our students achieving across Bands 5 to 9 have either remained static or declined, culminating in a pleasing increase in the numbers of students achieving in the top band (10), consequently pushing the results of these higher achieving students ever closer to the results of their high achieving peers across the state.

Throughout 2010, our Literacy Action Group specifically targeted spelling in Stages 4 and 5. The relevance of this focus is again reinforced by some mixed results in the spelling component of literacy testing. The numbers of students achieving in the middle bands declined (4.7%) relative to the school average over recent years. While this produced a growth in Band 9 results (1.9%), there was also a disappointing growth in the numbers of students achieving in Bands 7 and 8 by 8.1%, relative to previous years. However, it was disappointing that the proportion of students achieving in Bands 9 and 10 declined by 5.6%.

Clearly, the manner in which we cater for our students who should be achieving in the top bands needs to be addressed. The school has identified the structure and curricula delivery for “Reach High” classes as an area for review.

**Progress in literacy**

As has been noted, our Year 7 intake in 2010 comprised a large and diverse group – this is becoming a characteristic trend for our school.

The disparity in results which this trend implies for our Year 7 intake is typified by the gap in average growth achieved in reading (42.6 points) and writing (27.4 points) since these students were last tested in Year 5. Both sets of figures fell significantly below the state average – by 12 points for reading and 10 points for writing. Further to this, 41.7% of students improved their writing results at the expected rate of improvement or above, while the same figure for reading was 48.7%.
Across all elements of literacy testing, Year 7 student results were, however, consistently spread, with approximately 20% of students achieving results in the top bands, 50% in the middle bands and 30% in the lower bands.

The growth of literacy results for our Year 9 cohort in 2010, however, was far more encouraging, reflecting as it does the effectiveness of literacy focused teaching across all of our Key Learning Areas, coordinated by our Literacy Action Group.

The average growth of student results in writing (34.8 points) outstripped the state average (29.41 points), with 61.2% of students improving their writing results by the expected rate or better. The results in reading were also encouraging, with the average rate of improvement in student achievement (28.3 points) falling short of the state average (33.3 points) by only 5 points. 48.1% of students improved their reading results by the expected growth rate or greater.

The spread of our writing results in Year 9 was encouraging. 30% of our students achieved in the top bands, 47% in the middle bands and 23% in the lower bands. Meanwhile, in reading, 24% of students achieved in the top bands, 49% in the middle bands and 27% in the lower bands.

Overall, these figures are a characteristic representation of the progress made by Richmond River High School students in the development of literacy levels of achievement. Through a range of faculty based and whole school innovative literacy programs, a clear pattern of progress in literacy can be traced between Years 7 and 9.

**Progress in numeracy**

Levels of growth in numeracy levels of achievement demonstrated by our incoming Year 7 cohort since last being tested in Year 5 were indicative of the challenges in catering to a large and diverse group of students. The average growth in numeracy results (35.2 points), fell well below the state average (61.94 points) by 26.34 points, while only 35.6% of students attained a growth rate at or above the expected growth rate. Our school certainly has work to do in terms of numeracy levels of achievement among this group. Only 11% of Year 7 students achieved results in the top two bands, with 40% in the middle bands and 50% in the lower bands.

The average growth in results for our Year 9 cohort (28.3 points), in comparison, fell only 9.2 points below the state average (33.3 points) – a far more encouraging set of figures than those for Year 7. Further, 45.4% of students demonstrated a growth rate at or above the expected growth rate.

The spread of numeracy results in Year 9 reinforced the positive impact of our school’s emphasis on quality teaching and student success in lifting the numbers of students achieving in the top (13%) and middle (51%) bands at the expense of the lower bands (36%).

While progress in numeracy results is not as pronounced as for literacy, there remains clear evidence of a range of faculty based and whole school innovative numeracy programs which have catered for the large and diverse cohorts of students which make up our school community. One of the great strengths of our school is an entrenched culture of cyclical self evaluation and improvement through the active involvement of all staff in school improvement planning and the implementation of identified strategies.

**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 (83.6) was slightly below both the state average (84.4) and the SSG average (84.1), but higher than the regional average (82.9). While the results overall were sound, of concern is the low number of students achieving in the top bands.

**School Certificate**


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

**English Literacy**

Our 2010 School Certificate cohort achieved commendable results in their final examination, with average results (75.7%) exceeding the state average (75.1%) and comparative with the “like schools” average (75.8%). This was contributed to by 27.6% of our students achieving results in the top two bands. Further, 55% of our students achieved results in Band 4, exceeding the corresponding “like schools” figure by 5.4% and
the state figure by 11.8%. Once again, this placed over 80% of our students in the top three bands, with no students being placed in the lowest band.

**Mathematics**

2010 results revealed that the bulk of our students fit into the middle bands. We had a greater number of Band 3 and Band 4 results than the rest of the state and our “like schools” group. One of the faculty aims was to increase the number of results in the top three bands. This year, four Year 10 students achieved a Band 6 and a further fourteen obtained a Band 5 in the School Certificate Exam.

We have been successful in lifting the results of our low achieving students with the number of Band 1 and Band 2 results lower than the state and “like schools” average levels. This was due in no small part to a program of individualised and intense tuition that concluded in 2009.

**Science**

2010 was a more stable year than 2009 in terms of having all our laboratories back in action. The School Certificate exam for science covers all Year 9 and 10 work, so some disadvantage may still have been present in this cohort due to the disruption from the laboratory upgrades while they were in Year 9.

Overall the achievement of our students in the School Certificate was good. The average mark (75.6) was above both the “like schools” average (75.3) and the state average (74.6). We also had 5.7% of our students achieve Band 6 results, which is higher than in previous years, but lower than both the state average (7.5%) and the “like schools” average (6.0%). This cohort showed an overall value – added figure of +0.5, which is above our “like schools” average (+0.3).

**Australian Geography, Civics and Citizenship**

The average mark for the 2010 candidates was above both the state and “like schools” averages.

Achievement was not as strong as in previous years. However, 60% of students were in the top three bands of achievement.

The percentage of students in the lower three bands did not exceed the state or “like schools” averages.

**Computer Skills**

As has been noted elsewhere in this report, our school has invested substantially in the necessary infrastructure to make connected learning a daily reality for our students. This priority continues to be reflected in our sound computer skills results. Our students continue to outstrip average results across the state and our “like schools” group with 51.5% of students acknowledged as “Highly Competent”, approximately 2 points above both state and “like schools” comparative figures.

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

Our Year 10 cohort for 2010 was able to demonstrate, on average, significant value added to levels of achievement measured in their Year 5 Basic Skills Test in 2005. This was particularly the case in science, with a relative performance 0.5 above the state average and 0.2 above our “like schools” group. Our students also demonstrated significant value added to levels of achievement in Australian history and geography, specifically 0.4 and 0.9 respectively above the state average relative performance. Significant value added to relative performance levels were also demonstrated, as always, in computer skills, 0.7 above the state figure and 0.6 above the “like schools” figure.

Of particular concern, however, was the decline in value added to levels of achievement in English, and particularly mathematics. As has already been noted (see ‘Student attendance profile’), our staff have identified diminishing levels of engagement with the School Certificate course among many students. Consequently, a number of programs have been designed to encourage students to see the School Certificate, for however long it continues to exist, as more than a formality leading to Years 11 and 12 (see ‘Student Engagement and Retention’).
In 2010, 59 students from our school sat for the HSC across 41 Board developed courses which allowed them to qualify for an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).

**English**

Four English courses were offered in 2010, with 35 students completing the Standard English course, 19 students completing the Advanced English course along with four 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 be one percentage point above the state average. Our results in Bands 3 and 4 mirrored state averages. Results achieved by our students in the Advanced course averaged 73.8%.

The results achieved by students in both of the extension courses, however, were again impressive. Results in Extension 1 were above the average for recent years. Further, our Extension 2 results in 2010 again exceeded state averages.

**Mathematics**

All levels of HSC mathematics were completed in 2010. This included the extremely rigorous Extension 2 course which involves abstraction and generalisation and is integral to most of the scientific and technological advances made in Australia and elsewhere.

The popular course of General Mathematics was completed by the majority of our students. It provided the appropriate mathematical background for students who wish to enter occupations which require the use of basic mathematical and statistical techniques.

Results in all courses were close to both the state and "like schools" averages.

**Science**

Some of the science courses only had a small candidature, which makes comparisons with state and SSG averages difficult. Two courses, biology and chemistry, had more than 10 candidates. The average mark in biology was 67.3, which was below both the state average (72.2) and the "like schools" average (72.0). Chemistry students achieved an average of 59.6, which was also below state average (73.8) and "like schools" average (73.0).

Both physics and earth & environmental science had candidatures below 10 students. Nonetheless, the results in both of these courses were sound. Physics achieved an average mark of 59.2, which was below state average (61.5) but above the "like schools" average (56.5). Earth and environmental science achieved an average of 42.5, which was below state average (50.9) and in line with our "like schools" group (43.0). It should be noted that all of these courses are extremely demanding, and that students should always be commended for achieving a personal best result.
HSIE

The HSC subjects offered by the HSIE faculty in 2010 included Legal Studies, Business Studies, Ancient History and Society and Culture. Students studying Ancient History performed particularly well, achieving an average mark of 76 compared with the state average of 73. It was extremely pleasing to note that 15% of the candidates gained a Band 6 result.

The students studying Business Studies achieved an average mark of 75 compared with the state average of 74. In a strong group performance, 50% of the candidates gained a Band 5 result which was above the average state and “like schools” results. This showed an improvement on 2009 when 33% of candidates gained a Band 5 result.

The number of candidates in both Legal Studies and Society and Culture was quite small. However, in Legal Studies over half of the candidates received a Band 4 result. In Society and Culture 33% of candidates received a Band 4 result.

Creative and Performing Arts

The HSC in the Creative and Performing 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 continued to enhance student performance at our school.

This year’s highlight in the arts was Visual Arts (CAPA), which has continued to achieve strong results over the past four years. Results have come in at 1.2 marks above state average and above our “like schools” group.

In 2010 music continued the tradition of achieving substantial HSC results. A small cohort saw results just above state average.

Drama results for 2010 were not reflective of the continued growth experienced over the past four years. Results for this small candidature class fell just below the state average.

PDHPE

In 2010 only one course, PDHPE, was offered. This class was smaller than in 2009 by a third and the overall results were slightly lower than the preceeding year. However, this still saw 60% of the class achieve a Band 4 result or above.

Technology is still a key focus in the teaching and learning of this course through the use of blog sites to share information. Staff are strengthening ties with the Physiology Department at Southern Cross University with our students participating in some testing at the University.

Technical and Applied Studies

A variety of subjects were offered by the TAS faculty during 2010 and the results of the Higher School Certificate were well above the state and “like schools” average in hospitality, food technology and information technology. Individual students in industrial technology, food technology and metal and engineering gained pleasing results. In hospitality, food technology and information technology more than 50% of students achieved Band 5 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. Many of our students have successfully moved into further training and employment in these vocational areas.

We are developing innovative programs which have been implemented to encourage the use of the DER laptops and the use of other technologies such as interactive whiteboards, moodle and video conferencing. The application for the development of a Trade Training Centre at Richmond River High School has been successful in hospitality, construction, metal and engineering and primary industries.

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

Our 2010 Year 12 cohort demonstrated in their Higher School Certificate results an overall improved value added to achievement levels demonstrated in their School Certificate examinations in 2008 when compared to preceeding Year 12 cohorts since 2006. This was particularly the case for 2010 HSC students whose results fell between Bands 4 and 6, where levels of relative performance drew closer to the state average by 2.3 points for Band 4 results when compared to results over the preceeding four years, and similarly by 2 points for Bands 5 and 6 results.
It should be noted, however, that these results are not satisfactory when compared to relative performance figures from our "like schools" group. Our Bands 1 to 3 students fall 3.3 points below their "like school" peers, our Band 4 students fall short by 0.9 points and our Bands 5 and 6 students by 2.5 points. While these results, as noted, are an improvement on recent years, there remains a clear pattern of under achievement among our students whose levels of achievement fall within Bands 1 to 3 and, more pointedly, among our students whose results should place them in Bands 5 and 6. Such figures must certainly inform our school improvement priorities in 2011 particularly in our identified priority areas of Teacher Quality and Student Engagement & Retention and beyond into the 2012 – 2014 improvement planning cycle.

**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 in our school achieving at or above the minimum standard in 2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage of Year 7 students achieving at or above minimum standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>94.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>90.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>89.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation and grammar</td>
<td>86.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>96.1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As has already been noted, our Year 7 intake for 2010 comprised a large and diverse group. Given this, it is pleasing that in three of the five criteria the proportion of our students performing at or above the national minimum standard falls within the top percentile band. Given the identified need to develop numeracy skills in our Year 7 intake (see Numeracy – NAPLAN Year 7), it is pleasing to note that these results still compare so favourably to the national minimum standard.

**Percentage of Year 9 students in our school achieving at or above the minimum standard in 2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage of Year 9 students achieving at or above minimum standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>91.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>90.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>88.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation and grammar</td>
<td>91.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>96.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proportion of Year 9 students achieving at or above the national minimum standard reflects the trend of recent years in remaining high, again particularly in numeracy. Only one criterion for testing, spelling, saw less than 90% of students meeting the standard. Spelling, as has already been noted, has been explicitly targeted over the past two years by our literacy action group as a component of overall school improvement planning.

**Significant programs and initiatives**

**Positive Behaviour for Learning**

For the past four 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 achieving important social and learning
expectations for our students while preventing problem behaviours. 

During 2010 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 PBL signage around the school, and of PBL lessons delivered to students every morning during Roll Call. With the assistance of Nadine Brown, our PBL “coach” from Lismore District Office, specific “trouble spots” around the school, where patterns of negative behaviour had been detected, had specific signs erected, reminding students of the positive behaviour expected while in that area of the school. The signs were quite colourful and individualised for our school’s context by Chris Tooley, a member of our PBL team.

The content of PBL lessons was also revised. PBL team members surveyed staff to determine the areas of student behaviour which most needed correction. A set of PBL priorities was devised, using this data, which then formed the basis of PBL lesson planning and preparation. Issues addressed included electronic devices in school, harassment, uniform and formal assembly behaviour.

As in previous years, students were placed on Behaviour Monitoring where staff were 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 continued to demonstrate our school’s expectation to behave respectfully, responsibly, honestly and safely were 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.

PBL will continue to be an important priority in our school, as we experience ongoing growth in student numbers, in a school with unique physical restraints which can make the accommodation of a large student body rather challenging.

Aboriginal education

Our school continues to demonstrate our commitment to Aboriginal education through incorporating Aboriginal perspectives in all KLA programs, inservice training staff on the new Aboriginal Education Policy, commencing each school and formal assembly with an Acknowledgement of Country and 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, along with many parents, attended ‘Deadly Days’, an initiative by North Coast TAFE and held this year at Casino. 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 and hands on activities.

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.

During NAIDOC Week, our school invited an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dance group to perform for all Aboriginal students, along with students in Years 7 and 8. The week also featured our annual art competition featuring student works inspired by traditional Aboriginal designs.

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.
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 other indigenous cultures as well as the multicultural nature of Australian society. The Cultural Studies teaching program delivered to Year 8 students in 2010 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.

National partnership programs

Connected learning

During 2010, Richmond River High School consolidated its program of network updates to support the delivery of interactive classrooms and learning tools. Specifically, this took the form of sustainable asset replacement for all computer hardware to maintain a high level of current technology. The upgrade of our school network infrastructure and consolidation of resources brought our school into line with DET standards.

Substantial investment in technology throughout 2010 saw technology installed into teaching and learning spaces as follows:

- 19 classrooms with interactive whiteboards and 7 classrooms with data projectors.
- 1 classroom with video conferencing equipment.
- 4 dedicated computer laboratories.
- A library computer laboratory.
- 8 computers in the main library for student access.
- Dedicated photography computers – 4 MACs.
- Years 9-10 DER notebooks.
- All teaching and learning spaces listed above fully utilised during every lesson of every school day.

Connected learning in classrooms across the school takes the following forms:

- Widespread use in many faculties of interactive whiteboards and Smart Notebook software.
- Use of video conferencing facilities to deliver subjects taught at Richmond River High School to students in other schools through the Lismore Community of Secondary Schools (LCoSS).
- Development of teaching and learning activities integrating the use of student DER laptops in Years 9-11.
- Staff training in the use of and development of effective online learning sites using Moodle and Learning Wraps.
- Extensive use of the Clickview system for watching digital video and other digital media in the classroom.
- Year 8 Reach High students received training from a professional journalist in the use of Adobe ‘In Design’ and produced a school newspaper.
- Mathematics students’ use of an online maths program to complement class teaching and learning activities.
- A film and video editing course introduced into the Creative and Performing Arts faculty.
- Staff training in a computerised roll marking system.

This has allowed all of our staff to regularly use technology in their teaching, with a clear view to enhancing the impact of our core values (quality teaching, innovative programs, excellent opportunities and student success) across the
daily learning experiences of students in our school.

Other programs

Boys' and Girls' Education

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 continued its partnership with Youth Connections North Coast, a government funded body whose primary role is to work with and support young people struggling with life in school and in the broader community. The program, entitled “Keeping Kool” involves boys from Years 7 and 8, identified as at risk of not completing school. The boys were withdrawn from class for one afternoon each week and, in the company of Mr Woodward, one of our Year Advisors, spent time with facilitators at the Youth Connections Centre. Time was devoted to discussing what is going well and what wasn’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 from the Youth Connections North Coast budget.

Groups were 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 2010.

A similarly motivated program, entitled *Connecting Girls:Girls Can* was initiated in 2010 by the Year 8 Advisor, Mr Duncan, and the Girls’ Advisor, Mrs Zobel. With the support of Connect, identified girls in Years 7 and 8 were invited to participate in a program featuring mentoring by local business women, training by professional beauticians and participation in the Horse Sense empowerment program at the Teven Equine Centre. The girls’ success in this program, which lasted eight weeks, was acknowledged by female staff members, who received a nail treatment, the role models who assessed the girls’ skill development, and Connect coordinators, who presented the girls with certificates of achievement.

A number of clear benefits became evident. All of the students 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 those involved, this translated into a marked decline in behavioural issues. Further, substantial and lasting positive relationships were established between participating staff from both within the school and the community, and the students 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 students relate to both home and school.

Personal Interest Projects

Richmond River High School continued its Personal Interest Project (PIP) initiative, in which all Year 8 students participate, in 2010. Based on the assumption that learning must “draw clear connections with students’ prior knowledge and identities, with contexts outside the classroom, and with multiple perspectives.” (Quality Teaching framework), all students in Year 8 were required to present a substantial project showcasing an area of interest which they felt passionate about.

The program relied upon a structured program of lessons, lasting for ten school weeks, in which students were supported by our Teacher Librarian, Mrs Seccombe who also coordinated the PIP program during the completion of their project. These 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.

During 2010, students who were experiencing difficulty in attempting such a large project were supported by a community mentor with expertise in the area in which the student had expressed an interest. This mentoring program was coordinated by Mrs Seccombe, Mr Duncan, the Year 8 Advisor, and Melissa Hughes and June Grace from ‘Connect’ who initially liaised with the volunteer mentors. The PIP program culminated with the students’ presentation of their completed PIP during Education Week before a panel made up of their year advisor, one of the senior executive including our newly appointed Principal, Mr Watkins and a representative of the Parents and Citizens Association.

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.

Progress on 2010 targets

Target 1

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.

Our achievements include:

- The average spelling score was moved to within 15 points of the state average. It improved by 19.1 points.
- Teachers were able to identify 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 has become a KLA focus.
- Literacy teaching strategies, including accessible resources, are being developed in teaching programs across all KLAs.
- Literacy Action Group members 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 numeracy strategies into faculty programs to move 20% of Year 7 Band 7 (2008) results to Bands 8, 9 and 10 in Year 9 (2010).

Our achievements include:

- While 2% of students moved from Bands 5 and 6 into Band 7 in the 2010 Year 9 NAPLAN testing when compared to previous cohorts, the proportion of students in Band 8 remained static, while the proportion of students in Bands 9 and 10 unfortunately declined. Further, the average value added to numeracy results by this cohort fell below the state average by 9.2 points.
- More positively, teachers have been able to confidently use NAPLAN data to identify the learning needs of students in their classes. Teachers have modified their teaching to specifically address numeracy outcomes based on their engagement with the SMART data analysis package.
- Teachers across KLAs are developing their capacity to use of ICT teaching strategies and resources. At least one teacher in each faculty has been able to identify links between two identified school improvement priorities (i.e. numeracy and Quality Teaching) and reflect this in faculty programming.
- Teaching strategies which have led to the successful implementation of the NIMS project since 2007 have been implemented by teachers across all KLAs, with the support of our STLA.

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.

Our achievements include:

- Quality rich tasks have been established for the Reach High classes. Improved Reach High programs with greater levels of staff contentment and student enrichment
- The majority of KLAs have clearly established scope and sequence for Years 7-12
- Improved quality of assessment tasks for stage 4 and 5 students, heightening the importance and priority of assessments in stage 4 and 5. This has led staff to identify the need for revision of the stage 4/5 assessment procedures.

Target 4: Reduced rate of negative RISC entries, increased student participation in Praise and Merit system.

Our achievements include:

- Students identified as at risk of disengaging from learning involved in a range of pastoral care programs organised by the school and external agencies. These programs addressed self esteem, motivation, anger management, school attendance and the identification of education options.
- Preliminary work on expanding the concept of Personal Interest Projects in Year 8, requiring students in Years 7, 9, 10 and 11 to complete similar programs as a condition of enrolment at Richmond River High School. This ongoing “portfolio” would promote student engagement with learning across all years.
- Richmond River High School self nominated as a pilot school for the implementation of the English Studies course, designed for students not requiring an ATAR.
Student leaders actively promote the drawing of Praise and Merit vouchers at weekly school assemblies.

Substantial prizes (e.g. stereos, ipods) awarded to students at end of semester formal assemblies to students who have progressed through the Praise and Merit scheme.

**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 2010 our school carried out evaluations of:

**Educational and management practice**

**Background**

With the appointment of our new Principal, Mr Chris Watkins, 2010 proved to be a year of transition in terms of refining and clarifying leadership roles in all school settings. A foundation of distributed leadership across all staff had already been established through a collegially devised values platform (Quality Teaching, Innovative Programs, Excellent Opportunities and Student Success) underpinning all work done across the school.

Our three tiered planning process (Faculty, School Sustainability and School Improvement), with a common organisational basis drawn from our core values, explicitly supported and drove our identified school improvement priorities of Literacy, Numeracy, Teacher Quality and Student Engagement & Retention. Our task, at this point, became one of culture building, encouraging all staff to acknowledge that all work done across the school was integral to our school improvement priorities.

**Findings and conclusions**

- Faculty planning was refined to become the primary driver of school improvement priorities, with a view to making the link between classroom practice and school improvement as tangible as possible.
- Faculty representation on each of our four school improvement action groups would continue to ensure a coordinated approach to school improvement, ensuring targets in our three year improvement cycle would continue to be met across all faculties.
- With the replacement of our Head Teacher Teaching and Learning with a Head Teacher Administration, the Deputy Principals were free to assume a greater role in using electronic communication on a daily basis to reinforce whole school directions with all staff, hence regularly revisiting in practical ways the linkage of classroom practice with school improvement.
- This was further reinforced through our ongoing regular program of whole staff meetings encompassing school improvement, school management and extraneous whole staff issues.
- School improvement and sustainability planning has, accordingly, been refined to ensure simplicity and accessability, so that school improvement is viewed as part of the working day, rather than part of a "plan".

**Future directions**

School sustainability planning will be further refined into a series of role statements, reflecting the reality of ongoing school management and ensuring opportunities exist for all staff in line with the principles of distributed leadership.

School improvement priorities will necessarily be revised at the end of our current three year planning cycle in 2011. As has already been noted in this report, a significant part of this review must be the value added to levels of student achievement between Years 10 and 12. All of this must be achieved while consolidating our emergent culture of acknowledging daily classroom practice as fundamental to any strategy for school improvement.

**Curriculum**

**Background**

As indicated in earlier sections of this report, many aspects of the results achieved by our students in Years 10 and 12 have proven to be a cause of concern. Year advisors surveyed students in Years 10, 11 and 12, and found some of the prescient issues to be:

- Poor organisation and time management skills.
- A lack of understanding of the ongoing serious implications of formal assessment tasks among many students.
- A lack of understanding of the place of formal assessment tasks as part of an ongoing assessment program among many students.
- The above issues being exacerbated by an unnecessarily congested assessment program.
Findings and conclusions

These survey results led to a number of conclusions:

- Clarity and consistency in format and presentation of assessment schedules and tasks were essential.
- Year advisors needed to regularly revisit assessment schedules for their respective year groups, maintaining student awareness of their significance.
- Head teachers needed to assume direct responsibility for scope and sequence in assessment schedules generated by their faculties.
- Deputy principal to assume responsibility in enforcing school policies regarding the timing of assessment tasks, i.e. no more than two “in class” tasks in any given week, no assessment tasks to be scheduled in the two weeks prior to any examination period.
- Student absence on the day before an assessment task to be minimised, i.e. “hand in” tasks to be due only on Mondays, any absence prior to a task to be explained by medical certificate.

Future directions

The sustainability of these reforms depends significantly on a clear understanding on the part of all stakeholders as to the nature and timing of their roles. This, in turn, will be supported by the increasing reliance of staff on electronic communication, particularly the ready availability of relevant assessment schedules, policies and specific task requirements via the school’s common directory and website.

Parent, student and teacher satisfaction

In 2010 the school sought the opinions of parents, students and teachers about the school.

Their responses are presented below.

With the appointment of our new Principal, Mr Chris Watkins, midway through 2010, a substantial revision of the means by which students, their parents and more particularly staff were consulted on a wide range of issues began.

Parents, as always, continued to be ably represented by our Parents and Citizens Association which meets with the principal and other interested staff every month. Further, parents views are regularly canvassed through ‘River Views’, our weekly newsletter, and through feedback from our various community open nights conducted throughout the year.

Through these various forums, parents have expressed a range of views which the school has taken into account during the annual process of policy review. As always, the vast majority of our parents continue to support the school’s uniform policy. The uniform is seen to be smart but also practical for busy homes to maintain. Many parents have expressed concerns regarding electronic communication devices at school. While the school acknowledges the need for students to have mobile phones with them before and after school, the use of mobile phones by students during school hours continues to be a source of consternation both within the school and in terms of communication with persons outside the school. All parents need to continue to work with the school to address this complex issue. A similar “evolving” issue has been presented by the growing use of personal “cyber spaces” such as “Facebook”, where issues originating outside the school impact far too often on school learning time. Clearly, there is a growing need for all parents to have input regarding the school’s management of these issues which increasingly impact on both parent and student satisfaction.

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 teachers are really nice and understanding. The school prepares us well for the HSC and the future. It is a caring place and a great place to learn”.

Staff at Richmond River High School have a number of options in terms of expressing their views and having meaningful input into decisions regarding overall policy and procedure. Staff give up their time on Tuesday afternoons to attend whole staff and committee meetings, regularly correspond via group emails to all staff or specific...
subsets of staff and also attend annual whole school planning conferences.

Through these means, staff have been consulted with, and have provided meaningful input on issues ranging from the functioning of our timetable, routine daily organisation, the review and reform of our school discipline and assessment policies, the allocation of whole school roles and the ways in which extra curricular opportunities for students can be supported. While it would never be possible to achieve consistency of satisfaction across all of these issues in a staff of approximately 60 individuals, it is certainly the case that all staff have had the opportunity to be heard and that, wherever possible and appropriate, the majority view has prevailed.

Richmond River High School continues to pride itself as a school of inclusivity, reliant on the principles of distributed leadership to make it function. Consequently, parent, student and teacher satisfaction will always be a priority.

Professional learning

During 2010, a total of $51,289.44 was spent on professional learning for teachers. Appropriately, the bulk of these funds were spent on priority areas identified in our current school improvement plan ($29,148.90). Of the remainder, $16,019.80 was spent on priorities identified through faculty planning and individual professional learning plans which are part of our Teacher Annual Review process. To facilitate faculty based professional learning spending, each faculty is allocated $300.00 of TPL funds per faculty member. Finally, $3,120.68 was spent on other relevant DET priority areas such as Beginning Teachers and ICT.

A particular focus in 2010 was the development of leadership potential among our staff, with six members of staff attending regional leadership workshops in Ballina, based on the principles developed by Steven Covey. Four members of staff were sent to the Regional Quality Teaching Conference in Coffs Harbour. All members of the senior executive attended their respective annual state conferences.

Our four Staff Development Days focused on the Lismore Community of Secondary Schools priority areas of staff wellbeing and student harassment. Further, significant time was devoted to the implementation of ICT into school management and teaching and learning programs, school improvement priorities, value adding between Years 10 and 12, assertive discipline and Positive Behaviour for Learning.

The specific areas of professional learning funding expenditure were:

- Beginning Teachers: $1,225.22
- Use of ICT: $283.18
- Literacy and Numeracy: $2,733.07
- Quality Teaching: $19,642.31
- Syllabus implementation: $4,370.19
- Career development: $11,649.67
- Welfare and Equity: $7,923.52
- School identified priorities: $850.00
- DER: $2,612.28

School development 2009 – 2011

Targets for 2011

Target 1

Target 1: Majority of faculties can provide anecdotal/work sample evidence of improved spelling and writing skills (Years 7 – 9). Consistent value added can also be demonstrated through Year 9 cohort NAPLAN data.

Strategies to achieve this target include:

- Teachers familiarise themselves with and use NAPLAN package to create their own class groups – then identify weaknesses and appropriate teaching strategies.
- Action Group members model accessing and implementation of NAPLAN literacy resources – during Action Group/faculty meeting time.
- Literacy teaching strategies are embedded in Years 7 – 9 teaching programs in all KLA.
- Consistent, ongoing implementation of spelling program across all KLA.

Our success will be measured by:

- The value added to levels of student achievement in all aspects of NAPLAN literacy testing by Year 9 is on par, or exceeds state and “like school” averages.
- Year 9 cohorts over successive years demonstrate a consistent positive “drift” towards the higher achievement bands in all aspects of NAPLAN literacy testing, in particular spelling.
- TARS and EARS discussions feature positive and explicit reference to work done in classrooms across all KLAs in improving literacy skills.

Target 2: Majority of faculties can provide anecdotal/work sample evidence of improved numeracy skills (Years 7 – 9). Consistent value
added can also be demonstrated through Year 9 cohort NAPLAN data.

**Strategies to achieve this target include:**

- Teachers use NAPLAN package to create their own class groups – then identify weaknesses and appropriate teaching strategies.
- Action Group model accessing and implementation of NAPLAN numeracy resources – presented at staff meetings.
- Numeracy teaching strategies are embedded in Years 7 – 9 teaching programs in all KLAs.
- Regular staff meeting presentations on NAPLAN data, STLA testing of incoming Year 7 group, and faculty progress in addressing these.

**Our success will be measured by:**

- Students from specific class groups demonstrate individual improvement in aspects of numeracy targeted by their teachers.
- Teachers across faculties make use of numeracy teaching resources provided via SMART package.
- Head teachers and classroom teachers share their achievements in programming and teaching numeracy strategies through TARS and EARS discussions, and through staff meeting presentations.

**Target 3: SMART data (where applicable) demonstrates consistent positive value adding across all cohorts. Consistent overall improvement in assessment task results in individual courses can be traced. Improved quality in student response learning reflection tool can be traced.**

**Strategies to achieve this target include:**

- Scope and sequence documents to be developed across all KLAs emphasising depth of skills and knowledge.
- QT elements explicitly targeted in specific teaching strategies within existing teaching programs.
- Faculties develop tools for student reflection on learning where quality of responses can be traced.

**Our success will be measured by:**

- Students demonstrate consistent development of skills and knowledge acquisition as they move through each stage.
- Students demonstrate explicitly taught elements of the Quality Teaching framework through the work they produce.
- Students are able to reflect on their learning.

**Target 4: Reduction in fractional truancy, improved overall attendance, no Stage 6 N Award nominations.**

**Strategies to achieve this target include:**

- Staff meeting presentations on roles of all staff in whole school behaviour management policies and procedures. This will underpin the revision of our school discipline policy in 2011.
- Promote consistent use of Praise and Merit scheme and Good News Week.
- Further work on the implementation of an “RRHS Portfolio” encouraging engagement with learning, the incorporation of students’ broader worlds in their learning and the tracing of pathways for all students towards meaningful post school options.
- Transition meetings with partner primary schools, sharing information to better cater for our increasingly large and diverse Year 7 intake.

**Our success will be measured by:**

- Consistent understanding and implementation of our school discipline policy, minimising the impact of disruptive behaviour, student harassment and truancy on learning time.
- Consistently high numbers of diverse students receiving awards at weekly and formal assemblies as a result of our Praise and Merit scheme.
- A “RRHS Portfolio” ready for implementation across Years 7 to 11 in 2012.
- School welfare policies and procedures able to address the needs of incoming cohorts of Year 7 students in a proactive way.
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.

C Watkins  Principal  D Williamson  D Principal
M Hensley  D Principal  D Hanley  HT English
J Scarrabelotti  HT Maths (Rel)  Z van den Berg  HT Science (Rel)
S Dawson  HT HSIE  L Woodward  HT TAS (Rel)
P Howes  HT CAPA  T Laverty  HT PDHPE
M Bugden  Admin Manager  J Duncan  Teacher
L Prowse  P&C President

School contact information

Richmond River High School
Lake Street North Lismore 2480
Ph: 66 213456
Fax: 66 222928
Email: richmondri-h.school@det.nsw.edu.au
Web: www.richmondri-h.schools.nsw.edu.au/

School Code: 8214

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: