Our School at a Glance

Minerva School prides itself in fulfilling its motto "Making the student with special needs a successful part of the community".

Meeting the individual needs of all students drives the focus of all teaching and learning programs with a strong emphasis placed on student welfare, community access and work experience programs.

Collaborative consultation between the student, school staff, parents and/or caregivers and professional personnel provides students with a positive approach to accessing programs of best practice.

Students follow the Board of Studies K-6 Curriculum and the Life Skills Curriculum for the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate.

Minerva School is well resourced with a comprehensive sensory and physical therapy room, Food Technology room, Design and Technology room, ICT learning room with the latest technology accessed by all students to support the Key Learning Areas.

There is a strong focus on Inter-school sporting programs and in the Performing Arts with the school band performing regularly in the community.

Messages
Principal’s Message

This report provides our whole school community with a range of information and data on school achievement, initiatives and evaluations for the 2009 school year. It also reports on student achievement in a range of areas.

During 2009 Minerva School has received substantial financial support from many organisations within our local community. Cronulla Sutherland Leagues Club, Rotary Club of Como-Jannali, Rotary Club of Sutherland and Miranda RSL Sub Branch. This support along with the support of many others has enabled the school to provide a greater range of quality education programs to enhance and enrich student learning throughout 2009.

On behalf of the entire school community I would like to sincerely thank our local community clubs for their continued and generous support of Minerva School.

The 2009 school year was a hive of renovation activity. During the year both the male and female student toilet blocks underwent a complete refurbishment. We received government funding to have painting carried out on gutters, facia boards and windows. The Federal Governments “Building the Education Revolution Program” provided funding to refurbish the Industrial Arts building. Although still under construction it is being completely renovated to house a new classroom, modified Industrial Arts room, Counsellors Office and two storerooms. This project is expected to be completed in early 2010.

‘The Community of Schools on the Park’ initiative was officially launched in the middle of 2009. I look forward to working with our team of eleven local schools in 2010.

As always the P&C have been a wonderful support to the staff and students at Minerva throughout 2009. Led by the President Ms Jay Hernandez they have worked tirelessly throughout the year fundraising to provide resources and social activities for the students.

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.

Fiona Young
Relieving Principal

P&C Message

The 2009 school year was very busy with fundraising activities. Our biggest event was the ‘Trivia Night’ in which we raised $4000. All funds raised will be put towards assisting student programs such as the school band and investing in new school sport representative uniforms.

On behalf of the P&C committee I would like to thank everyone for their support and contribution throughout the year.

The P & C meets on the first Monday of the month at 7:30pm. I would like to extend an invitation to our valued school community members to attend the monthly meetings. Your contribution to the school is valued.

Jay Hernandez, P&C President,
Minerva School
School Context

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

A table of our school’s enrolment profile over the last five years is displayed immediately below. 53 students were enrolled at Minerva in 2009. The maximum enrolment is 63 due to the high support needs of our students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Structure of Classes

We had seven classes operating in 2009. Each class is staffed by one teacher and one School Learning Support Officer. We have graded Reading and Mathematics groups operating across the entire school three days a week. We have also established ability and needs based Personal Development classes to target specific topics such as Self Care skills, Hygiene, Puberty, Self Protective Behaviours and Friendships. The formation of the two high support needs classes established in 2007 and 2008 continued throughout 2009.

Post-school destinations

All senior students and their families at Minerva School are actively engaged in discussions about post school options. During Year 12 planning supports each student’s transition to a post-school environment.

Year 12 students undertaking vocational or trade training.

Of our five Year 12 students who left school at the end of 2009, each began either a Transition to Work Program or a Community Participation program coordinated by the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC).

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

The following table indicates the total number of teaching staff appointed to our school. However, in addition to this we have nine permanent School Learning Support Officers, one School Administration Manager and 0.344 School Administration staff. Minerva School does not currently comprise any members of staff who are from an Indigenous background.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal(s)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher of Emotional Disabilities</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher of Mild Intellectual Disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Librarian</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers Advisor</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher RFF</td>
<td>0.756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Administrative &amp; Support Staff (SASS)</td>
<td>11.856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During 2009 our school retained 100% of our permanent staff.

Teacher Qualifications

All teaching staff meets 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>80%</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.

Date of financial summary: 30/11/2009
Income $  
Balance brought forward  113 088.96
Global funds  123 479.21
Tied funds  70 797.32
School & community sources  38 293.75
Interest  5 187.48
Trust receipts  4 448.00
Canteen  0.00
Total income  355 294.72
Expenditure  
Teaching & learning
   Key learning areas  7 735.30
   Excursions  1 570.94
   Extracurricular dissections  4 056.51
   Library  131.70
   Training & development  2 897.65
   Tied funds  79 821.16
   Casual relief teachers  45 895.61
   Administration & office  21 727.87
   School-operated canteen  0.00
   Utilities  17 525.88
   Maintenance  5 236.19
   Trust accounts  8 039.87
   Capital programs  30 595.00
Total expenditure  225 233.68
Balance carried forward  130 061.04

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

Minerva School’s performance in the Arts and Sport during 2009 has remained consistent with the very high levels of performance demonstrated by students in previous years. The activities provided were carefully chosen to meet individual needs and to ensure that students accessed and participated in a broad range of artistic and sporting activities which would be immediately comparable to any mainstream school environment.

Achievements

Arts

The Dramatic Arts

In 2009, Minerva’s senior English class studied ‘Performing Arts’ as part of their weekly literacy lessons. The class was introduced to script reading for the first time and studied many different short plays.

This unit of work involved each of the students in the class rehearsing, memorising and performing their own play to the entire school audience. The students also took part in designing their own costumes and the set. The students delivered remarkable performances on stage, each of them delivering their lines without assistance. They have certainly set a high standard for others to follow.

Music

One of our achievements for 2009 was the further development of the school band. This achievement with the support of the whole staff can be quantified as a significant leap from an essentially in house school based musical experience to a polished, engaging and experienced performance band. Our band now performs on merit beyond its borders engaging with mainstream school performances and at significant events.

This has been achieved within the realm and value of inclusivity where one fifth of the school make up the band membership. This has not been a static membership. We have been developing a program that allows for a diversity of abilities and the rotation of student involvement that will ensure that many more students will have the opportunity to perform.

Our 2009 Creative Arts Program began with a stellar band performance at the City Recital Hall, Sydney CBD in February for The Sydney Region Opening for the 2009 School Year. This was a significant achievement for our students, having had to audition and be invited to perform on merit alone, along with similarly talented mainstream students from across the Sydney Region. Historically, this was a first for a Special School
and it was received with resounding praise prompting the Director of Education for the Sydney region, Phil Lambert to ring to congratulate staff involved as well as writing to say “It was the real talk after the show.”

School Band

A performance at the NSW Special Education Leader's Conference at the Novotel in Brighton Le Sands in June was received by all as being inspirational. The feedback that returned from the delegates at this event essentially expressed that our contribution encouraged all in their commitment to our schools. Our students themselves felt this achievement.

In August the band performed at the Sutherland Shire Schools Music Festival at the Sutherland Entertainment Centre. Again to our knowledge The Minerva Band was the first SSP School to perform on merit alongside several mainstream schools at this yearly ongoing event.

In December our band performed at the Broderick School Twenty-Five Year Anniversary Celebration. It was satisfying for students to be thanked by guests and parents for their involvement and pleasing for staff when a parent rang to find the source of the music only to discover it was a Minerva original.

The success of these performances speaks to the necessity of continuing to provide inclusive and satisfying musical opportunities for our students and of the benefits to them of participating in the cultural life of the wider community. It has been wonderful to see the pride of all the parents involved and their expressed desire to further support our students’ efforts in their musical endeavours.

Visual Arts

Students participated again in the 2009 Show Off's Exhibition at the Hurstville City Museum and Gallery. Through the theme, “Watch What Happens”, every student in the school was provided with a large canvas and given the opportunity to dialogue in an improvisational tactile painting experience under the guidance of staff who offered choices regarding medium, colour and other elements of design but who remained firmly “hands-off”. The results were affirming of the talent of Minerva students and encouraging to parents and public alike who viewed the works from October through to January - the exhibition was extended by popular demand.

Pottery

Sport

Sport is a very important part of Minerva school life and the 2009 Sports program was a success in regards to the access and participation levels of students in a wide variety of sports catering for a wide variety of ability levels and interest.

We were again successful in obtaining the AASC (Active After Schools Commission) grant money from the Australian Sports Commission and this money was used to support both the class PE programs as well as the whole school weekly Sports program.

Activities funded by this grant included: Surf Awareness conducted by the Sutherland Shire Council Surf Education unit, Swimming at Sutherland Leisure Centre, Hey Dee Ho Movement and Music, Dance with Ms Alisha Picken which included a dance presentation at Miranda Fair for Education Week, Athletics with Liz Radley, Fitness with Kids Sports, and football clinics conducted by the Cronulla Sharks Football Club.
‘Sailability Program’

In addition to this program students enjoyed participating in

- Sailing with Kogarah Bay Sailing Club- “Sailability” program
- A weekly Inter-school soccer Competition, run in conjunction with the Area Special Olympics Association
- Special Swim Scheme – a two week intensive swim program for less experienced swimmers conducted by the DET swim teachers at Sutherland Leisure Centre
- Interschool Swim carnival at Sutherland Leisure Centre
- Sydney Sports Committee Swim carnival at Auburn pool.
- Sydney Sports Committee Athletic Carnival at Homebush warm up Track.

In addition Minerva students were also given the opportunity to compete in the PSSA (Primary School Sports Association) and CHSSA (Combined High School Sports Association) Athletic and Swimming carnivals which are mainstream carnivals which include AWD (Athletes with a Disability) events. Two students achieved outstanding results at these carnivals. One student representing Sydney East Region in Long Jump and one student achieving 1st place in the Discus at the CHS Athletics carnival.

The focus continues to be on engaging students in activities to develop lifelong habits and a positive attitude to health and fitness.

Academic

School Certificate

Students engage in programs of study based on Life Skills outcomes and content from Years 7 to 10 syllabuses. Students who successfully engage in this program are awarded the School Certificate from the Board of Studies.

Life Skills outcomes are selected to meet the particular needs, goals and priorities of each student. In order to provide a relevant and meaningful program of study, many Life Skills outcomes and their content are taught and assessed across a variety of school and community contexts and settings.

Higher School Certificate

For students to successfully qualify for the Higher School Certificate students must engage in a program of Life Skills courses that meet the Board of Studies requirements for a “Special Program of Study”. Course objectives, outcomes and content are selected to provide an individualised transition planning process for the student. Five students successfully completed their Year 12 studies and were awarded a Higher School Certificate.
Significant Programs and Initiatives

Aboriginal education

Our school formally pays respect to the traditional custodians and owners of the land, both past and present at the beginning of all formal school occasions. We adopt an inclusive approach to all teaching and learning activities and actively value and teach respect towards Aboriginal people and culture.

During 2009 funding was accessed from the Sydney Region Aboriginal Education Unit under the Supplementary Recurrent Assistance Program to support three school initiatives. The first was to continue with the dedicated literacy learning program for Aboriginal students attending Minerva School initiated in 2008. This was in addition to the intensive literacy program indicated above. The outcome of the SRA funded program was improved literacy learning by all Aboriginal students.

The second initiative was an excursion to Kurnell. The students spent the day immersed in Aboriginal cultural activities. The range of activities was designed to raise students’ cultural awareness of traditional Aboriginal Bush Tucker, music, dance, painting, storytelling and tools.

The third initiative was to engage the Taronga Park Zoo “Animals of the Dreaming” educational program. The presenters of the program engaged the students in Aboriginal Dance, storytelling and native fauna.

Students gained a greater awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal culture and history.

Respect and Responsibility

The DET’s Code of Conduct for all staff, the Anti-Bullying Policy and our Student Welfare and Discipline Policy are adhered to and used in conjunction with each other. These practices provide an environment that demonstrates and models respect, empathy, dignity, diversity and unconditional acceptance for all.

The school has four ‘I Care’ core values;

1. I care for others.
2. I care for myself
3. I care for property.
4. I care for the environment.

Underpinning these core values is the whole school approach of Positive Behaviour Intervention and Choice Making. These strategies foster and encourage responsibility, develop conflict resolution skills, develop positive self esteem, self discipline and control.

Other programs

Workplace Learning Programs

Background

Workplace learning continues to be an area of ongoing strength at Minerva, due to its comprehensive, carefully structured workplace learning program that commences with at-school work experience. Students may then progress to community based teacher-supervised work crew groups and then to individual placements with a range of local supportive employers. Student participation is guided by the student’s individual Learning Support Plan and usually commences in the year the student turns fourteen. Early intervention in this key area assists to maximise the student’s skills giving them the best chance of post-school success. Students are supported according to their needs and available resources
to maximise the outcomes achieved. Ongoing interaction from student, parent and teachers guides the planning process to support the career goals of the student. The post-school employment destinations of students, provides sound data that the program optimises employment outcomes for students with an intellectual disability.

Findings and conclusions

In 2009 24 students participated successfully in the workplace learning program. Students participated for up to 20 weeks, often progressing from one stage of the program to another at the commencement of a new semester of the program.

Five students commenced the in-school work experience program in semester one undertaking activities to develop independent travel skills and sound generic work skills performing tasks such as cleaning, collating and small item assembly. One of these students moved to a supported work crew group in semester two having met the standards of behaviour, attitude and skill development needed to progress to a community setting placement.

Another outstanding achievement for the year was the number of students who progressed from the work crew groups to an independent workplace learning placement. In semester one, one student excitedly commenced their first independent work experience in the area of building construction.

In semester two there were six students participating in independent work experience in a range of areas including Retail, Hospitality and Construction. Their placements were a resounding success with great reports from employers reflecting on the skills they had learned and enthusiasm and interest shown. For the Year 10 students participating in work experience, this has provided the experience needed to secure a placement in a TVET course for 2010 including four students in a Retail Operations course.

In the supported work crew groups, 19 students further developed their work skills at Coles, Parkside Plaza Miranda, Woolworths Menai, and at Civic Industries, a Business Service in Caringbah.

Four students working at retail sites, both independently and in more intensively supported work crew, were undertaking work placement linked to their school and/or TAFE delivered Retail vocational education and training (VET) course. This gave the students experiences designed to contextualise and practice the skills they learned during their course and provided opportunities to develop and assess their achievement of competency in an authentic retail setting.

Future directions

The structure of the workplace learning program must be flexible enough to meet the ever changing needs of our students. A continued focus on individualising the workplace learning experiences of students will ensure that student’s workplace learning skills are maximised. During 2010 we also intend to implement the classroom based component of developing sound generic work skills.

Vocational Education and Training Courses

Background

Participation in appropriate VET courses is an important way for students with disabilities to gain the industry-specific skills needed for employment. With careful selection, preparation, support and extended time to learn many Minerva students can benefit from participating in VET courses.

Findings and Conclusions

During 2009 six students participated in TVET courses. Three students undertook Retail TVET courses at Gymea TAFE College, and three students undertook Hospitality TVET courses at Loftus TAFE College. The TAFE delivered VET courses are part of their studies leading to the award of the Higher School Certificate.

Students also participated in Retail and Hospitality work placements to further develop their skills. It was pleasing to see the success, effort and enthusiasm of students and the support provided by their employers and families.

In 2010, current Year 11 students will be continuing their TVET studies and four successful applications have been made for TVET courses in 2009 for current Year 10 students. Students in Years 9 and 10 were encouraged to sample vocational areas of interest to ensure that future selection of a VET course area is an informed decision.
Future directions

A continued focus on individualising the vocational learning and workplace learning experiences of students will ensure the participation of those students working at retail and hospitality sites, for both independently and more intensively supported students being capable of success in TAFE delivered VET courses.

Work Experience

Progress on 2009 Targets

Indicated below is the progress we have made on the targets identified in the Minerva School’s 2008 Annual School Report and in the Minerva 2009-2011 School Plan.

Target 1

Improved literacy, numeracy and Aboriginal Education learning outcomes for students.

Our achievements include:

- The staff were surveyed on the current literacy assessment schedule. They were asked to comment on its suitability for the needs of our students.
- The staff as a whole felt the current assessment schedule did not cater to the vast needs and abilities of our students and were in favour of an overhaul.
- The Sydney Region Literacy Consultant – Adele Crowhurst was then consulted to review the current assessment schedule. It was recommended that we look at the framework of the ‘Best Start Literacy Assessment’ Program to use as a base line. Two teachers then attended a two day training course on the ‘Best Start’ framework.
- All students were tested in 2009 using this framework as a platform and the data was analysed.
- All students had their reading age determined using the PM Benchmark reading program.
- Reading groups were reorganised according to student assessment results forming ability based groups.
- A whole school reading program was developed by the Literacy Team. This involved developing a reading folder for every student in the school which was ready to be implemented in 2010.
- All staff members were in-serviced on the implementation and delivery of the reading groups program.
- Each student work folder contains a levelled reader and worksheets, graded sight word lists and recording, assessment checklists. These folders remain with the student throughout their school life. The whole school approach provides reliable assessment and ongoing graded work to ensure students are moving forward and continue to build on their reading skills.
- A Home Reading program was established for every student across the school. Checklists, student tracking forms and home/school reward systems were established. The staff was in-serviced on the home reading program.
- New reading checklists were constructed to coincide with the whole school sight word program. All data collated from the original student tracking system has been transferred across into the new system.
- Every class was given a quality resource kit constructed by the literacy team which will continue to be added to over the years.
- One Assistant Principal and one School Learning Support Officer are allocated to support literacy groups. They do this by with-drawing individual students to provide intensive learning support and ongoing assessment.
- The reading resource room was completely cleaned out and stream lined. This has allowed us to see where the gaps were in our reading resources. These will be purchased in 2010.
- In Term 3 2009 Staff Development Day, all staff were in-serviced with an intensive reading overview and explicit instruction on “How to teach Reading” incorporating the new reading resources.
In Term 3 and 4 of 2009 all teachers were given a prescriptive handout with the breakdown of curriculum content to be covered in “Reading Groups” and the curriculum content “Spelling and Writing” to be covered in the students home class.

We have subscribed to a number of on-line literacy programs such as “Reading Eggs”. These are accessed by the whole school and will also be used in conjunction with the two interactive whiteboards due to be installed at the beginning of 2010.

Numeracy

- Advice was sought from the Sydney Region Numeracy Consultant.
- The ‘Count me-in Too’ maths program will be the direction we take in 2010.
- In–service courses will be available to our staff in 2010 for the ‘Count me-in Too’ numeracy program to support its implementation.
- Throughout 2009 targeted students were withdrawn on a weekly basis for intensive tutoring in numeracy.
- Staff was in–serviced and handouts were given over a number of staff meetings to guide the teachers in specific numeracy curriculum content to be taught in ‘Numeracy groups’ and the curriculum content which should be delivered by the class teacher in the students home class group.
- Maths homework has been incorporated into the homework program.
- ‘Mathletics’, ‘Go Maths’ and a number of other on-line maths programs were reviewed by staff. These programs are to be purchased early 2010 and implemented throughout the whole school.

Aboriginal Education

- We acknowledge the ‘Owners of the land, past and present’ at every formal occasion.
- A whole school excursion to Kurnell in the Royal National Park immersed our students and staff for a full day in a range of activities encompassing Aboriginal culture and traditions. The students engaged in specific learning about traditional painting, dancing, bushwalking, bush tucker, story telling and native flora and fauna.
- As a result of the Kurnell excursion Minerva has a three metre long canvas, painted using traditional Aboriginal methods during the excursion to Kurnell. It acknowledges the Dharawal People and each student’s handprint is on the canvas. It sits proudly on display in the foyer.
- The ZOO Mobile from Taronga Zoo provided an enriching afternoon of traditional Aboriginal music, storytelling, animals and art.
- Aboriginal culture and historical teaching continues to be taught across all Key Learning Areas.

Kurnell Excursion

Target 2
Improve Teacher Quality by Building School Capacity

Our achievements include:

- The whole staff were trained in current First Aid and CPR practices. All staff hold current qualifications in both areas.
- All staff were in–serviced in the DET Tale website.
- ICT training was delivered on a regular basis to staff by Ms Tracey Gocher the computer co-coordinator. She provided one to one training to staff in computer practices and knowledge throughout the year.
- Ms Tracey Gocher attends monthly computer coordinator in-service training at Miranda Regional Office.
- Ms Gocher
- Updates the staff in relevant information during staff meetings.
- Staff Development days in Terms 2 and 3 included training on Interactive whiteboards, how to access programs, how to create programs across all KLA’s in preparation for the installation of two boards in 2010.
- Two teachers were in-serviced in the ‘Best Start Literacy Assessment’ program.
- Four staff attended Autism workshops.
- The Relieving Principal and one School Learning Support Officer attended a four day Occupational Health and Safety course.
- Ms Shelley Brebner in-serviced staff on a number of occasions on ‘How to Teach Reading’ and structuring reading groups.

Target 3

Improved environmental education of students and reduced ‘greenhouse’ gas emissions.

Our achievements include:

- The Environmental team have developed a comprehensive SEMP Plan.
- Students and staff from Minerva and Sutherland Primary Schools combined with the Sutherland Shire Council coordinated a tree planting day where students and staff planted native trees and shrubs along the nature strip along the length of both schools on Eton Street. The students and staff assist the council with the care and maintenance of the plants.
- The Sutherland Shire Council assisted the In-school work experience gardening program by providing native plants and gardening instruction to re-establish a large garden bed in the school. Students are now involved in the ongoing watering and maintenance of the garden. The work experience garden crew have begun to redo the garden area at the front gate. The unused grass area is being incorporated into the existing garden and the SSC is supplying the school with native plants and assisting students with the planting. This garden should be completed in Term 2 2010.
- Ms Carolyn Wymess a long standing teacher developed a comprehensive unit on the Environment. It is accessed by the whole school. Activities are graded to meet the needs of all student ability levels. This program has been implemented by the classroom teachers.
- Recycling in the classroom has expanded from paper and general rubbish to include an organic matter bin. Students recycle this in the garden mulch bin.
- The school vegetable garden has been a resounding success in 2009. All students are involved in the planting, care, harvesting and cooking of the produce.
- Signage has been placed throughout the school to educate and support student and staff practices to reduce energy costs.
- We received Commonwealth Government Funding for Solar Panelling to be installed in Term 3, 2010.

Tree Planting with Sutherland Shire Council

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 the perceived image of the school of the current literacy and numeracy assessment content and the current format of the Year 7–12 student reporting format.

Educational and Management Practice

School Image and Presentation

Background

Minerva School was built in the early 60’s. We have seen it grow and develop over the years with major upgrades in the playground, establishment of a sensory room, refurbished student toilets and Industrial Arts and the installation of interactive whiteboards and technology. Discussions with the staff and parent body unanimously agreed that the
schools image needed to be updated and given a more corporate look to reflect the professional standards, excellent learning programs and teaching practices embedded in the school.

Findings and Conclusions

The following decisions were made and initiated in Term 3 2009.

- Re-establish and expand existing gardens with native plants.
- Establish low maintenance native gardens in unusable spaces.
- Lift the presentation of the front office giving it a more corporate look.
- School stationary was given a face lift.
- A new P&C letter head was constructed.
- The school newsletter format was completely revamped.
- Staff and Parents were dissatisfied with the quality of previous school photos.
- A school website was established.

Future Directions

- The parent body will be given survey to provide feedback on the new school newsletter format.
- A new company will be engaged to take student photos in 2010. The staff and parent body will be surveyed on customer satisfaction.
- Funds will be deployed in 2010 to carry out the front office renovation.
- The gardening projects will continue in 2010 and will become part of the Student Work Crew program.
- The school web site will continue to be expanded.

Background

In 2008 we reviewed and restructured the Year 3-6 student report format to include ‘P Scales’. Have a report that is more user friendly and give parents a meaningful record of their child’s achievements. In 2009 with the focus on Literacy and Numeracy assessment this led the staff to review the report format of our Year 7-12 students.

Findings and conclusions

- Staff agreed the current 7-12 report format was complicated and not user friendly.
- The Sydney Region Consultants’ advice was sought which was the best way to proceed.
- The consultant was very impressed with the Minerva format and was considering using it.
- They advised us to use the same format as the Year 3-6 reports we had modified in 2008.
- Staff felt that bringing the 7-12 reporting format in line with the Year 3-6 format brought the school together as a whole.
- The new format has allowed the teachers to provide a more meaningful record of student achievements to parents across all KLA’s.

Future directions

We will continue to review student learning and revise our delivery of the curriculum. Numeracy assessment and curriculum delivery will be a large focus in 2010. We will be looking at using ‘Best Start’ as a platform and building on curriculum programs and teacher delivery. Research into establishing and developing a whole school spelling program in which will provide consistency and accurate assessment will be initiated in 2010.

Other Evaluations

The role of the Student Representative Council did not have a clear focus within the school. Staff felt the SRC didn’t have any clear role within the school. Under the direction of Ms Diane Slater the SRC coordinator, monthly meetings were organised with the relieving principal. This gave the students a forum where they could put forward ideas from their peers. SRC driven activities such as the cake day, reward initiatives and Talent
Quest. All activities were a huge success with students, staff and parents. The school focus for 2010 is to continue to raise the profile of the SRC, School and Vice Captains to increase student ownership, responsibility and leadership.

Parent, Student, and Teacher Satisfaction

In 2009 the school sought the opinions of parents, students and teachers about the school.

Generally parents, students and teachers indicated a very high degree of satisfaction with Minerva School.

Parents consistently expressed a view that they felt the school was a safe and protected environment for their child. They also felt that all concerns and issues are taken seriously and resolved satisfactorily. The parents were unanimous that they felt the staff at Minerva School are extremely dedicated and committed to the students academic and welfare needs.

Students have consistently indicated a high degree of satisfaction with attending Minerva. Students' attendance, retention and participation rates are all very high when compared to mainstream schools.

Staff morale throughout 2009 was high and staff retention rates at Minerva are exceptionally high.

The staff always exhibits a high degree of camaraderie and support for one another, with staff absenteeism decreasing during the 2009 period.

Professional Learning

In 2009 all teachers were involved in professional learning activities. Staff learning needs were identified and prioritised to meet the targets of the 2009-2011 School Plan. The professional learning areas accessed by teachers included Literacy and Numeracy, Autism, Technology, Leadership, Financial Management and Career Development, Occupational Health and Safety and Environmental Education.

School Development 2009 – 2011

Our new school plan was developed to initiate strategies and programs to support quality teaching and improved learning outcomes for students over the course of the next three year period 2009-2011.

Briefly stated the school plan assists the school to appropriately and strategically plan to ensure we achieve the targets detailed in the School Plan and in this report. The School Plan is updated annually to reflect progress and current priorities.

A detailed copy of the school plan can be viewed and or discussed with the principal at anytime by contacting the school or principal directly.

Targets for 2010

Target 1

Improved Literacy, Numeracy and Aboriginal Education Learning Outcomes for Students.

Programs developed in 2009 will be implemented in 2010. They will continue to expand with the further development of a strategic and systematic Year 3 -12 literacy and numeracy program to meet the student’s needs of Minerva School.

Strategies to achieve this target include:

- Provide further training for staff in programming lesson content which will be responsive to student needs
- Systematic monitoring of student work and tracking of student progress. Differentiated professional teaching and learning programs based on good pedagogical practices to be developed to deliver a balanced approach to the teaching of literacy with the following features: Emphasis on meaning, contextualising the interaction between reading and writing, prioritise functional reading skills such as survival reading and
writing, the development of semantic, grammatical, phonological-graphological and visual/pictorial knowledge through explicit and systematic teaching. Both paper-based and digital texts will be utilised.

Promote a balance of Shared, Guided and Independent reading opportunities.

- Continue to strengthen the partnership between the home and school through the provision of information and training programs to assist parents to ‘teach’ reading at home (as strongly indicated by P&C)

- Development and implementation of literacy based and focused programs throughout the school including, a home reading program and extra reading support programs for particular groups of students organised through parent and community volunteers.

- Continued participation in Community of Schools on the Park network to facilitate sharing of expertise and resources with a focus on student literacy.

- Dedicate a classroom teacher and School Learning Support Officer to implement an intensive reading program.

- Use of the Mathematics K-6 Support Document for Students with Special Education Needs will be used as a resource to inform teaching and learning directions in numeracy.

- Dedicate a classroom teacher and School Learning Support Officer to implement an intensive numeracy.

- Sydney Region Mathematics consultants will In-service staff in the use of the ‘Best Start’ framework.

  This is in conjunction with the SSP Principals’ Community of Schools joint initiative.

- A numeracy homework program to be expanded for students.

- Provide parents with information through regular numeracy updates in the school newsletter.

- The implementation of specific Aboriginal cultural and historical teaching and learning programs.

- Aboriginal cultural and historical themes will be appropriately embedded in these programs.

**Our success will be measured by:**

- Literacy assessments in place and in-class term and semester assessments indicate relative growth for every student

- Parents report greater understanding and ability to assist their children at home with numeracy learning

- Students will demonstrate progress towards individual numeracy goals.

- Improved outcomes for all students in terms of their understanding of Aboriginal Australia"

- Improved academic outcomes for Aboriginal students.

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**Target 2**

**To improve teacher quality and internal school capacity building.**

Improved teacher quality can be gained by providing opportunities for staff to share their expertise, knowledge and skills with their colleagues.

**Strategies to achieve this include:**

- Professional learning policy revised and fully implemented.

- In school Professional Learning Programs to be developed and implemented for teaching staff and interested SLSO.

- Formal professional learning program to enhance teachers’ promotion skill learning

- ICT professional learning program developed and implemented through an
in school program to enhance staff ICT skill learning.

- In school program to enhance interested teachers’ learning of TVET, VET, and School to Work programs.

- External professional learning programs and courses accessed as required.

- The DET Tale website ‘bookmarked’ for all teachers and tutorial program designed and implemented.

- Access Future Leaders program through PLLDD

**Our success will be measured by:**

- Staff demonstrate knowledge and confidence in performing a varied range of professional roles within the school.

- Staff feel more empowered, valued, and engaged in whole school processes and procedures.

- Improved staff morale.

- Greatly enhanced school ICT capability.

- Improved staff engagement and understanding of the Department by ICT policies and initiatives.

- Improved teaching and learning outcomes recorded as per student assessment and tracking data.

**Target 3**

Further develop the environmental education of students and reduce ‘greenhouse’ emissions.

A strong focus at Minerva School is improved learning and understanding in environmental education and in reducing our own schools’ ‘carbon footprint’

**Strategies to achieve this target include:**

- Staff from the Royal National Park Environmental Education Centre will continue to develop to assist Minerva School staff to further develop the comprehensive School Environmental Education Plan.

- School's Environmental Education Plan to be fully implemented.

- Programmed Environmental Education themes and lessons to form part of Class Program accountability framework due each term.

- Utilise Commonwealth Government funding to purchase and install sufficient solar panelling to provide all school based energy requirements.

**Our success will be measured by:**

- Students develop a better understanding of the need to reduce emissions and engage in other environmental ‘friendly’ learning activities

- Staff demonstrate attitudinal and behavioural change in terms of emissions reductions behaviour

- Staff programming and implementing Environmental Education lessons

- Parents demonstrate awareness of and are supportive of the progress of this particular target.

- A reduction in the school's annual energy expenditure of a minimum of 50%

School Vegetable Garden
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.

Mrs F Young, Relieving Principal
Mr R Hely, Assistant Principal
Mrs G. Gocher Relieving Assistant Principal,
Mrs D. Slater Relieving Assistant Principal
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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: